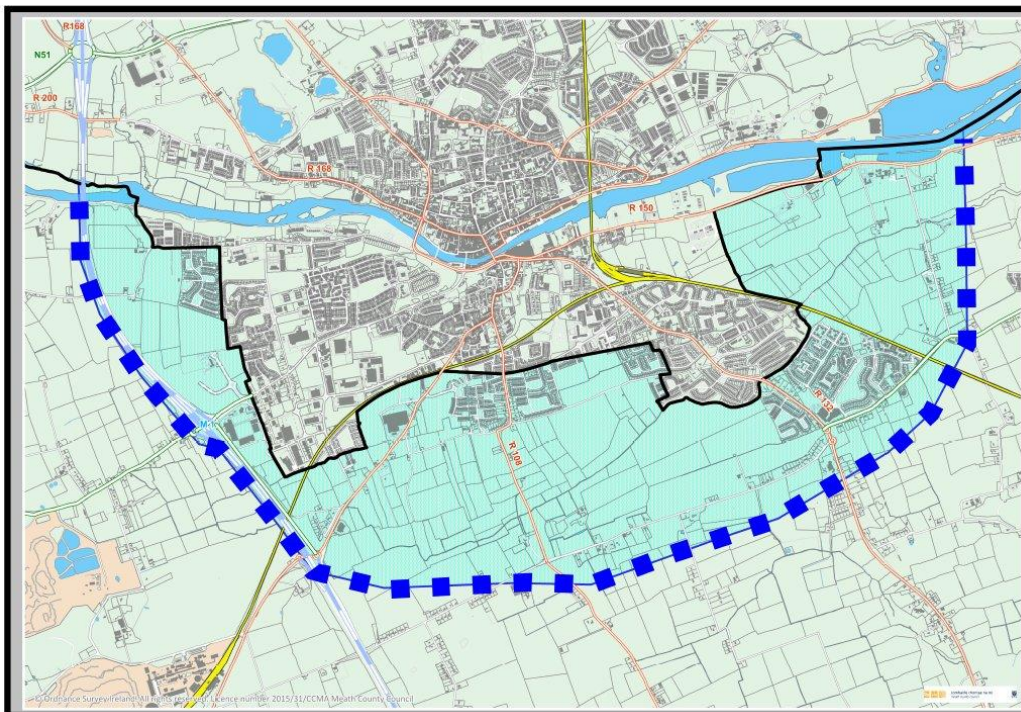


SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES: *DROGHEDA BOUNDARY COMMITTEE*



Prepared By:

Meath County Council



22 January 2016

Table of Contents

List of Exhibits	i
Glossary of Terms.....	iv
Executive Summary and Key Messages of the Submission	vii
Acknowledgements and Disclaimer	xxvi
1 Introduction and Background.....	1
1.1 Purpose and Overview of the Report	1
1.2 Meath County Council's Position on the Drogheda Boundary Review.....	4
1.3 Further Elaboration of Meath County Council's Position	11
1.4 Drogheda Chamber of Commerce's Call for a Boundary Review	21
1.5 Drogheda Chamber's Investment in Drogheda Brochure.....	23
1.6 Any Boundary Change would have No Effect on FDI into Drogheda	24
1.7 The Louth Economic Forum's FDI Proposal for Drogheda (2015).....	26
1.8 Drogheda 'City Status' Campaign.....	28
1.9 Drogheda Boundary Review Public Information Meeting of 9 September 2015	30
1.10 Terms of Reference of the Review and Chronology to Date	35
1.11 Meath County Council Comments on the <i>Modus Operandi</i> of the Review.....	38
1.12 Public Meeting regarding the Review Held on 19 January 2016	41
1.13 Historical Perspectives of the Drogheda Boundary	46
2 Overview of Meath County Council.....	48
2.1 Introduction	48
2.2 Organisational Structure.....	49
2.3 Council Corporate Plan	50
2.4 Human Resources	51
2.5 Municipal District Structure	51
2.6 Local Representatives by Local Electoral Area.....	53
2.7 Financial Overview	55
2.8 Other Relevant Matters	59
2.9 National Oversight and Audit Commission Reports	60
2.10 Summary	64
3 Meath County Council Operations and Functions in the Area of Interest	66
3.1 Introduction	66
3.2 Planning and Economic Development	66
3.3 Tourism	67
3.4 Transport.....	68
3.5 Housing	69
3.6 Emergency Services	69
3.7 Environment.....	70
3.8 Community Development.....	70
3.9 Library Services	70
3.10 Water Services	71
3.11 Summary	72
4 The Current Boundary Situation and the Area of Interest	73
4.1 Introduction	73
4.2 Recent Boundary Reviews Nationally	74
4.3 Delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland and the Current Drogheda Boundary	80
4.4 Discussion of Drogheda and its Hinterland.....	91

4.5	Summary	94
5	Economic and Socio-Economic Development and Performance	95
5.1	Introduction	95
5.2	Population.....	95
5.3	Employment.....	104
5.4	Pobal Deprivation/Affluence Indicators.....	111
5.5	Other Relevant Socio-Economic Indicators	130
5.6	Summary	134
6	Planning and Development.....	135
6.1	Introduction	135
6.2	National Planning Policy	136
6.3	Regional Policy	138
6.4	Meath County Development Plan 2013 - 2019.....	142
6.5	Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009-2015	146
6.6	Meath Development Contribution Scheme 2016-2021	148
6.7	Other Local Plans	150
6.8	Summary of Local Planning Perspective	151
7	Inter-Local Authority Collaboration and Effective Services Delivery	153
7.1	Introduction	153
7.2	Models of Inter-Local Authority Collaboration	153
7.3	Service Delivery and Resource Assignment	155
7.4	Customer Service	157
7.5	Development Plans	158
7.6	Road Projects and Maintenance	158
7.7	Water and Waste-Water.....	161
7.8	Social Housing	162
7.9	Tourism	163
7.10	Fire and Emergency Services	164
7.11	Community Development, Environmental and Cultural Services	165
7.12	Rationale and Possible Impacts of Further Collaboration beyond the Existing Collaboration	168
7.13	Summary	169
8	Financial Matters.....	170
8.1	Introduction	170
8.2	Expenditure.....	170
8.3	Income	175
8.4	Other Relevant Financial Measures	177
8.5	Summary	180
9	Governance and Accountability	181
9.1	Introduction	181
9.2	Formula for the Number of Elected Members per Local Authority.....	181
9.3	Political Representation of the Area of Interest	182
9.4	Summary	186
10	Community Interest	187
10.1	Introduction	187
10.2	Inventory of Clubs and Societies.....	187
10.3	Levels of Civil Society and Volunteering	191
10.4	Inter-Local Authority Collaboration in Support of Community Interest.....	195

10.5	Summary	195
11	New Survey Evidence – Residents and Businesses.....	196
11.1	Introduction	196
11.2	Synopsis of the Survey Results.....	196
11.3	Methodology.....	197
11.4	Results of the Residential Survey in the Meath Part of the Area of Interest (Area A)	198
11.5	Results of the On-Street Survey in the Louth and Meath Parts of Drogheda.....	200
11.6	Results of the Business Survey in the Meath Part of the Area of Interest (Area A)	201
11.7	Summary	202
12	Concluding Remarks and the Seven Questions.....	203
12.1	Concluding Comments	203
12.2	Meath County Council’s Responses to the Review’s Seven Questions for Public Consultations 204	
	Annex: Supplementary Information	207

List of Exhibits

Table 2.1: Local Representation in Meath County Council by Municipal District (MD)	54
Table 5.1: Population of Drogheda and its Immediate Environs in Counties Louth and Meath (2002-2011)	96
Table 5.2: Towns in Ireland Occurring in Two Counties	101
Table 5.3: Population of Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2002-2011)	102
Table 5.4: Employment within the Electoral Divisions (EDs) making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)	104
Table 5.5: Employment-to-Total Population Ratios within the Electoral Divisions (EDs) making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)	106
Table 5.6: Employment-to-Working Age Population Ratios within the Electoral Divisions (EDs) making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)	107
Table 5.7: Absolute Pobal Deprivation Indices in Louth, Meath and the State (2006-2011)	112
Table 5.8: Absolute Pobal Deprivation Indices in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)	113
Table 5.9: Relative Pobal Deprivation Indices in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	114
Table 5.10: Age Dependency Ratios (Pobal Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	115
Table 5.11: Age Dependency Ratios (Standard Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	116
Table 5.12: Youth Dependency Ratios (Standard Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	117
Table 5.13: Old Age Dependency Ratios (Standard Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	118
Table 5.14: Demographic Structure of the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	120
Table 5.15: Lone Parent Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	121
Table 5.16: Low Educational Attainment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	122
Table 5.17: High Educational Attainment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	123
Table 5.18: High and Low Professionals Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	124
Table 5.19: Low Skilled Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	125
Table 5.20: Male Unemployment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	126
Table 5.21: Female Unemployment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	127
Table 5.22: Owner-Occupied Housing Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)	128
Table 5.23: Total Recorded Crime Offences in Drogheda District (Louth Garda Division) and Laytown District (Meath Garda Division) 2004, 2009 and 2014	131

Table 5.24: Proportion of Residents in Drogheda and its Hinterland Reporting their General Health as being “Very Good or Good” (2011)	132
Table 6.1: Current DCS Rates in County Meath, County Louth and the Former Drogheda Borough as Currently Applicable in the Greater Drogheda Area.....	148
Table 6.2: Previous Rates in County Meath, and Dundalk Town Council (2010-2014) (as Currently Applicable in the former Dundalk Town Council Area).....	149
Table 8.1: Meath County Council Expenditure within the Area of Interest	171
Table 8.2: Meath County Council Revenue and Capital Expenditure within Area of Interest	171
Table 8.3: Meath County Council budgets for 2015 and 2016.....	172
Table 8.4: Schedule of Municipal District Works.....	172
Table 8.5: Analysis of Expenditure	173
Table 8.6: Whole Time Equivalent Staff	174
Table 8.7: Area of Interest Commercial Rates Overview	175
Table 8.8: Collection Rate Percentage.....	176
Table 8.9: Local Property Tax and its Implications for Meath County Council	177
Table 8.10: Movement in Revenue Account Balances 2010 to 2014	179
Table 9.1: Meath County Council Current Overview of Elected Member	182
Table 9.2: Current Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal districts – Meath	183
Table 9.3: Louth County Council Current Overview of Elected Member.....	183
Table 9.4: Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal Districts – Louth.....	184
Table 9.5: Potential Meath Elected Members – Population Reduction	185
Table 9.6: Potential Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal Districts within Meath.....	185
Table 9.7: Potential Louth Elected Members – Population Increase	186
Table 9.8: Potential Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal Districts within Louth	186
Table 10.1: Meath Local Sports Partnership Clubs-Laytown/Bettystwn MD	188
Table 10.2: Louth Local Sports Partnership Clubs-Drogheda	190
Table 10.3: Laytown / Bettystown Municipal District PPN Groups	192
Table 10.4: Drogheda Borough District PPN Groups	193
Figure 1.1: Suggested Structure for County Louth-wide Economic Forum.....	9
Figure 1.2: Map showing some of the Employers in the Southern Environs of Drogheda (Meath)	14
Figure 1.3: Map of the New Regional Assembly Areas (NUTS 2 Regions) in Ireland	18
Figure 2.1: Illustration of the Organisational Structure of Meath County Council	49
Figure 2.2: Map of Municipal Districts in County Meath	52
Figure 2.3: Summary of Local Representation in County Meath	53
Figure 2.4: Five Year Summary of Revenue Account Balances (2010-2014).....	56
Figure 5.1: Population of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs and Selected Other Urban Centres (2011) – Confirming Drogheda as the Largest Town in Ireland	100
Figure 5.2: Louth and Meath Shares of the Population of Drogheda and its Hinterland (2002-2011)	103
Figure 5.3: Map of RAPID Areas in Drogheda (2010)	130
Figure 5.4: Proportion of Residents in Drogheda and its Hinterland Reporting their General Health as being “Very Good or Good” and the Pobal Relative Deprivation Index (2011)	133
Figure 6.1: Planning Hierarchy	135
Figure 7.1: Models of Inter-Local Authority Collaboration	153
Figure 7.2: Basic Customer Service Workflow at Meath County Council	157
Figure 8.1: Budget Income 2016.....	175
Figure 8.2: Cumulative Revenue Deficit and Unfunded Capital Balances	178

Figure 11.1: Map Utilised in the Behaviour and Attitudes Survey of Drogheda Residents and Businesses (2015/2016).....	198
Box 1.1: New Regional Aid Map for Ireland (2014-2020) – including Details of the Electoral Divisions in Meath (Kells LEA).....	26
Box 1.2: Historical Perspectives of Drogheda’s Boundary between Louth and Meath (Cont’d Overleaf)	47
Figure A1: Indecon Map of the M1 (Dublin-Belfast) Corridor	216
Figure A2: Conceptual Map of County Meath-Local Communities and their Economic Characteristics	217

Glossary of Terms

B&A	Behaviour and Attitudes
BMW	Border, Midland and Western Region
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CCMA	County and City Management Association
CDP	County Development Plan
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Council	Alternative reference in this Submission to Meath County Council
CPG	Corporate Policy Group
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DART	Dublin Area Rapid Transit
DCU	Dublin City University
DCS	Development Contribution Scheme
DECLG	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
DG	Directorate General (of the European Commission)
DIFE	Drogheda Institute of Further Education
DkIT	Dundalk Institute of Technology
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
ED	Electoral Division
EI	Enterprise Ireland
EU	European Union
EMRA	Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTI	FTI Consulting
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
HAP	Housing Assistance Payment
HE	Higher Education
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HR	Human Resources
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IFS	International Funds Services
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
IT	Information Technology
JSA	John Spain & Associates

LAP	Local Area Plan
LCDC	Local Community and Development Committee
LEA	Local Electoral Area
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LEF	Louth Economic Forum
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
LMFM	Louth Meath Frequency Modulation Radio
LSP	Local Sports Partnership
MCC	Meath County Council
MD	Municipal District
MEF	Meath Economic Forum
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NI	Northern Ireland
NOAC	National Oversight and Audit Commission
NSMC	North South Ministerial Council
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NTA	National Transport Authority
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
NUTS	Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics
PMCA	PMCA Economic Consulting
PMDS	Performance Management Development System
PPF	Putting People First
PPN	Public Participation Networks
POWCAR	Place of Work, Census of Anonymised Records (CSO)
POWSCAR	Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records (CSO)
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
RAS	Rental Accommodation Scheme
Review	Drogheda Boundary Review
Review Committee	Drogheda Boundary Review Committee
RPG	Regional Planning Guidelines
RSES	Regional Spatial Economic Strategies
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
R&D	Research & Development
SEDO	Sustainable Economic Development Objective
SPA	Strategic Planning Area
SHLI	Social Housing Leasing Initiative
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
Submission	Meath County Council's Submission to the Drogheda Boundary Review (this document)

TD	Teachta Dála
UCD	University College Dublin
UfW	Unaccounted for Water
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States of America
WEO	World Economic Outlook
WTE	Whole Time Equivalent
WWTP	Waste Water Treatment Plant

Executive Summary and Key Messages of the Submission

Overview

Meath County Council encloses a very detailed and evidence-based Submission in respect of the Drogheda Boundary Review and invites the Boundary Committee to fully consider the important content set out therein.

The Drogheda Boundary Review matters greatly to Meath County Council and, during the course of the Review, since the Council first met with the Review Committee Members and their advisors, through to making this Submission, we have made every effort to assist the Committee in its work. This is reflected in the level of detail contained in our Submission, which is designed to inform, in an evidence-based manner, the Review Committee to come to the right conclusion from Meath County Council's perspective, which is to say that the current arrangements are working effectively and that the *status quo* should remain in place. Meath County Council has as much a stake in the growth and development of Drogheda as Louth County Council, and both Councils have cooperated well over many years for the betterment of the residents, communities and businesses in the greater Drogheda area, both Meath and Louth parts.

The Area of Interest, which has been delineated by the Review Committee, is located in a part of County Meath that is of immense importance to the economic development and sustainable growth of the county. Manifestation of this is provided by the fact that the Meath environs of Drogheda rates very highly in the current Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2013-2019. Over recent years the Council has committed heavily to supporting community and economic development in the area, which has grown rapidly in population terms and in respect of the number of jobs within the area. Accordingly, the Council is determined to continue to support the Area of Interest and the wider Meath environs of Drogheda, which are inextricably linked with the rest of the greater Drogheda area. Meath County Council will strongly and vigorously oppose any recommended change to the boundary, commensurate with the importance it attaches to the review area.

Meath County Council's Position

In essence, the Review is fundamentally about evaluating whether the current arrangements for the local administration of Drogheda are working well, with the focus being put on the Area of Interest, which the Review Committee have delineated and mapped. Are people generally satisfied with the quality of their lives? Are businesses happy with where they are located? Are people and businesses generally satisfied with the quality of services from their local authorities (Meath and Louth County Councils)? In addition, do people and businesses believe that a change in the current local authority arrangements would have an impact on their lives? Do people and businesses really care about a boundary change or extension? Evidence-based answers to these key questions are provided in this Submission and summarised in this opening part of the document.

The relevant information assembled, analysed and presented in this Submission shows that the current arrangements in which Meath and Louth County Councils are responsible for the local administration of Drogheda are generally working effectively, with people and businesses expressing a high level of satisfaction with the quality of their lives and operations respectively and with the services received from their local authority. The Area of Interest, within the St. Mary's Electoral Division (ED) in County Meath, has witnessed very strong employment growth during the past two censuses (2006 and 2011), and the Review Committee will be cognisant of the fact that the specialist Central Statistics Office data that the Council have examined for this purpose represents the latest available and most authoritative

data on employment within the aforementioned ED or indeed any other ED in the country at the present time (the CSO's POWSCAR – Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records – and POWCAR – Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records – were conducted as part of Census 2011 and 2006 respectively and it is expected that the next generation of these important sources of information on employment locally within EDs will become available next year, as a result of Census 2016).

Meath County Council has committed considerably to facilitating the strong employment growth and the other aforementioned positive outcomes occurring in the Area of Interest over the years and the Council has positioned the area at the top of the economic hierarchy in the current Meath CDP, where the Meath environs of Drogheda ranks with the same level of importance as Navan, the County Town of Meath. This reflects the significant potential of the area, which is favourably located in the heart of the M1 Dublin-Belfast Corridor, whose scope for economic development has yet to be fully realised. Meath County Council plans to continue its role in facilitating further development of the Area of Interest in the coming years, with continued partnership with Louth County Council and continuing our cooperation with the other local authorities in the M1 Corridor, including Fingal County Council.

As outlined in the course of the Submission, with illustrative examples, Meath County Council has a rich history and tradition of cooperating with neighbouring local authorities aimed at serving communities and businesses in settlements and sites occurring along county boundaries (Meath County Council has worked with Cavan County Council, Kildare County Council and Westmeath County Council as well as with Louth County Council and Fingal County Council) and the Council is strongly of the view that the most appropriate and proportionate way of serving areas straddling county boundaries is through cooperation between local authorities rather than by changing the boundaries themselves, which would represent a very severe, restrictive and potentially very divisive form of change.

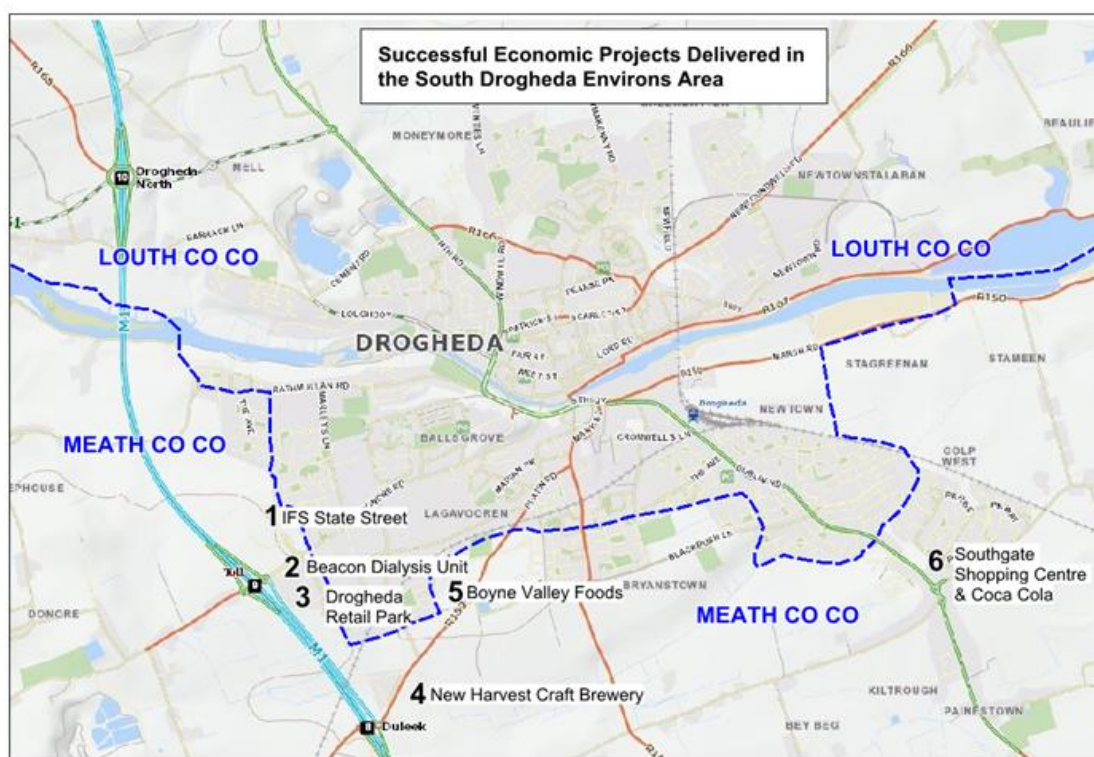
The Area of Interest currently contains almost 2,000 residential units, with approximately 6,000 people living in this area as per the most recent census in 2011. As detailed in the Submission, the Area of Interest is home to people with strong educational attainment and skills, which is added to again when one draws in the wider East Meath area. Coupled with the area's favourable location and strong transport infrastructure, there is little doubt that it has the potential to become one of the most attractive and competitive locations within the Greater Dublin Area, with the vision being of more people having employment opportunities closer to where they live and thus greater economic impact being retained locally, for the overall benefit of local communities.

Currently, the Area of Interest and the wider East Meath Area, and indeed Drogheda and its catchment areas in Louth and Meath overall, are characterised by high rates of outbound commuting – many people living in the town and its environs have employment but a significant proportion work well outside the area, typically in the capital. The central aim of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022, which Meath County Council commissioned in 2014 and launched in 2015, is to support sustainable communities throughout the county by facilitating more jobs closer to where people live, including in the Area of Interest, which is now positioned and promoted as a key investment location within the county given its unique configuration of positive economic attributes.

The economic development potential of the Area of Interest is evident when one takes stock of the employers already operating in the area and that it is functioning effectively economically. The employers include the Boyne Valley Food Group, a major Irish-owned company and well-known throughout the country for distributing some of the best-known household brands in Ireland. The Area of Interest also benefits from the presence of two major foreign-owned employers, in which around 500

people work at Coca-Cola International Services and IFS/State Street, equating to around 40% of all FDI (foreign direct investment) employment in the county currently. Both companies are active in the internationally-traded services sector and together provide demonstration to potential new FDI companies and to the IDA, the State agency responsible for attracting FDI into Ireland, of the Area of Interest's capability to host such investment and to become a hub/cluster for such international services. IFS/State Street commenced operations in the IDA Business and Technology Park on the Donore Road in Drogheda (Co. Meath) in 2006 and more recently Coca-Cola established its global facility in the Southgate centre, having been previously based in the M1 Retail Park in the Louth part of Drogheda. Coca-Cola also had a presence on the Donore Road, in the Louth part of Drogheda, where it manufactured concentrates for its drinks, but the former production plant has been out-of-commission now for many years. Nevertheless, the company continues to be present in Drogheda thanks to the Southgate facility in County Meath. As well as these employers, there are many other enterprises based in the Area of Interest – too numerous to mention here. For instance, the Southgate centre where Coca-Cola International Services has its global services facility has also seen new employment growth in the past year or so; the Drogheda Retail Park, also in the Meath environs of Drogheda, opened some years ago and is already proving to be very popular with shoppers; and the new Boann Distillery, which will also have a restaurant and visitor centre, is due to begin operations in the Area of Interest later in 2016, creating up to 100 new jobs in the process.

Map showing some of the Employers in the Southern Environs of Drogheda (Meath)



Source: Meath County Council.

Note: The map is illustrative and is not exhaustive of all employers/businesses in the area.

Further to the existing employment in the Area of Interest, Meath County Council would add that there are also 120 hectares of employment-zoned lands available for development and new jobs in the review area. The scale and significance of these employment lands can be seen by the fact that the 120 hectares are almost twice the size of the Trim Legal Town Boundary. In addition, there are 1,132 residential units in the Area of Interest that have been granted planning permissions by Meath County Council. Both the employment and residential lands will play their part in ensuring the attractiveness, and competitiveness, of the Area of Interest for new and sustainable mixed-use development in the years ahead.

Meath County Council wishes to continue its commitment towards the Area of Interest by working towards the goal of helping to convert the significant opportunities currently available in the area into new jobs and residents locally, enriching and giving even more critical mass to the area. As well as being an attractive offering to investors and wealth creators, the planned new residents and employment in the Area of Interest will in turn have knock-on impacts, benefitting local sports clubs and societies, and making for a wider community in the process.

Among the strands of empirical evidence shown in this Submission is the new survey information that Meath County Council commissioned from Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A). The details are outlined subsequently in the Submission and the B&A report is attached under separate cover with this Submission. In summary, the new survey evidence reveals:

- A very high level of satisfaction among residents and businesses;
 - People are generally highly satisfied with their lives in either part of the town and with the overall quality of their lives – the levels of satisfaction are especially high among residents in the Meath part of the Area of Interest, with virtually all (100%) of respondents being “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with their daily lives and/or the quality of their lives
 - People are to a large extent satisfied with the level of service from their local authority, with approximately two-thirds of respondents expressing that they are “very happy” or “fairly happy” with their local Council for the upkeep of the area in which they live
 - Businesses have a very high level of satisfaction, with 85% being “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with being located in the Meath part of the Area of Interest
- The Drogheda Boundary Review does not rank significantly in people’s or businesses concerns;
 - The Review ranks much lower compared with other issues in people’s day-to-day lives, namely the cost of living, employment/job security, local health services and distance/travelling to/from work (commuting) – a common finding observed in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda
 - A very high proportion of businesses (95%) had little or no knowledge of the Review – if the Review really mattered to them, they would make it their business to know more
- People and businesses believe that the Review outcome will have no impact on their lives;
 - Over 81% of residents in Louth or Meath have this view and 91% of businesses in the Meath part of the Area of Interest share this belief.

Overall, when everything is considered, the extensive empirical evidence presented in this Submission at best provides overwhelming support for Meath County Council's position that there should no change in the current arrangement in respect of the local administration of Drogheda and at worst creates a sufficient level of doubt to conclude that the *status quo* should be permitted to remain.

The onus, Meath County Council believes is on those who called for the Review in the first place to show, in an impartial and evidence-based manner, that a change in the current boundary in favour of Louth would result in a *substantial* improvement in residents', communities' and businesses' lives and operations *compared* with the present situation. As part of this requirement, the proponents of the boundary extension would firstly have to set out in detail the facts relating to the current arrangements, including extensive data analysis of population and employment developments, and then they would have to prove, with at least a very high likelihood or beyond all reasonable doubt, and with further extensive data analysis, including modelling of the 'counterfactual' in which the Area of Interest would come under the auspices of Louth County Council, that the proposed extension would lead to a *significant* enhancement of people's and businesses quality of lives and operations in the area concerned, in line with the intentions of Putting People First (2012).

Having carefully considered the evidence, Meath County Council considers that the burden of proof and the evidence required to show such an outcome, namely that there should be a boundary extension in favour of Louth, is beyond reach and thus that the case for a change or extension cannot be established in any credible manner in fact or evidence.

To convey Meath County Council's position alternatively, there is no evidence of any failure or poor service provision from the current arrangements. There is no evidence that people's lives are suffering or are adversely affected under the current arrangements. There is no evidence of administrative failure or governance failure under the current arrangements. Furthermore, previous studies of Drogheda and its environs did not propose any boundary review, let alone extension. Moreover, there is no evidence that Drogheda is functioning less than other towns, of a similar size or otherwise, because of the boundary. On the contrary, as documented in this Submission, the evidence shows that economic development and the quality of people's lives has improved in recent years, certainly in the Meath environs of the town – more jobs, more shops and retailing centres, schools and services etc. There is no evidence (*a priori* or *a fortiori*) that a boundary extension in favour of Louth County Council would result in a net benefit for people, businesses and communities in Drogheda.

Accordingly, there is no theoretical, practical or any other basis to support any boundary change in respect of the area under consideration; any boundary alteration would merely be disproportionate, unwarranted and unnecessary. It would be a very severe blow for one local authority, removing a vital part of its current development plan and economic strategy. Given the dynamic nature of economic development, no amount of compensation could make up for the loss of this critically important part of County Meath, given its skills base, the investment put into the area by Meath County Council and its strategic location along the M1 Corridor.

Accordingly, Meath County Council will defend every inch of territory currently under its remit, reflecting the plans and ambitions we as the Council have for this part of the county, which includes its potential to be a major catalyst for employment creation countywide and in the wider functional region, benefitting Louth as well as Meath.

Any boundary extension whether in Drogheda, or in any of the other three areas also being examined, would have the effect of setting a potentially very dangerous precedent among the many other towns in the country occurring along inter-county boundaries (these towns are shown in Section 5 of the

Submission) and would create perverse incentives among the local authorities concerned, in which the probability or likelihood of a Ministerial boundary review would cause councils to become more cautious in their approach to planning and development along the boundary, with the risk that little or no development would eventuate, contrary to the intentions of Putting People First.

We live in a dynamic and ever-changing environment – development is a necessity and a fact of life and the world stands still for nobody. People demand and expect good, sustainable development, which unfortunately has not always been the case in our country, as the recent experiences regarding the housing and flooding crises have shown all too visibly. No local authority is totally without blame in this regard. But a situation in which local authorities would be panicked into not developing a local area in- and-around a county boundary for fear that it might be taken away from them in the future would be a grievous and insidious development in the country's planning practices if allowed to take root – it would ignore people's and businesses' needs and be without any proper foundation. **All good planning should be free of any political interference or any politically-driven agendas – something that has been learned to our cost during the Great Recession.**

In sum, the only coherent way forward is for the current arrangements to remain in place and for both local authorities to continue to work together for the betterment of Drogheda and its environs in both Louth and Meath, with further enhanced cooperation where warranted – in response to an identified need or 'market failure', as consistent with good public policy.

Drogheda's Growth and Development

The story of Drogheda's development during the past number of years is central to understanding Meath County Council's submission and our position regarding the Review.

During the pre-crisis years, significant house price rises were occurring in the capital and many people working there could not afford to purchase accommodation – even very small houses in Dublin were out-of-reach of very many people with young families. Consequently, these people had no option but to look outside Dublin, where house prices were more affordable and the locations were viable because of transport connections and/or distance to the capital. Meath, and Louth, became attractive locations for these people and Drogheda in particular became one of the most sought-after towns for the newcomers to make their new home. Drogheda's attractions were, and remain, manifold – as well as the transport connections to Dublin, in the form of the railway line, motorway and bus services, onto which private operators have entered since, Drogheda was, and is, also a sizeable town with a large and varied range of attractions and amenities as well having a plentiful supply of high quality residential accommodation at more affordable prices compared with the capital. New housing estates such as Grange Rath, DeepForde and Highlands in the St. Mary's ED in Meath saw increased interest and were soon bought and turned into new homes, and they formed the basis of the new communities that sprang up in this part of Drogheda. In the space of a few years, the Meath environs of Drogheda became transformed with the arrival of many new people and families, all of which have served to enrich the Drogheda community overall, for example, clubs and societies, and local retailers and other businesses, have benefitted from the additional population and demand.

Some parts of the Louth side of Drogheda also grew rapidly during this time – for example, in the St. Peter's ED – but it was the Meath side that experienced the largest growth. The Meath environs of the town had more choice in regard to housing and were more favourably located in regard to travelling to Dublin – where many of the people living in the area continue to work today. Compared with the southern environs, the northern environs of Drogheda, in County Louth, saw very little change: the envisaged North Drogheda Environs Plan ('Sienna Valley'), which at the time in the mid-late 2000s, prior

to onset of the Great Recession, foresaw a whole new town and many hundreds of new jobs, came to nought and today the once-planned development sites stand largely as a collection of empty fields with little or no development to date.

On the other hand, the comparably rapid population growth in the Meath environs of Drogheda served to support the growth of the National Gateway (Dublin) and to take the pressure off the housing demand in the capital city by providing alternative, affordable, high quality housing for many people whose jobs and careers are in Dublin.

The new arrivals who have moved to the Meath environs of Drogheda have integrated very well into their adopted new home. Their children today go to primary and secondary school in the Louth and Meath parts of the town. They and their children have become members of local sports clubs: the Meath environs of Drogheda, for example, boast three soccer clubs, one of the largest GAA clubs in the whole country, let alone in County Meath, and various other sports facilities, such as golf, tennis, hockey, badminton, athletics, bridge etc. These features have formed the basis of Drogheda's package of attractions for new residents and the Meath environs of the town, facilitated by Meath County Council, have enabled this development to occur.

However, in the process, the suburbs of Drogheda – particularly in the Meath environs – have become a large commuter location. Analysis of the aforementioned CSO POWSCAR data in 2011 reveals that 54% of all those living in County Meath and at work in any location do so outside the county (mainly in the capital, which accounted for 76% of all the outbound commuters from Meath in that year). The rate of outbound commuting in the Meath environs of Drogheda is even bigger again – over 70% in 2011.

Nonetheless, there is a dynamic element to the development story, which does not end with the commuting from the Meath environs of Drogheda, and one that is particularly relevant to the Review. Those living in the Area of Interest and the wider East Meath area today are generally people with relatively strong educational attainment and workplace skills, employed in good jobs, typically in Dublin (public and private sectors). The facts on the skills and other qualities of the outbound commuters are laid out in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022. This data is also apparent in the Indecon Economic Strategy for Drogheda of 2009, which was commissioned by Louth County Council and Drogheda Borough Council. For instance, these studies reveal that there are more employers and managers, and more professionals, living locally but working outside their area of residence than both living and working locally. But there is a cost to commuting and many of the commuters, who spend on average more than 2 hours commuting to work every day, would likely prefer to be working closer to home. **Recognising this and the economic potential of the local skills base, Meath County Council, in liaison with other State agencies, has been working hard to develop employment opportunities in the Meath environs of Drogheda. This constitutes a cornerstone of our economic plan for the Area of Interest and East Meath – namely to promote the region as a competitive and compelling investment location so as to facilitate more employment opportunities locally.**

As the detailed data analysis presented in Section 5 shows, the rate of employment growth has been more rapid in the Meath than in the Louth environs of Drogheda and very positive and encouraging progress has been made in regard to ensuring sustainable communities in the Area of Interest – *with employment growth now backing up the population growth*. In particular, the St. Mary's ED in Meath, in which the Area of Interest occurs, has seen its employment grow by over 48% between 2006 and 2011, to reach almost 1,400 in the latter year. This compares with a contraction of almost 18% in the number of jobs within the corresponding ED in the former Drogheda Borough area in the Louth part of

Drogheda, which had 1,771 jobs in 2011. Looking more widely at the respective environs of the town, the Meath environs of Drogheda, comprising the EDs of St. Mary's, Julianstown, Stamullin, Ardcaith, Duleek and Mellifont, experienced jobs growth of 46% during 2006-2011, compared with just 1.4% employment growth in the Louth part of the town, made up of the EDs comprising the current Drogheda Local Electoral Area (LEA).

It is instructive to consider some of the other economic developments in the neighbouring EDs to St. Mary's ED in Meath, in which the Area of Interest is located. The following information further illustrates Meath County Council's commitment to the area.

A little to the south of St. Mary's ED is Stamullin, also strategically located in the M1 Corridor. This part of the Drogheda catchment area includes the City North Hotel, an important landmark and meeting point on the motorway. Next to the hotel, the recently-established City North Business Campus is the location of choice for a number of important and much-valued employers in business services, environmental services, professional services, engineering, life sciences and healthcare, and in research and development. In August 2015, one of the campus' tenants – Hanley Energy – launched its new Data Centre Research and Development Hub. Like Coca-Cola International Services at Southgate, Hanley Energy previously operated in the Louth part of Drogheda, specifically at the Millmount incubation centre near the town centre. Hanley Energy was supported at the Millmount by Dundalk Institute of Technology and then decided to move to its new and current premises at the City North Business Campus, where it has seen rapid employment growth, from just 2 people at the Millmount Centre in 2013 to 40 at the end of 2015 in Stamullin. The company, which started out in environmental services but is focusing more on data centre services, with clients worldwide, plans to develop further at City North with additional employment envisaged. Meath County Council will continue to support such valued employers. In total, it is estimated that there are now in the region of 200 people employed in the City North Business Campus and rising.

Across the M1 Motorway in the Meath Environs of Drogheda are two further important employers in the greater Drogheda area, namely: Irish Cement, the largest cement plant in the country and part of the CRH Group, the largest indigenous company in Ireland and a major (Irish-owned) multinational enterprise with subsidiaries around the world; and Indaver Ireland, a waste-to-energy facility that has been operating successfully from this part of County Meath since 2011 and helping to support the national policy objective of diverting waste away from landfill.

Not far from these major employers is the historic town of Duleek, home to the Duleek Business Park, where there is a range of employers in building materials and light manufacturing, and in which there are plans to further develop the park to accommodate more employment initiatives, including services and office/commercial employment. During 2006-2011, the number of jobs in the Duleek ED grew by 17% to over 800. Duleek is connected with Julianstown *via* the R150 road, which is a high quality and scenic route along the course of the Nanny River, with the Bellewstown esker to the south and some of the finest agricultural land in the whole country on either side of the road. At Julianstown, in the past year, the former public house and restaurant have been re-developed into new premises proving to be popular with visitors and locals alike. In 2011, there were 1,100 jobs recorded in the Julianstown ED and that figure has been comfortably exceeded today, illustrating the vibrancy of the community in-and-around Drogheda.

But Meath County Council is not resting on its laurels and duly recognises that the continued effort needs to be applied with further employment growth planned. The data analysis of Section 5 also reveals that, while the Meath environs of Drogheda has experienced considerably higher employment

growth than Drogheda LEA (Louth) during 2006-2011, the ratio of employment-to-population (whether total population or the working age population) remains lower in the Meath than the Louth part of Drogheda, which is reflective of the higher outbound commuting from the Meath environs of the town. The challenge is to facilitate further employment growth in the Meath environs, including in the Area of Interest, to close the gap, which we have succeeded in addressing between 2006 and 2011, as also revealed by the empirical analysis presented in Section 5.

This explains why we have put the Meath environs of Drogheda, along the M1 Corridor, at the very top of the economic hierarchy in the county, along with Navan, the County Town of Meath. To ensure the positive progress in respect of employment growth, and sustainable communities, continues in the years ahead, Meath County Council are firmly of the view that the current arrangements in respect of the local administration of the Area of Interest provides the most effective means of ensuring that the favourable growth achieved over recent years continues in the future. The South Drogheda and Environs Local Area Plan (LAP) carefully sets out the zoning requirements of the Meath environs of the town, which include different categories of economic development tailored towards the needs of various enterprises and employers, along with provision for sustainable residential and community development. That plan was made in 2009 and is consistent with overall County Development Plan, which recognises the primary role of the Meath environs of Drogheda and the East Meath areas (occurring within the M1 Corridor) as driving economic development locally and across County Meath, and indeed in the wider functional region.

Meath County Council considers that it is best-placed to continue its important economic development work in the Area of Interest, under the current local authority arrangements or *status quo*.

Today, Drogheda is a better town compared what it was a decade and more ago – retailing has improved considerably in the town, aided by judicious planning. For example, in the Meath parts, Meath County Council would point to the Southgate Shopping Centre and the Drogheda Retail Park, which the new B&A survey evidence shows are viewed favourably by residents, given that they are frequent visitors.

The Significance of the Area of Interest and St. Mary's ED in Meath

Further illustration of the importance of the Area of Interest to Meath County Council and to Drogheda comes from the following facts regarding the St. Mary's ED in Meath, within which the Area of Interest occurs:

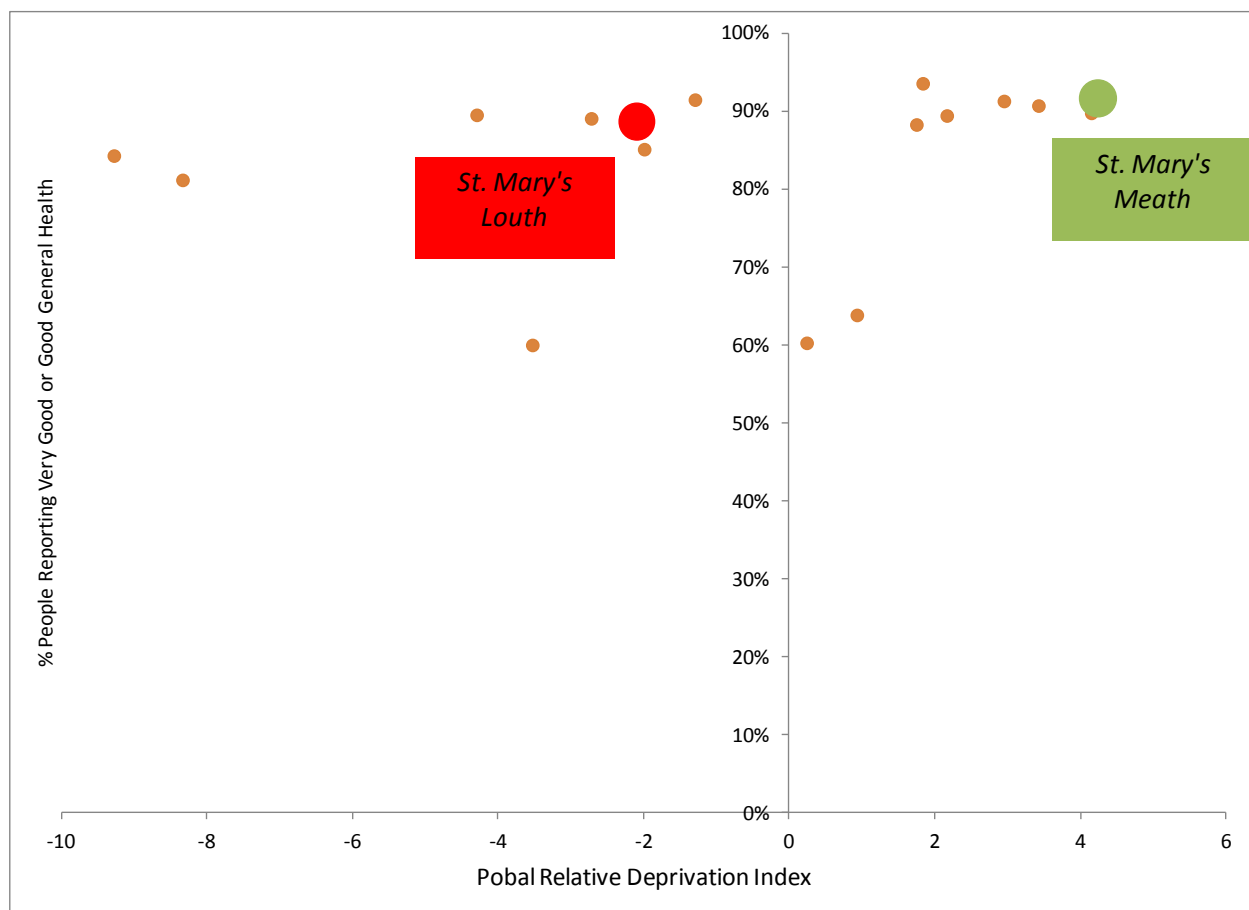
- The St. Mary's ED in Meath was the *most affluent* or *least deprived* of all the EDs in Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) in 2006 and remained that way in 2011, according to our examination of independent Pobal indicators;
- The same ED in Meath had the smallest *low educational attainment* rate among all EDs making up Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) in 2006 and 2011 (the low educational attainment rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of the adult population (15+ years) with primary school education *only*);
- Conversely, the largest *high educational attainment* rate of all the EDs in Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) in each of the census years 2006 and 2011 was in the St. Mary's ED in Meath (the high educational attainment rate being defined by Pobal as the percentage of the adult population (15+ years) with third-level education);
- St. Mary's ED in Meath also had one of the highest *high and low professionals rate* among all the EDs in Drogheda and its Hinterland in 2006 and 2011 (where the high and low professionals

rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of persons in households headed by ‘professionals’ or ‘managerial and technical’ employees, including farmers with 100 acres or more).

Turning to general health/subjective wellbeing – an indicator of quality of life – the 2011 Census of Population conducted by the CSO asked people to rate their general health on a five-point scale from “very bad” to “very good” – the first time that an Irish census contained a question on subjective wellbeing. The proportion of people reporting their general health to be “very good” or “good” was higher in County Meath compared with the State, which in turn was higher than Louth (63.9% versus 60.3% v 60%). Secondly, the proportion in the Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland was higher than the Louth part (89.9% compared with 87.1%). Thirdly, within the Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland, the portion in the St. Mary’s ED was highest (91.7%) and was the second highest in the study area (after the ED of Mullary in County Louth, 93.6%).

The chart overleaf provides examination of whether higher subjective wellbeing is positively correlated with lower deprivation/higher affluence. Only a very weak positive relationship is evident among the EDs making up Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath parts). Each dot represents an ED in the study area. EDs occurring in the right hand quadrant have relatively low deprivation/high affluence, while EDs in the left hand quadrant have relatively high deprivation/low affluence. The two St. Mary’s EDs in the study area (one in Louth and the other in Meath) have been blown up for illustrative purposes, where it is observed that the one in Meath has lower deprivation/greater affluence and residents have higher subjective wellbeing (general health), with the inference from the independent, official data being that residents in the Meath ED enjoy a higher quality of life on average (*because they have comparably low deprivation as well as high subjective wellbeing whereas those in the Louth St. Mary’s ED have high subjective wellbeing but relatively high deprivation/low affluence*).

Proportion of Residents in Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) Reporting their General Health as being “Very Good or Good” and the Pobal Relative Deprivation Index (2011)



Source: CSO Census 2011, Meath County Council analysis.

Note: Each dot represents an ED in Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath EDs). EDs occurring in the right hand side quadrant have relatively low deprivation/high affluence, while EDs in the left hand side quadrant have relatively high deprivation/low affluence. We have increased the size of the dots for the St. Mary's EDs in Louth and Meath for illustrative purposes. Compared with the St. Mary's ED in the Louth part of Drogheda, the St. Mary's ED in the Meath part of Drogheda has comparably low deprivation or high affluence and its residents have a higher degree of subjective wellbeing (quality of life) (although the degree of subjective wellbeing in both EDs is high). Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath parts) is delineated in Section 4 of the Submission.

Inter-Local Authority Collaboration

Meath County Council has a long history and tradition of collaboration with Louth County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council in terms of effective local government services delivery in South Drogheda and East Meath, including the Area of Interest. Section 7 of the Submission outlines in detail the examples of the cooperation between Louth and Meath County Councils making for the betterment of the people, communities and businesses in Drogheda and its environs. In the same section of the Submission, references are made to models of inter-local authority collaboration internationally, and consider how these initiatives could be replicated by both Meath and Louth County Councils.

The cooperation between Meath and Louth County Councils extends *inter-alia* to planning and development, transportation projects, water services and tourism.

In regard to *planning and development*, the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area set out a vision for the development of the greater Drogheda area and was compiled and incorporated into each of Louth County Council's, Meath County Council's and (the former) Drogheda Borough Council's Development Plans in 2007, without mention of any boundary change. Other plans that have required a collaborative effort between the three local authorities for the benefit of the greater Drogheda area, and the Area of Interest, include the: South Drogheda and Environs LAP 2009-2015; Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017; Meath CDP 2013-2019; and Louth CDP 2009-2015. None of these local authority plans make any reference to the boundary or raise it as an issue requiring attention.

Furthermore, the Indecon Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda, which was completed in 2009, and commissioned by Louth County Council and the then Drogheda Borough Council, gives a significant role to Meath County Council in the implementation of the economic plan for the greater Drogheda area as delineated by Indecon, yet makes no reference to the boundary.

Turning to *transportation projects*, Meath County Council led with the funding and management of the iconic Boyne Valley (Mary McAleese) Bridge straddling the county boundary between Meath and Louth, and which today stands as a national landmark along the M1 Corridor. It is of significant benefit to Louth County Council, and Drogheda in particular, that Meath County Council is assigned as the project lead on inter-county projects such as that aforementioned major bridge, as Co. Meath is part of the Greater Dublin Area and can therefore seek funding for projects based on the Meath-Louth/Drogheda and environs border area. Therefore, while Louth County Council, and particularly Drogheda and the Area of Interest under review, currently benefit from this funding arrangement, the initiatives would not have occurred if Meath County Council were not the project lead. *In effect, Meath County Council is the agency for Drogheda (Meath and Louth) in respect of the GDA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.*

In regard to *water services*, over the past decade, Meath County Council, as lead authority, has been proactive in terms of advancing and investing in drinking water capacity in order to benefit residents in Drogheda (Louth), the Meath environs of Drogheda and East Meath. Primarily as a result of these works, additional capacity has been made available at the Staleen Water Treatment Plant, which principally serves and benefits Drogheda and the Meath environs of the town (i.e. Louth and Meath). Meath County Council holds a formal agreement with Louth County Council for the provision of additional capacity at Drogheda Waste-water Treatment Plant in order to provide for the future development and growth of the town in Louth, the Meath environs of Drogheda and East Meath. In conjunction with Louth County Council, Meath County Council has proactively and substantially invested in the provision of essential waste-water capacity for the current and future development and growth of the Meath environs of Drogheda.

The cooperation between Meath and Louth County Councils is particularly noteworthy in regard to *tourism*. The Meath and Louth Tourism Development Plan, commissioned by Fáilte Ireland, recommended that Louth and Meath County Councils work together jointly on tourism development and promotion. It recommended the appointment of a Boyne Valley Tourism Development Officer working on tourism for both Councils. This commenced in 2012. Outputs from the collaboration between the two local authorities regarding the Boyne Valley have included:

- The Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012-2014;
- The Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020;

- The Boyne Valley Drive – where Meath County Council implemented the road signage on behalf of Fáilte Ireland for this particular initiative;
- Along with Navan, Kells and Trim, Drogheda is one of the main towns identified in the latter initiative, which aims to encourage people to stop, shop and overnight in one or more of the promoted centres of the Boyne Valley Drive;
- The two Councils have also succeeded in facilitating tour operators to bring familiarisation trips to the Boyne Valley;
- Other initiatives between the two Councils have included showcasing conferences, specific tourism products (golf in the Boyne Valley, promoted around the main golf clubs in Drogheda – Baltray/County Louth, Seapoint (Termonfeckin, Louth) and Laytown-Bettystown (Meath) and online and digital marketing of the Boyne Valley;
- Meath County Council is also delighted that the recently launched Regional Action Plan for Jobs – Mid-East Region (January 2016), has highlighted the Boyne Valley's tourism potential and recommended support for the development of a complementary Boyne Valley Food Series, with a food trial and events over the summer months.

Other areas of productive and effective cooperation between Meath and Louth County Councils include fire and emergency services, community development, environmental and cultural services, all of which are detailed in Section 7 of the Submission.

At the end of that section of the Submission Meath County Council outlines possible future initiatives designed to enhance cooperation between Meath and Louth County Councils for the benefit of the town, its residents and businesses. The possibilities include contracts and service level agreements and knowledge sharing. Also outlined is our research on such collaboration from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), which in 2012 published a toolkit offering a simple guide for local authorities wishing to embark on collaboration and joint working. On considering the Welsh toolkit, one can see its principles and practices at play in the various examples of cooperation between Meath and Louth County Councils. What the toolkit may offer the local authorities in the period ahead is an organised and systematic means of enhancing their collaboration, with the aim of focusing on the areas where co-working would have the most beneficial outcomes for users (residents, communities and businesses – people who contribute to the town, financially and otherwise).

Our overall stance is that cooperation between the two local authorities – continued and enhanced, where circumstances necessitate – is preferable to any boundary change.

Efficiency

The term efficiency is generally a complex, and elusive, one – even in the private sector let alone the public sector. It is a dynamic concept manifesting itself over time and cannot be treated merely in isolation or at a given point in time, such as a year. If one were to take a very fundamental view of the concept, based on inputs and outputs, then one would have little hesitation in concluding that Meath County Council is one of the most productive, and thus efficient, local authorities in the country: the Council provides a high quality of service to our communities and businesses, not least in the Area of Interest, where the new survey evidence from B&A illustrates this fact, but with the lowest ratio of staff-to-population in the country (3.3 versus 5.17 for Louth and 5.8 as the national average). Also relevant to note in regard to the positive outcomes facilitated by Meath County Council is the very rapid growth in employment in the Area of Interest during 2006-2011 (as summarised above and in Section 5). To recap, employment within the St. Mary's ED in Meath, within which the Area of Interest occurs, grew from 919 in 2006 to 1,363 in 2011, representing growth of 48.3% during the period, compared with 17%

employment growth in Meath as a whole, 0.4% in Louth and contraction of 10% in the State during this time (the ED is the lowest level of geographical disaggregation provided for in the CSO's POWSCAR 2011 and POWCAR 2006 datasets and there are no official employment figures in these data sources for areas *within* EDs).

To this fact, we would add that Meath County Council's revenue account balance, comprising income and expenditure, has improved substantially since the beginning of the decade – after Dublin City, Meath County Council has shown the biggest gain in its revenue account balance among all 31 local authorities during 2010-2014, and this is also apparent in the recently published NOAC (National Oversight and Audit Commission) Performance Indicators Report for local authorities (December 2015). This illustrates that Meath County Council has responded well to the challenges of the public sector reform process and the deep funding cuts but the Council has made a submission to the Department of the Environment, outlining that Meath's funding from central government needs to be increased to ensure the sustainability of our operations.

Meath County Council is a net contributor to the Exchequer, reflecting the comparably high rate of employment among residents in the county. The demonstrable efficiency of the Council is difficult to argue with, not least in the Area of Interest, where employment has risen strongly and where people and businesses express a strong level of satisfaction with the quality of their lives and with the services provided by Meath County Council (as revealed by the new B&A survey results in Section 11).

Meath County Council operates a function-based approach to its service delivery rather than a location-based approach. This carefully planned development has been in response to Putting People First (2012) and the 2014 Local Government Reform Act, and is designed to enhance the efficiency of the organisation in the wake of the public funding crisis following the Great Recession of 2008.

By doing so, Meath County Council has made significant advances towards improving overall customer service and delivery of services so as to ensure the most effective (including most cost-effective) and efficient service to the public. The dedicated Customer Service team work closely with all service departments throughout the Council to ensure effective communication with the public on all relevant matters. This has proved very useful to all service departments to date and has been particularly successful during periods of higher activity (e.g. weather related issues, emergencies etc.).

The outcomes of these positive changes within Meath County Council are all reflected in the independent evidence presented in the course of this Submission (CSO employment growth, B&A survey evidence, NOAC performance indicators etc.).

Meath County Council has a current workforce of 685 staff (632 whole-time equivalent) across a range of disciplines (e.g. management, clerical/administrative, technicians/engineers/planners/scientists, general services supervisors/general operatives/water caretakers/wardens, fire-fighters etc). The Council manages its human resource function by way of a suite of HR policies, including workforce planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management through the PMDS process, and diversity and equality.

While there has been a significant reduction in staff resources available to the Council since 2008, with the overall staff number dropping by 20% to the current resource level, the Council, in line with the challenges arising from the national public service agreements and through the commitment and flexibility of our staff, has delivered a range of efficiencies within the local authority in recent years, while ensuring the continued effective delivery of services. Efficiencies have also arisen by way of ongoing and continuous review of how services are delivered.

Meath County Council continue to forward plan, by way of the workforce planning process, in order to ensure the continued development of our current staffing cohort and the provision of appropriate staffing across the organisation in order that the Council may meet the requirements and objectives outlined in Meath's Corporate Plan.

While there is a cohort of staff physically based in offices, depots, libraries and water/waste-water treatment plants in the Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District, this is irrelevant for the purposes of reviewing the delivery of effective and efficient services in the Area of Interest. The requirement for efficiencies across the organisation has resulted in a shift towards the delivery of services on a *planned* 'function-based' approach rather than a *reactionary* 'location-based' approach, which normally entails the assignment of staff to particular geographic areas. The majority of Meath County Council services are managed and planned from a central point with day-to-day services delivered on a planned programme basis in various geographic locations throughout the county.

This is particularly the case in terms of the delivery of transportation and operations activities, water services, environment and housing-related activities, as well as general customer services. These local authority services are managed at a central point on the basis of a planned programme for the county (e.g. Schedule of Municipal District Works), including a provision for reactionary works as required.

While staff assigned to these departments have various bases throughout the county (offices, depots, libraries, plants etc), they are not tied to specific geographic areas as each of the functions outlined above are provided on the basis of the priority of workload provision.

Due to the review of service delivery throughout the Council in recent years, it is the case that the Area of Interest under consideration here is serviced by a high proportion of our staff in one way or another whether *via* the Customer Service Team, Water Caretakers, Operations Engineers, Litter and Dog Wardens, Finance staff, Planners, General Services Supervisors, Fire Officers, Housing Officers etc.

Services are delivered in the Area of Interest by the relevant and required staff as and when required and these services are provided in the same manner, and same degree of effectiveness, as services provided in any other geographic location in Co. Meath.

The positive changes occurring in Meath County Council's revenue account balance illustrate that the Council have developed an efficient and predominantly centralised delivered service structure and in this context it is considered that there will be no discernible savings in the event that there is an adverse change to the boundary in Drogheda. No financial package could compensate Meath County Council for the loss of the Area of Interest, such are its future economic and commercial development potential and its importance to Meath County Council.

Local Governance

The current governance and political representation structures were put in place as recently as 2014, following the 2012 Putting People First and the 2013 Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report.

A shift in population of around 6,000 in the Area of Interest is shown in this Submission (Section 9) to necessitate changes in the local electoral area configurations in Meath and Louth, as well as increasing the total number of elected members nationally by +2, which would increase the national total above the 2013 recommended level of 950. As a result of this possibility, local representation in the Laytown/Bettystown MD, in which the Area of Interest occurs, may have to be reduced, (for consideration by the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee) which would be an unpalatable

consequence of an adverse boundary change in respect of the Review, to which Meath County Council would be strong opposed.

Drogheda City Status Campaign

One of the consequences of the Review process since it was announced last June 2015, perhaps inadvertently, is that the Drogheda City Status Campaign has come to more prominence – the proponents of this view have seen the Review as a possible opportunity to drive their campaign forward. Meath County Council's assessment is that this campaign is without any merit. Reference is made to the Review Committee to the following statement of Minister Kelly in response to a Dáil Question on the matter (27 January 2015) – the Minister's formal response is pretty clear and unambiguous (the final paragraph is highlighted in italics).

"545. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on city status for the greater Drogheda metropolitan area plan as the way forward as there are 76,000 persons living within the GDMA; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): There are no proposals to establish additional city authorities. The Action Programme for Effective Local Government (October 2012) sets out government policy in relation to the reform of a range of local government matters and the Local Government Act 2001, extensively revised and updated by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, now provides a modern legal framework supporting the local government sector. The 2014 Act provided for the unification of the city and county councils in Limerick and Waterford and reviews of local government arrangements, recently announced in Cork and Galway, include the option of unification of the city and county councils in those areas.

A new system of sub-county governance in the form of municipal districts was also introduced under the 2014 Act to replace the now dissolved town council formation and achieve stronger, more integrated local government in each county while devolving significant decision-making to elected members at district level.

Within the new sub-county arrangements, specific legal provision has been made to allow Drogheda to retain the title 'Borough' and to continue to use the title of 'Mayor' as an alternative to Cathaoirleach, thereby maintaining appropriate recognition for the history and civic status of the town. Moreover, elected members for the Borough District of Drogheda have a wide range of reserved functions which can be performed in respect of the district. In addition, those same members form part of the combined plenary membership for Louth County Council with responsibility for the discharge of an additional suite of strategic and other reserved functions.

Overall, I am satisfied that Drogheda has a status appropriate to its size and location within Louth County Council and having regard to the structural and other changes that have taken place countrywide under the Action Programme and revised legislation. In the circumstances, I have no proposals to introduce amending legislation to establish a new city authority in Drogheda or elsewhere. Any such proposal would be at variance with the thrust of policy development and implementation work to date which has seen greater streamlining and integration of local government, with the potential for improved subsidiarity, coherence and efficiency resulting in better value for money and service delivery for citizens."

Concluding Remarks

The various strands of evidence presented in this Submission, which are based on analysis of official data from the CSO plus the new survey evidence from residents and businesses, conducted by the market research organisation B&A, as well as Meath County Council's experience of working in the Area of Interest over many years, show conclusively and convincingly that the current local government arrangements are working effectively in Drogheda (Meath and Louth parts).

Residents and businesses are generally satisfied with living and operating in the town and its environs and are also generally satisfied with the level of service received from their local authorities, whether Meath and Louth County Council. The *status quo* is working. It is not broken. A boundary change is not warranted. It lacks any evidence. It would create winners and losers, and would be divisive.

Meath County Council has a very clear roadmap for supporting the Meath environs of the town in the coming years, based on working towards the goal of facilitating more jobs in the area so that people can work closer to where they live and therefore support sustainable communities. All the ingredients necessary to make this happen are in place – the big challenge now is to realise the goal and this will necessitate being proactive with entrepreneurs and wealth creators, and with government and State agencies, who may otherwise lack information on the true prospects concerning the area. The fundamental job of the Council is to promote and champion the qualities of the town to enable new investment, employment and enhanced standards of living to take effect in the years ahead. Meath County Council's Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022 is very clear on this process and outcome, and ranks the Meath environs of Drogheda, within which the Area of Interest is located, at the top of the county's economic hierarchy, along with Navan, the County Town.

Drogheda is a great town. It has great people and resources, great communities and tremendous economic development potential. Meath County Council is prepared to work hard to ensure that the opportunities are realised and looks forward to continuing to work with Louth County Council for the betterment of the town in the coming years and into the longer future. Meath County Council is quite prepared and willing to engage further with Louth County Council and work towards a new strategy, understanding, and vision for the town overall – building on the cooperation to date. This could be a unique opportunity to exploit best practice inter-local authority cooperation and would serve to support Meath and Louth County Council's efforts to develop Drogheda into the future.

Key Messages

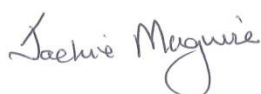
In conclusion, the following summarises the key messages advanced, and underpinned with relevant empirical evidence, in the course of Meath County Council's Submission to the Review:

- The *status quo* or current local authority arrangements are working well, as evidenced, for example, by the new B&A survey results of residents and businesses in the Area of Interest;
- The Area of Interest has witnessed comparably strong employment growth, which has been supported by Meath County Council;
- The strong employment growth in the Area of Interest has derived from existing businesses increasing their staff numbers and from new businesses establishing operations in the area and taking on new staff in the process;
- The strong employment growth has occurred among large enterprises (under the remit of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland) and small enterprises in various economic activities;
- The official CSO data show that during 2006-2011, which included an exceedingly challenging time economically for the country, there was nevertheless appreciably large employment

growth in the Area of Interest in Meath and therefore it is likely that the positive trend will continue or even improve in the coming years, as the recovery in Ireland gains momentum, implying that the prognosis for businesses and employment in the Meath environs of Drogheda is very encouraging;

- The positive outlook for the Area of Interest can also be seen by the fact that there currently exists 120 hectares of employment-zoned lands under the South Drogheda LAP, and in addition there are 1,132 residential units in the Area of Interest that have been granted planning permission by Meath County Council;
- The employment growth in the Area of Interest has occurred *regardless of the boundary*;
- Any possible view that if the IDA Business and Technology Park in Drogheda, which is located in the Area of Interest in Meath, were to be moved into County Louth would then become more attractive for FDI, due to Louth being part of the Border Region, is incorrect, because the EU Regional Aid Map for Ireland 2014-2020 has been finalised and agreed by the European Commission;
- The positive and sustainable development that has occurred, and which continues to evolve, in the Meath environs of Drogheda, under the South Drogheda LAP, has not been replicated in the northern environs of Drogheda under the remit of Louth County Council – the ‘Sienna Valley’ project envisaged in the late 2000s did not materialise and employment-zoned lands under the North Drogheda Environs LAP did not result in the creation of any significant new employment;
- However, it is the view of Meath County Council that the northern environs of Drogheda still have significant economic and residential development potential and the area presents the opportunity for Louth County Council to take the lead in planning for its sustainable growth, with Meath County Council continuing to lead in the future sustainable development of the southern environs of the town;
- This would be a better and more effective use of resources for the benefit of the whole of Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts) than a potentially divisive alteration of the boundary;
- It is considered that there is a unique opportunity for both local authorities to continue to cooperate for the betterment of Drogheda, working towards the overall goal of facilitating Drogheda to become a *real regional economic power*;
- The retail parks at Southgate and Drogheda Retail Park in the Area of Interest in Meath have proved to be very popular with residents/shoppers and this is illustrated by the positive comments about these important new developments outlined in the new B&A survey evidence;
- Further manifestation of the pro-business approach being taken by Meath County Council is provided by the examples of Coca-Cola International Services and Hanley Energy, which previously operated in the Louth part of Drogheda but subsequently moved to County Meath;
 - Coca-Cola had been active in manufacturing concentrates in the former Drogheda Borough Council area before moving to the M1 Retail Park in the Louth environs of the town, where it commenced its global services centre, prior to moving its global services operation to its current location at Southgate in the Meath environs of Drogheda
 - Hanley Energy commenced its operations at the Millmount Centre in the former Drogheda Borough Council area before moving to open its new data centre R&D facility in the City North Business Campus, Stamullen, Co. Meath, where its workforce has grown considerably
 - These two examples demonstrate the importance of being favourably located along the M1 Corridor, close to a large skills base, which is available in the Meath environs of Drogheda and the East Meath area

- Meath County Council is determined to continue its commitment to this area and to facilitate further employment growth in the area, so that more residents in the Area of Interest will have the opportunity to work closer to where they live thereby creating sound sustainable communities
- The cooperation between Meath and Louth County Council over the years has included planning and economic development strategies for the greater Drogheda area – both studies rightly give Meath County Council its stake in the town and none of them mention the need for any boundary change;
- The productive cooperation between the two Councils has seen the promotion of Boyne Valley as one of Fáilte Ireland’s signature visitor destinations and an integral part of Ireland’s Ancient East, and the counties have jointly prepared a Tourism Action Plan and share a Tourism Marketing Officer;
- Drogheda benefits from the fact that Meath County Council is the agency for Drogheda (Meath and Louth parts) and as such has secured significant NTA funding for the area in respect of the GDA Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022;
- Given the efficiency improvements being implemented at Meath County Council – by which the Council has responded to the funding constraints and public sector reform process by moving to a function-based model from a location-based model of local services delivery – the Council is confident that it is the best-suited local authority to continue its commitment towards the residents and businesses in the Area of Interest in the future;
- In terms of the financial implications of any adverse boundary change, the analysis undertaken by Meath County Council and set out in detail in this Submission, indicates that an increase in exchequer funding would be required.
- The community infrastructure in the Area of Interest and in the East Meath area is apparent from the Submission, where there are many clubs and societies, and facilities and amenities for residents and their families, all helping to make quality of life strong in the area, as evidence by the new survey results summarised in the Submission;
- When considered along with the corresponding facilities in the Louth part of Drogheda, the package of community resources available in the whole town is considerable and together help to make Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts) the attractive town in which to live, work and visit;
- The big opportunity for the greater Drogheda area now is for both local authorities to work together to facilitate more employment closer to where people live so that they can have more time to spend with family and enjoy a better quality of life;
- Finally, one significant benefit of the whole review process is that it has reinforced Meath County Council’s resolve to continue supporting the sustainable development and growth of the Area of Interest in the coming years, and the Council envisages continuing to work with Louth County Council for the overall betterment of the greater Drogheda area.



Jackie Maguire
Chief Executive
Meath County Council



Cllr. Brian Fitzgerald
Cathaoirleach
Meath County Council

Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

Acknowledgements

Meath County Council would like to thank the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee for its interaction with the Council during the Review period. Thanks to all staff within the Council and to all Councillors and Oireachtas Members in respect of County Meath for their help and support during the Review period. A word of thanks is also due to: Dr. Pat McCloughan, Managing Director of PMCA Economic Consulting, who advised Meath County Council during the Review and in the preparation of this Submission for the Review Committee; and to Behaviour and Attitudes for their inputs in regard to the new survey evidence about the boundary and what it means to people and businesses living in and operating from Drogheda. Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank all those external stakeholders who contacted us with their support and encouragement during the Review, including business and employers in Drogheda, residents and community members, schools and other public bodies, sports clubs and societies, and various other voluntary organisations.

Disclaimer

This report is the responsibility of Meath County Council.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Purpose and Overview of the Report

This report is prepared by Meath County Council (Comhairle Contae na Mí) and represents the Council's Submission (hereinafter the 'Submission') to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Drogheda (the 'Review').

The Submission advances the case that the economically and socially significant portion of Drogheda under the remit of Meath County Council should remain in County Meath under the local administration of Meath County Council. In the best interests of the whole of Drogheda's economic and community development now and in the future, the present arrangements or *status quo* should remain in place, which is to say Meath County Council continuing to serve the residents, communities and businesses in the Meath environs of Drogheda and continuation of the cooperation with Louth County Council for the local administration of the greater Drogheda area now and in the future.

Particular care and attention is given throughout the Submission to ensuring that Meath County Council's position is supported by relevant evidence and facts. In addition to the analyses contained herein, which are based on official and other available data sources, the evidence base also includes the results of new surveys (conducted among residents and businesses in Drogheda, specifically aimed at informing the Review, by market research organisation Behaviour and Attitudes). The new survey evidence reveals the following key high-level results: that people and businesses living and operating in the Area of Interest, as delineated by the Review Committee, have a very high level of satisfaction with the current arrangements; and that the Review does not rank highly in people's or businesses' everyday concerns, which instead, and perhaps not surprisingly, include issues such as the cost of living, employment/having a job, local health issues and travelling to and from work, which captures the fact that the Area of Interest is one in which there are many outbound commuters, many of who work in Dublin. The issues highlighted as important to people and businesses in the Area of Interest, and elsewhere in Drogheda, according to the new survey results, lie principally in the domain of national public policy and we elect our national representatives to work towards addressing them as far as possible. Nevertheless, local authorities also have a role in contributing to these key determinants of local communities, and a third overall finding of the new survey evidence is that a significant majority of people and business in Drogheda believe that a change in the Drogheda boundary would make no material or significant difference to their everyday lives.

Any proposed boundary change, which Meath County Council would strongly oppose, would represent a disproportionate response to a situation warranting more reasoned and focused action, particularly in view of the fact that many of the services and functions traditionally assigned to local authorities have switched to national or regional bodies, in recognition of the policy objective that local authorities need to cooperate more productively in support of the wider functional regions in which they operate.

Meath County Council has as much a stake in Drogheda as Louth County Council and in view of the socio-economic importance of the Meath environs of Drogheda and East Meath we are as firmly committed to this part of the county as we are to every other part of Meath, now and in the future.

Reflecting our long-term commitment to the town – for instance, the current boundary of the Drogheda Southern Environs Local Area Plan has been in place since 2009 – the Meath environs of the town have grown significantly and progress has been positive and comprehensive in the context of residential, retail and large-scale employment developments. The population of the immediate environs of the area

under Meath County Council's remit was around 6,000 persons in the 2011 Census of Population and accommodating approximately 1,900 residential units. The residential units are of high quality and predominantly in private ownership, and include the Grange Rath, Deepforde and Avourwen estates. There are no social housing *estates* in the Meath environs of Drogheda (Area of Interest); instead the social housing in the Meath part of the Area of Interest is integrated with private housing, consistent with national policy objectives and good planning principles.

Over the past 10-15 years, the attraction of the Area of Interest as a place to live has included its accessibility to Dublin (*via* the nearby M1 Motorway and McBride Rail Station in Drogheda) as well as being favourably located in respect of a large and historic town with a large and varied range of services and amenities.

It could well be said that the inflow of new residents to the town have benefitted the capital as much as Drogheda because the new housing developments in the Meath environs allowed people with jobs in Dublin to move out to more affordable accommodation whilst at the same time remaining connected to the capital through strong transport infrastructure, which today includes private and public bus services competing with each other, giving users better quality of service and choice as well as lower fares, as well as rail and road.

In essence, Drogheda has become a highly attractive commuter location – low house prices, new friends and networks facilitated by the new housing developments and existing social, sporting etc. infrastructure by virtue of the fact that the town was already relatively well endowed with such services and activities, such as soccer clubs, GAA clubs, athletics clubs, golf clubs, theatre and drama etc. Unlike some other commuter destinations, Drogheda was a large town capable of responding relatively well to the influx of new residents and adapting accordingly. Thus, during the past 10-15 years, the town has seen new retail and shopping developments, and more employment *within* the town, most significantly within the Meath environs, as we shall illustrate in detail subsequently in the Submission.

Through the proactive leadership of Meath County Council, the Southern Environs of Drogheda is an exemplar for well planned sustainable communities with a quality range of housing, significant employment, high quality retail offer and excellent amenities. This view is supported by the new survey evidence presented in the Submission, which gives a very compelling endorsement for the current arrangements.

However, this is not to say that there are no challenges ahead. On the contrary, one of the biggest challenges is to work towards realising the undoubted and substantial *economic development potential* of the area, which we consider represents a major opportunity rather than a challenge. The influx of new residents – many of whom commute to work in the capital – means that the area today benefits from having a large skilled labour pool, many of whom it is believed would prefer to work closer to where they live if the right employment were to become available. Working towards ensuring *greater economic impact locally* remains top of our economic priorities, as provided for in the Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2013-2019 and the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath (2014-2022), which is currently being incorporated into the Meath CDP by means of the proposed Variation No. 3 of the CDP (early 2016). As the data analysis presented in this Submission shows, we are progressing and succeeding in supporting high quality employment growth in the Meath environs of Drogheda, including within the Area of Interest in the St. Mary's Electoral Division (ED) of Meath, and we look forward to continuing to facilitate jobs growth in this way because we are a-tune to the reality that the commuting option will remain strong and that Dublin, as the National Gateway, will continue to get the lion's share of major new investment in the functional region in which both counties occur.

Meath County Council is therefore awake to the job-of-work that remains to be done towards realising the area's economic potential. This includes the overall goal of the Meath CDP, namely supporting vibrant communities with increased employment opportunities closer to where people live. This vision is achievable in the Area of Interest and accordingly we have positioned Drogheda at the top of the economic hierarchy in the current Meath County Development Plan (along with the County Town of Navan).

We have been demonstrably successful in developing the Southern Environs through the operation of sound planning and development policies and practices. But we also recognise the importance of continuing the effort, particularly in regard to facilitating more employment opportunities for residents closer to where they live. It would be unconscionable if a local authority were to be penalised for its success by having one of its most strategically and economically important, and successful, areas given up to an adjoining county on a whim or without a sound basis.

If such were to be the case, no local authority would attempt to develop areas on their periphery lest such areas be targeted for annexation. Such policies or practices would create perverse incentives among local authorities, resulting in little or no economic and community development for fear of possible 'land-grabbing' and the biggest losers would be the residents and businesses/employers of the areas affected.

If one looks carefully at the new developments in the Meath environs of Drogheda it will be seen that they have occurred *contiguous* to the Louth-Meath boundary, consistent with good planning principles.

Unlike most other parts of the country, Meath happens to be located in a region of high growth and strong opportunities, and there are important settlements lying along the boundaries with other local authorities – for example, Clonee, Maynooth, Kilcock and Ashbourne as well as Drogheda. Other towns and settlements occurring along boundaries between counties include Carrick-on-Shannon (Counties Leitrim and Roscommon), Carrick-on-Suir (Tipperary and Waterford) and Clonmel (Tipperary and Waterford).

While the Review might be seen by some as an opportunity to further a point-of-view or campaign, there is a risk that it will create divisions and therefore be counterproductive. It may also (inadvertently) scupper new investment and thus employment because a review of this nature generally creates uncertainty, which is perhaps the biggest enemy of investment (for example, a potential investor that might have been contemplating moving into the Area of Interest and creating new jobs might instead have chosen to delay or even stop the process pending the outcome of the Review, in which case time would have moved on and the opportunity lost). Entrepreneurs and business people often work to different timescales compared with public sector organisations, whose job it is to assist sustainable development and employment by working *with* rather than *against* wealth creators. The Review under consideration has been running now for more than six months and still has further to run, as we head towards the General Election – valuable time that Meath County Council could instead have been using to support enterprise and employment development at full tilt and going about its normal business as usual.

If one positive thing has come out of this process then it is surely our undoubted commitment to the Meath environs of Drogheda and our determination to do everything in our powers to ensure it remains part of the Royal County.

1.2 Meath County Council's Position on the Drogheda Boundary Review

1.2.1 Maintenance of the *Status Quo*

The most appropriate, proportionate, practical and workable basis for the local administration of Drogheda and its environs is for the current arrangements to remain in place, which include continuation of the historic cooperation between Meath and Louth County Councils in regard to supporting economic and community development and in respect of the provision of local authority services to the people and businesses of Drogheda.

1.2.2 No Evidence of Any Failure from the Current Arrangements

There is no evidence of any failure or poor service provision from the current arrangements. There is no evidence that people's lives are suffering or are adversely affected under the current arrangements. There is no evidence of administrative or governance failure under the current arrangements, even though we are aware of media reports decrying the abolition of Drogheda Borough Council and the centralisation of Louth County Council to Dundalk, and, on very rare occasion, people mentioning the centralisation of Meath County Council in Navan. These developments, which have seen the establishment of the new Borough District of Drogheda Louth and the new Municipal District of Laytown-Bettystown LEA in Meath, are as a result of policy change *nationally* rather than *locally*.

1.2.3 Previous Planning Studies

It is also relevant to note previous planning studies of Drogheda and its environs, which are predicated on cooperation between Louth and Meath County Councils. These include the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area (Drogheda, East Meath, South Louth) 2007, which was carried out by Drogheda Borough Council, Louth County Council and Meath County Council and sought to establish a cohesive and interlinked strategy for the whole area.

Relevant previous studies also include the Indecon Report entitled 'Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs (2009-2015) – Towards a Flourishing Urban Centre in the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor' (March 2009). This report was commissioned by Louth County Council and Drogheda Borough Council (Meath County Council did not commission any part of this report but nevertheless cooperated with the study by meeting with the consultants during the course of their work). For this reason, it is useful to consider the Indecon Report in more detail because it is directly relevant and of interest in the context of the Review (we will return to the 2007 Planning Study subsequently in Section 6).

1.2.4 The Indecon Report for Drogheda

1.2.4.1 *Role of Meath County Council in the Implementation of the Economic Development of Drogheda as well as Louth County Council – But No Mention of Any Boundary*

The detailed and extensive report by Indecon makes no mention of any boundary between Louth and Meath; but instead recognises the important role that Drogheda Borough Council, Louth County Council and Meath County Council have in implementing the recommendations of the report, namely (p. i):

"Three local authorities – Meath County Council as well as Drogheda Borough Council and Louth County Council – are responsible for the public administration of the Area of Interest. The three local authorities, along with other public and private sector stakeholders, will have an important role in implementing the Strategy formulated in this Report".

1.2.4.2 Indecon Vision of Drogheda Developing on Both Sides of the Boyne (Meath and Louth)

In terms of Indecon's vision for the greater Drogheda area outlined in the report, the consultants envisage (p. ii):

“one of a flourishing urban centre with vibrant communities either side of the River Boyne. We envisage a possibility that the Study Area will have a population approaching 85,000 persons in 2015, representing an additional 22,000 persons compared with 2006. Most of the growth is estimated to occur in the northern and southern environs of Drogheda”.

With the benefit of hindsight, the possibility of there being around 85,000 persons living in the greater Drogheda area by 2015 did not eventuate as originally envisaged by the consultants. However, the estimate is close enough to the mark. Subsequently in this Submission, we carefully delineate a study area of “Drogheda and its Hinterland”, which broadly reflects that in the Indecon Report of 2009, and includes the EDs in the former Drogheda Borough Council area as well as EDs in the catchment areas of the town in both Louth and Meath (this wider study area is important for properly understanding the greater Drogheda area and was delineated by Meath County Council before the Area of Interest Map came to light in late November 2015). In 2011, the year of the last Census of Population, the population of our study area (as defined in this Submission) was 74,645 persons, representing growth of 12.8% on the 2006 figure or average annual growth of 2.4% (compound annual growth rate or CAGR) basis. Assuming that rate of average annual growth continued since 2011, then the estimated population of the Area of Interest in 2015 would be 82,169, less than 3,000 shy of the projected figure in the Indecon Report of 2009.

1.2.4.3 Collapse of the Drogheda Northern Environs Plan (County Louth)

Whatever about the merits or otherwise of population or other economic projections, which we appreciate is an inexact science, one of the biggest changes following the publication of the Indecon Report in 2009 was the collapse of the plan to develop the northern environs of Drogheda in County Louth, which became a high profile casualty of the Great Recession (and unrelated to the Indecon Report).

The plan (launched with much fanfare in 2007) was based on the concept of developing a ‘new town’ in the northern environs of Drogheda (in County Louth, contiguous with the then boundary of the former Drogheda Borough Council, which no longer exists), complete with new neighbourhoods, new schools, local parks and a new sports campus catering for an envisaged 20,000 additional people (which Indecon factored into their population projections but we know now that the population growth since the 2009 Indecon Report occurred in other ways and by far the most rapid population growth in the greater Drogheda area during 2006-2011 occurred in the Meath environs, which we illustrate subsequently in the Submission). The plan also included the much-heralded Northern Port Access Route and a proposed new railway station (in addition to McBride Rail Station south of the Boyne that currently serves the town and its environs).

While the proposed new railway station was ambitious, not least given further calls to build another new railway station further north in County Louth at Dunleer, the proposed Northern Port Access Route had merit, at least in principle. It would have connected the operational part of Drogheda Port (located at Tom Roe's Point and the Drogheda docks areas north of the River Boyne on the County Louth side) with the N51 Road and thence with the M1 Motorway, and it was anticipated that the new ring road around the northern environs of the town would have removed around 3,000 vehicle trips from the centre of Drogheda every day, greatly improving traffic flow and easing congestion.

However, the developer-led plan to develop the northern environs plan (in Louth) became a casualty of the financial and economic crisis and, as reported locally by the *Drogheda Independent* in an article entitled ‘Northern Environs Consortium disbands’, 5 January 2011):

“The death knell for the much heralded €150m Sienna Valley project on the northside of Drogheda has been sounded with the news that Drogheda Environs Limited has been struck off the list of registered companies after the consortium behind it was disbanded”.

The same article reported that, when the Sienna Valley project (as it was branded) was given the go-ahead (by Louth County Council), the Northern Port Access Route “had been on the drawing board for more than 15 years and had continually stalled due to lack of funding”.

1.2.4.4 Northern Cross Route in Drogheda would have Merit

While the ambitious plan has been in abeyance now over a number of years, and was overly ambitious (but of its time in the pre-crisis property bubble), there is a possibility that Louth County Council will revisit elements of the scheme, including the northern access route, which, Meath County Council believes, would make Drogheda more attractive and competitive as a business and investment location.

If one visits the town today, it quickly becomes apparent that the town centre is severely hampered by significant traffic congestion, caused in large part by the steady-stream of lorries and heavy goods vehicles coming to and from Drogheda Port, whose main activities are in bulk cargo (serving the agricultural hinterlands in Louth and Meath with cargo like imported animal feeds and fertilizers).

The traffic issues in the town centre may have been noticed by the Review Committee members on their site visit to Drogheda on 18 November 2015; Meath County Council would encourage the Review Committee to spend some more time in the centre of the town, on a week day, and to see/experience the traffic congestion causing delays to people and businesses going about their normal, everyday business.^{1 2}

¹ In an article in the *Drogheda Independent* (25 November 2015, by regular columnist Hubert Murphy, p. 16) entitled ‘When will the Drogheda port access route finally get underway’, Mr. Murphy describes how his newspaper received a letter from a concerned reader, asking the question: “When (not if) will the new road [Northern Port Access Road] from the docks to the motorway [M1] begin? To my knowledge, the corporation (or council) have purchased and paid for most of the land required for this project”. The author of the letter goes on to comment that “Dundalk got their by-pass many years ago so why has our new road it (*sic.*) not even been mentioned lately?” The letter author continues (Meath County Council’s italics at the end): “This By-Pass is now needed very urgently; it will be a massive bonus to truckers, residents and businesses. When this road is complete (doesn’t have to be anything fancy or extravagant) it will bring much more prosperity to the town of Drogheda. *Will you please encourage your readers to start a campaign by contacting their local politicians now; and do this before the elections*”[?] Clearly we have a reader/citizen of the town exasperated by the lack of a route that would take the HGVs to and from the port out of the town centre and open-up new opportunities for commerce in Drogheda, which Meath County Council would support.

² The same edition of the *Drogheda Independent* (25 November 2015) carried another story ‘Town boroughs to make return?’, which quotes local Minister Mr. Ged Nash TD as having said that Labour returned to government after the next General Election in 2016 would restore Borough Status to Drogheda. The article contains a quote attributed to Minister Nash: “When Phil Hogan dreamed up the ‘reform’ of local government my colleagues['] eyes were off the ball, busy saving the country from economic ruin”. The article goes on to say that Minister Nash said that “a careless and frankly stupid decision was taken by a Fine Gael Minister which emasculated towns like Drogheda, Wexford & Kilkenny as regional powers”. The article proceeds to mention that Minister Nash said that: “Our major urban areas are the drivers of economic development. They need

1.2.4.5 Indecon Report on Economic Activities for Drogheda and Outbound Commuting

The Indecon Report is also relevant in highlighting the types of economic activity that can be developed in Drogheda and for raising the issue regarding commuting. Meath County Council agrees with both parts of the Indecon Report, which can be summarised here by reference to the following passages (p. ii):

“Among the specific economic activities in the Study Area will be: internationally-traded services (including business services and ICT); high-technology (high-tech) manufacturing (including production facilities with R&D functions); distribution and logistics; food processing; renewable energy technologies; and tourism activities. In relation to the latter, we envisage that Drogheda will be fulfilling its potential as the gateway to the Boyne Valley and will be an attractive and competitive retailing location, offering residents and visitors alike a large selection of shops catering for different tastes and styles”.

“Commuting to Dublin will continue to be a feature of life in the Study Area but it is envisaged that there will be greater retention of high quality employment locally compared with currently – harnessing the significant potential of the large commuter resource to enhance inward investment and in turn the level of high value employment in the Study Area is one of the key components of the Economic Development Strategy formulated in this Report. Retaining more of the talent pool currently residing in the Study Area cannot be over-estimated because it will yield social as well economic benefits for the town and its environs, including greater social capital as well as even higher local multiplier effects”.

Both of the above passages from the Indecon Report (2009) are catered for in the Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022, which, as mentioned earlier, is currently being incorporated into the Meath CDP through the proposed Variation No. 3.

1.2.4.6 Spatial Elements of the Indecon Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda

On page xxv of the Executive Summary of the Indecon Report, the consultants outlined the “drivers of the economic development of the Study Area”:

- “The **Donore Road** area, which includes the Drogheda Industrial Estate, the new IDA Business and Technology Park and a large range of commercial and retail developments that have become a focal point for businesses and shoppers”;
- “The **North Drogheda Environs** and adjacent lands with economic development potential (including the possibilities of (i) a new third-level institution, possibly in association with an existing higher education institution and/or DIFE specialising in environmental technologies, marine research, archaeological services and (ii) the recent announcement of a major €250 million economic and tourism development north of Drogheda at the gateway to the Boyne Valley just off the Boyne Valley (Mary McAleese) Bridge)”;

their own budgets, vision and civic leadership and we will restore those functions to Drogheda and other major urban areas”. Meath County Council would consider that, in respect of the penultimate quote from the newspaper article above, Drogheda has never been a true “regional power” (that position has been fulfilled by Dundalk in the North East); however, it is the aim of Meath County Council, working in tandem with Louth County Council, that Drogheda should become a regional economic power in the coming years and that this ambition for the town can be best achieved by both local authorities working cooperatively under the *status quo* arrangements.

- “The **South Drogheda Environs** and adjacent lands with economic development potential (provided transport infrastructure is in place to facilitate access to the area)”;
- “The proposed new site for Drogheda Port at **Bremore** south of the Study Area, which has the potential to develop into a distribution and logistics hub as well as a new port;
- New economic development sites (e.g. Boyne Bridge Business Park, which was recently launched)”.

Since the Indecon Report, Meath County Council has facilitated the development of Drogheda Retail Park in the Donore Road area of the town, which has become one of the most successful retailing centres in the town with a large and varied range of tenants and with substantial parking facilities. The South Drogheda Environs has developed strongly with the assistance of Meath County Council and today the St. Mary’s ED in Meath is one of the principal economic assets of the greater Drogheda area, with two prominent foreign direct investment (FDI) companies (Coca-Cola International Services and International Funds Services (IFS), which is part of the State Street Group) and major indigenous employers like Boyne Valley Foods and new companies, including Boann Distillery, which announced in 2015 that it will be opening its new facility in the Meath environs of Drogheda. The St. Mary’s ED in Meath is also home to the IDA Business and Technology Park in Drogheda, located just off the Donore Road close to the M1 Motorway. This strategically important facility comprises IFS/State Street, which has been in Drogheda since 2006 and employs over 230 people in high quality employment. Along with the Navan IDA Park, the Drogheda Park is being proactively promoted for new FDI by Meath County Council in partnership with the IDA, as provided for in the Economic Development Strategy launched in 2015. The Council is liaising with personnel from the IDA’s regional office in this regard.

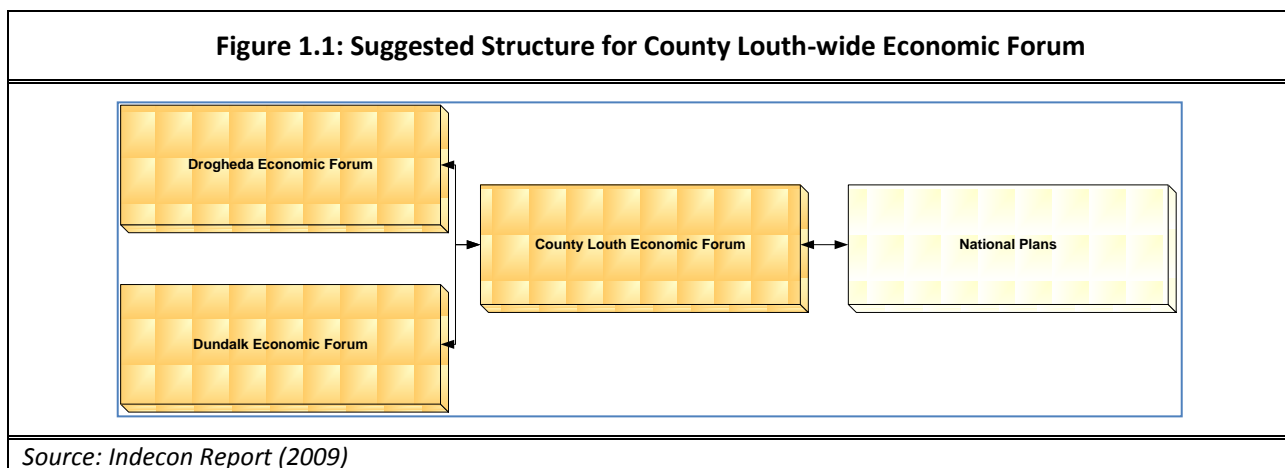
On the other hand, as outlined earlier, the North Drogheda Environs or Sienna Valley plan in Louth came to nothing. In addition, the ambitious Bremore project south of Drogheda (in Fingal) has been in abeyance now since the crisis and seems unlikely to develop further (under the National Ports Policy, Drogheda Port Company is being transferred from central government to Louth County Council as its new owner, owing to the fact that its operations are located in the Louth side of the Boyne, although its headquarters are on the southern side of the river, on the Louth-Meath border). It is also understood that the proposed Boyne Bridge Business Park, on the Louth side of the town (comprising 38 acres of lands at Killineer north of the M1 Retail Park between the M1 and the R132), has not been developed (the site is close to where Pope John Paul II visited Drogheda in 1979).

We wonder whether the Review Committee had the opportunity to visit the lands making up the North Drogheda Environs Plan (under Louth County Council) during its site visit. Along the old Dublin-Belfast road one will see the Boyne Bridge Business, which stands sadly along the roadside without any development. Indeed if one looks at the zoning map in respect of the North Drogheda Environs Plan, the large yellow area, which was to provide for residential use in accordance with the envisaged new town plan (Sienna Valley) has been without development, as have generally been the lands zoned for employment uses (opposite the M1 Retail Park and including the aforementioned Boyne Bridge Business Park plus on the eastern side of the plan the substantial lands in the vicinity of Drogheda Port and Beaulieu House. We presume that the Review Committee has carefully studied the North Drogheda Environs Plan and what happened since it was made. The contrast with the planning on the other side of the town, under the remit of Meath County Council, could hardly been any different. As we shall shown subsequently in the Submission, the Meath environs of Drogheda, including the Area of Interest, has seen the most rapid growth in employment during the last censuses in 2006 and 2011, the latest available employment data with the study area.

1.2.4.7 Implementation of the Indecon Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda – the Drogheda Economic Forum

There is substantial detail in the Indecon Report (2009) concerning the implementation of the consultant's evidence-based economic development strategy for the town and its environs. The Executive Summary alone runs to more than 5 pages with actions for implementation, many of which include Meath County Council working in tandem with Louth County Council and other stakeholders in the town. Central to the implementation of the strategy is the Drogheda Economic Forum, and indirectly the Louth Economic Forum. The latter continues to function today, whose remit is county-wide (Louth); however, the Drogheda Economic Forum no longer exists, as outlined presently.

The Indecon Report proposed that the then Drogheda Economic Development Group and the Dundalk Economic Development Group, which acted in the respective towns prior to the commissioning of the Indecon study, be reconstituted into two new action-oriented and results-based groups (namely the Drogheda Economic Forum and the Dundalk Economic Forum) and that a County Louth-wide Economic Forum be established with inputs from the chairs of the new Drogheda and Dundalk groups and operating in the context of national economic and planning initiatives. The suggested structure is illustrated in the figure below, which is reproduced from the Indecon Report (2009).



According to the Indecon Report (p.xxix):

“Unless a county-wide strategy (which builds on the key urban centres of Drogheda and Dundalk and Ardee) is developed, there may be a danger that Drogheda and the other centres will not benefit fully from a coherent, integrated economic development plan”.

“The Drogheda Economic Forum would be responsible for driving the Strategy formulated in this Report. It would continue the work of the Drogheda Economic Development Group and would also work with the three local authorities responsible for the public administration of the Study Area, including with the recently established steering group involving representatives from Drogheda Borough Council, Louth County Council and Meath County Council and the two sub-groups of representatives from the three local authorities active in water services, transportation/planning and economic development/tourism”.

All three economic forums came into effect following the launch of the Indecon Report – April 2009. However, only the LEF exists today. The Drogheda Economic Forum included representatives from Drogheda Borough Council, Louth County Council, Meath County Council and Drogheda Chamber, *inter alios*. It met on several occasions between 2009 and 2012 but unwound in 2012.

Meath County Council understands that the initiative was overtaken by events, including when Drogheda was chosen as the location for the Raidió Teilifís Éireann's (RTÉ) Television programme *Local Heroes*. Drogheda was selected for the TV programme from a list of other applicant towns and the programme served to raise the profile of the town (it was a mix of light entertainment and business, aiming to appeal to a broad audience at peak-time viewing, given competition from programmes on other channels, including soaps, comedies etc.).

Nonetheless, *Local Heroes* did produce some legacy for the town-a new brand for Drogheda ('Drogheda on the Boyne') and a video promoting Drogheda as a location for inward investment. A town centre unit (then vacant) was donated to the initiative, which quickly took on a life of its own and gained momentum. The once vacant town centre office which catered for the *Local Heroes* project, even after the TV programme, is today otherwise used and one cannot be sure whether the programme succeeded in bringing any new significant employment to the town. To be fair, it raised local spirits in the midst of the crisis and gave some hope, but what ultimately matters is investment and jobs.

It is regrettable that the Drogheda Economic Forum came to an end. Perhaps also the Indecon proposal of having three economic forums proved too much, not least given the fact that some members of the Drogheda and Dundalk Economic Forums also sat on the county-wide LEF – possibly too many meetings. From 2012, after the demise of the Drogheda Economic Forum, the Dundalk Economic Forum was also wound down.

In any event, the key point is that the Drogheda Economic Forum was an opportunity for Drogheda to promote itself economically and hence socially and from a local community perspective. It was proactively supported by Louth County Council, resourced (meetings were held monthly in Drogheda Borough Council's offices, on the corner of Patrick Street and Bolton Street) and funding was made available by Louth County Council to support worthy proposals. The success of the group in getting the town chosen for the *Local Heroes* programme bears testimony to its potential.

1.2.4.8 Events since the Indecon Report

Since Indecon reported in 2009, Drogheda Borough Council has become subsumed as part of Louth County Council and so today, two local authorities – Meath and Louth County Councils – are responsible for the local administration of Drogheda and its environs, and therefore have a common interest in looking after the economic and community development of the area.

Whatever about the spurned opportunities following the Indecon Report, there is no evidence that Drogheda is functioning less effectively today than other towns because of the inter-county boundary.

On the contrary, the evidence shows that economic development and the quality of people's lives has improved in recent years, in the Meath environs of the town – more jobs, more shops and retailing centres, schools and services etc., despite the challenges of the Great Recession.

There is nothing (*a priori* or *a fortiori*) to substantiate the notion that a boundary extension in favour of Louth County Council would result in a net benefit for people, businesses and communities in Drogheda. Neither is there any evidence that a boundary change in the other direction (in favour of Meath) would have a net benefit.

Accordingly, there is no theoretical, practical or any other basis to support any boundary change in respect of the area under consideration; any boundary alteration would merely be disproportionate, unwarranted and unnecessary. It would be a very severe blow for one local authority, removing a vital part of its current development plan and economic strategy. Given the dynamic nature of economic development, no amount of compensation could make up for the loss of this critically important part of

County Meath, given its skills base, the investment put into the area by Meath County Council and its strategic location along the M1 Corridor.

Accordingly, Meath County Council will defend every inch of territory currently under its remit, reflecting the plans and ambitions the Council has for this part of the county, which includes its potential to be a major catalyst for employment creation countywide and in the wider functional region, benefitting Louth as well as Meath.

The logical and most coherent way forward is for both local authorities to continue to work together for the betterment of Drogheda and its environs in both Louth and Meath.

1.3 Further Elaboration of Meath County Council's Position

1.3.1 Drogheda a Common Resource for Counties Louth and Meath, like the Boyne Valley

Meath County Council recognises the importance of Drogheda to the economic and employment development of County Meath and the wider functional region in which the town is located now and in the coming years, namely the new Eastern Strategic Planning Area (SPA) within the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) area, which became effective in January 2015.³ This applies to the whole town and its environs coming under the remit of Louth and Meath County Councils. As the country's largest town, as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and illustrated subsequently in the Submission, Drogheda may be seen as a common resource between the two local authorities, much like the Boyne Valley stands as a common resource between the two Councils and their communities – even though most of the Boyne Valley occurs in Meath, we do not seek to 'own' or have claim over this important resource, which today is being promoted by the tourism authorities (Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland) as one of Ireland's 'signature' visitor destinations, given its beauty, history and heritage. Indeed, we recognise that Drogheda, sitting on the mouth of the River Boyne, promotes itself as the gateway to the Boyne Valley.

We are proud to be associated with some very high quality, informative and attractive visitor guides to Drogheda, which can be picked up in the Tholsel Visitor Centre in the centre of town or in some other retail outlets and organisations around the town. We would hope that the Review Committee has obtained these publications and considered them – if not we would urge the Committee to do so because they are put together before and independently of the boundary. The publications include:

- 'Welcome to Drogheda', produced under the Drogheda on the Boyne brand (one of the positive legacies of *Local Heroes*) and recognising the Boyne Valley brand, a joint initiative between Louth and Meath County Councils – this publication comes in the form of a detailed and extensive A4 magazine-style format, which is very professionally and attractively put together, and a smaller leaflet-type format, giving pen-pictures of Drogheda's top-ten visitor attractions and a map of the town;
- 'Drogheda Free Map and Guide' – similarly produced in partnership between Louth and Meath County Councils and Drogheda Chamber, which is also attractively and professionally put together and includes a potted history of the town, illustrating its rich heritage; and
- Boyne Valley literature, which is also informative, attractive and professionally produced and includes;

³ The Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 (S.I. 573 of 2014). The new regional arrangements are outlined in more detail in Section 6, which deals with planning and development.

- ‘Discover the rich heritage of Ireland’s Boyne Valley’, where mention is also made that the area is part of Ireland’s Ancient East
- ‘Ready, steady go!’, where the emphasis in this particular publication is placed on family activities and fun times
- ‘Boyne Valley Garden Trail’, which provides a list of the gardens around the Boyne Valley.

These welcome and up-to-date publications, which are aimed at exciting the visitor, include the now classic Boyne Valley Trail, where Drogheda features prominently. For example, the ‘Drogheda Free Map and Guide’ mentions at the beginning of its summary about the town that:

“Drogheda is a thriving town straddling in the Louth/Meath border...”

As welcoming and visitor/tourist-oriented initiatives, these publications are not in any way constrained by any inter-county boundaries but rather promote the common resource that is the Boyne Valley.

Unfortunately, however, some local stakeholders in the Drogheda area have sought to associate the town, and its achievements, with one county only, as though Meath and/or Meath County Council have had no hand, act or part in supporting Drogheda. We return to this unacceptable development below.

1.3.2 Drogheda at the Top of the Economic Hierarchy in the Meath County Plan

In recognition of the economic potential and importance of Drogheda (as a whole), and given the part of the town under the remit of Meath County Council, the Meath environs of the town are identified by Meath County Council at the top of the economic hierarchy in the current Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (jointly with the County Town of Navan).

Drogheda also features in the same way in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022, which was prepared for Meath County Council by PMCA Economic Consulting, John Spain and Associates (chartered planners) and FTI Consulting (public affairs and marketing). This major report was launched by Meath County Council at a function in Ballymagarvey House (on the N2 Road between Navan and Drogheda) in June 2015, at which Mr. Frank Ryan (current Chairman of IDA Ireland and former Chief Executive of Enterprise Ireland) gave the keynote address.

The new evidence-based economic plan for County Meath comes on foot of major changes within the Council, including the adoption and practice of a more proactive approach to enterprise and employment growth within the county, in line with the wider public sector reform process and the local authority changes heralded by Putting People First (2012) and the Local Government Reform Act 2014, which call for local authorities to make economic and employment development a central part of their everyday work. Meath County Council supports these reforms and looks forward to continuing to assist entrepreneurs and enterprises in creating employment in those parts of Drogheda under its remit as well as throughout the county, and the wider functional region.

Both the Meath CDP 2013-2019 and the new economic plan for the county recognise the important economic development work facilitated by Meath County Council over the years – for example, the comparably rapid employment growth in the St. Mary’s ED in the Meath environs of Drogheda (in which the Area of Interest delineated by the Review Committee) and in the other EDs occurring in the Meath catchment area of Drogheda, which are currently home to a number of major employers, both indigenous and foreign-owned.

While the Council is proud to support enterprises and wealth creators in the area concerned and the county as a whole, we are also well aware of the reality that the economic development effort cannot

and must not cease, particularly in view of the increasingly competitive and internationalised marketplace for investment.

Another reality for Drogheda and its environs is the extent of outward commuting by residents on a daily basis, principally to Dublin. According to our analysis of the specialist POWSCAR 2011 data (Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records), conducted by the CSO as part of Census 2011, more people resident in County Meath at work in any location do so outside the county than within the county – of the approximately 61,000 people living in Meath and at work in 2011, around 33,000 or 54% worked outside the county in that year, mostly in the capital (around 25,000 or 76% of the outbound commuters travelled to work in Dublin, meaning that there were almost as many Meath residents working in the capital as there were working within the county in which they lived in 2011). It turns out that Meath had the fourth highest outbound commuting rate among all local authorities at the time of the last census (South Dublin, Fingal and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown had slightly higher rates of outbound commuting, all less than 60%, but we would expect outbound commuting rates to be high among the Dublin local authorities in any event, since they are effectively part of the same city). Accordingly, Meath had the highest outbound commuting rate of any local authority *outside* of the capital in 2011 (the outbound commuting rate in Louth was 28%).

The outbound commuting rate in the Meath environs of Drogheda was, and is, even higher than the 54% rate for the county. To address the concerns and costs associated with outbound commuting, while generally positive and a fact of life for many residents in the county, the new economic plan aims to create more jobs *within* the county as a priority. The Area of Interest and other parts of the Meath environs of Drogheda are of critical importance to this goal of the Council's economic plan, where the aim is basically to harness the skills available in the area, combined with Drogheda's other comparative advantages, to attract more investment and jobs into the area, benefitting the whole of Drogheda and its environs in Louth and Meath in the process.⁴

1.3.3 Economic Developments

Both Meath and Louth County Councils, in common with all local authorities, wish to facilitate more employment closer to where people live, and we understand that, like ourselves, Louth County Council is also keen to downplay the unhelpful media tags “commuter belt”, “satellite” or “dormitory” locations (in relation to Dublin), which crop up in the media from time-to-time.

Meath County is firmly of the view that Drogheda can be an important catalyst for more employment locally – benefitting both Councils and their communities in the process. This view is based on the evidence showing strong educational attainment and workplace skills and given the favourable location and excellent infrastructure in regard to the area.

The detailed data analysis presented in Section 5 of the Submission shows that relatively rapid employment growth occurred in the St. Mary's ED in Meath, south of Drogheda, and in neighbouring EDs in the southern environs of Drogheda in the county, which bodes positively for the future, given the mix of small and large Irish-owned enterprises, and major FDI companies, in the area.

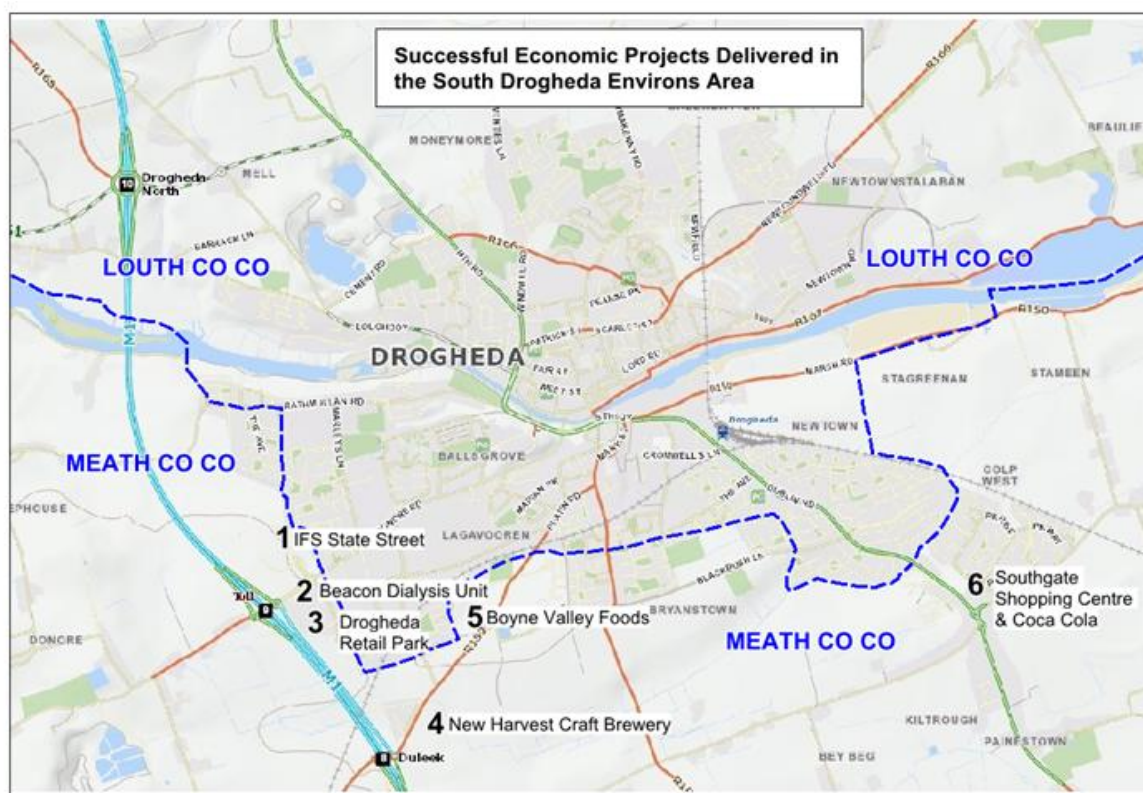
For example, between 2006 and 2011, the number of jobs within the St. Mary's ED in the Meath environs of Drogheda grew by over 48% to reach 1,363 in the latter year. This rate of growth far

⁴ Two recent local media reports illustrate that Drogheda is now Ireland's busiest rail commuter town: 'Drogheda country's busiest rail commuter route', *Drogheda Independent* (13 January 2016); and 'Drogheda is top commuter town – Figures support calls for extra trains and DART service', *Drogheda Leader* (13 January 2016).

exceeded that in Louth (0.4%), Meath (17%) or the State (-10%) during the period, and indeed the rate of jobs growth in the Meath environs of Drogheda far outstripped that in the Louth environs during the period (46% compared with 1.4%). At the rate of growth achieved during 2006-2011, and remembering that this period coincided with the unprecedented economic crisis in the country, it is estimated that there were almost 1,900 jobs in the St. Mary's ED in the southern environs of Drogheda in 2015, whereas, for example, the number of jobs in the St. Mary's ED in the Louth part of the town contracted by almost 18% during 2006-2011 and would be in the region of 1,500 in 2015, if we were to go on the historical trend during that time.

However, whilst jobs growth has been especially impressive in the Meath environs of Drogheda in recent years, there is still a long way to go and the key task today is to confront the high rate of outbound commuting from the area. Meath County Council is working very hard in this regard and will continue with the effort in the years to come.⁵

Figure 1.2: Map showing some of the Employers in the Southern Environs of Drogheda (Meath)



Source: Meath County Council.

Note: The map is illustrative and is not exhaustive of all employers/businesses in the area.

⁵ The detailed analysis of the CSO POWSCAR data on employment within the study area in Section 5 also includes consideration of the employment-to-population ratio, which reflects the high outbound commuting rate from the Meath environs of Drogheda. While the jobs/employment ratio is comparably low in the Meath environs of the town, it is nevertheless growing relatively rapidly, which bodes well for future jobs growth within the area and in support of sustainable communities locally.

1.3.4 Developments in Economic and Enterprise Support at Meath County Council

Much of note has been achieved by Meath County Council in recent years, in respect of supporting economic and employment development, building on the gains in previous years. As well as commissioning the new economic plan, which aims at ensuring more jobs and economic impact locally, including in Drogheda, and which is currently being integrated into the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 through the variation process, Meath County Council can point towards the following achievements already:

- Establishment of the Meath Economic Forum (MEF) in 2013, which consists of senior members from the business, policy and academic communities with connections to Meath and with the purpose of promoting and championing economic and jobs development across the county – some MEF members are involved in the delivery of significant employment to the immediate boundary;
- Major new employment initiatives – including, for example in 2015, the announcement that Facebook will open a large-scale data centre in Meath (with around 1,000 jobs in the construction phase and 115 jobs during the operational phase) and, in Drogheda, the granting of planning permission for a new brewery and distillery that will create up to 100 new jobs at premises in the Platin Road area of the town, Co. Meath (Boann Distillery).

In addition, other employment in the county in 2015 includes (but is not limited to): Tayto Park 150 seasonal jobs and visitor numbers are expected to grow even further with the major new rollercoaster at the park (Tayto Park is now among the very top visitor attractions in the country); DEKO Foods 20 jobs at its new ethnic food facility in Kells; Slane Castle Whiskey 25 jobs; and Hand on Heart 20 jobs (Navan).

Furthermore, the following planning permissions granted exemplify the economic development work underway in the county: Primeline has been granted permission for an extension to the existing warehousing unit in Ashbourne Business Park (25,968m² in size); Aldi stores limited has been granted permission for the construction of a single storey discount food store with a gross floor area of 1,757m² (net retail area 1,254m²); Ntron Limited, which specialises in the development and manufacture of gas analysis and gas handling technologies, has been granted permission to expand its business in Navan; and Hickwell Limited have been granted permission for development of a hub logistics park at Bracetown, Clonee.

Meath County Council has also been liaising with the State enterprise agencies – IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland – to secure more investment and jobs locally, including within the Area of Interest and along the M1 Corridor, whose economic development potential is being acted upon by the Council.

While it is the undoubted position of Meath County Council to continue to administer all parts of Drogheda currently under its remit, the Council also recognises the importance of working cooperatively and productively with Louth County Council to promote investment and employment, and community and social development, in both the Meath and the Louth parts of the town and it looks forward to continuing to work in this way for the benefit of all residents, businesses and visitors to the town.

1.3.5 Louth and Meath County Councils' Tradition of Collaboration and New Developments Nationally

The tradition of both Councils working together for the betterment of Drogheda include the provision of water and waste water services in-and-around Drogheda as well as the aforementioned collaboration in respect of promoting the Boyne Valley for visitors/tourists and job creation, not to mention the councils' collaboration in regard to planning inputs, including in respect of the Regional Planning Guidelines for

the Greater Dublin Area in 2004 and 2010 (the current RPGs) and the aforementioned Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area of 2007. There was also cooperation between the two local authorities in regard to the Tobin Report concerning long-term key infrastructural inputs for the broader Drogheda area in 2001.

With the establishment of Irish Water in January 2014, water services are now managed on a national level by this new semi-state company. A similar situation arises when considering other previous local authority functions such as national roads, waste collection, driver licensing etc., which are now carried out by semi-state or national operational bodies.

The consequence of these overall functional changes serves to weaken any barriers (potential, actual or perceived) to development on boundary issues where previously local authorities would appear to have competed for limited infrastructural resources. Accordingly, with the establishment of national and regional service providers, there is little need, or appetite, to re-visit or engage in rationalisation of traditional local authority boundaries that may have long-standing emotional and/or historical contexts.

Meath County Council considers that it has built up a demonstrably effective collaborative relationship with Louth County Council, and the former Drogheda Borough Council, in regard to planning and development matters for both Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts) and the Boyne Valley area. For instance, in regard to the Boyne Valley, a common natural and historical resource having significant economic potential for both local authorities, Meath and Louth County Councils are working together on the preparation of a new Management Plan for the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site to replace the previous 2002 Management Plan under the auspices of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (the Newgrange site is one of the only three UNESCO World Heritage Sites on the island of Ireland, the others being Skellig Michael off the Kerry coast and the Giant's Causeway in County Antrim).

According to the recently published (January 2016) Regional Action Plan for Job – Mid-East Region, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) observes that (p. 45) (DJEI's bold reproduced here):

*"In recent years Meath and Louth County Councils have adopted a holistic approach towards the development and marketing of the Boyne Valley. The **Boyne Valley Destination** is an initiative of Louth and Meath County Councils working together to jointly promote the destination. There has been significant investment in the Boyne Valley in areas of enterprise development, marketing and destination development by Fáilte Ireland in conjunction with both County Councils."*

Further along, the DJEI's new action plan for the Mid-East Region mentions a specific form of collaborative initiative for the Boyne Valley (p. 93):

"The Boyne Valley 'Waterway through Time' project aims to boost economic development in the Boyne Valley region through the restoration of some 35km of waterways, including the navigation on the River Boyne and along the canal network between Drogheda at Oldbridge, to the Newgrange Interpretive Centre. Restoration work will be carried out on lock walls and the canal to Bru na Boinne, creating a channel between the visitor sites of the Battle of the Boyne and Newgrange and the villages along the route".

It is recognised that Drogheda promotes itself as the 'gateway' to the Boyne Valley in its marketing literature. Furthermore, the 'Boyne Valley Tourism Drive', a tourism initiative operated on a joint basis by Louth and Meath County Councils, highlights the many visitor attractions available throughout both counties and is further evidence of a collaborative working relationship for the wider good. The rich and varied visitor attractions exist above any Louth-Meath boundary, which matters little to the tourist; if anything, it adds to the attractiveness of the area.

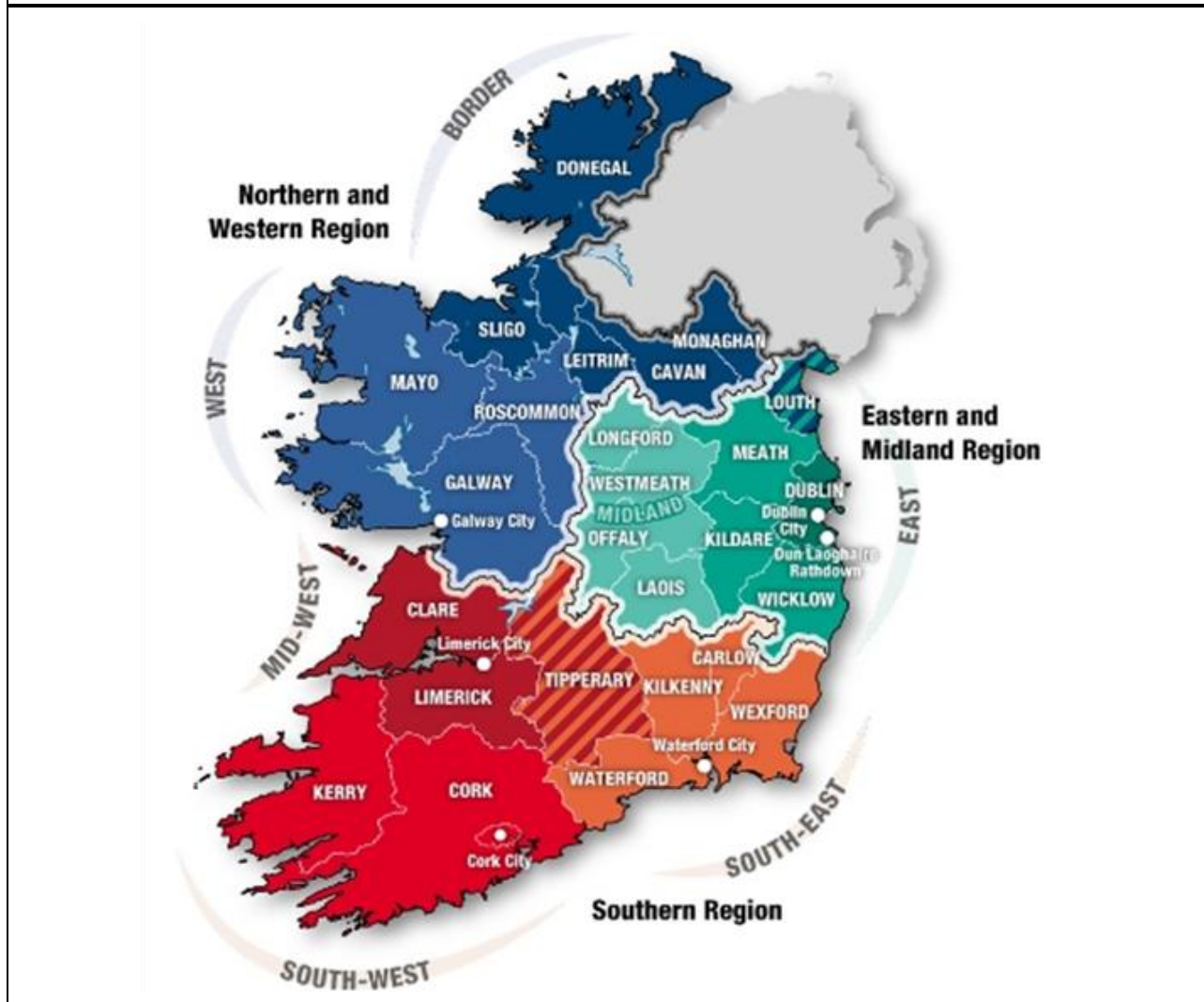
The *incentives* for both local authorities to continue working together for the betterment of Drogheda and all of its residents, in Meath and Louth, are strong and both councils have the *ability* to strengthen the town – economically, socially and culturally – in partnership in the coming years.

1.3.6 New Regional Arrangements

The most important and noteworthy regional development in the context of the Review and this Submission to the Review by Meath County Council is the coming into effect of the new Regional Assemblies since January 2015.

While the EMRA Region is the smallest of the three new Regional Assemblies, geographically, as evident from the map below, it is fair to say that it is the most significant, economically, by virtue of the presence of Dublin and the counties making up the NUTS 3 Mid-East Region, namely Meath, Kildare and Wicklow: the Greater Dublin Area (comprising the NUTS 3 Dublin and Mid-East Regions) includes the most affluent parts of the country and also those parts of the State with the highest rates of employment (but there are also pockets of deprivation within the GDA). It is seen from the map below that Louth is also part of the new EMRA – the shading of this particular county denotes the fact that it is both part of the EMRA and part of the new Northern and Western Region.

Figure 1.3: Map of the New Regional Assembly Areas (NUTS 2 Regions) in Ireland



Source: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG).

There are twelve local authority areas within the new NUTS 2 EMRA, grouped into 3 Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) as follows:

- Composition of the EMRA;
 - Dublin SPA – four local authorities of the NUTS 3 Dublin Region
 - Midlands SPA – comprising the local authorities in Counties Longford, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath (NUTS 3 Midlands Region)
 - Eastern SPA – consisting of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow (NUTS 3 Mid-East Region) along with Louth, which is also part of the Border SPA, hence that county's dual status in the new arrangements.

The new EMRA will be responsible, *inter alia*, for the formulation, adoption and implementation of the Regional Spatial Economic Strategies (RSEs), which will replace the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and, it is understood, will come to replace the National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

Meath County Council welcomes the new regional arrangements, including the inclusion of County Louth in the same SPA as Meath. As far as the Council is concerned, the NSS did not work effectively for Meath and led to unbalanced regional growth and high rates of outbound commuting, contrary to what was originally planned. In the region concerned, it copper-fastened Dublin as the economic centre and also promoted a large amount of FDI towards Dundalk, compared with Drogheda and other large urban centres in the region, including the main towns in Meath and those in Monaghan and Cavan as well. While Dundalk and Dublin benefitted from strong designation under the NSS – each a Gateway – no other urban centre in Louth or Meath, or in the north-east, benefitted from significant designation in the NSS. Drogheda was deemed to be a Primary Development Centre under the NSS, the same designation as that afforded to Navan. In reality, it is popularly felt, this designation had no economic impact on the towns concerned.

Commenting on the new regional assemblies, Professor Chris van Egeraat of Maynooth University (formerly the National University of Ireland Maynooth, NUIM) and Chairman of the Regional Studies Association (Irish Branch) states:⁶

“On the positive side, the creation of a[n] Eastern and Midlands region which includes Metropolitan Dublin and its commuting belt makes a lot of sense. The inclusion of County Louth in this region makes sense as well and will support spatial planning in the wider Dublin-Belfast Corridor”.

1.3.7 Regional Action Plan for Jobs – Mid-East Region

Meath County Council welcomes this new for the county and for the NUTS 3 Mid-East Region as a whole, now part of the new EMRA. The DJEI’s new plan is consistent with our own recently-completed economic plan and will therefore contribute to our goal of working towards more jobs and economic impact locally. We are particularly excited by the specific actions provided for in the DJEI’s new plan, namely the Boyne Valley tourist initiatives, where we are commended by the DJEI for our collaboration with Louth County Council; the proposals in regard to enhancing FDI into the region, where the plan is that the IDA will develop a value proportion to promote the Mid-East Region as a “second site location” option for existing multinationals in the Dublin area; and for the Boyne Valley Food Hub.

We hope, and will certainly support, the statement in the DJEI’s plan that the “IDA will target a **30-40% uplift in investments** for the Mid East over the period 2015-2019”. Our own economic strategy is based in large part around the opportunity to promote Meath as a competitive alternative to the capital for FDI and other inward investment, including by indigenous enterprises looking to expand. Drogheda is a key part of this goal.

1.3.8 Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area

Also relevant to note is the Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) under preparation by the National Transport Authority (NTA). It is expected that the final strategy will be issued in early 2016, following a public consultation process on the draft strategy, to which Meath County Council has contributed.

Section 2 of the NTA’s draft strategy provides a helpful policy overview of the proposed plan, where it states that the plan will form part of “Tier 2: Regional Planning”, where the Transport Strategy for the GDA will sit alongside the RSES for the EMRA area and there will be “Integrated Implementation Plans”

⁶ Article (with Ronan Foley) available at <https://irelandafternama.wordpress.com/2012/10/16/new-regional-assemblies-announced/>.

in respect of the strategies. This makes sense but the proof will be in the implementation as much as the design of the strategies themselves, in our experience.

The NTA's map in Figure 3.6 of the draft strategy shows that Drogheda is included as part of the transport plan, specifically in respect of "Corridor A – Drogheda-Balbriggan-Swords-Airport-North Inner City-to Dublin City Centre" (p. 35). However, it is not clear from the document whether "Drogheda" includes only the Meath part or also the Louth part as well. In the same page (p. 35), there is mention of the "significant amount of population and employment growth planned for the larger urban areas within this corridor, including *South Drogheda*" (our italics). The maps shown in the draft strategy suggest that the plan will apply only to the southern environs of Drogheda in Meath.

However, given Louth's inclusion as part of the Eastern SPA within the EMRA, as well as Meath, a case exists for including the whole of Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts) in the NTA's transport strategy for the GDA. *This represents an example of an issue where Louth and Meath County Councils could usefully and productively cooperate for the betterment of Drogheda as a whole, given the special nature of the town occurring in two local authority areas.*

For example, a significant proposal in the NTA's plan is the electrification of the rail line between Malahide and Drogheda as part of the DART Expansion Programme, and the provision of high frequency DART services on this line, extending to Drogheda (McBride Rail Station is located in the former Drogheda Borough Council area of the town, in Louth, although lies close to the Louth-Meath boundary and would cater for a large number of outbound commuters living in the town and working in the capital).

Meath County Council would also note the NTA's proposal to develop a new version of Metro North, which would see a light rail link between St. Stephen's Green to Swords and serving Dublin Airport, operating in tunnel under Dublin City Centre, and providing a high frequency, high capacity service (the lifetime of the Transport Strategy for the GDA is 2016-2035). This major part of the plan will likely see significant development in the Swords area and support the concept of the Dublin Airport City Area.

In regard to the Leinster Orbital Route, which would extend from Drogheda in the north around to Naas/Newbridge in the south, with intermediate links to Navan and other towns, the NTA states in its plan that "While this project is not planned for implementation during the lifetime of the Strategy, the finalisation of the route corridor and its protection from development intrusion is recommended".

Meath County Council would agree with the NTA in this regard. We would, however, see the Leinster Orbital Route as a potentially important enabler for economic and employment development for Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts) and County Meath as a whole, and this would represent another area where we could usefully and productively cooperate with Louth County Council regarding the onward development of Drogheda, whilst being acutely aware of the commuting implications.

1.3.9 Supporting Drogheda and its Hinterland

There is mutual economic benefit between surrounding towns like Duleek, Stamullin and the East Coast area (Bettystown/Laytown/Mornington), which support Drogheda as the larger service centre whilst also providing employment locally in the coastal Meath environs. Thus, for example, the success to date of privately-developed business parks like Duleek Business Park and City North Business Campus (located at the landmark City North Hotel, off Junction 7 of the M1 Motorway towards Stamullin and Julianstown and thence towards Drogheda *via* the old Dublin route, along the R132 regional road) means that high quality local employment opportunities are available for local residents.

Being an urban centre governed effectively by two local authorities, it is imperative that both Councils continue to work effectively together in partnership in the planning, promotion and sharing of local services so that the economic and employment potential of Drogheda and its environs in both counties can be realised now and in the years ahead.

1.4 Drogheda Chamber of Commerce's Call for a Boundary Review

Meath County Council has considered a publication produced by Drogheda and District Chamber of Commerce in 2015, which calls for "an immediate Boundary Review taking into account the full range of people who are affected by the way that Drogheda develops". We are disappointed to note that there are inaccuracies in this publication which we would like to deal with it here in the following paragraphs.

The front of the Drogheda Chamber publication shows a map of Drogheda, over which are superimposed three population statistics – "Drogheda 30,435", "North Drogheda/Louth 15,451" and "South Drogheda/Meath 32,695". It is not clear how these figures have been derived and to what particular geographic areas they relate. Assuming the first-mentioned figure applies to the (former) Drogheda Borough Council area, and assuming the year in question is 2011 (the Chamber publication is not clear on this), then the figure of 30,435 should be 30,393, by reference to the CSO's Census 2011 figures.

Subsequently in our Submission, we clearly identify the EDs making up the Drogheda Borough Council area and what we delineate as Drogheda and its Hinterland (both Louth and Meath parts). In 2011, the population of the Drogheda Borough Council area was 30,393 and the population of the CSO-defined "Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs", which includes parts of Louth and Meath, was 38,578, making Drogheda (defined in this way) the largest town in the country in that year.

Taking a wider view of geography, the population of the Drogheda LEA was 41,925 in 2011 and the population of (our delineated area) Drogheda and its Hinterland in County Meath was 32,720 (differing from the estimate of 32,695 accorded to "South Drogheda/Meath" in the Drogheda Chamber's publication).⁷

This means that the population of Drogheda and its Hinterland (both Louth and Meath parts, as delineated subsequently in this Submission) was 74,645 in 2011 (this figure being the sum of (a) Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth) (equivalent to the Drogheda LEA) (41,925) and (b) Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (32,720)).

Our figure of the 74,645 persons in the greater Drogheda area in 2011 is lower than the estimate of 78,851 given in the Drogheda Chamber's publication, which is not clearly laid out for the reader. Our figure is clearly spelled out and we will go into further detail regarding the derivation of the figure subsequently in Sections 4 and 5 of the Submission.

⁷ Drogheda and its Hinterland in Meath (as carefully defined subsequently in this Submission, Sections 4 and 5) consists of the following EDs in Meath (with population figures in 2011, which together add up to the aforementioned figure of 32,720): St. Mary's (10,769), Julianstown (9,606), Stamullin (4,696), Ardcah (1,911), Duleek (5,177) and Mellifont (561). The Drogheda Borough Council area comprises the following EDs (all in Louth) (population figures 2011): Fair Gate (9,806), St. Laurence Gate (4,004), West Gate (6,042), St. Mary's (pt.) (6,563) and St. Peter's (pt.) (3,978), which all sum to the aforementioned figure of 30,393 for the Drogheda Borough Council area in that year. Finally, the population figure for the Drogheda LEA in 2011, 41,925, arises as the sum of the following EDs making up the LEA: the remainder of the St. Peter's ED (outside of Drogheda Borough) (5,173), Monasterboice (1,342), Termonfeckin (3,294) and Mullary (1,723) added to the 30,393 figure for Drogheda Borough.

On the next page of the Drogheda Chamber's paper calling for a boundary review, there is mention of "Infrastructural Deficits" in the town, namely:

- "No Local Government Management present in Drogheda";
- "No Foreign Direct Investment";
- "No State Agencies – IDA, EI, LEO etc.";
- "No Dedicated Tourism Marketing resources";
- "No 3rd Level College/University: while we have DkIT/DCU/Trinity/UCD/Queens within 90 minutes of (sic.) the absence of 3rd Level facilities in Drogheda means that there are little or no industry clusters".

The misleading nature of these claims is apparent when the responses to each point are considered below (Meath County Council comments in blue italics):

- "No Local Government Management present in Drogheda" – *Drogheda Borough Council is now catered for by Drogheda Borough District (which, it is understood, has been meeting monthly since the last local authority elections in May 2014 and there continues to be a 'Mayor of Drogheda') and the Louth and Meath parts of the town and its environs are also locally administered by Louth County Council and Meath County Council respectively, which, as described above, have been supporting and facilitating job creation as well as providing local services in the town continuously;*
- "No Foreign Direct Investment" – *on the Meath side, we would note the important role played by Coca-Cola International Services at Southgate and IFS/State Street in the IDA Business and Technology Park in Drogheda, and, on the Louth side, Drogheda can boast the presence of, for instance, Yapstone (a rapidly expanding US FDI company) at the Mill Enterprise Centre (which was developed with the help of Drogheda Chamber), and potential new FDI opportunities are under consideration for the town;*
- "No State Agencies – IDA, EI, LEO etc." – *Louth LEO and Meath LEO (formerly the County Enterprise Boards) cater for new starts and micro enterprises (employing less than 10 people) in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda respectively and the IDA and Enterprise Ireland are working to support FDI and Irish-owned employment respectively in Drogheda and the rest of Louth and Meath;*
- "No Dedicated Tourism Marketing resources" – *it is disappointing to find that the Chamber document does not recognise the Boyne Trail in the Meath environs of Drogheda and the Ramparts Walk from the town centre out towards Oldbridge House/Battle of the Boyne site on the Louth side, not to mention the efforts of the d-Hotel (a private sector stakeholder), which has facilitated Drogheda getting on to the itineraries of coach tours;*
- "No 3rd Level College/University: while we have DkIT/DCU/Trinity/UCD/Queens within 90 minutes of (sic.) the absence of 3rd Level facilities in Drogheda means that there are little or no industry clusters" – *Drogheda's favourable location next to Dublin, and to Dundalk, where there are excellent transport links, means that the absence of a higher education institution in Drogheda is not terribly significant (Meath does not have a HE college but that has not prevented the county from being one of the most economically prosperous locations in the country and we believe the same can be said for Drogheda).⁸ The statement that there are little*

⁸ *The statement by Drogheda Chamber that there is no third-level college in Drogheda is also unfair to Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE), which is a growing and an important asset to the town and its environs, and does important work in producing graduates for vocational careers and enterprise formation.*

or no industry clusters in Drogheda is further misleading because it ignores the presence of Coca-Cola International Services and IFS (State Street) in the Meath environs of Drogheda, and Yapstone, in the Louth part of the town, which are all active in the IDA-targeted internationally-traded services sector, and the growth of these firms points to the town's capability to attract more of this form of inward investment in the coming years.⁹

The Drogheda Chamber document then proceeds to mention “Drogheda’s Attributes”, specifically:

- “Infrastructure – Airport, Railway, Deepwater Port, M1 Motorway”;
- “Highly educated and experienced workforce”;
- “M1 Economic Corridor”;
- “Excellent business infrastructure inc. 4G Broadband, Water and Power”;
- “A resilient business and civic community who continue to work together for the betterment of the region”;
- “Tourism potential – nestled on the banks of the historic River Boyne, Drogheda and the Boyne Valley region are steeped in history”;
- “Quality of Life – Drogheda has a relaxed easy feeling with superb schools, great shopping, outdoor leisure pursuits and fabulous dining opportunities”.

Meath County Council would agree with these positives for Drogheda, which in turn needed to be harnessed to facilitate further economic and employment growth in the town and its environs.

Economic development stands still for nobody, no town, no county, no region or no country. It needs to be worked upon continuously and there is no time to rest on one’s laurels. Meath County Council is seeking to act in this way with its economic plan for Drogheda and the rest of the county, and it is understood that Louth County Council is acting in the same way. This in turn reinforces the position that what is best for Drogheda is for both local authorities to continue to work together for the betterment of the town and its environs, its people and its businesses.

1.5 Drogheda Chamber’s Investment in Drogheda Brochure

Our disappointment with Drogheda Chamber does not lie alone with its call for a boundary review in regard to the town. Meath County Council has recently come across a brochure produced by the Chamber, under the banner of “Drogheda on the Boyne”, entitled ‘Invest Drogheda Co. Louth, Ireland’.

Here is an example of an important stakeholder in the town claiming the town for one county only and not giving any credit to a neighbouring and partner local authority in regard to Drogheda.

Further on in the document, it mentions FDI companies operating in the Meath environs of Drogheda (Coca-Cola International Services and IFS/State Street) as though they are in “Drogheda, Co. Louth”.

No attribution anywhere in the publication is given to Meath County Council in regard to facilitating and supporting the economic development of the town. On pages 14-15, there are outlines of Boyne Valley Group, as well as Coca-Cola and IFS/State Street, where, for example, the outline of Boyne Valley Group comments on its innovative and state-of-the-art Central Warehouse and Distribution Centre – which is located in County Meath and was enabled by the Council.

⁹ *These are precisely the sorts of clusters that the Regional Action Plan for Jobs for the Border Region (launched in late 2015) hopes to build upon in Drogheda.*

In addition, the document proceeds on the next page (p. 16) to outline the town's main retail parks, including Drogheda Retail Park and Southgate Shopping Centre, which were developed with the support of Meath County Council and today stand as major employers in the Meath environs of Drogheda.

Finally, on the same page, there is reference to the IDA Park in Drogheda, which is in Meath and we as the Council are re-doubling our efforts with the IDA to get more investment into the site, following on from the Economic Development Strategy, which prioritises FDI as a driver of economic development in the county in the coming years.

1.5.1 Drogheda and District Chamber Newsletter (Autumn/Winter 2015)

This recent publication of Drogheda Chamber would seem to have a more conciliatory stance judging by the editorial, where the President decries the lack of recognition of the true significance of the town. As reported further below in this Submission, the same person appeared to modify his position at the public information meeting on the Review (hosted by Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Ged Nash TD) on 9 September 2015, when, after robust questioning from attendees from the floor, stated words to the effect that the real objective of the Chamber's call for a boundary review was merely to "raise the profile of the town". If that was the intention, then it would seem that the plan was a very divisive and costly means of achieving an aim that could otherwise have been achieved in a much simpler and inclusive manner.

On page 10 of the same publication, there is a listing of activities that the Chamber has been involved in during 2015, which mentions the aforementioned Invest Drogheda prospectus and information pack, which fails to give due accreditation to the efforts of Meath County Council in promoting the town for economic development and as a visitor attraction, in partnership with Louth County Council.

1.6 Any Boundary Change would have No Effect on FDI into Drogheda

Meath County Council considers that a change of boundary would have no effect on Drogheda relative to Dundalk in regard to inward investment. Were there to be a boundary change, in which part of County Meath in the environs of Drogheda would come under the local administration of Louth County Council, which Meath County Council vehemently opposes, the new part under Louth County Council would not then fall into the Border Region and thus would not benefit from Border Region financial incentives for investment and employment, as County Louth currently does.

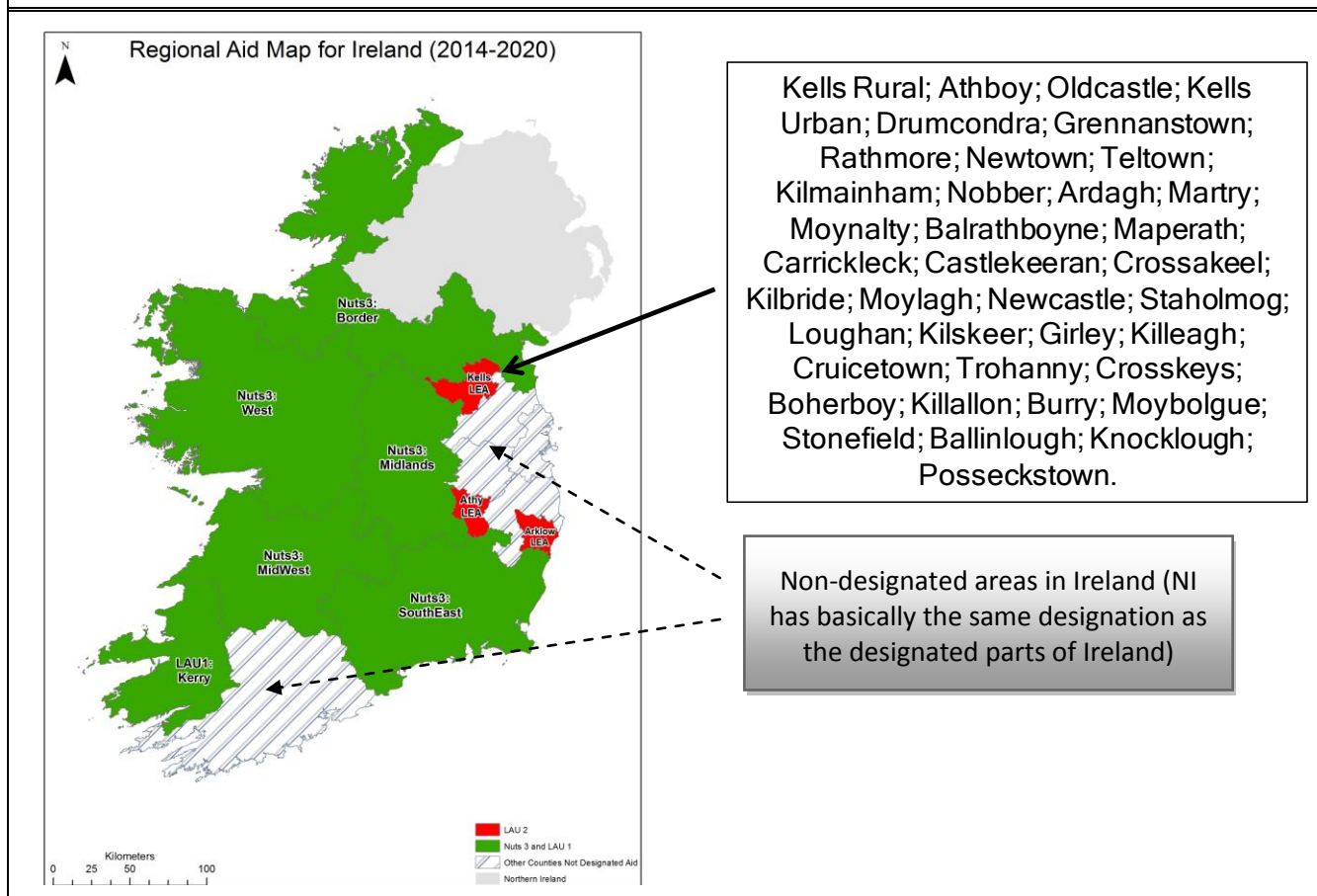
The EU Regional Aid Map 2014-2020 has already been finalised by the European Commission. The map is reproduced in Box 1.1 overleaf, where it is seen that County Meath, apart from the Kells LEA, is one of the parts of Ireland not designated for regional aid under the new arrangements. Kells and the other two local areas forming part of the designated area are coloured in red in the map in Box 1.1.

The new EU Regional Aid Map map became effective from 1 July 2014 and means that the Irish government will be able to provide enhanced State aid to the eligible areas identified in the map. The aid will include EI (Enterprise Ireland) and IDA Ireland grants – Irish and foreign firms. The aid will also include tourism grants, urban and rural renewal incentives. The new source of aid will be subject to limits and the aid intensity rates (capital and employment grants) are 30% for small firms, 20% medium firms and 10% large firms. While the design of the aid is directed towards micro, small and medium firms, larger firms are also eligible, where the EU rules specify that large-firm aid should be directed at new activities, diversification of existing firms into new products and/or process innovation.

Getting the Kells LEA into the new map has been a major success for Meath and will enable that part of the county, which struggled during the recession, to recover and create new employment.

Meath County Council has been and continues to embark on a proactive and business-friendly approach to promoting the Drogheda environs under its remit for inward investment purposes and believes that further significant employment growth by foreign-owned and indigenous enterprises can be facilitated in the St. Mary's ED (Meath) and neighbouring EDs. In regard to new FDI, the Meath environs of Drogheda benefits from being the home of the town's IDA Business and Technology Park, which currently includes IFS/State Street and in which more such employers are planned.

Box 1.1: New Regional Aid Map for Ireland (2014-2020) – including Details of the Electoral Divisions in Meath (Kells LEA)



Source: Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) (<https://www.djei.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/RAG-Info-Note-2014.pdf>), Meath County Council.

1.7 The Louth Economic Forum's FDI Proposal for Drogheda (2015)

Meath County Council observes that, in its FDI Action Plan (2015), the LEF states (p. 22):

"The Louth Economic Forum has proposed to IDA that Drogheda should be seen as part of the Dublin Metropolitan Region for the purpose of incoming foreign itineraries".

The precise meaning of this statement is unclear from the document but it would appear to imply that the whole of Drogheda – both its Louth and Meath parts – should be pulled into the Dublin Metropolitan Region for the purposes of inward investment or FDI itineraries, including presumably IDA site visits with potential inward investors. Meath County Council understands that this proposal, if followed through by the IDA, would mean that Drogheda (including those parts of the town in Louth) would no longer come under the auspices of the LEF for inward investment purposes because clearly

Louth is outside the Dublin Metropolitan Region.¹⁰ It is noted by Meath County Council that County Louth is planned to be part of the proposed new (NUTS 2) EMRA area for Ireland (as part of 3 new regional assembly areas to replace the current two NUTS 2 regional assembly areas of Ireland, namely the Southern and Eastern Region and the BMW or Border, Midland and Western Region).

For clarity, the Dublin Metropolitan Region or the GDA comprises the four local authority areas of the Dublin Region (Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown) together with the three counties of the Mid-East Region (Meath, Kildare and Wicklow).

On the other hand, Louth is currently in the Border Region. The Dublin, Mid-East and Border Regions are all EU NUTS 3 regions.

In effect, therefore, in its recent FDI Action Plan (2015), the LEF has proposed that Drogheda be promoted as part of Meath, which is part of the GDA, for inward investment or FDI purposes, while the rest of County Louth, including Dundalk, will be promoted by Louth County Council and the LEF.

Meath County Council has no issue with this proposal – it actually serves to support the case being advanced in this Submission because it would permit us to continue to promote the environs of Drogheda under the Council's remit for FDI. It also recognises the reality that the IDA Business and Technology Park in Drogheda is, and will continue to be, located in County Meath, in the Southern Environs of Drogheda. In the event that this park were to be transferred into Louth, which we would be strongly opposed to, its designation would not change for the reason that the EU Regional Aid Map 2014-2020 has been agreed and signed off by the European Commission. As some might erroneously say, transferring the park into Louth would mean that it would then benefit from Border Region status and be able to avail of enhanced financial support, when the reality would be otherwise – namely that any boundary change, which we would vehemently be against, would have no effect on FDI into Drogheda.

In addition to the above, the LEF's proposal that Drogheda should come under the Dublin Region for IDA itineraries might send out a negative signal in regard to Louth County Council's, and/or the LEF's, commitment to Drogheda for FDI purposes. For instance, besides IFS/State Street in the IDA Business and Technology Park, there are other FDI companies currently operating in Drogheda. In the Louth part of the town, there is, for example, Becton Dickinson (medical devices) and Yapstone (international services, based at the Mill Enterprise Centre). Is the LEF/Louth County Council now suggesting that any future such investments in the Louth parts of the town come through the offices of the Dublin Metropolitan Region? If so, there is a risk that future IDA/FDI itineraries for the town (Meath and Louth parts) will be few-and-far between, given the scale and significance of the Dublin Region, which currently accounts for about half of all IDA Ireland jobs announcements (based on 2015 press releases).

Drogheda's FDI promotion needs local support and Louth County Council's commitment to growing FDI in the town should be as important as its commitment to developing FDI in Dundalk or any other part of Louth, just as Meath's promotion of Drogheda ranks along with Navan's for FDI purposes.

Meath County Council will continue to fight hard for the Meath environs of Drogheda, including the Drogheda IDA Business and Technology Park being actively promoted for FDI purposes. However, for the rest of Drogheda (Louth parts), we strongly feel that the promotion in regard to FDI/IDA itineraries

¹⁰ The LEF's FDI Action Plan 2015 is available at [http://www.louthcoco.ie/en/Services/Economic-Development/Louth Economic Forum /Foreign Direct Investment /Foreign-Direct-Investment-Plan-2015.pdf](http://www.louthcoco.ie/en/Services/Economic-Development/Louth%20Economic%20Forum%20-%20Foreign%20Direct%20Investment%20-%20Foreign-Direct-Investment-Plan-2015.pdf).

needs to be urgently clarified for fear that this part of the town might be falling between the cracks and losing out on new investment.¹¹

1.8 Drogheda ‘City Status’ Campaign

According to the CSO’s delineation of ‘legal towns and their environs/suburbs’, Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts) had a population of 38,578 in 2011, a little higher than the figure for Dundalk (37,817).

This means that Drogheda is the sixth largest urban centre in the country, after Dublin City and Suburbs (1,110,627), Cork City and Suburbs (198,582), Limerick City and Suburbs (91,454), Galway City and Suburbs (76,778) and Waterford City and Suburbs (51,159) (delineated by the CSO).

Whatever about the merits or otherwise of Drogheda as a ‘city’ – it rightly takes pride in its rich history but it does not have a cathedral or university (ecclesiastically Drogheda north of the Boyne is in the Archdiocese of Armagh and Drogheda south of the Boyne in the Diocese of Meath, where the Bishop of Meath sits in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, stemming from ancient tradition) – it seems that it would not be possible to advance any sensible case to create a sixth city in Ireland, not least given the new administrative machinery that would need to be put in place in order to administer such a development (whether in Drogheda or any other town in Ireland). In any event, attributing city status to Drogheda would run contrary to the public sector reform/rationalisation process that has been in train over the last number of years. In the highly unlikely event of Drogheda getting city status, other towns would likely seek city status too.¹²

But there are even more important and fundamental factors driving the reason for why the Drogheda ‘City Status’ campaign is without merit. While Drogheda may be the sixth largest urban centre in Ireland and whilst its wider environs might boost its overall population towards 75,000 (2011), it remains a large town, with a large hinterland area of a rural character. The same applies to Dundalk and the same could be also said to apply to Limerick, Galway and Waterford, and even to Cork, all of which are much smaller than the capital.

To the independent eye, there are only two cities of an international character on the island of Ireland – Dublin and Belfast – and Drogheda (and Dundalk, we would add) happens to be located in the heart of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor, which has enormous economic development potential, which remains to be realised. Scale and critical mass are key ingredients to ensuring the competitiveness of cities, which

¹¹ ‘Is Drogheda in Dublin? Proposal to place Drogheda in Dublin area to attract overseas investment’, *Drogheda Leader* (9 September 2015).

¹² History rightly matters to Drogheda and its people. Meath County Council notes a recent (front page) newspaper article in the *Drogheda Leader* entitled ‘Drogheda’s history goes under the hammer’, with the subtitle ‘Disgrace as Louth County Council puts vintage fire engine up for auction’ (26 August 2015). The story referred to a decision by Louth County Council to sell a vintage (1955) fire engine (a Dennis F12) for an estimated €12,000, which apparently was used during the visit of Pope John Paul II to the town in 1979. A picture showing the fire engine illustrates the branding (in traditional Irish font) ‘bárdas droicid-áta’. It subsequently turned out that the old fire engine is to be sold to the Old Drogheda Society and will be on display at the Millmount Museum in the town (<http://www.pressreader.com/ireland/drogheda-independent/20150902/282398398180230/TextView>). Visitors to Drogheda are sometimes struck or surprised to realise that there are no cathedrals in the town, even though the skyline features three tall, cathedral-like spires (St. Mary’s RC church in the RC Meath Diocese; St. Peter’s RC Church in the RC Armagh Archdiocese (where the remains of St. Oliver Plunkett’s head can be seen); and St. Peter’s Church of Ireland in the CofI Archdiocese of Armagh) (Drogheda is also home to numerous other places of worship, and a recently-constructed Presbyterian church is located at Colpe, in the Meath environs of the town).

today compete for inward investment internationally.

Giving city status to a town that generally functions well as a large growth town (as recognised in the current Meath CDP and Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area) with a sizeable rural hinterland but with a comparably low population in a European or wider international context makes little or no sense in principle or in practice and we can think of much better uses for scarce public resources. Instead, Drogheda's future is part of the main region of Ireland – EMRA – and, while Dublin is naturally enough at the core of this region, Drogheda and its local administrators can and will continue to act towards the goal of securing more inward investment and employment locally as the links between the town and the capital improve and as transport infrastructure between them becomes enhanced even further in the coming years.

The following extract from Minister Kelly's formal reply to a Dáil Question on the possibility of City Status for Drogheda shows that such designation is not warranted:¹³

"545. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on city status for the greater Drogheda metropolitan area plan as the way forward as there are 76,000 persons living within the GDMA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3777/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): There are no proposals to establish additional city authorities. The Action Programme for Effective Local Government (October 2012) sets out government policy in relation to the reform of a range of local government matters and the Local Government Act 2001, extensively revised and updated by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, now provides a modern legal framework supporting the local government sector. The 2014 Act provided for the unification of the city and county Councils in Limerick and Waterford and reviews of local government arrangements, recently announced in Cork and Galway, include the option of unification of the city and county Councils in those areas.

A new system of sub-county governance in the form of municipal districts was also introduced under the 2014 Act to replace the now dissolved town council formation and achieve stronger, more integrated local government in each county while devolving significant decision-making to elected members at district level.

Within the new sub-county arrangements, specific legal provision has been made to allow Drogheda to retain the title 'Borough' and to continue to use the title of 'Mayor' as an alternative to Cathaoirleach, thereby maintaining appropriate recognition for the history and civic status of the town. Moreover, elected members for the Borough District of Drogheda have a wide range of reserved functions which can be performed in respect of the district. In addition, those same members form part of the combined plenary membership for Louth County Council with responsibility for the discharge of an additional suite of strategic and other reserved functions.

Overall, I am satisfied that Drogheda has a status appropriate to its size and location within Louth County Council and having regard to the structural and other changes that have taken place countrywide under the Action Programme and revised legislation. In the circumstances, I

13

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/DebatesWebPack.nsf/takes/dail2015012700088?opendocument&highlight=city%20status#WRCC03900>.

have no proposals to introduce amending legislation to establish a new city authority in Drogheda or elsewhere. Any such proposal would be at variance with the thrust of policy development and implementation work to date which has seen greater streamlining and integration of local government, with the potential for improved subsidiarity, coherence and efficiency resulting in better value for money and service delivery for citizens.”

1.9 Drogheda Boundary Review Public Information Meeting of 9 September 2015

1.9.1 What the Speakers Said

On 9 September 2015, the Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, co-hosted a public information meeting regarding the Review at the Boyne Valley Hotel in Drogheda. The other speakers at the event were a specialist in urban economics and formerly based at Dublin Institute of Technology (now retired), and the President of Drogheda and District Chamber of Commerce.

In announcing the event, the Minister, in a local circular distributed to households in Drogheda (dated September 2015), stated:

“Earlier this year I worked with Environment Minister Alan Kelly to secure a major review of Drogheda’s town boundary with County Meath. In my opinion, it goes against every principle of sensible planning that Drogheda has almost 6,000 people living in estates on the fringes of the town ... who are forced to depend on a Council based in Navan for all of their local services”.

“An extension of the boundary of Drogheda makes economic, social and planning sense ... County boundaries should no longer act as a straitjacket blocking the natural development of towns like Drogheda”.

In fairness to the Minister, while on the one hand conveying his own, personal views on the matter, thereby running the risk of pre-judging or pre-determining the outcome of the Review, he nevertheless deserves credit for taking the initiative of organising the event, the aim of which was to give members of the public “as much information as possible and the chance to have their own voices heard” (as stated in the Minister’s September 2015 local circular).

By way of a brief aside, the level of attendance from members of the public at the event was very low. There were about 40 people at the event, about half of whom were councillors or speakers, or those associated with the speakers, including some members of Drogheda Chamber. The very low level of attendance suggests that people by-and-large (in either the Louth or Meath parts of the town) do not attach a high level of importance to the Review and that other issues rank higher on people’s everyday lives. This is not to say that people do not care about the boundary in Drogheda or that it should give licence for there to be any change; rather one interpretation is that the current arrangements are working well for people in the town and that any improvements can be made in a more proportionate and less restrictive manner compared with a boundary change (i.e. continued and further cooperation between the two local authorities where it is warranted). The new survey results from Behaviour and Attitudes reported upon subsequently in this Submission confirm these views, by providing new evidence that (1) there are much more important issues occupying people’s lives and concerns (like employment, the cost of living, health and commuting) and (2) any change to the current arrangements is unlikely to change people’s lives/have impact. The new survey evidence also reveals that people living in the Area of Interest in Meath are satisfied to a very large extent with the quality of their lives.

The written views of the Minister were conveyed orally at the beginning of the event, where he also introduced the speakers.

The remarks made by the urban specialist may be summed up as follows (noting that he has been providing support to the ‘Drogheda City Status’ campaign) (a copy of his research paper was made available at the event, co-authored with the President of Drogheda Chamber of Commerce):

- Importance of jobs – the most important issue it was said;
- The policy content framed by the government’s Putting People First (2012), where he emphasised that the Review of the Drogheda boundary must respect the guiding principle of “putting people first”;
- Drogheda has fared poorly under the NSS;
- East Meath is not being properly promoted or catered for by Meath County Council;
- Proposal for a “Greater Drogheda Area” that would respect the current Louth-Meath boundary but which would come under the local authority of Louth County Council (i.e. some of the Meath environs of Drogheda currently under the administration of Meath County Council would transfer to come under the remit of Louth County Council); and
- Louth would basically be re-configured around Drogheda and Dundalk and their respective catchment areas.

The President of Drogheda Chamber said that:

- The Drogheda Chamber’s call for a boundary review was precisely that – namely a call for a review of the boundary and not for a boundary change;
- The reason for the call for a boundary review was to raise the profile of Drogheda;
- The current local administration of Drogheda is based around the “system” rather than the “people” (as intended under Putting People First, 2012);
- The people of Drogheda have been poorly represented politically;
- On local services provision, he raised the following:
 - Healthcare – the lack of a primary healthcare centre in the Meath environs of Drogheda (Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington)
 - Driver licensing
 - Importance of providing work closer to where people live.

Meath County Council notes that Appendix 5 at the end of the co-authored paper by the President of Drogheda Chamber and the urban specialist contains a high-level map showing four delineations of Drogheda, namely:

- Drogheda Borough with the population figure quoted of “30,393” (which is the correct population figure based on Census 2011);
- “Developed Drogheda” with a population figure quoted of “38,579” (which is just 1 person more than the figure of 38,578, which is the population figure attributed to the CSO’s delineation of “Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs” (in Louth and Meath) based on Census 2011);
- “Including Zoned Lands” with a quoted population figure of “39,614” (the derivation of which is not clear from any part of the document); and
- “Drogheda and District” with a quoted population figure of “60,646”.

The latter delineation is based on a wider boundary around Drogheda and its catchment area, taking in, according to the map presented by the President of Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, Tullyallen and Termonfeckin in the northern environs of Drogheda and Staleen, Bellewstown, Julianstown and Laytown

(where the River Nanny meets the Irish Sea) to the south. This area, according to Mr. Phelan, represents the Louth and Meath environs of Drogheda; but it is not clear how it squares with the Chamber's previous figure (noted above) of 78,851 (Appendix 1 of the joint paper refers to a similar population level in 2011 for "Greater Drogheda" of 78,594, this being made up of populations for "North of River" of "39,311" and "South of River" of "39,283" – but it is not at all clear how these figures have been derived in the paper).

1.9.2 What the Public Attendees Said

The level of public attendance at the public information evening at the Boyne Valley Hotel was much lower than Meath County Council expected for an event like this. If the boundary were such a significant issue, then surely the venue would have been packed. But this was far from the case. At most, around 40 people were in attendance, including the speakers and the local authority councillors who attended. There were a lot of empty seats in the venue.

There were 10 councillors from Meath in attendance and just 1 councillor from Louth. There was a time constraint on the meeting, which concluded at around 9.30pm.

Without any doubt, there was a lot of criticism about the Review and about what the three speakers presented, before the meeting was opened up to the floor.

Many points were made from the floor, including the following:

- Biased and flawed presentations by the three speakers and that the outcome of the Review was pre-determined and thus the Review was merely an exercise in reverse-engineering to get the result that the speakers wanted (Meath County Council would note, however, that there appeared to be contradictions in the proposal);
- Politics should be purged from the Review process;
- Drogheda is effectively governed (locally) now by Louth County Council in Dundalk, which is 22 miles from Drogheda (35km), whereas Navan is 16 miles (26 km) from Drogheda (they are about the same drive-time from Drogheda, given the M1 between Drogheda and Dundalk);
- "Better the devil you know" was the remark made by one speaker in regard to maintaining the *status quo* and the uncertainty that would ensue from new local authority arrangements in the Meath environs of Drogheda;
- Drogheda Chamber should focus its efforts more on the northern environs of Drogheda, where there has been little or no employment development;
- "Drogheda is a bottleneck of lorries" – relating to the last point and the congestion caused by lorries travelling through the centre of town into and from Drogheda Port in the Louth part of the town and the absence of a northern cross route that would have alleviated the problem but has been in abeyance for a number of years;
- The sad dereliction of Narrow West Street in the centre of town;
- Meath environs doing very well, employment-wise, retailing-wise and residentially;
- The people living in the Meath environs of Drogheda are not living in isolation but are inextricably fused with the rest of the town;
- Healthcare issues – people living in the Meath environs of Drogheda have no primary healthcare centre in the East Meath area and instead have to travel to Navan (it was pointed out by another person at the meeting that this is a Louth/Meath HSE (Health Service Executive) issue and separate to the local authority boundary and can be addressed through liaison with the HSE);

- There are no apparent issues regarding policing between the Louth and Meath parts (while there are Garda Divisions in Louth and Meath, and Garda Districts within each county, when needed law enforcement is not shackled by local boundaries as it is between jurisdictions – for example between the two parts of the island);
- The onus is surely on the Review to prove that people will be better off in the event that the Meath environs of Drogheda are moved into Louth;
- Disingenuous for the speakers, or anyone for that matter, to suggest that the people in the Meath environs of Drogheda and/or the East Meath area are worse off compared to the situation in which they would find themselves if they were living in Louth;
- The Review is suffering from “too much emotion” and “not enough substance”;
- One person remarked that Coca-Cola re-located from the Louth part of Drogheda to its current location in the Meath environs of the town at Southgate and that that move was indication enough from a business perspective;
- One person suggested that both Louth and Meath County Councils should be merged;
- It was suggested that there should be a public vote on the matter (e.g. the people of East Meath should be given the opportunity of voting on whether to remain administered locally by Meath County Council or administered by Louth County Council).

1.9.3 Meath County Council Comments on the Boundary Review Public Information Evening

We would have the following observations regarding the public information evening.

First, regarding the Minister’s remarks, it is not clear what, if any, planning principles Drogheda’s fringe development violates – these were not given or presented upon during the public information event. On the contrary, the population and employment development in the Southern Environs of Drogheda, including within the St. Mary’s ED, has been one of the most successful and sustainable developments the town has experienced in living memory.

Secondly, it is not at all clear whether people living in the Meath environs of Drogheda are disadvantaged in any way through being “forced to depend on a Council based in Navan for all of their local services”. To what extent, if any, does this make a difference to people and businesses residing and operating respectively in that part of the town? The survey evidence presented subsequently in this Submission indicates that virtually everyone residing in the Meath part of the Area of Interest (98-99%) reports a very high satisfaction level and two-third are happy with their local council in terms of upkeep;

Third, in regard to the Minister’s assertion that county boundaries act as a “straitjacket blocking the natural development of towns like Drogheda”, no evidence was presented to substantiate this claim. On the contrary, and evidenced in the course of this Submission, the Meath environs of Drogheda have grown strongly over the past decade, in regard to population, jobs within the area and socio-economic performance.

In addition, the Minister’s remarks on the evening did not take into account the possibility or likelihood that the Review will create winners and losers, and there was no discussion of any possible re-distributional effects of any boundary change arising from the Review (taking into account future opportunities and not just the present situation).

In relation to the Chamber’s presentation, Putting People First (2012) provided for the local authority mergers in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford but makes no mention or has any provision for the Drogheda Review or any of the other current boundary reviews in Athlone, Carlow and Waterford, let

alone the recent possible mergers in Cork and Galway (the former has been mired in controversy following the dissenting report, while the publication of the Galway report has been delayed).

Contrary to what the speakers may have meant, Meath County Council appreciates the economic potential of the M1 Corridor: along with Fingal and Louth County Councils, we commissioned the Indecon report on the economic significance and potential of the M1 Corridor in 2009 (not to be confused with the Indecon report on the economic development strategy for Drogheda – Louth and Meath environs – reviewed earlier). Further, the M1 Corridor features prominently in the economic hierarchy in the Meath CDP 2013-2019 and in the Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022; and employment within the Meath parts of the M1 Corridor has grown strongly since 2006, as also evidenced in Section 5 of this Submission.

Turning to what the Chamber President said:

- Driver licensing is not a significant issue for many in today's environment – the facility is available online and, as shown later in this Submission, online usage has been growing rapidly in recent years;
- On working closer to home, Meath County Council is proactively supporting employment growth in the Meath environs of Drogheda and, as we shall see subsequently in this Submission, the empirical evidence reveals this strongly.

With regard to the floor, there might be an issue with the provision of health services in East Meath but this is a HSE issue and can be addressed without the need for a boundary change. One person at the public information evening spoke of her child, who has autism/special needs, and is brought to Navan daily for services. While the person expressed satisfaction with the services at Navan, the distance to travel everyday was significant for the mother and there would be preference for service provision closer to home. The school in question is St. Mary's Special School in Navan, which caters for around 80 pupils aged between 4 and 18 years. Pupils travel from the Meath environs of Drogheda and from all over the county daily to attend the school, which is due to be expanded in the next year or so. In addition, local schools in the East Meath area also cater for children with autism and special needs. For example, Donacarney Girls National School now has an autism unit catering for up to 7 children with this condition and the same applies to the Donacarney Boys National School, which is located on the same campus – the new school was officially opened by the Bishop of Meath Most Reverend Michael Smith in 2014.¹⁴ In addition to both these schools in Donacarney, East Meath, not far from the Area of Interest, where there are places for 14 local children with autism, the new building for the Irish primary school, along the Mill Road and within the Area of Interest, will also have provision for educating local children with autism and so recent years have seen a significant improvement in local schools catering for the condition, in addition to the Navan resource, which looks after children with special needs requiring care and support beyond what a school would be capable of providing.

In the Louth part of Drogheda, there is a school for children with autism and complex needs – Abacus School – which aims to serve Louth and Meath. It was formed by a parent-led group in 2002 with the aim of ensuring that their children were able to access evidence-based education in their local

¹⁴ Other primary schools in the local area in the Meath environs of Drogheda include Mount Hanover, Whitecross (Julianstown), Laytown, Le Cheile and Gaelscoil and Bhradáin Feasa. Secondary schools include Drogheda Grammar School and Colaiste na hinse. St. Mary's Boys School and Sacred Heart Girls School are located in the St. Mary's Parish of Meath (but in the former Drogheda Borough Council area).

community and that they were enabled to maximise every opportunity in their lives. It is understood that the school is today recognised by the Department of Education and Skills.

Returning to St. Mary's School for special children in Navan, plans are underway to develop the facility at the Johnstown Educational Campus in 2017, which will see capacity extended significantly.

With respect to the number of councillors who attended the public information evening, Meath County Council was struck by the fact that only one councillor from Louth County Council attended (a member of the same political party as the Minister), while there were 10 councillors from Meath County Council.

Meath County Council understands that the Minister announced plans that he would be following up the public information evening in Drogheda with a similar event in Dundalk. No such event has been held in that town, and we understand that the Review has registered very little interest or attention in Dundalk.

1.10 Terms of Reference of the Review and Chronology to Date

1.10.1 Announcement and Broad Scope of the Review

On 19 June 2015, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Alan Kelly TD, announced the establishment of four statutory committees to review local government boundaries in Athlone, Carlow, Drogheda and Waterford. According to Minister Kelly's announcement:

"The main rationale for boundary alteration is to bring the administrative jurisdictions into line with the current settlement and development position and the reviews I have announced are clearly warranted given the significant overspill of population in each of these cases into another county".

The Minister went on in his press release to say:

"Bringing all of a town or metropolitan district within a single local authority area eliminates anomalies and distortions of divided administration, service provision, regulatory/enforcement responsibility and electoral representation, including problems such as competitive policies and practices between authorities in relation to planning, rating and charges, which can impact negatively on town centres. Consolidation of administrative responsibility can also strengthen the economic performance of the town or metropolitan district, both by eliminating the anomalies I have referred to and ensuring that there is a single authority working on its behalf".

Meath County Council would be concerned that these remarks – inadvertently or otherwise – may serve to pre-judge or pre-determine the outcome of the Review *ab initio*, risking the relegation of hard evidence that might come to the attention of the Review *during* the process.

In addition, the latter statement by Minister Kelly ignores the complexities involved in a boundary change in respect of the local administration of a town and its environs, not to mention the history and the future (e.g. Meath County Council's investment in Drogheda and its environs over many years, including its leadership role in managing the planning and construction of the Boyne Valley (Mary McAleese) Bridge on the M1 Motorway, in tandem with Louth County Council, and its ambitious plans for economic development in the Meath environs of Drogheda in the coming years).

The word "overspill" is clearly inappropriate to the situation in Drogheda, where the southern environs of the town clearly features very importantly in the plans of Meath County Council, well before the Review and reflected in the current Drogheda LAP 2009-2015 and in the Meath CDP 2013-2019. Also, the growth or the lack of it of retailing in Drogheda town centre has not been due to the Louth-Meath

boundary in the town as numerous other large, and small, towns up-and-down the country with no inter-county boundaries have struggled with town centre development over many years, with the tendency towards out-of-town retail developments. This tendency has occurred in other advanced countries and can be witnessed, for example, in Northern Ireland. Thus, new retail parks can be found in towns like Letterkenny, Wexford, Mullingar, Tralee, Ballymena, Newry, Coleraine etc. etc. Town centres can effectively compete with these developments by differentiating their offerings and providing shoppers with an alternative experience. Ultimately, through the process of competition, consumers are better off, with lower prices, more choice and greater availability.

1.10.2 Membership of the Review Committee

The Review Committee would comprise the following members:

- Mr. Jack Keyes (former Cavan County Manager)(Chair);
- Mr. Joe Allen (former Principal Officer at the DECLG); and
- Mr. Ciaran Lynch (Limerick Institute of Technology (Thurles Campus) and former Chief Planner at Clare County Council).

In early September 2015, Meath County Council learned that Mr. Lynch resigned or stepped down from the Review Committee and a few days later it was learned that Mr. Allen also stood down or resigned from the Committee, leaving only Mr. Keyes on the Committee. A few weeks later, Mr. Allen and Mr. Lynch were replaced by Mr. Donal Enright, former Principal Officer at the DECLG, and by Mr. Gerry Sheeran, former Senior Planner in Limerick City and County Council.

During the course of the Review, the Review Committee members were supported by members of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).

1.10.3 Terms of Reference of the Review

The Terms of Reference of the Review (dated June 2015) are as follows (reproduced here):

1. The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government hereby establishes the Drogheda Boundary Committee under section 28 of the Local Government Act 1991, hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”.
2. The following persons are hereby appointed as members of the Committee:-
 - Jack Keyes (Chair);
 - Joe Allen (replaced as describe above);
 - Ciaran Lynch (replaced as describe above).
3. The Committee shall be independent in the performance of its functions and shall stand dissolved on submission of its final report to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.
4. In accordance with sections 32 and 33 of the Local Government Act 1991, the Committee is hereby required to:-
 - carry out a review of the boundary between County Louth and County Meath;
 - make such recommendations with respect to that boundary, and any consequential recommendations with respect to the area of the Borough District of Drogheda, that it considers to be necessary in the interests of effective and convenient local government; and
 - prepare and furnish to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, a report in writing of that review and its recommendations.
5. In the event of a recommendation that the boundary between County Louth and County Meath and the area of the Borough District of Drogheda should be altered, the report shall contain

relevant supporting information, analysis and rationale relating to or arising from such recommendation, including the following matters:-

- (a) The financial and other relevant implications, including the potential outcomes to be achieved, and likely benefits and costs.
 - (b) Any significant issues that are considered likely to arise in the implementation of revised arrangements and how these should be addressed.
 - (c) Measures that should be taken consequential to or in the context of the recommended arrangements, including any measures in relation to financial arrangements.
 - (d) Any matters in relation to which provision should be made in a primary order or a supplementary order (providing for matters arising from, in consequence of, or related to, the boundary extension) within the meaning of section 34 of the Local Government Act 1991, including any financial adjustments required.
 - (e) Any interim measures which should be taken, if necessary, in advance of, or in preparation for, the full implementation of the recommendations.
 - (f) The appropriate timescale for implementation of recommendations, including any interim measures.
6. In carrying out its review and formulating its recommendations, the Committee shall address the following matters in particular, insofar as relevant to the requirements of articles (4) and (5):-
- (a) The need to take full account of: -
 - (i) current demographic and relevant spatial and socio-economic factors, including settlement and employment patterns;
 - (ii) detailed information to be provided by the relevant local authorities in relation to their structure, services, finances and operations or other matters relevant to the Committee's functions;
 - (iii) Government policy in relation to local government as set out in the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government, Putting People First*, and in relation to the public service and the public finances.
 - (b) The need to maximise efficiency and value for money in local government.
 - (c) The need to ensure that the arrangements recommended are financially sustainable and will not result in an ongoing additional cost to central Government through increased subvention.
 - (d) Staffing, organisational, representational, financial, service delivery and other relevant implications or requirements.
 - (e) The need to ensure effective local government for Drogheda and its hinterland, with particular regard to the need to maximise the economic performance and potential of the area; to facilitate the delivery of efficient and good value local authority services; and to ensure effective and accountable democratic representation.
 - (f) The need to have regard to the identity and cohesion of local communities.
 - (g) Any weaknesses in current local authority arrangements or operations that need to be addressed.
 - (h) Any additional matters that the Minister may specify.
7. The Committee shall make such recommendations with respect to the requirements at (4) and (5) and (6) as it considers necessary in the interests of effective and efficient local government.

It shall prepare and furnish to the Minister, **no later than 30 November 2015**, a report, in writing, of its review and recommendations, which the Minister shall publish.

As noted above, two of the members of the Review Committee resigned or stood down during the course of the Review and were subsequently replaced. This inevitably led to slippage in the timing for the Review Committee to report back to the Minister and the original deadline of “no later than 30 November 2015” was put back to the end of March (31 March 2016).

The Original Terms of Reference for the Review, as reproduced above, specified an overall completion date to report back to the Minister of 30 November 2015, in common with Waterford. On the other hand, the review for Athlone and Carlow had a reporting date of 29 February 2016. It was not clear what the rationale for the “staggered” deadlines between the two groups of reviews was at the time but since then it is understood that all four reviews have moved to a common reporting date of the end of March 2016.

Ahead of the final report of the Review and the recommendation(s) of the Review Committee to the Minister concerning the boundary in Drogheda, members of the public can submit their views to the Review by email through a facility on the website of the Review (<http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie>). The submission facility contains a number of questions concerning the current situation and whether or not alteration of the boundary would help or hinder arrangements in respect of employment and economic development, community, local government services and efficiency etc. The deadline for making submissions is 5pm on 22 January 2016, which Meath County Council considers is a tight enough timeframe, particularly if there will be a large number of submissions and attachments accompanying some or all submissions.

1.11 Meath County Council Comments on the *Modus Operandi* of the Review

1.11.1 Importance of Objectivity and Proportionality in the Review

It is understood by Meath County Council that the Review Committee will exercise due and full objectivity throughout the Review and will not approach the exercise in any way from the perspective of compiling any evidence merely to show, demonstrate and/or illustrate a pre-defined position.

It could well be argued that the Review is biased from birth given Minister Kelly’s remarks on announcing the Review on 19 June 2015, namely that:

“The main rationale for boundary alteration is to bring the administrative jurisdictions into line with the current settlement and development position and the reviews I have announced are clearly warranted given the significant overspill of population in each of these cases into another county”.

“Bringing all of a town or metropolitan district within a single local authority area eliminates anomalies and distortions of divided administration, service provision, regulatory/enforcement responsibility and electoral representation, including problems such as competitive policies and practices between authorities in relation to planning, rating and charges, which can impact negatively on town centres. Consolidation of administrative responsibility can also strengthen the economic performance of the town or metropolitan district, both by eliminating the anomalies I have referred to and ensuring that there is a single authority working on its behalf”.

These remarks, which also appear on the aforementioned website of the Review (<http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie>), without giving any opposing view or failing to recognise the

long history of the two counties in Drogheda, *risk biasing the outcome of the review in one direction, namely the proposal that the Meath environs of Drogheda be moved into County Louth.*

1.11.2 Cost/Revenue Neutral Considerations

It has been suggested that any proposed change to the Drogheda boundary would be based on cost/revenue neutral considerations but this is plainly impossible to achieve in practice, owing to the dynamic nature of the town and its environs over time. Over the years ahead, Drogheda will continue to grow and prosper, and new businesses and jobs will be created in-and-around the town, in both the Louth and Meath parts. Nobody knows or can predict with any degree of accuracy how this development will occur over the next 5, 10 and more years' time.

If recent history provides a guide, then a substantial amount of employment and population growth will occur in the Meath environs of the town in the coming years as the rate of both has been much higher in the Meath parts than in the Louth parts of Drogheda. For instance, if one looks at the EDs in each part of the town respectively the most jobs at the time of the last census in 2011, namely Fair Gate (Louth) (5,704 jobs in that year) and St. Mary's (Meath) (1,363 jobs in the same year), it emerges from the data analysis conducted by Meath County Council (reported in detail in Section 5) that the rate of jobs growth during 2006-2011 has been much higher in the Meath ED (48.3% employment growth in the Meath ED versus 6.1% employment contraction in the Louth ED). Indeed, if one compares the St. Mary's ED in Meath with its counterpart of the same name in the Louth part of Drogheda, the evidence shows jobs contraction in the Louth part of almost 18% during the period compared with the more than 48% employment growth in the St. Mary's ED in Meath during the same time period. Today, the Meath environs of Drogheda are home to some major employers – indigenous and foreign-owned – and Meath County Council has big plans and ambitions to further develop the area, with even more jobs growth to support the goal of the Meath CDP and Economic Development Strategy of facilitating people to work closer to where they live, thereby addressing the commuter leakage from the area.

How could a cost/revenue neutral formula compensate Meath County Council for future economic development? The short answer is that it cannot or could not.

1.11.3 Criteria and Meath County Council's Full Cooperation with the Review

At the beginning the Review process, the Review Committee, supported by personnel from the IPA (Institute of Public Administration, Dublin), held meetings with both Louth and Meath County Councils (at the meetings together) in which criteria for the Review were considered. In August 2015, a set of "potential" criteria were circulated covering the following areas:

1. Financial matters;
2. Coherent economic, environmental and social development;
3. Governance and accountability;
4. Effective service delivery;
5. Community of interest;
6. Human resource management;
7. Efficiency;
8. Geographical features.

When the new Review Committee was established, a detailed information request was the circulated to Louth and Meath County Councils, in October 2015, requesting a long list of planning and other documents relating to the respective Councils and the area under consideration. The Review Committee's information requests also sought "analyses" of the large volume of documents requested.

Then in January 2016, near to the submission deadline, Louth and Meath County Councils were shown another document from the Review Committee, entitled Standard Framework for Evaluation for Local Authority Boundary Reviews (for Athlone, Carlow, Drogheda and Waterford). The front of this document states “As developed and adopted by the Boundary Review Committees” and was prepared on 13 November 2015. However, Meath County Council only had sight of this document on 6 January 2016, and it is understood that Louth County Council saw the document for the first time on the same date (at the meeting of the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee on that day, at the Boyne Valley Hotel, Drogheda, in which members of both Councils were in attendance along with the Committee Members and a representative from the IPA).

Meath County Council considers that there has been a lot of confusion over the Review Committee’s criteria for handling how it will evaluate the evidence that it will receive on 22 January 2016. We have nevertheless done our best to cover all the main bases of the criteria communicated to us by the Committee and this is reflected in the headings and sub-headings contained in this Submission.

The Area of Interest Map was produced by the Committee in late November 2015, by which time Meath County Council was already committed to our submission document. But this Submission nevertheless takes due account of the Area of Interest.

Throughout the whole process, we have cooperated fully and comprehensively with the Review Committee, taking time to produce special maps of the area and compile relevant statistical information, *inter alia*.

In the Annex of Supplementary Information at the end of this Submission, we tabulate the documents produced by Meath County Council and shared on the Review Committee’s internal website (using the Alfresco system and hosted by Fingal County Council), noting that all of the documents will have been uploaded to the website following the submission deadline (22 January 2016) (this website, designed to facilitate the working of the Review Committee, including the three external members and the IPA as well as Louth and Meath County Councils, should not be confused with the public website for the Review, to which members of the public will send their submissions by 22 January 2016).¹⁵ Meath County Council in addition furnished a copy of the document list to the Committee at its meeting (in Navan) on Wednesday 20 January 2016.

1.11.4 Chronology of the Review

Owing to the critical importance of this Review for Meath County Council and for the economic and social development of Meath in the future, we have closely monitored how the Review has proceeded since its commencement last June (2015) and this chronology of events is given in the Annex too.

1.11.5 Interest Shown by Meath County Councillors

In addition, our local councillors have turned out in relatively large numbers to meetings concerning the Review. For example, at the meeting held with the Review Committee on 18 December 2015 in the Boyne Valley Hotel, 26 of the 40 councillors at Meath County Council (65%) met with the Review Committee at what turned out to be a very informative and cordial meeting, which was designed to aid the Committee in its understanding of the current arrangements, including the cooperation between Louth and Meath County Councils and just how important the Area of Interest is to Meath and to Meath County Council. The meeting between the Meath councillors and the Committee commenced at 11am

¹⁵ <http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/>.

and ran until 1pm. At 2pm, there was a corresponding meeting with the Louth councillors. We understand that 6 councillors from Louth attended the meeting, 2 of which were from the Drogheda Borough District.

1.11.6 Important to Note that this Boundary Review Differs from the Recent Mergers in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford and from the Recent Reviews in Cork and Galway

Meath County Council understands that the various criteria (wholly or in part) shared with Louth and Meath County Councils during the Review process may have been used in the mergers involving (1) Limerick City and County Councils, (2) Tipperary North and South Councils and (3) Waterford City and County Councils, and the recent reviews in 2015 involving (a) Cork City and County Councils and (b) Galway City and County Councils.

We would make the point that these mergers and reviews all differ fundamentally from the Review under consideration in this report: the Review here relates to a boundary between two *different* counties (Louth and Meath); whereas the aforementioned mergers and other reviews (Cork and Galway in 2015) relate to *within* given counties (although, as we have learned, the Cork review has become extremely controversial and, it is understood, will be subject to legal challenge).

1.11.7 Timing of the Review and (Inadvertent) Uncertainty for Investors and Wealth Creators, and Ultimately Possible Lost Employment in Drogheda

Meath County Council would have the following to say regarding the timing of the Review, namely that it has placed significant additional work on the Council at an extremely busy time for the organisation. Furthermore, it is felt that the announcement of the Review may (inadvertently) have had the (unintended) effect of making Drogheda less attractive as an investment location during the period of the Review, because the announcement of the Review may have created *investment uncertainty* regarding Drogheda as a business location – ‘which county will it be in and under which local authority?’ Businesses and potential investors may well have taken the view of waiting for the outcome of the Review, before deciding whether to invest in the town – by which time it may be too late given the decision times in the commercial world.

1.11.8 Re-Statement of Meath County Council’s Commitment to Drogheda and Maintenance of the Current Arrangements

It is nevertheless accepted that the stakes in this Review are extremely high for Meath County Council and if there is one positive thing that has come out of the Review then it is that the process has exercised the minds of the Council of the importance of Drogheda and its environs in Meath to the county as a whole, and we remain resolutely committed to the area and to defending the *status quo*.

1.12 Public Meeting regarding the Review Held on 19 January 2016

On Tuesday 19 January 2016, Senator Thomas Byrne and Meath County Councillor Wayne Harding hosted a public meeting on the Review at the Glenside Hotel, County Meath – the hotel is located just south of the Area of Interest on the R132 between Southgate and the Meath village of Julianstown. Both hosts are members of Fianna Fáil and given that we have already reported on the Labour public

information evening on the Review held back in September 2015, we feel it is only fair to also include the more recent event in our Submission too.¹⁶

1.12.1 What the Speakers Said

The meeting, which commenced a little after 8pm and was well-attended, with well over 100 people, was introduced by Councillor Harding, who began by outlining the beginning and timeline of the Review. He noted that the Area of Interest Map was produced in late November 2015. He talked through the Boundary Committee and noted the changes that occurred in the membership of the Committee during the process. Councillor Harding also talked those in attendance through the government's Putting People First (2012) and the local authority reform process – in broad general terms to set the context. He said that there was no provision in Putting People First for the Drogheda Boundary Review and that it was also not provided for in the government's Programme for Government (2011-2016). He then proceeded to sum up his position, and that of his fellow Meath County councillors, by stating that all of the councillors and the officials within Meath County Council are strongly opposed to any boundary change. He said that Drogheda has been growing rapidly, regardless of the boundary issue, and that there has been considerable collaboration between Louth and Meath County Councils down the years, where he outlined the Boyne Valley (Mary McAleese) Bridge and tourism initiatives in respect of the Boyne Valley straddling both counties, plus water and waste water capacity, transportation, and fire and emergency services (where he mentioned that Meath and Louth County Councils have a longstanding service agreement dating back to 1952). He made the point that the current local authority arrangements are working well and “why fix what is not broke”. In regard to the zoned employment lands within the Area of Interest in Meath, Councillor Harding made the point that these lands equate to an area 18 times the size of Croke Park. He also made the point that the uncertainty caused by the Review is not helpful for businesses and that he has had feedback from local businesses to this effect.

Senator Thomas Byrne then remarked that his family have lived in the Area of Interest since the 1940s. He also pointed out that, legally, Drogheda Borough no longer exists and that this is a review about a county boundary, which matters much less in a large town like Drogheda, in his experience. In regard to the view that planning is better done by one body, which he accepted might have some validity in principle, he pointed out that the Regional Planning Guidelines help to control local plans and effectively act as a constraint, helping to ensure sustainable planning. Senator Byrne also pointed out that he would have a vote on the outcome of the Review (as a member of the Oireachtas) and that he would be voting against any recommendation for a boundary extension in favour of Louth. He said that it would be divisive and unhelpful to the spirit of cooperation between the two local authorities that has generally served the town well over the years. There were four elected members of Meath County Council in attendance at the event and no apparent elected members from Louth County Council.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dr. Pat McCloughan of PMCA Economic Consulting attended both events on behalf of Meath County Council. We would add that there have been, during the course of the Review, many debates and exchanges between the Louth and Meath views, including in the media, but it is not possible to cover them all here. Both the Labour/Drogheda Chamber of Commerce (September 2015) and Fianna Fáil (19 January 2016) events are significant as “public meetings” on the Review, hence their inclusion in this Submission.

¹⁷ The next day (20 January 2016), there was an interview on the local radio station LMFM with Councillor Wayne Harding and Councillor Paul Bell (Labour) of Louth County Council. During the interview, Councillor Bell said that he was not able to attend the event on the previous evening.

1.12.2 What was Said from the Floor

There were wide-ranging questions and views when the meeting was opened to the floor, namely (in the order in which the points were made during the evening):

- Who selected the Review Committee Members and how were they chosen?
- Where did the Review originate? Both Councillor Harding and Senator Byrne made the point in response to this question that the Review did not originate from Louth County Council but rather it has been driven by political considerations (Councillor Eimear Ferguson, Sinn Féin councillor from Meath County Council, who was also in attendance, among the crowd, added that the Review also originated from Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, who have been campaigning for city status for Drogheda for quite some time);
- Councillor Ferguson also added the lack of development in respect of the Northern Environs Plan for Drogheda, whereas the Meath environs of Drogheda, including the Area of Interest, have experienced rapid population and employment growth over time;
- Councillor Ferguson referred to what she called the “Louth Cuckoo Syndrome”, whereby Meath County Council helped to develop the Area of Interest only for Louth County Council to come in and take it away from Meath;
- Councillor Ferguson also mentioned the new EMRA (Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly) and the fact that both Louth and Meath are now part of the same new regional authority for planning purposes, within which they are part of the same Strategic Planning Area (SPA);
- A person from County Kerry, who is a member of St. Colmcilles GAA Club, drew an analogy to what would happen in her native county if ever there were a proposal to shift a part of the “Kingdom” into County Cork, which drew a laugh from those in attendance;
- The same person from Kerry remarked that she had generally been made to feel very welcome by the people of Drogheda since she had moved to the area to make her new home;
- Another person from the Meath part of the area was critical of Meath County Council’s service provision in the area, where in particular he criticised the Council for not looking after some of the roads in the area and for managing the hedges;
- Councillor Tom Kelly, an Independent on Meath County Council, was critical of Minister Nash and Drogheda Chamber for trying to further the city status campaign for Drogheda while at the same time trying to take a part of County Meath, with around 6,000 people, which he said would hardly make a major difference to the campaign, given the population of the greater Drogheda area being over 70,000 people;
- A member of the audience, a Meath native, was critical of both Louth and Meath County Councils for ignoring Drogheda for many years and that both Drogheda and East Meath have not got their fair share from government over many years, despite the population of the greater Drogheda area;
- Another person from the floor, currently living in Meath, said that his motor and house insurance would increase if Louth became his new address, and there would be a cost associated with the change-of-address;
- He also said that being reliant on Navan for services in Meath is not ideal;
- Another person, from Meath, was heavily critical of Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, which she said has been “anti-business” in Drogheda, by preventing new entrants and more competition, which would have otherwise benefitted shoppers, and she decried the poor state of affairs along West Street (traditionally seen as the town’s ‘main street’) – she was also critical of Louth County Council’s lack of commitment to the Drogheda area over many years;

- Another person remarked “better the devil you know” (in favour of the *status quo*), an expression that was also used in the previous public information evening hosted by Drogheda Chamber and Minister Nash in September 2015;
- Another person made the point that 75% of all IDA employment in 2014 went to the four cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway – illustrating the benefits of a city, which he said would act as the “medicine of prosperity” for the area;
- One person, originally from Dublin, wondered what would happen to her land/title deeds to her home and she made the point that Dundalk has benefitted to the detriment of Drogheda – a point that was echoed by Senator Byrne;
- Councillor Harding agreed that a lot of the development that occurred in East Meath did so without adequate infrastructure but that Meath County Council have been working hard to “retrofit” the East Meath area with necessary services;
- Councillor Harding also said that Meath County Council were in a process of “catching up” with the rapid population growth of East Meath and that the prospects for the future were very positive;
- Another person made the point that, while services may not be perfect in Meath, he did not believe that things would be any better in the event of a boundary change in favour of Louth;
- The same person also made the point that the Area of Interest was the most successful area in the whole of Drogheda economically and that this would be “land grab” to develop the rural areas between the boundary of the Drogheda LAP and the outer boundary to the south in respect of the Area of Interest (Beamore etc.);
- The same person said that a proper public vote should be take on the matter;
- A representative from the Mill Enterprise Centre in Drogheda, also a member of Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, and a Laytown native (Co. Meath), said that, from an economic development perspective, it would be better for the future to plan for more employment within the area so that economic development can keep abreast of population growth;
- The same person also made the point that the two local authorities should cooperate more closely to ensure that economic development for Drogheda (Meath and Louth parts);
- Another person said that the only reason why there was a proposed boundary extension in favour of Louth was due to the economic and commercial success of the Area of Interest – if the area instead were not successful, there would have been no interest in the area;
- The same person said that the north of Drogheda in County Louth had not developed and that the whole Review was politically driven;
- Another person, who recounted a bad experience from having built her house in the Julianstown area, thought that Louth County Council was more efficient than Meath County Council but nevertheless she hoped that the “proposed boundary extension”, as she put it, would not go through – if one positive thing comes out of the whole Review process, she remarked, then it is that it has focused attention on the East Meath area and, the person hoped, would mean that Meath County Council would commit more to the local area;
- The Chairman of St. Colmcilles GAA Club said that it was the “quality of life” that helped to make the Area of Interest attractive to newcomers, including Dubliners, which drew a laugh from the audience – the Chairman made the point that the club would be supporting Meath County Council in its submission, which drew a round of applause from the floor;
- One other person from the floor wondered about the apparent arbitrary nature of the boundary and the response from Senator Byrne and Councillor Harding was that the map was *ad hoc* but

also pointed out that the Review was about the Area of Interest primarily and specifically included community interest and business/economic considerations;

- Another person from the floor wondered what or how he might be compensated in the event that his insurance might increase in the event of a boundary change in favour of Louth;
- A straw poll of the audience was taken by Councillor Harding at this juncture, which revealed that about 30-40% of those in attendance commuted to work in Dublin or had a member of their family who commuted to Dublin for employment;
- During the discussion session from the floor, both Senator Byrne and Councillor Harding were critical of the DECLG, who they said had not come out to the people of the Area of Interest to explain how the Review would work and how it might affect them (Senator Byrne and Councillor Harding also said that no literature/leaflet information was produced and distributed to the Department, which might otherwise have served to inform local people in the Area of Interest);
- Councillor Eimear Ferguson held up a planning map showing the plans for the southern environs of Drogheda (under Meath County Council), which she said had experienced rapid development, and the northern environs of Drogheda (Louth County Council), which she said did not develop, and she then said that, were there to be an adverse boundary change, against Meath, then there would be very little resources for maintenance and local services in the East Meath Area;
- Another person was critical of the lack of foresight by Louth County Council in regard to a medical planning application in the northern environs of Drogheda and the same person remarked that there was lack of investment and infrastructure in East Meath and that he hoped that the area could “go forward from here”.

1.12.3 Meath County Council Comments on the Review

Meath County Council would make the following comments on the event:

- Compared with the previous public information evening hosted by Minister Nash and Drogheda Chamber of Commerce in September 2015, the evening at the Glenside Hotel was very well attended, with well over 100 people in attendance (predominantly people aged 35 years and over but with a good mix of male and female and with some members of ethnic groups in attendance too);
- There was some criticism of both local authorities but generally the weight of opinion was in support of Meath County Council and the current arrangements, probably reflecting the fact that the event was hosted in Meath and that the majority of those who turned out were from the Meath environs of the town, including the Area of Interest;
- At the beginning of the event, Councillor Harding prepared a 2-page document addressed to the Drogheda Boundary Review Secretariat and expressed as an open letter to the Secretariat, objecting to the Review and giving the reasons (existing arrangements working well, identity – people feel part of Meath and wish to remain, jobs, existing businesses, house prices – where it was stated that “We don’t know what the impact on house prices would be from a change of address”), existing council cooperation (mentioning fire, water, tourism), cost (saying that “Any change is sure to cost money and time to implement, which would be better spent on services”), not a priority (saying that the Review is not high on the list of people’s worries), recreation (“People are well catered for with recreation facilities and amenities in the area”) and divisive (“Any change is sure to be divisive, creating winners and losers, and damaging to existing co-operation”). It is understood that many of those who attended signed copies of the letter at the meeting.
- The meeting concluded at 21.55, after almost two hours.

1.13 Historical Perspectives of the Drogheda Boundary

The Louth-Meath boundary dates back many centuries and in Box 1.2 below we attempt to give a brief, potted history of the boundary situation – but the reader is advised to consult the history books, including the book cited in the summary below, and we would also advise those interested in learning more to visit the Tholsel Building in the centre of Drogheda (along West Street, Louth part of the town), which provides a very attractive centre and experience for the visitor. The visitor centre features an array of historical maps, exhibits etc. One such exhibit that catches the eye outlines the town's motto: "*Deus praesidium mercatura decus*" (translating as "God our strength, merchandise our glory").

Box 1.2: Historical Perspectives of Drogheda's Boundary between Louth and Meath (Cont'd Overleaf)

As local historian Mr. Ted Greene describes in his book *Drogheda – Its Place in Ireland's History* (first published in 2006) (p. 46) (Greene's emboldened and italicised parts reproduced here):

"The Twin Towns: In fact **two separate towns** had been established [by the Twelfth Century]. They had separate identities, one each side of the river and facing each other. Each had its own parish – this was necessary since the River Boyne was the line of demarcation between the Armagh and the Meath dioceses. A separate corporation governed each".

Further on in the account, Greene observes (p. 51) (Greene's emboldened part maintained here) (Meath County Council italics):

"Fairs and Markets: As early as 1205 – merely 30 years from the time of their first arrival – the newcomers [the Normans] had proved their creative ability and commercial aptitude in realistic ways. The English monarch King John visited Drogheda in 1210 and directed that a fair of 8 days duration be held each year in Drogheda on the Feast of Saint John the Baptist, and in 1229 Henry III granted further charters to Drogheda (*Louth side*)".

"Not to be outdone, Drogheda (*Meath side*) in 1247 obtained similar charters, including the right to hold a market and a fair of 6 days duration once a year. An annual fair on the vigil of the Feast of the Assumption was also established and this was of seven days duration, and a weekly market day every Wednesday. Other fairs were granted later in the century".

Much further on in Greene's extensive book (pp. 389-390), he examines the rapid population growth of Drogheda (Greene's emboldened and italicised parts reproduced here):¹⁸

"THE GREATER DROGHEDA AREA: The 2006 Census revealed that the town has 28,894 inhabitants. That figure relates to persons residing *within the designated boundary of the Drogheda Borough as presently constituted*. The Borough, restricted by this boundary, is bursting at the seams, and at the time of writing an extension of the boundary is under review. To the figure of 28,894 must be added the two sections of St. Peter's and St. Mary's Districts which lie outside the Borough Boundary – this brings the total to 41,538 – by far the highest ever recorded".

"To obtain a true picture of the town's growth and development we must also take into account the continuing migration of residents from within the actual boundary towards its satellite villages, e.g. Baltry, Duleek, Julianstown, etc. Some of these villages have shown phenomenal growth since the last census (2002). Stamullen's being an incredible 64% in the four years to 2006. Collectively, the population of these satellite villages has increased in four years by as much as 12,000 souls or 45%. Taking this into account, the population of the Greater Drogheda Area is in the region of 65,000, and is inexorably expanding further. It is clearly the largest town in Ireland, and its growth is accelerating".

At the end of his historical account (p. 391), Greene (2006) asks pertinently **"Is Big Beautiful?"** [Greene's emboldened part], where he wonders (his italics reproduced here):

"Is there an inherent danger in Drogheda continuing growth? Much of the infrastructural development that has taken place during the era of the 'Celtic Tiger' has been in residential property, supermarkets and other extensive retail outlets – all geared towards appeasing the appetite of the indulgent consumer. The expansion must be counterbalanced *by enterprises that create wealth rather than dissipate it* by providing employment for the expanding population. Otherwise the town's growth is pointless, indeed counterproductive".

Meath County Council has been working hard to facilitate employment growth in the environs of the town under its remit (including Coca Cola International Services, International Funds Services State Street) and Boyne Valley Foods Group). New enterprises include the Boann Distillery and also City North Business Campus along the M1 Corridor. Later on in the Submission, we profile Hanley Energy, which has been in the campus for just two years and has seen its employment grow from 2 to 40. Like Coca-Cola, it moved from the Louth part to the Meath part of the town in recent years.

Source: Meath County Council.

¹⁸ The passage from Greene's account refers to Drogheda Borough having a population of 28,894 in 2006. The figure recorded in the (finalised) CSO Census data files is slightly higher at 28,973 (a small difference of 79).

2 Overview of Meath County Council

2.1 Introduction

Comhairle Contae na Mí (Meath County Council) was established in 1898 and is the authority responsible for local government in Co. Meath. As a local authority, it is governed by the Local Government Acts. The Council is responsible for the delivery of services in Meath, including housing and community, roads and transportation, planning and development, amenity and culture, environment, and water services. Economic development is also a core function of Meath County Council, where the focus of the Council is on facilitating employment among all forms of enterprise, small and large, Irish-owned and foreign affiliates, in all sectors of activity. The Council has forty elected members with elections held every five years using the single transferable vote system.

Co. Meath is situated in north Leinster, along the east coast of Ireland and occupies a land area of over 230,000 hectares. It adjoins Dublin to the south and this geographical proximity and the strong functional relationship between the two counties results in Meath being a vital component of the Greater Dublin Area. Meath is also contiguous to County Louth and both counties have been close neighbours and have worked productively for many years, not least in respect of Drogheda.

As at Census 2011, the county's population was 184,135 persons, having increased from 162,831 in 2006. The growth of Meath during the inter-census period (13.1%) exceeded that of the State (8.2%) and some parts of the county experienced some of the most rapid growth rates in the country. These include the Meath environs of Drogheda, which have changed substantially over the past decade or so.

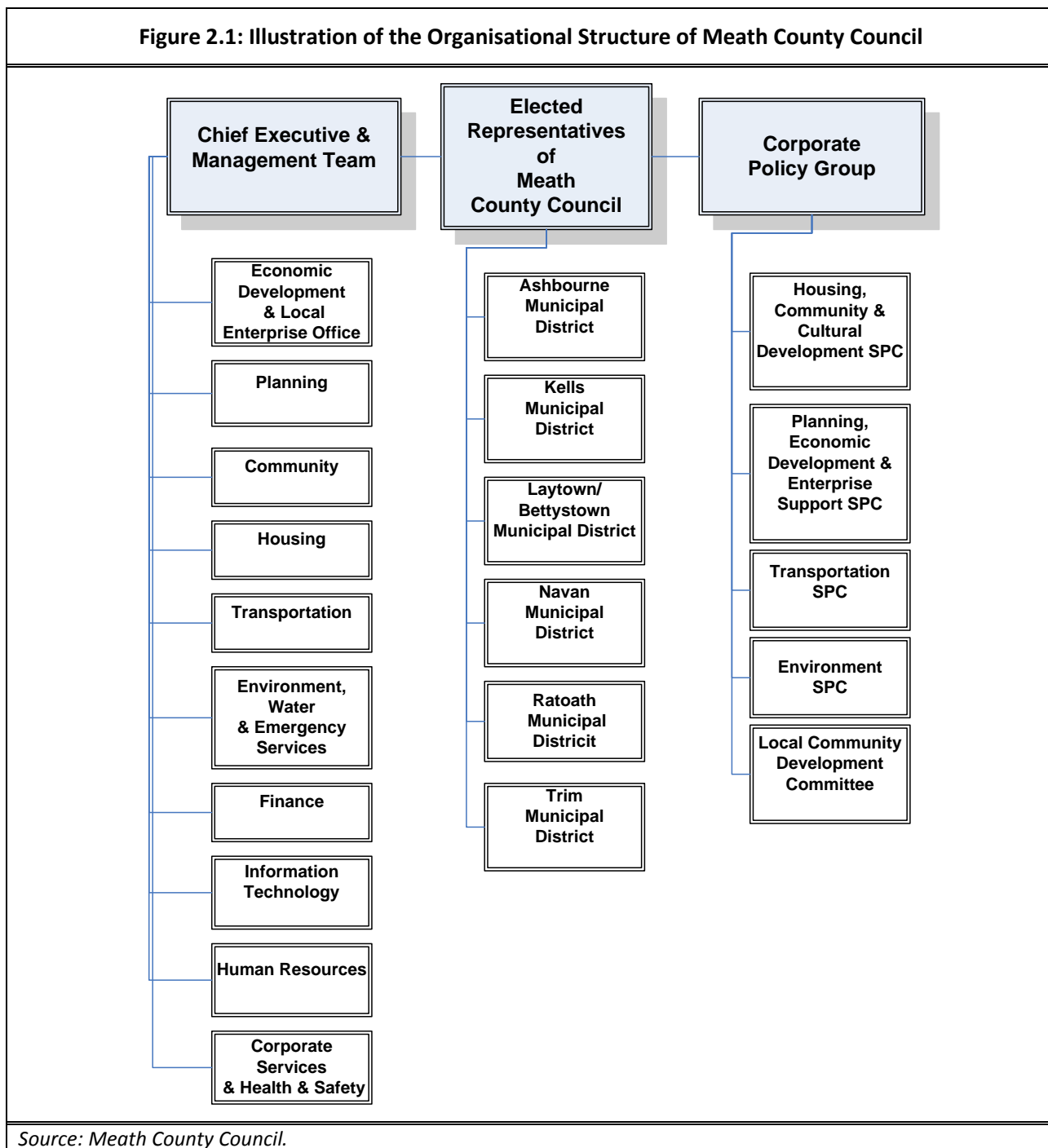
Approximately 52.6% of the population of Co. Meath resides in the larger growth areas such as Navan (County Town), Ashbourne, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Drogheda/East Meath, Kells, Ratoath, and Trim. However, apart from the south-east, the county remains largely rural in nature with a well-developed network of smaller towns and villages. This is evident in the Area of Interest in the Review – while the Meath environs of Drogheda have grown rapidly since the beginning of this century, there is still a strong rural character to the place: development has occurred contiguous to the Louth-Meath boundary, consistent with good planning principles and practice, and on travelling out of the developed areas one is struck by the general absence of ribbon development or one-off housing evident in other parts of the country (there are no ghost estates or housing developments in this part of the county).

Meath possesses a diverse range of landscapes, including ten kilometres of coastline (very close to the Area of Interest), the drumlin hills in North Meath, rich pastures, tracts of peatland and raised bog in the southwest and the central area that includes Tara – the ancient capital of Ireland. While there are no uplands in the county, the occurrence of raised lands is nevertheless striking – like the esker ridge that includes Bellewstown visible from the Meath environs of Drogheda.

The Meath landscape reflects the changing influences of its population over time; from the megalithic sites at Newgrange and Oldcastle, to the Norman castle ruins at Trim, the landed estates at Headfort and Summerhill, the historic and changing network of field boundaries to modern day dynamic settlements such as Drogheda. The county benefits from a wealth of natural and man-made resources. It is supported by a well developed road and rail infrastructure system which provides access to international transport networks at Dublin Airport and Dublin Port and the remainder of the country. The fertile soils provide the basis for a thriving agricultural and food sector, and the natural and built heritage enhances the quality of life for the people of the county and has long enticed visitors to Meath.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Meath County Council operates through the councillors, who collectively act as a board of directors, working in partnership with the Executive (led by the Chief Executive), to develop and implement policy at local level. The councillors are assigned specific 'Reserved Functions' under legislation, such as the adoption of the Annual Budget and County Development Plan, and carry out these functions by way of resolution. The Executive and a number of Committees assist and advise the Council with its policy role.



2.3 Council Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan (2014-2019) sets out the vision, mission statement, core values and strategic objectives for the Council. It also outlines the framework for the Council's Annual Service Delivery Plan which sets out in detail the activities to be undertaken across all key functional areas so as to deliver on the Corporate Plan objectives and be linked to the budgetary process, the performance management and development system and relevant performance indicators.

The Executive, working with the Corporate Policy Group, has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Corporate Plan. Each year the strategic objectives contained in the plan are matched to the financial resources available to the Council as part of the Annual Budget process. The Executive and Corporate Policy Group work together to maximise the resources available both from locally determined income, central government funding and other funding sources. Where sufficient financial resources are not available, objectives are prioritised with the intention of achieving all key objectives within the life of a plan. Metrics are developed in order to validate progress and the status of the strategic actions contained in the plan.

The vision for Meath County Council outlined in the plan is: *"Meath County Council will lead economic, social and community development, deliver efficient and good value services, and represent the people and communities of County Meath, as effectively and accountably as possible"*.

The mission statement is: *"To drive the economic, social, cultural and environmental growth of our county in a balanced manner, which is inclusive of all our citizens"*.

In the implementation of the Corporate Plan, Meath County Council is guided by the following core values which underpin our operations and services: (1) strong customer, citizen and community focus; (2) high standards of conduct, probity and impartiality; (3) accountable, accessible and responsive; (4) innovative and Inclusive; and (5) integrity and respect for all.

The Corporate Plan 2014-2019 is based on the following 6 Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objective 1: Deliver Excellent Services

- Meath County Council will focus on promoting and sustaining the social and environmental well-being of the people of Meath; and will
- Increase the level of satisfaction expressed by citizens with our services.

Strategic Objective 2: Lead Economic Development

- Meath County Council will be the lead agency in developing the economy of the county and the adjoining region (the EMRA region, which also includes County Louth, as outlined in Section 1); and will
- Focus on the creation and retention of jobs for the people of Meath and will work with a view to increasing the prosperity of the region.

Strategic Objective 3: Build Strong, Influential Partnerships

- All levels of leadership across Meath County Council will build strong influential partnerships with their key stakeholders; and will
- Fundamentally enhance the reputation of the Council in each core area of work.

Strategic Objective 4: Engage the Larger Community

- Communities, individuals and Council staff will engage as a team in promoting initiatives which will deliver what is important to our citizens;
- Staff will be available to listen and communicate with the citizens of Meath formally and informally on an ongoing basis.

Strategic Objective 5: Nurture a Staff Excellence Culture

- Meath County Council will be seen as the employer of choice in the region, where staff are proud to work in its progressive environment;
- Both customers and colleagues will experience professional and respectful interactions in a cohesive organisational structure that encourages fairness.

Strategic Objective 6: Develop System and Process Capability

- The internal business process and ICT systems of Meath County Council will allow quick and easy access to information, in order to support staff and external stakeholders to make informed decisions.

2.4 Human Resources

Meath County Council has a committed workforce of 685 staff (632 whole-time equivalent) across a range of disciplines and it manages the human resource function *via* a suite of HR policies, including workforce planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management through the PMDS process, and diversity and equality.

There has been a significant reduction in staff resources available to the Council since 2008, with numbers dropping by 20% to the current resource level. The Council, in line with the challenges arising from the national public service agreements and through the commitment and flexibility of our staff, has delivered a wide range of efficiencies within the local authority in recent years, while ensuring the continued effective delivery of services. An example is our new function-based, as opposed to location-based model, of Customer Service delivery, where the Council's dedicated Customer Service staff work closely with all service departments to ensure effective communication with the public and elected representatives on all relevant matters. This has proved very useful to all service departments to date and has been particularly successful during periods of higher activity (e.g. weather related issues, emergencies etc.).

In considering the assignment of staff resources, it is important to note that arising from a review of service delivery (due to significant staff reductions particularly since 2008 as well as the implementation of the requirements of Putting People First and the Local Government Reform Act 2014) the organisation now operates a function-based approach rather than a location-based approach. This will be outlined in further detail in Section 7 of this submission (Service Delivery & Resources Assignment).

2.5 Municipal District Structure

2.5.1 Municipal Districts (MDs)

Since 1 June 2014, the reserved functions of the Council are exercisable by the councillors at two levels. A range of functions remain reserved for the full County Council, sometimes referred to as the Plenary Council. Other functions are performed at municipal district level. County Meath is divided into six municipal districts: Ashbourne, Kells, Laytown/Bettystown, Navan, Ratoath, and Trim (Figure 2.2 overleaf).

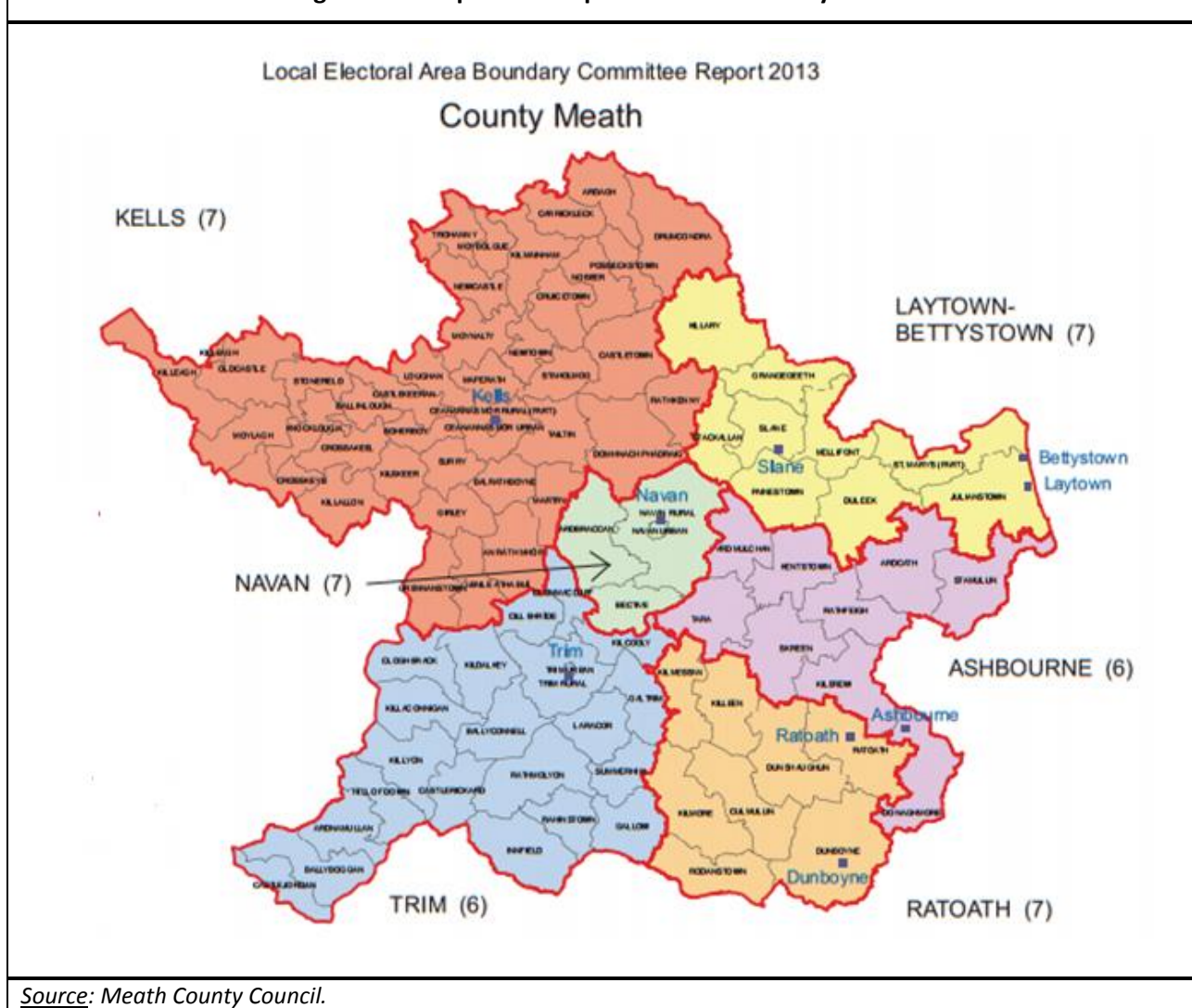
2.5.2 Corporate Policy Group (CPG)

The CPG provides a forum for co-ordination and discussion of policy issues, which transcend the remit of the four strategic policy committees (SPCs) (see below) and municipal districts and acts as a link between the SPCs and the full Council. The CPG consists of the Cathaoirleach (Chair of the Council), the Chairs of the four SPCs, and a representative from each municipal district not already represented. The CPG is supported by the Chief Executive and the Management Team.

2.5.3 Strategic Policy Committees

The SPCs assist the Council in the formulation, development, and the review of policy. One third of the membership of the SPCs is drawn from sectors relevant to the work of the particular SPC. The role of the SPC is to provide the councillors with external sectoral views and, in doing so, enhance the policy formulation process. Meath has four SPCs: (1) Housing, Community & Cultural Development, (2) Planning, Economic Development & Enterprise Support, (3) Transportation, and (4) Environment.

Figure 2.2: Map of Municipal Districts in County Meath

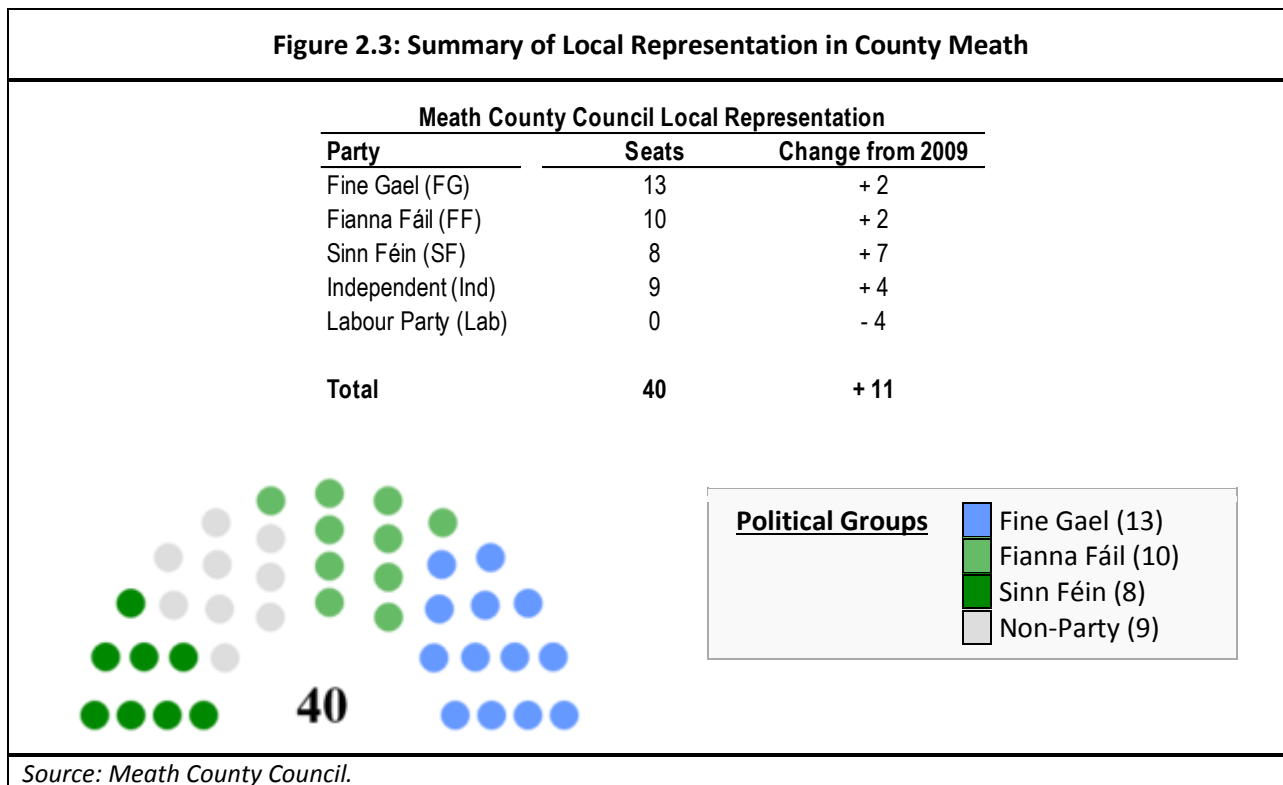


2.6 Local Representatives by Local Electoral Area

2.6.1 Overview

An election to Meath County Council took place on 23 May 2014 as part of that year's local elections. Forty (40) councillors were elected from six electoral divisions by PR-STV (proportional representation-single transferable vote) voting for a five-year term of office, an increase of 11 seats from 2009. A summary of the local representation in Meath is shown in the table/chart below.

Figure 2.3: Summary of Local Representation in County Meath



Source: Meath County Council.

2.6.2 Local Representatives on Meath County Council by Municipal District

Table 2.1 overleaf gives a detailed breakdown of the councillors currently serving the six MDs across County Meath. The Laytown-Bettystown MD, in which the Area of Interest is located, comprises 7 councillors and would have experienced the most rapid growth in population during 2006-2011, and indeed since 2002. The greater Drogheda area – or what we will subsequently delineate in this Submission as ‘Drogheda and its Hinterland’ includes, in the Meath part, a good section of the Laytown-Bettystown MD, seen as the natural catchment area of the urban area of Drogheda. All of the councillors representing the Laytown-Bettystown MD have a strong affinity to Drogheda and strongly support the *status quo* in respect of the current arrangements for the local administration of the town; they are strongly opposed to any change that would weaken in any way Meath's role in the functioning of Drogheda or any of its environs occurring in Meath. The Review Committee met these (and other Meath) councillors at the meeting regarding the Review on Friday 18 December 2015 at the Boyne Valley Hotel in Drogheda, which we consider was a very positive and helpful meeting.

Table 2.1: Local Representation in Meath County Council by Municipal District (MD)

Local Electoral Area (Seats)	Councillor	Party	Electorate	Turnout	Turnout Rate	Valid Votes	Spoiled Vote Rate
Ashbourne (6)	Joe Bonner	Ind	19,845	9,001	45.4%	8,908	1.0%
	Darren O'Rourke	SF					
	Dr. Claire O'Driscoll	FF					
	Suzanne Jamal	FG					
	Alan Tobin	FG					
	Seán Smith	FF					
Kells (7)	Seán Drew	FF	25,923	13,790	53.2%	13,585	1.5%
	Michael Gallagher	SF					
	Johnny Guirke	SF					
	David Gilroy	Ind					
	Sarah Reilly	FG					
	Eugene Cassidy	FG					
Laytown-Bettystown (7)	Bryan Reilly	FF	22,959	9,955	43.4%	9,841	1.1%
	Eimear Ferguson	SF					
	Wayne Harding	FF					
	Sharon Keogan	Ind					
	Sharon Tolan	FG					
	Paddy Meade	FG					
Navan (7)	Stephen McKee	FF	22,088	9,825	44.5%	9,703	1.2%
	Tom Kelly	Ind					
	Joe Reilly	SF					
	Francis Deane	Ind					
	Shane Cassells	FF					
	Sinead Burke	SF					
Ratoath (7)	Tommy Reilly	FF	24,916	11,012	44.2%	10,902	1.0%
	Wayne Forde	Ind					
	Jim Holloway	FG					
	Brian Fitzgerald	Ind					
	Nick Killian	Ind					
	Maria O'Kane	SF					
Trim (6)	Maria Murphy	FG	24,531	9,961	40.6%	9,799	1.6%
	Damien O'Reilly	FF					
	Gerry O'Connor	FG					
	Gillian Toole	FG					
	Caroline Lynch	SF					
	Joe Fox	FG					
	Trevor Golden	Ind	24,531	9,961	40.6%	9,799	1.6%
	Enda Flynn	FG					
	Ronan McKenna	FF					
	Noel French	FG					

Source: Meath County Council, Wikipedia and other external sources.

2.7 Financial Overview

2.7.1 Introduction

Meath County Council will operate on a Revenue Budget of almost €101m in 2016. This will be a net increase of almost €3m on the 2015 budget.

The county's main funding sources are commercial rates receipts, which account for 32.9% of expenditure, and central government grants, which represent 22.7% of expenditure. The balance is funded through Local Property Tax (LPT) receipts (12.3%) as well as income from goods and services.

Meath County Council operates a multi-annual Capital Programme across all areas of service. Earlier in 2015 the Council adopted a six year Capital Programme (2015-2020) at an estimated cost of €255.3m.

2.7.2 Significant Improvement in Meath County Council's Operating Performance since 2010

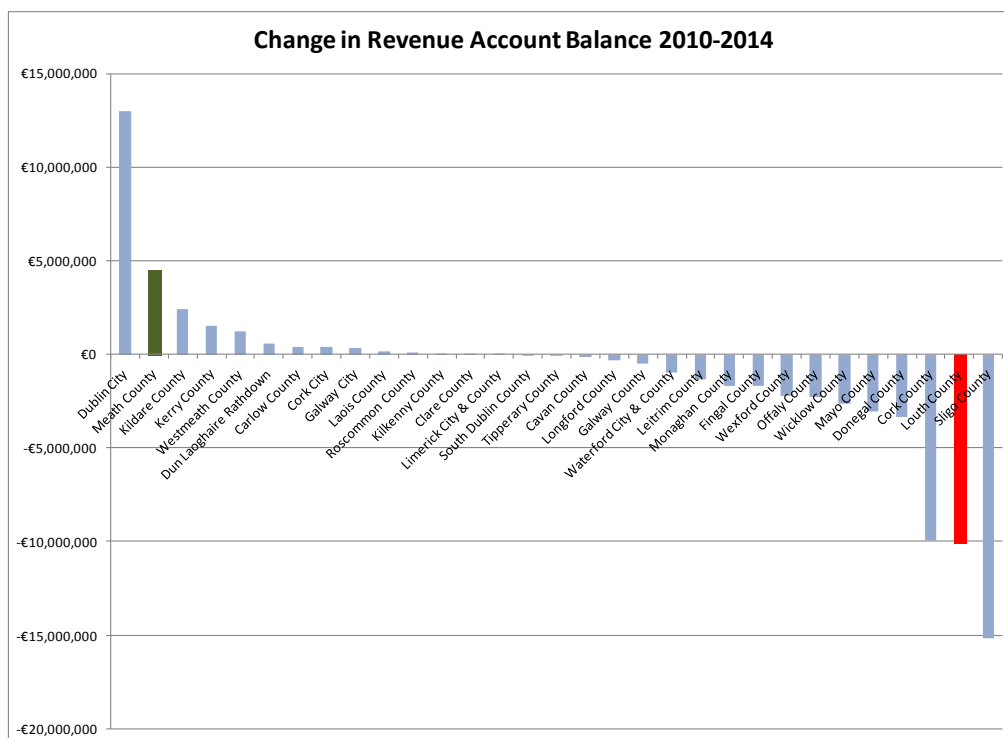
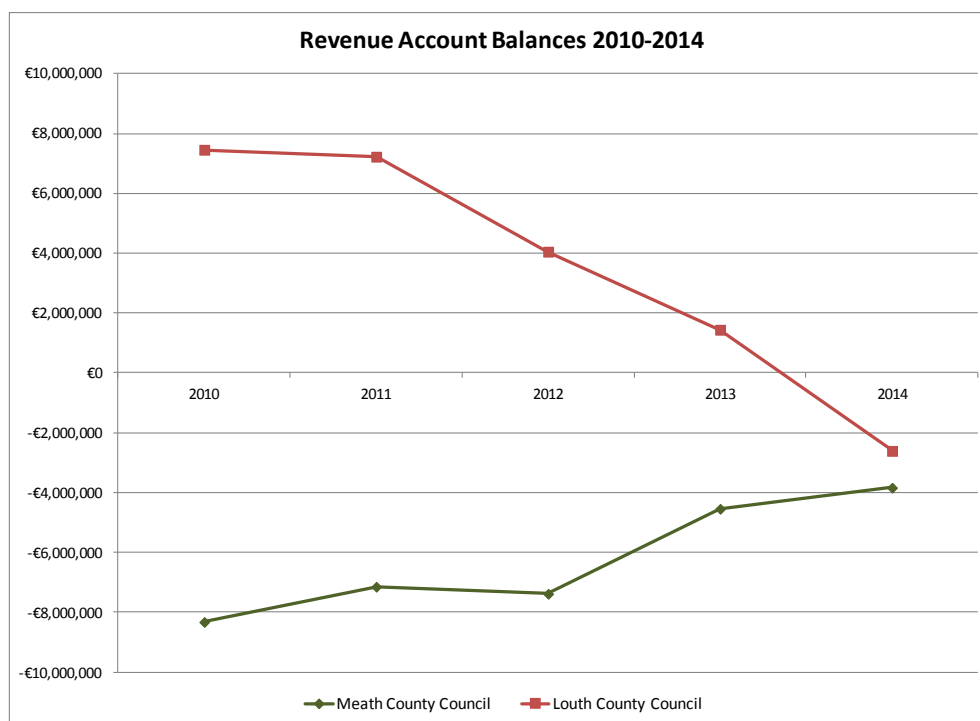
Meath County Council's revenue account balance (incorporating income and expenditure) has improved significantly during 2010-2014. The improvement can be seen by reference to the National Oversight and Audit Commission's (NOAC's) report entitled Performance Indicators in Local Authorities 2014, which was published a few weeks ago on 16 December 2015. As the Review Committee will be aware, NOAC was established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to provide independent scrutiny of local government performance in fulfilling national, regional and local mandates.

A new set of indicators in the NOAC report of the revenue account balances of local authorities, adjusted to include the figures relating to the abolished rating town and borough councils (relevant to 21 of the authorities), provides information on the trends in the balances over the five years from 2010 to 2014, a challenging period for local government and the broader public service. The overall revenue account credit balance among the 31 local authorities was €3,361,659 in 2014, showing deterioration from 2010 of €30,928,280. A total of 14 authorities showed a surplus and 17 were in a deficit situation in 2014.

While Meath County Council was one of the local authorities in deficit in 2014, during the 2010-2014 period its revenue account balance improved substantially, by over €4.4m, and the deficit was reduced from €8.3m at the start of the period to €3.8m in 2014 (rounding the figures). After Dublin City, the improvement in the revenue account balance in Meath was the largest in the country. On the other hand, Louth has gone from running a positive balance in each year during 2010-2013 to recording a negative balance in 2014. Over the period, its revenue account balance has deteriorated from €7.5m surplus in 2010 to €2.6m deficit in the latest year – a decline of over €10m. After Sligo, this deterioration was the largest of any local authority in the country.

Graphical illustration of the changing revenue account balances of Louth and Meath County Councils during 2010-2014 is provided in Figure 2.4 below. The graph in the upper panel shows the improvement in Meath's balance during the period, which is in sharp contrast to that of Louth. The chart in the bottom panel shows the extent of the changes in the local authorities' balances during the period, where it is seen that Meath had the second biggest improvement (after Dublin City), whilst Louth had the second biggest deterioration (after Sligo).¹⁹

¹⁹ Further information on the NOAC performance indicators report 2014, and two other NOAC studies (also released on 16 December 2015), is given in Sub-Section 2.9, where a link to all three studies is given.

Figure 2.4: Five Year Summary of Revenue Account Balances (2010-2014)

Source: NOAC Performance Indicators in Local Authorities 2014.

2.7.3 Meath County Council's Funding Submissions to the Department

2.7.3.1 Ability to Fund

While the evidence clearly shows a strong relative improvement in the operating performance of Meath County Council over recent years, the Council remains in deficit. We have made submissions to the DECLG flagging the fact that the ability of the Council to provide an appropriate level of service is under pressure. In the most recent submission – Funding Submission by Meath County Council to the Department (17 July 2015) – we included analysis of expenditure per person, an agreed standard for measuring the level of service a local authority can provide. The analysis contained in that submission showed that in 1996 local authority expenditure per person in Meath was only 79% of local authority expenditure per person nationally. By 2002 this percentage had dropped to as low as 67%, and it had dropped further to 61% by 2015 (i.e. by 2015 local authority expenditure per person in Meath was only 61% of local authority expenditure per person nationally).

Meath County Council has been faced with an exceptionally rapid rise in its population but without an appropriate increase in the level of resources required to service the population.

2.7.3.2 External Impacts on Ability to Fund

In regard to the cause of the problem, grants to Meath County Council have not evolved to take account of the county's *demographic and economic changes and characteristics*. The population of Meath increased extremely rapidly over the 1996-2011 period. Over the 19 years, the population in the county increased by 68% or 74,403, up from 109,732 to 184,135. The rate of growth in the population was two-three times that experienced in most other counties and was two and a half times that experienced in the State as a whole.

However, Meath County Council has been allocated the 28th lowest level of government grants and the 20th lowest level of property tax in the country. Compounding the problem is that locally generated income, such as commercial rates, has not been able to grow at the same pace as the population growth. As a result Meath has the lowest level of expenditure per capita of any county.

The low commercial rates base-relative-to-population in Meath is not due to a low rate on valuation; Meath ranked in the top one-third in terms of its rate on valuation in 2015. Rather, Meath's low commercial rates base per capita reflects the low number of firms in the county relative to its population. Meath has a low ratio of firms-to-population because it has operated largely as a commuter belt county in respect of the capital since the 1990s, when national economic growth began to escalate. The funding base (i.e. the number of firms) available to Meath County Council is very low relative to the population to which local authorities have to provide services. Therefore the county has had very low levels of commercial rates available to provide services to the large number of houses in the county. However, this is now being addressed through the objectives outlined within the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022.

2.7.3.3 Independent Illustration of the Funding Problem – from The Economic Development Strategy Report for County Meath

These causes of the funding problem facing Meath County Council – rapid population growth, commuter county, too few firms and the fact that Meath is a giver rather than a taker in regard to the Exchequer – are evidenced independently in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 commissioned from PMCA Economic Consulting, FTI Consulting and John Spain and Associates Chartered Planners.

For instance, in regard to the giver-versus-taker fact, the consultants looked in detail at county incomes and their components, in 2011 (the latest year for which estimates were available from the CSO at the time the consultants conducted their work). Every year, the CSO publishes data on county incomes, showing average income per capita across counties. The data are released with a lag of 3 years (2011 estimates in 2014 and the 2012 estimates came out in March 2015) and they pertain, at headline level, to *disposable* income per capita (judging by recent years, it is expected that the 2013 estimates will be made available in the first quarter of 2016).

In 2011, the consultants reported that Dublin had the highest disposable income per head of any county (more than 10% greater than that for the State), followed by Kildare, Limerick and Cork (in no particular order) (this group of counties had disposable income per head up to 10% higher than that of the State), with Meath in a third group of nine (9) counties with disposable income per head between 95-100% of the State figure. Basically the same map was apparent in 2012, although the number of counties in the third group of counties fell from 9 to 6, probably reflecting the challenges of the economy (even though the recovery was underway then).

However, the consultants made the important point that primary income is a more fundamental indicator of income performance than disposable income. Generally speaking, disposable income is equal to primary income *plus* social welfare payments *minus* income taxes and social insurance contributions. It therefore follows that primary income is equal to disposable income plus income taxes and social welfare contributions less social welfare payments. Thus, for primary income to exceed disposable income, income taxes and national insurance contributions must be greater than social welfare receipts. Accordingly, counties whose residents are net contributors to the Exchequer are those in which primary income per head exceeds disposable income per head because the residents contribute more to the Exchequer in the form of income taxes and social insurance contributions than they receive from social welfare payments.²⁰

Meath is one such county – a net contributor to the Exchequer – because primary income per head exceeds disposable income per head. Alternatively, the ratio of primary-to-disposable income per head exceeds unity or 100% (depending on how one chooses to scale the data) in net-contributor counties to the Exchequer (whereas in net-recipient counties, the ratio is less than 100%).

In 2011, the consultants reported that Meath was among only 4 counties whose residents were net contributors to the Exchequer because the ratio of primary-to-disposable income per head was greater than 100%: the other counties were Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow, all the counties making up the Greater Dublin Area, GDA. Cork was added in the 2012 CSO data and the ratio in Meath was next to that in Dublin in that year.

Judged on this basis, the CSO's headline map, which is based on disposable income per head, changes radically, with Meath occupying a much more prominent position (second only to Dublin in the latest available, 2012 data).

²⁰ This can also be shown algebraically as follows. Disposable income (*DI*) is equal to primary income (*PI*) plus social welfare receipts (*SW*) less income taxes and social insurance contributions, which we may denote by *T*. That is, $DI = PI + SW - T$. Re-arranging and tidying-up, it follows that $PI = DI + (T - SW)$. This in turn means that primary income exceeds disposable income (i.e. $PI > DI$) if and only if $T > SW$ (that is, if income taxes and national insurance contributions, *T*, are greater than social welfare receipts, *SW*). Counties whose residents contribute more to the Exchequer than they receive are ones in which primary income per head exceeds disposable income per head.

The PMCA-FTI-JSA consultancy team also identified more precisely the nature of the lack of enterprise base giving rise to the narrow commercial rate base in Meath, and hence the county's funding crisis. It comes down basically to a paucity of FDI in the county, where Meath's share is much lower than the national average; whereas it has performed well in regard to larger indigenous employment (under the auspices of Enterprise Ireland) and we know is doing well in regard to LEO (micro enterprise) employment.

In fact the PMCA-FTI-JSA consultancy team went further and stated, categorically, at the beginning of their report that the largely residentially-based model of development in Meath is not sustainable and the challenge now and in the years ahead is to address the high rates of outbound commuting by encouraging more investment and employment *within* the county. While the process of recovery will be challenging, it is achievable because the large commuter base residing in the county can be harnessed to help to attract more inward investment/FDI into Meath.

The big wins for the county in 2014 – the Facebook announcement being the highest profile development – are striking and show the resources and effort now being channelled into making Meath a more economically and socially sustainable county, with more economic and social impact being retained locally.

The Meath environs of Drogheda have been identified – in the current Meath CDP 2013-2019, in the consultancy team's Economic Development Strategy and most recently in the proposed Variation No. 3 of the Meath CDP, which basically seeks to integrate the Economic Development Strategy into the CDP – as central to the new economic development process in Meath and that is why the Council is understandably enough concerned and animated by the possibility of losing a key part of the St. Mary's ED, which we will defend strenuously.²¹

2.8 Other Relevant Matters

The external environment, to which the Council is exposed, is dynamic and ever changing. Meath County Council works with a wide range of central government departments and State agencies as well as partners in the community, voluntary and business sectors. For example, we are currently liaising proactively with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in respect of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) in Meath (addressing the identified Intervention Areas, where the commercial provision of broadband services is not possible) and with agencies like the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland in regard to economic development. The external operating environment is also influenced by many factors, some of which are not directly within our control. Whether these factors are external or internal, they must be considered in the preparation of plans and work programmes, and we can nevertheless liaise and seek to exercise influence where possible – for example, the work of the State agencies is becoming increasingly regional and/or national but we can nevertheless liaise and support them to fulfil both mandates (ours and theirs) because in a non-ideal world there are imperfections and 'market failures' and by working with the agencies we can help to facilitate employment and economic development to occur where otherwise it might not (due to information deficits etc.).

²¹ The Review Committee is also invited to consider the publication in the latest edition of learned journal *Pleanáil*, viz.: McCloughan *et al.* (2015) 'Planning for Economic Development in a Hitherto Commuter Location – The Case of the Royal County', *Pleanáil – Journal of the Irish Planning Institute*, Issue 21, 2015/2016, pp. 44-64.

Generally speaking, examples of external factors which influence our ability to undertake or influence works are:

- The global economy and the national and local economies;
- EU Directives, national legislation, Government and regional policies;
- Directives with respect to staff and financial resources;
- Customer expectations;
- The attractiveness of our county as a location for investment;
- Infrastructural assets.

Internal factors that must be considered in setting achievable objectives for our work over the life of this Plan include:

- The availability of adequate skilled staff and financial resources;
- Changing work practices;
- The consolidation of our offices to a new headquarters facility;
- Maximisation of business process improvement in order to ensure streamlined service delivery and efficiencies.

The economic conditions experienced by the country in recent years have significantly impacted on many of the external and internal factors listed above. These must be reviewed on a regular basis, and in particular in the preparation of both the Annual Budget and Annual Service Delivery Plans.

2.9 National Oversight and Audit Commission Reports

On 16 December 2015, the aforementioned NOAC published three reports relevant in the context of this Submission, namely:

- Performance Indicators in Local Authorities 2014;
- Local Authority Corporate Plans 2015-2019; and
- Results of a Local Authority Tenants Satisfaction Survey.²²

2.9.1 Performance Indicators in Local Authorities 2014

The aim of the NOAC performance indicators report is to provide information on performance for each individual authority that can be used to compare outputs/outcomes across the various local authorities.

The indicators attempt to deliver a common approach to measurement and benchmarking, and the availability of the information is intended to support all local authorities to improve the services they provide to local communities. NOAC believes that, by learning from one another, there is scope to develop and enhance best practice in the performance by local government bodies of their functions. The benchmarking process aids understanding of why councils vary in terms of performance. By making the information publicly available, citizens and service users can hold councils to account in relation to what is achieved on their behalf. It also allows councils themselves to ask questions about their services in order to make them better.

In reviewing the data, it must be recognised that local authorities vary in terms of their client base, scale, resource base, geography and topography, which may impact on service outputs/outcomes.

²² The reports are available at www.noac.ie.

The NOAC performance indicators report is mindful of the broader economic and financial context within which local authorities operate. The indicators show reduction in staffing levels and levels of revenue collection. In addition, authorities are dependent on central government funding which has reduced during the recession. It should also be noted that the provision of services by each local authority is governed by policy decisions which are taken at local level to match services to locally-identified priorities and the needs of the population served.

The key findings of the performance indicators report 2014 are summarised in the following paragraphs.

2.9.1.1 Housing Services (Social Housing)

The total stock available for social housing purposes at the end of 2014 was 153,773. There were 3,645 social housing units in Meath, including the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and the Social Housing Leasing Initiative (SHLI), representing 2.4% of the total for the country as a whole in that year (the corresponding proportion in Louth was a little higher at 2.5%). There are no social housing estates in the Area of Interest (Meath part). However, Meath Co. Council has provided 27 social housing units in the Area of Interest through a combination of direct acquisition, RAS and leasing with a further 11 units imminent under SHLI. Meath has recently commenced the Housing Assistance Payment scheme (HAP), which will facilitate further provision in the area. The social housing units are integrated with private housing in well-planned and high quality housing estates. The proportion of social housing is larger in the former Drogheda Borough area, where there are pockets of pronounced deprivation and social exclusion (RAPID areas, which are outlined subsequently in Sub-Section 5.4.4). While some progress has been made in addressing the problems in these estates over the years, they remain marginalised with comparably high rates of unemployment and crime. The differences between the Louth and Meath parts of the Area of Interest are shown subsequently in Section 5 of this Submission by reference to independent Pobal deprivation statistics and official CSO data on recorded crime in the Drogheda and Laytown Garda Districts in the Louth and Meath Garda Division respectively.

The vacancy rate among social housing was 2.1% in Meath in 2014, below the average vacancy rate for the State (mean 3.5%, median 2.8%); the vacancy rate in Louth was 1.4%. Minimising vacancy rates is naturally enough desirable as an outcome for local authority policy and practice.

Re-letting times of social housing units averaged 24 weeks across the country (median), with the figure for Meath County Council being substantially lower than the national average, 15 (the figure for Louth County Council was 26). Lower re-letting times are more desirable, other things being equal. In commenting on the large variation of re-letting times, the NOAC study also reports on a quality assurance exercise of 7 of the performance indicators that it conducted during 2015 – Meath County Council was among the local authorities selected for this particular exercise.²³ The maintenance cost by unit of social housing in Meath was €801 in 2014, falling in-between the median and mean figures for the State (namely €758 and €931) (the figure for Louth was €914).²⁴ Commenting on the variation in this performance indicator generally, the NOAC report observes that (pp. 13-14):

²³ The other local authorities selected for this review were Dúnlaoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, Carlow County Council, Galway County Council, Clare County Council, Cavan County Council and Cork City Council.

²⁴ The mean and median measures of central tendency are generally reported where distributions are non-symmetrical: in a positively skewed distribution, where the tail occurs to the right hand side, the mean exceeds the median; in a negatively skewed distribution, where the tail occurs to the left, the median is larger. In a symmetric distribution (like the normal curve), the mean and median are equal.

“Explanations that were provided for the variations include costs associated with the age of the property, the extent of the work required and the impact of hard to let properties ...

The NOAC performance indicators report of 2014 mentions another housing study that NOAC is currently conducting relating to the local authority function of implementing the private rented sector regulations. Table 4 of the 2014 NOAC indicators report shows that local authorities carried out a total of 18,553 inspections of private rented dwellings in 2014, compared with 21,218 inspections in 2013 and 19,921 in 2012. Inspections in Louth, consistent with its 2013 performance, amounted to less than 0.5% of registered tenancies. The corresponding proportion in Meath was 1.8%, which, while more than three times the rate in Louth, is still low and needs to be tackled.

2.9.1.2 Road Tax

Of particular relevance to the Review is the extent to which motor tax transactions are performed online – that is, without the need to travel or visit a local authority motor tax office.

The average online rate for the country as a whole was 50% in 2014 (median 50% and mean 51%), having grown steadily and substantially from 30% in 2010. At 66.31%, Meath had one of the highest online motor tax payment rates in the country; the corresponding rate in Louth was 47.42%.

With greater usage of online services, including mobile data services, it is expected that the upward trends will continue in the future, making the traditional task of visiting local authority offices for motor tax purposes largely a thing of the past in the coming years. This is not to say that the face-to-face service should be discontinued; there will always be a need for this function, only it will be even lower in the coming years compared with currently.

2.9.1.3 Water

The unaccounted-for-water (UfW) figures published in the NOAC performance indicators report were supplied by Irish Water and derived from data provided to it by local authorities under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in respect of January-June 2015, as this was the most reliable data available. The mean UFW outcome for the country as a whole was 46.7%. The rates in Meath and Louth were 43% and 42% respectively. A Lower UFW rate is more desirable, all things being equal.

The UfW figure for Meath as published in the NOAC report is incorrect. Using Irish Water’s new calculation methodology, the figure in the NOAC report should have been 36% and, using the Council’s/DECLG calculation methodology produces an even lower UfW figure for Meath of 29%. We were in contact with Irish Water on the matter in December 2015. IW subsequently acknowledged its error and is due to circulate the corrected figures shortly. We have asked IW to advise NOAC of the error and it is envisaged that the NOAC report will be revised accordingly.

2.9.1.4 Waste Service

The July 2014 national target for household access to a 3-bin refuse collection service was 50%, according to the NOAC performance indicators report. The rate in Meath was just 13%, which Meath County Council believes reflects the comparably large rural extent of the county, whereas more compact and/or more densely populated local authority areas generally tend to have higher rates (Louth 26%).

2.9.1.5 Planning Service

The NOAC performance indicators report 2014 expresses disappointment that the buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings whose commencement was notified to the authorities in 2014 was a reduction on the percentage inspected in 2013 in the case of the majority of local authorities. The

exceptions to this were Kerry, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Carlow, Longford, Meath, Roscommon, Sligo and Waterford and, in the case of the latter 6 authorities, the percentage improvement was between 35% and 86%.

The average cost per capita of the planning service was found to be €27-€28 for the country as a whole in 2014 (median-mean). The corresponding figure for Meath was lower than the State average (€22) and the figure for Louth was €26.

2.9.1.6 Fire Service

Local authority fire and emergency services respond to fire and non-fire incidents throughout the country. Attendance at the scene is a key performance target for both full- and part-time services and attendance response times are reported in the NOAC performance indicators report. Fire brigades were called out to attend over 21,700 fires and more than 9,000 other incidents in 2014 and attended the scene in less than 10 minutes in the case of 58% of these fires and 52% of the other incidents. The 2014 mean value for attendance at fire scenes within 10 minutes was 45.02%, an improvement on the 2013 figure of 44.08%. There is a considerable variation in attendance patterns between full-time and part-time fire authorities. Perhaps not surprisingly, the full-time fire services in the larger urban areas tend to have a quicker response time with Cork City achieving a 10-minute attendance at 89.42% of fire incidents. The percentage of incidents where attendance was greater than 20 minutes varied from a low of 1.22% in Cork city to a high of 27.09% in Galway County.

In Meath, the average time to mobilise a fire brigade in response to a fire was 5.2 minutes and was marginally higher than this figure in respect of non-fire incidents (5.31 minutes) (both figures pertain to part-time stations). The corresponding figures for Louth were 3.8 and 2.91 minutes, the lower figures reflecting the more compact nature of the county and its greater concentration of population in main urban centres (Drogheda, Dundalk, Ardee/Duleek). The part-time fire services in Meath are also supported by the Meath Civil Defence.

The NOAC report also contains a new indicator introduced to measure the cost of the fire service per head of population served. This indicator highlights the variation in cost for full-time brigades and part-time services. The NOAC report observes that the highest per capita cost stood at €93.13 in Cork City and this service consists of full-time fire fighters only. However, it also achieved the best response times to incidents. The costs associated with the part-time services were generally lower – the median per capita cost for part-time brigades was €43.17. The figure for Meath was €30.40 and that for Louth €50.90. The NOAC report mentions that “Further exploration of the cost indicators from comparable counties may facilitate the sharing of good practice and efficiency measures” (p. 17).

2.9.1.7 Library Service

The NOAC report contains data on the cost per head of population of providing a library service. The national average was around €27,000 (median)-€29,600 (mean). In Meath, the figure was appreciably lower at €19,178, even though visits per 1,000 of the population were higher in Meath compared with the country as a whole (3,674) (State median 3,622). In Louth, the cost per population was higher than Meath but lower than the State (€23,345) but the number of visits per 1,000 population was lower in County Louth (2,364).

2.9.1.8 Financial Performance

Further to the details of the financial review earlier (Sub-Section 2.7), NOAC is currently undertaking a more in-depth analysis of the underlying issues associated with revenue account deficits.

The collection of revenue is an important element in the financing of local authorities and collection rates over the period 2010 to 2014 for rates, rents and annuities and housing loans are included in the NOAC report. It is observed that the percentage collection levels for commercial rates were higher in Meath compared with the State (and Louth) during 2010-2014: for example, the collection levels in Meath average approximately 80% versus 75% in the country as a whole and 56% in Louth. The collection levels in respect of rent and annuities were about the same in the three cases during the period, as were the collection levels for housing loans.

2.9.1.9 Economic Development

The NOAC performance indicators report 2014 contains data on the number of jobs created in 2014 with assistance from the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). On average in that year, approximately 112 jobs were created with the support of LEOs across all local authorities; the corresponding figure in Meath was 102 and that in Louth was 45.5. Further information and statistical analysis relating to economic development is contained in subsequent sections of the Submission (see particularly Section 5).

2.9.2 Local Authority Corporate Plans 2015-2019

NOAC has also published the report of its review of the adequacy of the corporate plans prepared by the 31 county, city, and city and county councils for the period 2015 to 2019. It is, in general, satisfied as to the adequacy of all the corporate plans for the purposes of meeting the relevant statutory requirements, complying with the guidelines issued by the DECLG and responding to the major changes in local government that were implemented in 2014. NOAC will commence evaluation of the implementation of corporate plans towards the end of 2016.

The NOAC report references a number of important local/regional initiatives underway, including developing Meath and the Boyne Valley as must-go-to tourism destinations (Meath) (Louth is mentioned for its work in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills to deliver the school building programme and working with the Office of Public Works to deal with the threat from coastal erosion and rising tidal levels).

2.10 Summary

Meath County Council is one of the largest local authorities in the country, reflecting the fact that we are one of the most populous counties in Ireland. According to Census 2011, we were the seventh most populous local authority area in the country in that year, with only the four authorities in Dublin plus Cork County and Kildare having higher populations. Overall, the county is a relatively large one spatially, with a number of large urban centres and with numerous other smaller villages and settlement areas. Accordingly, economic development needs to be planned carefully and we have identified a number of centres throughout the county that will drive employment and prosperity in the coming years – Drogheda (Meath environs) is one of these key settlement areas, which ranks top of the economic hierarchy in the current Meath CDP 2013-2019 (along with the County Town of Navan). Achieving economic development, as planned, will in turn help shape the wellbeing and quality of life of our communities and the financial and operating performance of the Council.

The financial performance of Meath County Council has improved over recent years; however, the Council still faces substantial challenges, stemming from developments nationally and locally (population growth within the county being a leading driver).

One thing that we have neglected to mention in this section of the Submission, but which may be stated here, concerns the Council's plans to move its central offices in Navan under the one roof – at Buvinda

House in Athlumney, adjacent to the town's IDA Business and Technology Park. Currently, the Council's central and planning functions are carried out at County Hall and Buvinda House respectively (the latter building was formerly in the possession of the Quinn Group). During the year ahead, the objective is to move the functions to Buvinda House, which we believe will be a major development for the Council and the people and businesses it serves, and therefore for the county as a whole. The new building, to which the planning staff and functions moved in the past year, is a state-of-the-art, modern facility and will provide the built environment for the Council and its functions in the years ahead.

3 Meath County Council Operations and Functions in the Area of Interest

3.1 Introduction

Meath County Council provides a variety of public services throughout the county. The individual services provided in the Area of Interest by Meath County Council are outlined in this section of the Submission. The review of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) performance indicators report 2014, published in December 2015, in Sub-Section 2.9 of the preceding section is also relevant here.

3.2 Planning and Economic Development

Meath County Council as Planning Authority provides 3 core statutory planning services within the Area of Interest: Forward Planning; Development Management and Enforcement. The Council prepares, adopts and implements statutory land use plans for the Area of Interest all planning applications within the Area of Interest are receipted, processed and determined by the Council. The Council also undertakes all investigations and prosecutions for breaches of the Planning Code, whether it is for unauthorised development, or non-compliance with conditions of planning permission.

The taking-in-charge of residential estates is a planning compliance function. In respect of the taking-in-charge of residential estates in the Area of Interest, Meath County Council is currently undertaking this process for two estates: Lagavoureen and Five Oaks. Four phases of DeepForde have been taken-in-charge with works ongoing on a fifth phase. Knightswood and Avourwen are currently under construction. In respect of Grange Rath, the Council understands that a plebiscite relating to the taking-in-charge process is under consideration and Meath County Council is awaiting a submission in this regard. The Highlands Estate is complete and under active consideration regarding the taking-in-charge process.

The Planning Department also implements the requirements of all Building Control legislation, including commencement notices, disabled access certificates and compliance with the Building Control regulations generally.

Drogheda is identified along with Navan in the current Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 as a Primary Growth Centre. The Council is therefore committed facilitating the creation of sustainable communities in the Drogheda Environs in County Meath, which will include quality residential schemes, commensurate employment uses, and the community, social and recreational facilities necessary to support Drogheda realising its potential as a Primary Growth Centre.

In the context of the promotion of economic development, Meath County Council has taken a very proactive approach and engaged a multidisciplinary consultancy team comprising PMCA Economic Consulting, FTI Consulting and John Spain and Associates to prepare a comprehensive evidence-based Economic Development Strategy for County Meath covering the period 2014-2022. This major report by the consultants builds upon the Economic Baseline Study for County Meath completed in June 2013 by researchers at Maynooth University. Additional empirical analysis was undertaken in order to assess the structure and performance of the local economy of Meath, including indigenous enterprises and foreign direct investment (FDI). The extent of outbound commuting also formed part of this assessment.

Within the Area of Interest, the Donore Road is identified as a key employment hub for ongoing intensification of development and the IDA Business and Technology Park and immediately adjoining

lands have been identified as one of the 5 key strategic sites in the Meath Economic Strategy. Meath County Council has also played a proactive role in securing the re-occupation of vacant buildings. A primary example of this is the Beacon Dialysis Centre within the Drogheda Retail Park, which was formerly used as a car sales showroom.

We would refer the reader to Section 5 of the Submission, which looks in detail at employment and economic development within the Area of Interest and the wider environs of Drogheda.

Schools play an important role in developing sustainable and balanced communities and are fundamental to building and maintaining a sense of community. Meath County Council is working with various stakeholders to progress the provision of high quality educational facilities in the area, which will contribute to the ongoing economic improvement of the country with an increased output of high quality graduates into the labour force. Within the Area of Interest, there has been substantial school-building and improvement works in recent years. For instance, along the Mill Road, not far from Southgate, as one approaches Drogheda from Dublin/Julianstown along the R132, new primary school provision has been catered for – Le Cheile (Educate Together) National School on the Mornington Road (R150) (County Meath) (located beside Drogheda Grammar School, which is also in County Meath, and Gaelscoil an Bhradáin Feasa, along the Mill Road, which runs between the aforementioned Mornington Road (R150) and the Colpe Road between Southgate and Donacarney (Meath). The Gaelscoil opened in 2007 and has operated from prefabs to date but will move into new premises in the next year or so. Planning for the new 16-room classroom school was secured in the autumn of 2014 and will include provision for a special needs/autism unit. Not far from these schools, in Donacarney village in Meath, are Realt na Mara Boys and Girls Primary Schools (two separate schools on the same campus, which is one of the largest schools of its kind in the country). The new schools here were officially opened in 2014 by the Bishop of Meath (the Very Reverend Michael Smith) and all of these primary schools cater for many children in the Area of Interest (Louth as well as the Meath parts). As mentioned earlier, these two primary schools in Donacarney also contain special autism units, catering for up to seven (7) children in each case. The largest secondary school catering for children in the Area of Interest is Coláiste na hInse (Laytown, County Meath), which was first opened in 2012.

3.3 Tourism

Meath County Council is the local body responsible for tourism marketing and product development in County Meath and engages in a range of activities with the aim of promoting County Meath as Ireland's Heritage Capital. Meath County Council also engages in a range of activities in conjunction with Louth County Council with the aim of promoting County Meath and South County Louth as the Boyne Valley destination and assisting in the development of the tourism product. This cooperation has resulted in the accolade of the Boyne Valley (which occurs in Louth and Meath) being promoted by Fáilte Ireland as a signature destination among Ireland's portfolio of places to visit.

Meath County Council is recognised as being one of Ireland's most innovative county tourism marketing bodies, continuously striving to develop and implement new initiatives aimed at highlighting what the Boyne Valley has to offer. Working in partnership with the public and private sectors, Meath County Council also works closely with Meath/Boyne Valley Tourism, to develop a range of materials that highlight the many heritage, leisure, retail, accommodation and sporting opportunities available in Meath and Louth.

A recent initiative coordinated by Meath County Council, focused mainly on the Drogheda area, was the development of a play-and-stay package involving three local golf links courses at Baltray (Louth), Seapoint (Louth) and Laytown and Bettystown (Meath) joining together with the CityNorth Hotel.

Meath County Council has also recently led a joint project with Louth County Council and Fáilte Ireland to develop a 225km Boyne Valley driving route, which is the foundation for the development of the Boyne Valley destination. With the infrastructure and promotional material completed, the focus then turned to phase three and the development of IT platforms to maximise the opportunities that the Boyne Valley Drive will bring to the tourism trade. During 2015, Meath County Council led the development of the new Official Boyne Valley Tourism App which also encompasses County Louth heritage and tourist facilities.

Both local authorities are excited about the potential for the Boyne Valley tourism product to grow further, including by virtue of being part of Fáilte Ireland's Ancient East product (developed in part from the huge success of the Wild Atlantic Way on the west coast) and given other tourism attractions in the region, including Tayto Park near Ashbourne (which has grown extraordinarily rapidly to become one of Ireland's most visited destinations).

3.4 Transport

The Transportation Department of Meath County Council uses its resources to maintain and improve the road network in the county, to meet the needs of road users and to support economic development. The services provided by Meath County Council within the Area of Interest include routine maintenance, winter maintenance, road resurfacing and restoration works. As well as maintenance and upgrade works, Meath County Council also promotes and develops sustainable transport initiatives, traffic management improvements and traffic safety schemes.

In addition to general road works, within the Area of Interest, Meath County Council also provides and maintains the litter bins, street furniture, grass cutting, pedestrian crossings and the public lighting on the road network and within the housing developments.

Some recent works undertaken in the Area of Interest include the provision of sustainable transport projects such as the Boyne Greenway, providing a wonderful amenity for cyclists and recreational walkers in the area. The plan is to have a full cycleway running between Mornington in coastal Meath along the Boyne into Drogheda and thence from the Ramparts in Drogheda out to Oldbridge House in Meath, the scene of the Battle of the Boyne (however, as reported earlier, the Ramparts in the St. Dominic's Park area of Drogheda (Louth) have been closed to members of the public for much of 2015 due to subsidence problems). Recently Meath County Council constructed footpaths and cycle lanes on both sides of the R132, providing pedestrian linkage from developments in County Meath with County Louth and upgraded the R152, which included traffic calming measures and pedestrian linkage from the Avourwen development in County Meath to the County Louth boundary. Meath County Council is currently in the process of constructing a footpath near Millmount Abbey which will result in a continuous pedestrian linkage to the nearby education facilities in County Louth.

Some of these projects were implemented with the assistance of funding received under the Sustainable Transport grants available from the National Transport Authority for schemes in the Greater Dublin Area. This funding is available to projects undertaken by Meath County Council due to its location within the Greater Dublin Region; however, Louth County Council is unable to avail of funding under this scheme.

In addition to the above Boyne Greenway scheme, the National Transport Authority has committed to fund a technical consultant for Meath County Council to consider the feasibility of extending this Greenway further into Drogheda and providing a link to the train station.

3.5 Housing

A key function of Meath County Council is the provision of social housing, encompassing the assessment of housing needs within the county, traveller accommodation, homelessness, estate management, the provision of adaptation grants to private households, and the inspection of standards within the private rented sector.

The housing supports available to meet the accommodation needs of those on our social housing waiting list include direct provision and mechanisms through the private rented sector, including the Rental Accommodation Scheme, long term leasing initiatives and the Housing Assistance Payment.

The social housing first preference demand for the Area of Interest stands at 68, while 27 households have had their accommodation needs met by Meath County Council through various housing supports. In addition, under the auspices of the Social Housing Strategy 2020, Meath County Council is advancing a programme of social unit delivery across the county. To date this has included the acquisition of a number of properties within the Area of Interest. There is therefore a very small element of social housing within the Meath part of the Area of Interest and it is notable that the social housing therein is integrated with private housing (there are no stand-alone social housing estates), which reflects good planning principles and practice and is in line with national policy.

As outlined earlier in Sub-Section 2.9, Meath County Council's social housing service figured comparably well in the NOAC performance indicators report 2014, which was published in December 2015 (Meath comes out strongly in regard to vacancy rates and re-letting times).

3.6 Emergency Services

Meath County Council Fire Service has a statutory obligation to make provision for the prompt extinguishing of fires in buildings and other places of all kinds in its functional area and for the protection and rescue of persons and property from injury by fire.

In 2015, the Council adopted its 5-year Fire Service Operational Plan to cover the entire county and acknowledges the existing agreement with Louth County Council to provide a Fire Service operational response to East Meath. The Plan identifies the need to continually review the operational response and to conduct an appropriate study to determine future needs for the Fire Service in this area.

The range of tasks and areas of work undertaken by Meath County Council's Fire Services within the Area of Interest including Community Fire Safety, Major Emergency Management Planning, Building Control and ensuring compliance with the Building Regulations.

Meath County Council's Fire Services is supported by the Civil Defence, which provides support to the Principle Response Agencies and the Principle Emergency Services in times of crises. A secondary role is to provide community support at local, regional and national events.

Meath Civil Defence fulfils these roles through a network of training units throughout the county with 204 volunteers. The nearest Civil Defence training base to the Area of Interest is Duleek. A number of volunteers from the Drogheda area travel to Duleek for their weekly training class and operational activities. The Meath Civil Defence regularly provides support at events in the Area of Interest and has also supported the emergency services during flood incidents in recent years.

3.7 Environment

The protection of the environment is of significant importance for the residents of and visitors to County Meath. Clean air and water, a litter-free countryside, pristine beaches and sustainable waste management systems are fundamental to improving the quality of life of our citizens.

Meath County Council in partnership with different stakeholders are involved in a wide range of litter-related activities raising awareness of litter and its effects and ensuring that the streets, footpaths and roads in the Area of Interest are kept clean and tidy.

In 2015, Meath County Council adopted its 3-year Litter Management Plan 2015-2017, to cover the entire county and the implementation of this is supported by the litter wardens continuing to enforce the relevant legislation including the Litter Bye-Laws. Meath County Council are also involved in extensive education and awareness campaigns including media advertisements, house-to-house calls, workshops and information days in the Area of Interest to encourage the use of the brown bin collection system.

In addition to the protection of the environment, Meath County Council's Environment Department is currently looking for a suitable burial ground site south of the Area of Interest that would serve Stamullen and environs and the East Meath area. Meath County Council's draft policy dictates that burial grounds are for Meath citizens only and would only accept burials from people from outside of Meath if there is a family connection/history with the locality. This may have an effect on the people currently living in the Area of Interest, if the boundary was to change.

3.8 Community Development

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 significantly strengthens and expands the role of the Local Authority in local and community development, with particular focus on promoting the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities. Meath County Council has a pivotal role in improving the delivery of services for the citizens of the study area through facilitating collaboration between service providers and the community and voluntary sector.

The Meath Age Friendly initiative forms part of the advancement of the community sector which is supported by Meath County Council and available to the residents of the Area of Interest. Also initiatives such as the Pride of Place, the Community Grant Scheme and PPN participation are all actively availed of in the East Meath area.

3.9 Library Services

Meath County Council provides a network of thirteen libraries and schools services, with some of these facilities also providing a cultural development support to individuals and groups. The Library Service also offers exhibition and activity spaces for the public to access. As well as normal library functions, Meath County Council also promotes a children's book festival, summer programme and science week to the residents of the Area of Interest, through the local Duleek library. This library currently serves the Area of Interest in its capacity as a regional library, with 3,000 members, issuing over 14,000 items per annum and delivering over 2,500 internet sessions.

The Area of Interest is also served by the centrally-based local studies and schools services, both of which operate from the county headquarters at Navan. Examples of local studies support include the

county fieldnames project (which resulted in a new book in 2014 (*Meath Field Names*),²⁵ which was well received and very popular with local readers in the Area of Interest) and support to researchers engaged in publishing local histories.

The schools reference and advisory service reaches all schools in the area and schools also avail of programmed activities at the Duleek library.

3.10 Water Services

Meath County Council manages and maintains approximately 32km of a water main network in the Area of Interest. The management of this water main includes the monitoring of flow rates, active leak control, and the reading of non-domestic water metres. The maintenance of this network includes the cleaning and checking of various valves and hydrants, and the repair and cleaning of marker posts.

In terms of water quality, regular scouring is carried out in the water main networks to remove sediment build up and a programme of water sampling and testing is carried out to ensure that the water supplied remains compliant with the EU Drinking Water Regulations 2014. Daily checks are carried out on the levels of chlorine in the water mains networks, particularly at the ends of the networks, to ensure that at least the required minimum residual chlorine levels are maintained.

Over the past decade, Meath County Council as lead authority has also been very proactive in terms of advancing and investing in drinking water capacity to benefit in particular Drogheda, including the Meath Environs of Drogheda and East Meath. Primarily as a result of these works, in excess of 5 Ml/day of capacity has been freed-up at Staleen water treatment plant which principally benefits Drogheda, including the Meath Environs.

Meath County Council maintain approximately 13km of foul sewer networks in the Area of Interest. This maintenance includes the jetting and cleaning of blockages that occur in public sewers.

Meath County Council paid more than €4.85m to Louth County Council to provide additional capacity (an increase of over 20,000 population equivalent) at Drogheda waste water treatment plant in order to provide for the future development and growth of the Meath Environs of Drogheda and the Meath Coastal villages (Donacorney, Mornington, Bettystown, Laytown and Julianstown). In essence, over 27% of the capacity of Drogheda waste water treatment plant is reserved for Meath County Council and was funded by Meath County Council for the current and future needs of the Meath Environs of Drogheda and the coastal villages listed above. Even though Irish Water is now the Water Services Authority across both jurisdictions, it is still Meath County Council's contention that over 27% of the capacity of the Drogheda waste water treatment plant was provided on foot of very substantial investment by Meath County Council and that Meath County Council is still entitled to that reserved capacity.

Meath County Council is currently planning the construction of approximately 570 metres of water main from the county boundary at the Knockbrack housing development to the new Harvest Distillery and Brewery (Boann enterprise in the Meath environs of Drogheda, which will see up to 100 new jobs created) and the construction of approximately 440 metres foul water rising main from the Harvest Distillery and Brewery along the Platin Road (R152) to outfall to the existing drainage system within the Knightswood housing development.

²⁵ See, for example, <http://www.meathfieldnames.com/index.php/news/33-where-to-get-our-book>, where one can get the unique book.

3.11 Summary

Meath County Council provides a wide range of services throughout the Area of Interest, from administrative support promoting economic development to the physical work of providing the infrastructure to facilitate economic development. In addition, the Council also maintains various existing networks, including water, wastewater, roads, public lighting and footpaths as well as carrying out upgrade works. Through library services, community initiatives and environmental education, Meath County Council provides an extensive range of awareness activities to the residents of the Area of Interest. Meath County Council also provides statutory functions such as planning and emergency services. In regard to the areas of planning and economic development, which are closely aligned, Meath County Council has adopted and is implementing a new economic development strategy for the period 2014-2022, which provides for the addition of 7,500 new jobs across the county and sets out 8 key actions for implementation. This ambitious but achievable jobs target will be supported and reinforced by the Economic Element of the Meath LECP, which is presently being finalised in tandem with the Community Element (through the Meath LCDC). The Area of Interest – the Meath environs of Drogheda and the wider East Meath area – features in these plans as key drivers of new investment and jobs growth, the overall goal of which is to facilitate greater economic impact locally.

4 The Current Boundary Situation and the Area of Interest

4.1 Introduction

The easiest and most insightful way to understand the current boundary situation in Drogheda is illustratively, with the use of maps (“a picture is worth a thousand words”). During the course of the Review, Meath County Council provided the Review Committee with a series of ED and planning maps aimed at clarifying the current boundary. The maps reproduced in this section of the Submission are not meant to be exhaustive of the maps provided by the Council to the Review Committee or indeed the many possible boundary maps that could be produced; rather the intention of the following maps is to complement the boundary situation within the context, and confines, of a document (A4) of this nature. It is judged by Meath County Council that the maps are sufficiently detailed to elucidate the current boundary and prepare the way for the subsequent extensive data analysis pertaining to the EDs in-and-around Drogheda (in Section 5). The intention is that the maps incorporated into the Submission will complement the larger and more detailed printed maps that we have provided to the Review.

The maps are shown and described in Sub-Section 4.3, where we start at county-level before zoning-in to show the current Louth-Meath boundary in the town itself. Given that Drogheda is not detached from its respective catchment areas in Louth and Meath, we also set out in Sub-Section 4.3 to delineate what may be referred to as ‘Drogheda and its Hinterland’ (comprising parts of both Louth and Meath), reflecting the fact that Drogheda is fundamentally and inextricably linked to the EDs in its wider environs. Subsequently in the report, empirical evidence on employment, affluence/deprivation, skills etc. is provided on each of the EDs making up Drogheda and its Hinterland, so that the Review Committee can properly understand the changes that have taken place over the past decade, taking both narrow and wider definitions of the town and its catchment areas in Louth and Meath.

The maps shown in Sub-Section 4.3 also include the Review Committee’s Area of Interest, which we have reproduced from the Review website (<http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/maps.html>). The delineation of the Area of Interest includes within it the area covered by the current Drogheda (Southern Environs, Meath) LAP, which we also show for completeness. It is observed by Meath County Council that the Area of Interest includes a lot of relatively sparsely populated and currently undeveloped lands south of the Beamore Road and east of the Mill Road.

Before considering the Area of Interest and the maps, we begin by considering recent boundary reviews nationally, including the mergers, under the current government, of: (1) Limerick City and County Councils; (2) Tipperary North and South Councils; and (3) Waterford City and County Councils. We also look at the reviews of LEAs countrywide in 2013, with particular reference to the Drogheda LEA. These reviews differ fundamentally from the current Review under consideration: in particular, whereas the mergers relate to given counties (Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford) and the LEA reviews pertain to local authority representation (i.e. *the number of councillors in LEAs*) within given counties (including Louth and Meath), the Review here pertains to *two different* counties where there are inevitably elements of competition as well as cooperation between the two local authorities concerned (as there are among all neighbouring local authorities in Ireland and in other advanced economies).

4.2 Recent Boundary Reviews Nationally

4.2.1 Introduction

A number of recent reviews of local authority arrangements and boundaries are now outlined – based on publicly available information sources. It is important to note that none of the following reviews is similar to or of the same type as the Review under consideration here, where there exists the possibility of a boundary change among two different local authorities in two different counties, to which Meath County Council is opposed.

4.2.2 Mergers of Local Authorities in Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford (2014)

The DECLG's Putting People First (2012) initiative provided for the merger or unification of the city/county councils in Limerick and Tipperary, and also for a single local authority in Waterford (i.e. merger of Waterford City and County Councils).²⁶

According to Putting People First (p. viii):

“A key objective of local government unification is to increase the capacity of local government to promote economic and social development. The merging authorities can act as leaders in the development of the enhanced local authority role in economic development”.

This passage underlies the importance of economic development – employment/jobs being the number one priority – in the mix of local authority functions, which Meath County Council supports and we have identified the environs of Drogheda under our remit as central to the forward economic and employment development of the county, and the wider functional region (EMRA), which includes both Louth and Meath within the same SPA (Strategic Planning Area) within EMRA.²⁷

We strongly believe that, on the basis of the extensive empirical evidence presented in this Submission, the economic/employment development of Drogheda under our remit is best carried out by Meath County Council, working in partnership with Louth County Council and within the EMRA.

According to the Programme for Government: Annual Report 2015,²⁸ in regard to local government reform it is stated that (p. 45):

“The 2014 local elections saw 949 councillors elected across the country to the new structures, down from 1,627 outgoing councillors. There was also a reduction of local authorities from 114 to 31, involving the merger of Limerick city and county councils, Waterford city and county councils and North and South Tipperary county councils, as well as the dissolution of the 80 town councils and other subsidiary bodies”.²⁹

²⁶ Putting People First is available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,31309,en.pdf>.

²⁷ Please see to Figure 1.3 (p. 17) showing the new regional assemblies in Ireland, with Louth and Meath being part of the new Eastern SPA within EMRA.

²⁸ The document is available at http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2015/Programme_for_Government_Annual_Report_2015.pdf.

²⁹ Meath County Council would note the dissolution of Drogheda Borough Council as part of the reform process (under the Local Government Reform Act 2014).

The former Drogheda Borough Council was among the dissolved councils as part of the local authority reform process and, while there exists a new municipal district structure, which includes the new Borough District structure, the former Drogheda Borough Council's functions have been transferred to Louth County Council in Dundalk, which today has executive powers for the area as well as the county as a whole.

4.2.3 Review of Boundary and Local Government Arrangements in Cork (2015)

On 15 January 2015, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Alan Kelly TD, announced the appointment of a statutory committee to review the Cork City boundary and other local government arrangements in Cork.

The Minister's announcement said that he "sees a clear case for extending the Cork City boundary to encompass a wider metropolitan area and has appointed an independent group to review the boundary and examine whether the local authority structures should be merged".³⁰

Some commentators criticised these remarks by the Minister at the outset of the review – for the reason that they gave the impression that the Minister had already made up his mind about the outcome of the review and that the review process was a *fait accompli* or an exercise in reverse engineering to demonstrate a pre-ordained position, particularly in view of the Minister's use of the words "**clear** case for extending the Cork City boundary" (Meath County Council's bold italics). In the end, the Cork review became a major news story about the *extent* of the boundary extension for Cork City, and the Galway review, which was due to be published after the Cork review, has been in abeyance since the eruption of the controversy over the Cork review, which we understand is being legally challenged (the Galway review is considered below).

On 8 September 2015, the Cork review group reported back to the Minister with the recommendation that Cork City and County Councils should be merged within four years, with the new merged council split into three divisions, namely that: Cork City Council would be abolished and replaced with a Metropolitan Cork Division to govern an expanded city and suburban region of some 290,000 people; with a Cork North and East Municipal Division and a Cork West and South Municipal Division each feeding into the unified authority. The review group also recommended that powers should be devolved from government and some State agencies to each of the three proposed divisions and that special provisions be made to retain the historic civic status of Lord Mayor and the option of a directly elected Lord Mayor should also be considered.

However, the Cork review quickly led to major controversy and is now being legally challenged, we understand. Two of the members of the Cork review committee dissented from the review's findings and they furnished their own, dissenting report, which was published as an annex/appendix to the committee's report. The dissenting report argued that the county should retain a city council and a county council, and that the city's administrative area be expanded considerably. The dissenters opposed to the 'Majority Report' said that Cork needed an independent and autonomous future.

In an article carried in *The Irish Times* after the publication of the two opposing reports ('Robust minority report poses food for thought', 9 September 2015), journalist Mr. Harry McGee concluded:

"Given the tenor and robust arguments of the minority [dissenting] report, logic suggests that further deep investigation is needed before the trigger is pulled on this one".

³⁰ <http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentReform/News/MainBody,40018,en.htm>.

The editorial of *The Irish Times* on that day (9 September 2015) remarked as follows:

“The majority report on Cork lacks credibility, where the minority report by Prof Dermot Keogh and Dr. Theresa Reidy is well-grounded on international experience that recognises cities as “the epicentre of economic development” in their regions. They favour extending Cork city’s boundary to take in the entire metropolitan area, with the aim of ensuring that it will be able to compete internationally as the Republic’s second largest city – a strategy that should be replicated in Waterford. Everyone in Cork city who agrees with them must now seek to make this an issue in the forthcoming general election – to save Cork from the depredations of Alan Kelly and the Department of the Environment”.

In a remarkable interview with RTÉ’s *Drivetime* (Radio 1) programme on 18 September 2015, Cork South Central TD Mr. Ciaran Lynch said that the Majority Report had the potential to be the most damaging thing that Cork experienced since the Black-and-Tans almost 100 hundred years ago, and he shot an arrow across both the DECLG and Minister Kelly (he and Minister Kelly are Labour Party colleagues), criticising the review process and the Department for its role in diminishing local authorities and local democracy over a long period of time. Like *The Irish Times*, Mr. Lynch believes that the ‘minority report’ carries greater empirical weight than the Minister’s favoured Majority Report.³¹

4.2.4 Review of Local Government Arrangements in Galway (2015)

On 21 January 2015, Minister Kelly announced a review of local government arrangements in Galway. Like the Cork review, he appointed an independent statutory committee to carry out the review, including the potential of a city and county merger.³²

At the time of finalising this Submission to the Drogheda Boundary Review, the Galway report has not yet come to light or been published. Given that the announcement of the Galway review came less than a week after the announcement of the Cork review (21 January and 15 January 2015 respectively), one would have expected that the report of the Galway review would have been launched at this stage; however, the fallout from the Cork review has been substantial.

In fairness to Minister Kelly, other events have conspired to overtake the local authority reviews, most notably the housing crisis and the growth in the number of homeless people on the streets of the capital and countryside plus in the run-up to Christmas and in January 2016 (when our Submission to the Review was finalised) the floods along the Shannon, which have raised a whole series of different issues.

4.2.5 Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Review and Report (2013)

4.2.5.1 Introduction

The former Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Phil Hogan (currently European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development), established the Local Electoral Area (LEA) Boundary Committee on 15 November 2012 to review and make recommendations on the division of each council area, other than Cork City, into LEAs, and to make recommendations on the number of members of each council to be assigned to each local electoral area.

The remit of the LEA Committee did not include any changes to local authority/county boundaries. The LEA Committee reported on 29 May 2013.³³

³¹ Mr. Ciaran Lynch TD has also been Chairman of the Oireachtas Banking Inquiry, which is due to report in early 2016.

³² <http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentReform/News/MainBody,40082,en.htm>.

The LEA Boundary Committee was required to have regard to Putting People First (2012) and in particular the proposals for a new municipal district structure for local government in counties outside Dublin. The recommendations on local electoral areas were to provide the basis for the configuration of the new municipal districts. The LEA Committee was also required to have regard to the decision of government to merge the councils of Limerick City and Limerick County, North Tipperary and South Tipperary, and Waterford City and Waterford County.

In the course of its work, clarification was provided to the LEA Committee by the Minister on a point regarding the electoral boundaries that are to apply in respect of counties Carlow, Laois, Louth and Meath.

The Local Government (Boundaries) (Town Elections) Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 114/1994) altered the boundaries of Drogheda and Carlow towns *for the purposes of local elections* and not, we would hasten to add, to local administration (thus Meath County Council retains executive functions over the Meath part of Drogheda and likewise Louth County Council for the Louth part of Drogheda). Paragraph 5(a) of this statutory instrument altered the boundary of Drogheda town to include part of the electoral division of St. Mary's (Meath) in County Louth for *electoral purposes* (only, we would add).³⁴ The Minister requested the LEA Committee not to have regard to the provisions in this statutory instrument in making its recommendations.

4.2.5.2 County Louth Drogheda

The position in Drogheda (Co. Louth part) before the LEA Boundary Committee made its recommendations was that the Drogheda Borough Council area comprised two LEAs – namely Drogheda East and Drogheda West – with a total of 10 elected members (6 in Drogheda East and 4 in Drogheda West).³⁵

Based on the number of councillors and population, the LEA Committee recommended in its 2013 report that County Louth be re-configured from 5 LEAs into 4 LEAs, with the former two Drogheda LEAs (Drogheda East and Drogheda West) merged into a new LEA, namely Drogheda, with the same number of elected representatives (namely 10 councillors). On p. 91 of its report, the LEA Committee stated that:

“A new 10-member local electoral area is recommended for Drogheda. This is the maximum number of councillors that can be assigned to a single electoral area. The Committee in making this recommendation was mindful of the current status of Drogheda as a borough council [which today does not exist]. This new Drogheda local electoral area is formed from the current local electoral areas of Drogheda East and Drogheda West, apart from the electoral divisions of Dysart and Clogher which would move to the new Ardee local electoral area”.

³³ <http://www.boundarycommittee.ie/reports/2013-Report.pdf>.

³⁴ Paragraph 5(b) altered the boundary of Carlow Town to include part of the electoral division of Graigue Rural (Laois) in County Carlow for electoral purposes.

³⁵ A previous local electoral area boundary review was done in 2008 (Mr. John Gormley was the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government). The 2008 review recommended that the number of seats (elected members or councillors) be increased from 5 to 6 in the then Drogheda East LEA with the number of seats in the then Drogheda West LEA remaining at 4. Drogheda Borough Council no longer exists.

As recorded in the LEA Committee's report (p. 91), the recommended new Drogheda LEA would comprise the following EDs with an overall population of 41,925 in the 2011 Census (as shown subsequently in Section 5 of this submission):

- Fair Gate;
- Monasterboice;
- Mullary;
- St. Lawrence Gate;
- St. Mary's (part);
- St. Peter's;
- Termonfeckin; and
- West Gate.

4.2.5.3 County Meath Drogheda

The LEA Boundary Committee recommended a substantial increase in the number of elected members (councillors) from 29, before the review, to 40, reflecting the significant population growth in Meath.

The Committee's proposals included that a new LEA – Laytown-Bettystown, with 7 members/councillors – be configured with the following EDs:

- Duleek;
- Grangegeeth;
- Julianstown;
- Killary;
- Mellifont;
- Painestown;
- Slane;
- St. Mary's (part);
- Stackallan.

In Meath County Council's experience, the Meath hinterland of Drogheda takes in (at least) four of the above EDs in the environs of the town, namely Mellifont, Duleek, St. Mary's (part) and Julianstown. To these, we would also add the EDs of Ardcath and Stamullin, which are located in the Ashbourne LEA (a map showing all of the EDs grouped according to the LEAs currently in Meath is presented below).³⁶

³⁶ The six EDs in Meath are also included in Indecon's delineation of the M1 Economic Corridor Development Study (completed in 2010) commissioned by Fingal, Meath and Louth County Councils. Indecon's map of the M1 Corridor is reproduced in Figure A1 (p. 196) and it includes more EDs in the vicinity of Drogheda along the M1 motorway than judged to be in the Drogheda Hinterland (Meath) in this Submission.

4.2.5.4 Submissions to the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Review 2013 ³⁷

County Louth

Pat McDaid

This submission mentions that (emboldened in his letter to the Committee) that (bold removed here):

“The St. Marys Electoral District (E 10047) is at present the only ED in the country that is divided in two counties”.

Cormac Bohan

This submission to the 2013 proposes an enlarged Drogheda Borough Council area within Louth County Council and states that:

“the existing local electoral areas (LEAs) of Drogheda East and Drogheda West and contiguous urban areas and electoral districts (EDs) of Drogheda, currently in the Co. Meath local authority area, known as Julianstown and “St.Mary’s” are combined to form a Borough/Municipal District circling Drogheda as part of the Louth County Council area bringing the local authority area in line with the urban settlement pattern and the revised Constituency of Louth as determined by the Constituency Commissions of 2007, reaffirmed in 2012. This Borough/Municipal district would in turn be divided into two separate electoral areas North and South of the Boyne with 8 seats each circling Drogheda as their central urban focus point”.

Drogheda City Status Group

This submission simply states that it agrees with the submission made by Pat McDaid (above).

County Meath

Meath County Council

The submission by Meath County Council to the 2013 LEA review outlines the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, where it is stated that (p. 7):

“The County Meath Development Plan 2013-2019 sets out a clear strategy for the development of towns and urban areas in Meath so that the County achieves its full economic potential. The towns identified and other main areas will play an important role in delivering jobs and services to the rural areas around them, to their resident population thus ensuring the building, growing and developing communities therein. Table 2 [in the submission] outlines the urban settlement hierarchy for County Meath which accords with the regional hierarchy set out in the Regional Planning Guidelines [for the Greater Dublin Area, which pertain[s] up to the year 2022].

[Table 2 in the Meath submission shows that Drogheda Environs and Navan are at the top of the settlement hierarchy in County Meath – each is designated as a “Large Growth Town I”.]

Further in its submission (p. 8), Meath County Council reproduces the outline of the settlement hierarchy in the Meath CDP 2013-2019, where it is stated in regard to Large Growth Town I (Drogheda Environs and Navan):

³⁷ The submissions to the 2013 review referred to here and below are not exhaustive of all of the submissions to that review in regard to Counties Meath and Louth; the submissions referred to in this submission include those mentioning Drogheda/Drogheda Environs.

“Key destination, economically active supporting surrounding area, located on multi-modal corridor in metropolitan hinterland – plan for population of up to 50,000”.

Fine Gael – Meath East

This submission to the 2013 review includes (p. 5):

“Drogheda Environs while largely situated in Co. Louth has a large portion of its hinterland in Co. Meath”.

4.2.6 Summary

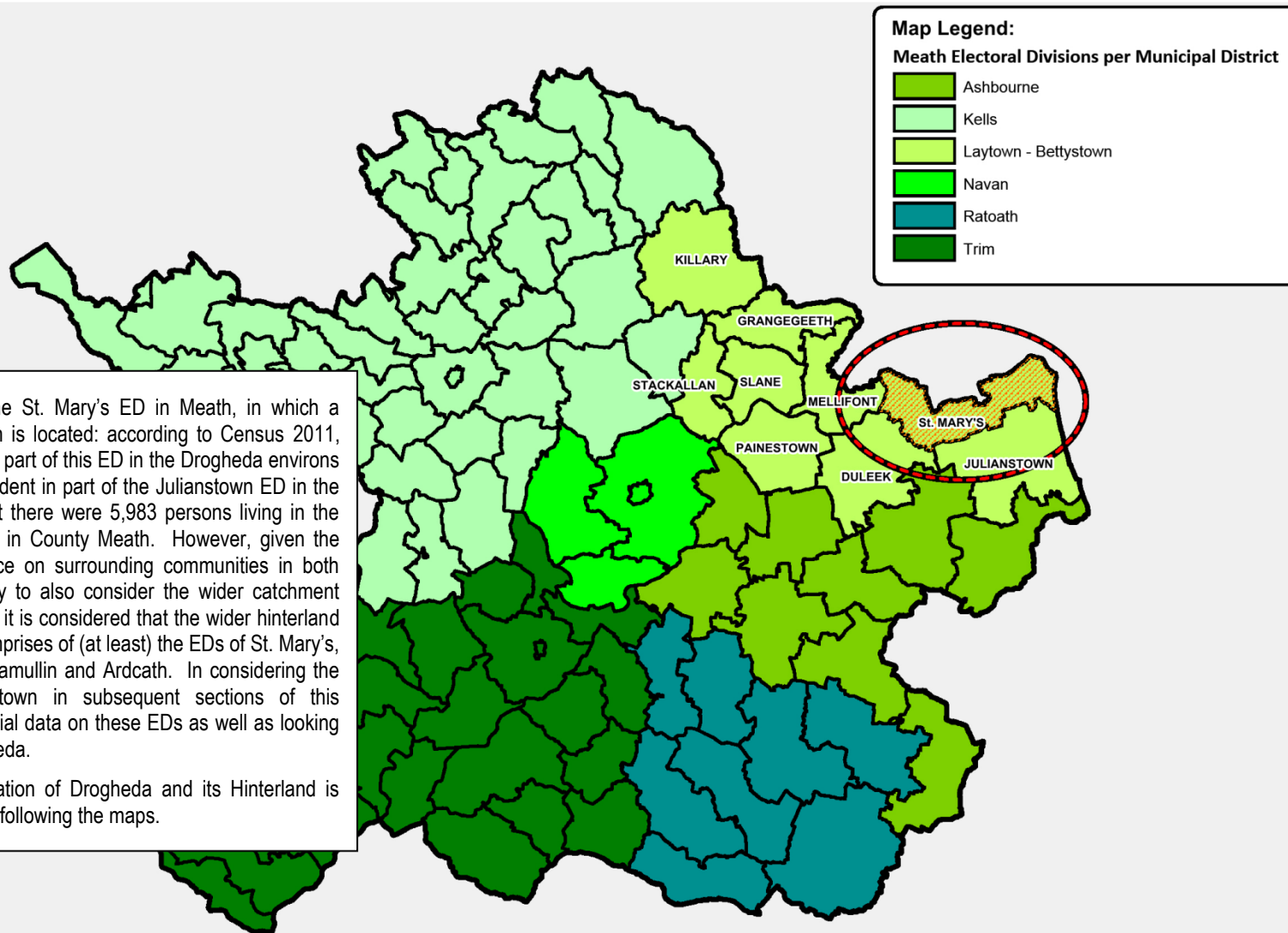
Summing up on the mergers in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford, and the recent local authority reviews (commenced in 2015 but now stalled) in Cork and Galway, not forgetting the previous LEA reviews in 2013, it is seen that each is beset by its own particular issues. The review in Cork has proved very controversial with the emergence of a dissenting view within the review committee and the Galway review, which was to have been published by now, has been in abeyance since the Cork controversy. The current Review in Drogheda even differs from its sister reviews in Athlone, Carlow and Waterford, where in each case there are particular histories and issues. Accordingly, each should be treated on its own merits and devoid of any political considerations or pre-judging, which are consistent messages of this Submission.

4.3 Delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland and the Current Drogheda Boundary

The series of maps overleaf – there are ten (10) maps – starts out by showing the current EDs in Counties Meath and Louth before zooming-in to more geographically disaggregated maps of Drogheda and its Hinterland and then the current Meath County Council Drogheda Local Area Plan (LAP) map before showing the CSO’s map of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (which is based partly on the criterion of including all occupied buildings within 100 metres of an existing building and thereby this last map shows that Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs funnels into a small corner of the Julianstown ED in Meath). The Review Committee’s Area of Interest Map is also shown, in which it is clear to see that the Area of Interest occupies a greater area than the current Drogheda LAP area.

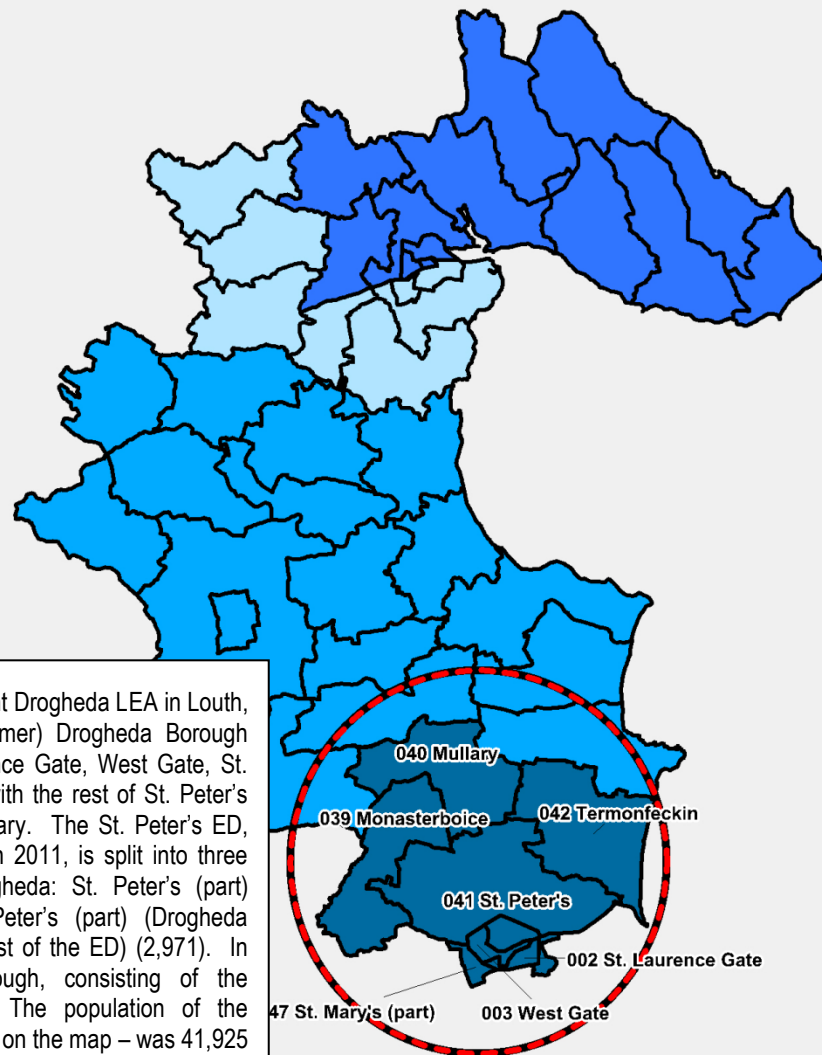
Superimposed on the maps are brief narratives describing their relevance in the context of the Submission (the Meath County Council maps have been produced under Ordnance Survey Ireland copyright – License Number 2015/31/CCMA/Meath County Council; the CSO map of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs is reproduced from the publicly available CSO map; and the Review Committee’s Area of Interest Map, which we have reproduced directly from the Review’s website (<http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/maps.html>), was produced under Louth County Council’s OSI License Number 2015/30/CCMA/Louth County Council).

One of salient features of the geographically disaggregated maps below is the fact that the new developments in the Meath environs of Drogheda have taken place close to the existing development along the Louth-Meath boundary, which is consistent with good planning principles. If there were to be a change in the existing boundary in Drogheda in favour of Louth, it would send out a worrying signal to other local authorities with similar boundaries and risk resulting in perverse incentives in which little or no development would occur at inter-local authority boundaries. Elsewhere in this Submission, we have listed out other towns around the country with such boundaries (Sub-Section 5.2.3, p. 100).



The highlighted area includes the St. Mary's ED in Meath, in which a significant part of Drogheda town is located: according to Census 2011, there were 5,965 persons living in part of this ED in the Drogheda environs and a further 18 people were resident in part of the Julianstown ED in the Drogheda environs, meaning that there were 5,983 persons living in the immediate environs of Drogheda in County Meath. However, given the size of the town and its influence on surrounding communities in both Louth and Meath, it is necessary to also consider the wider catchment area of Drogheda. In this regard, it is considered that the wider hinterland of Drogheda in County Meath comprises of (at least) the EDs of St. Mary's, Mellifont, Duleek, Julianstown, Stamullin and Ardcath. In considering the economic significance of the town in subsequent sections of this Submission, we will examine official data on these EDs as well as looking at narrower delineations of Drogheda.

Further discussion of the delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland is provided in the paragraphs below following the maps.

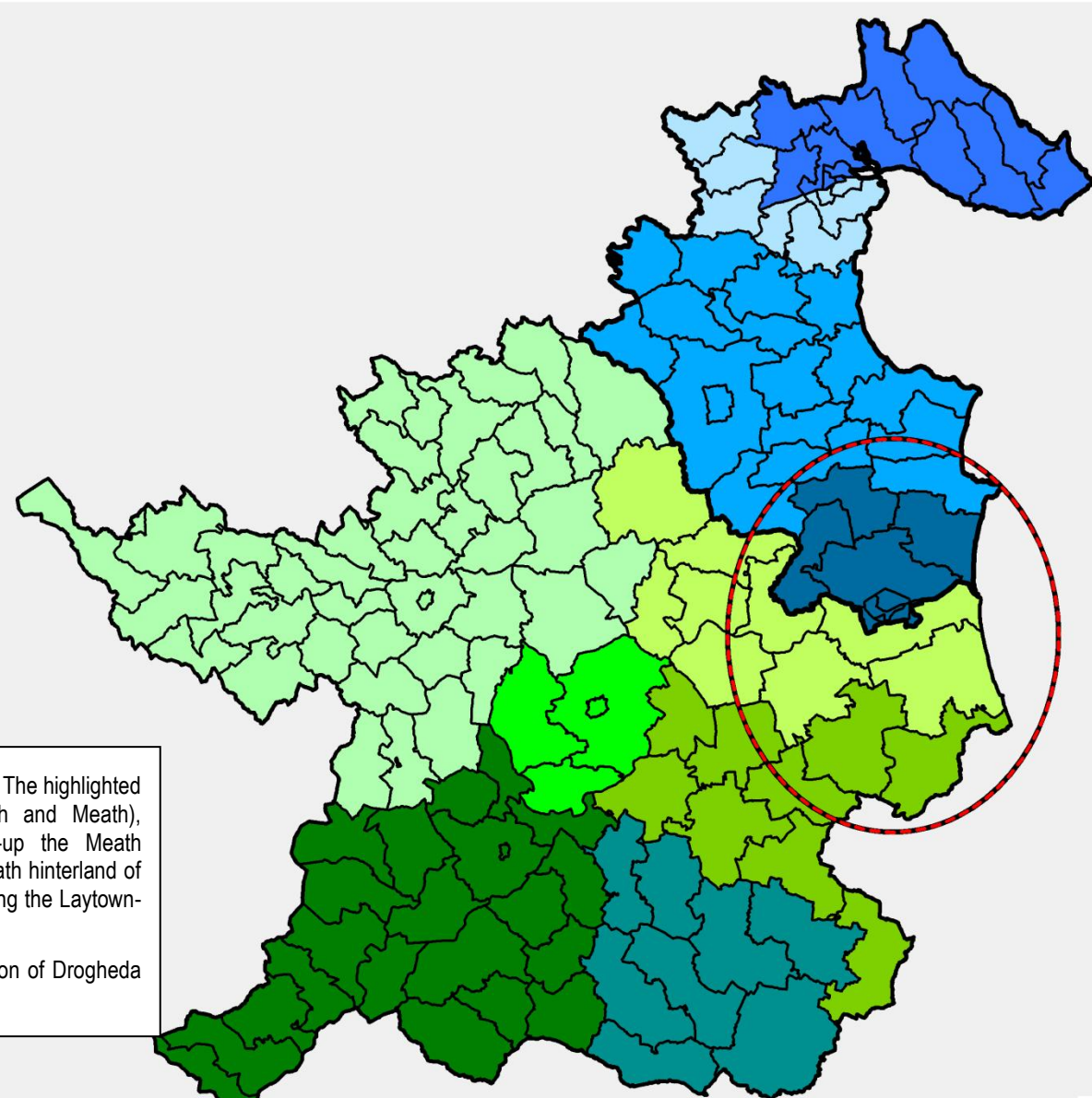
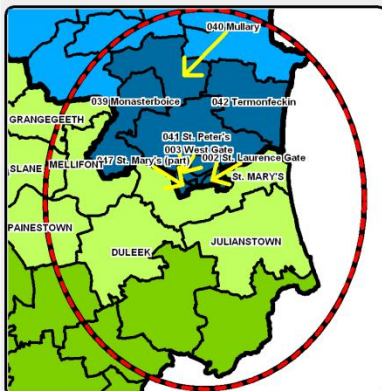
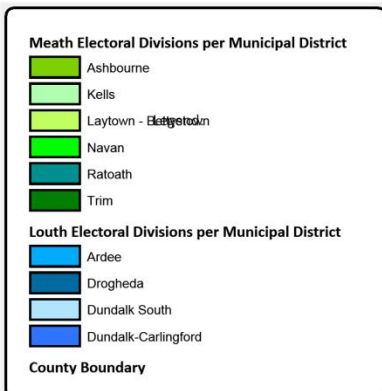


Map Legend:

Louth Electoral Divisions per Municipal District

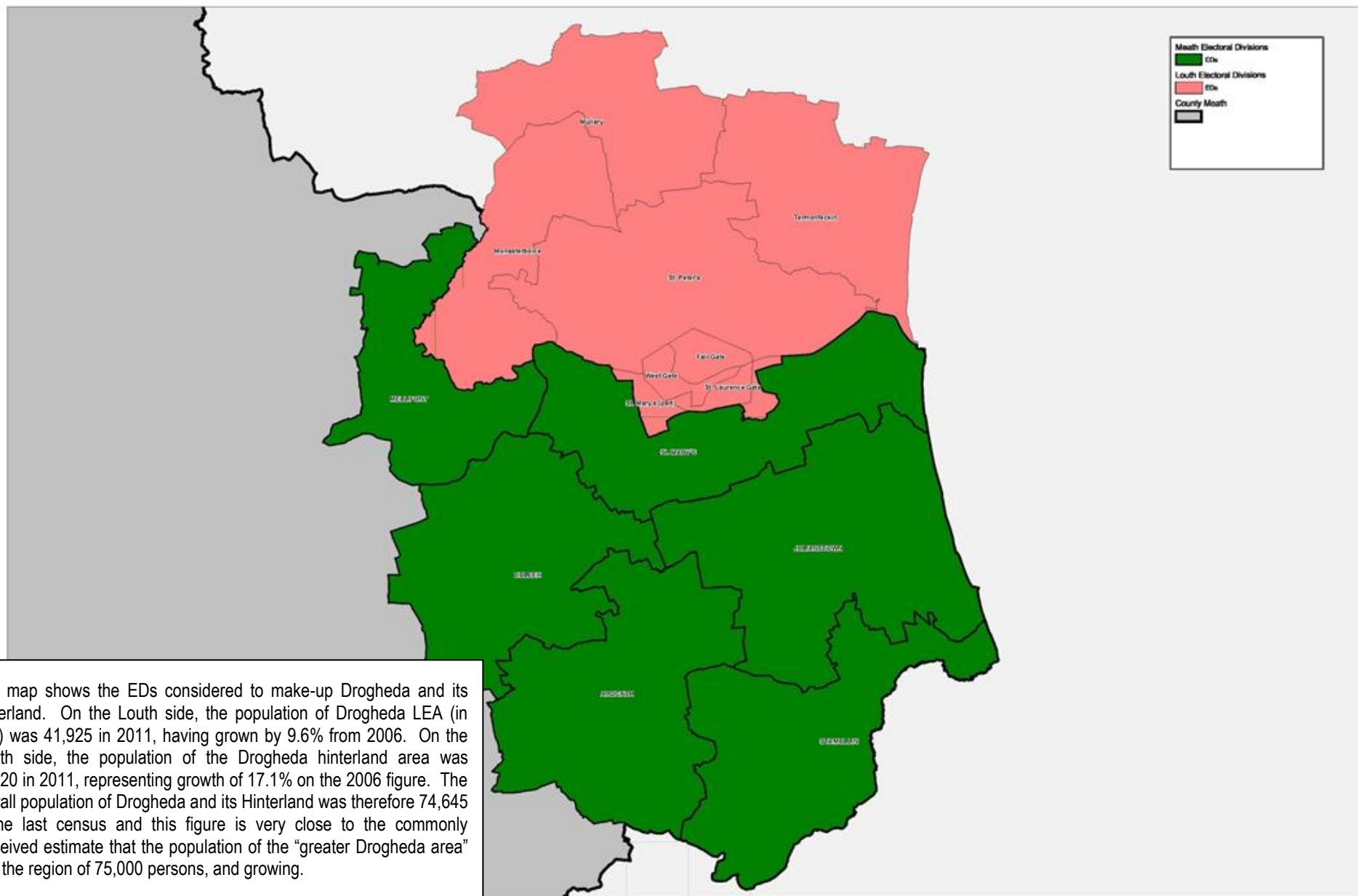
- Ardee
- Drogheda
- Dundalk South
- Dundalk-Carlingford

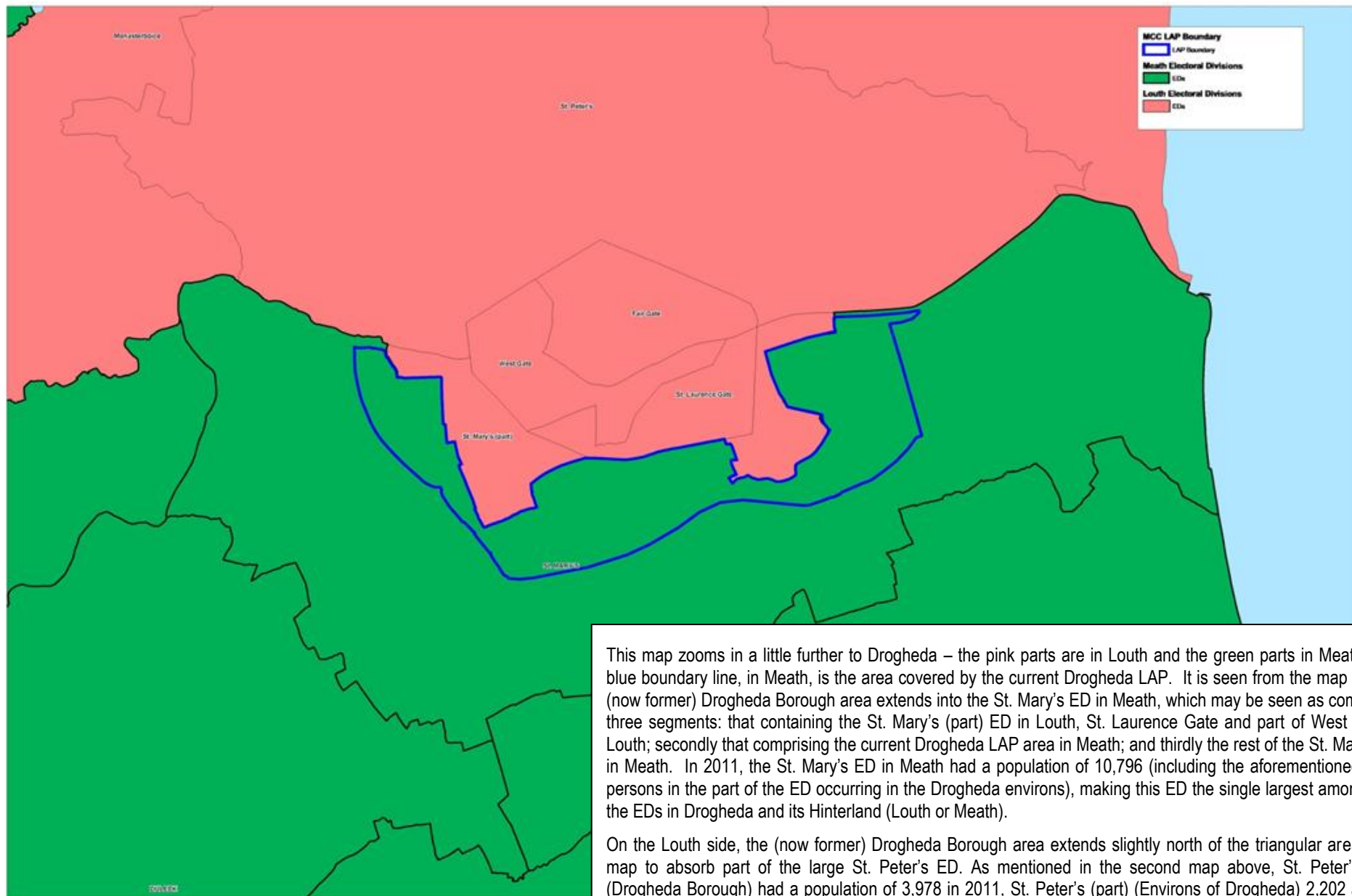
The ringed area in this map shows the current Drogheda LEA in Louth, which comprises the five EDs of the (former) Drogheda Borough Council area (namely Fair Gate, St. Laurence Gate, West Gate, St. Mary's (part) and St. Peter's (part)) along with the rest of St. Peter's ED, Monasterboice, Termonfeckin and Mullary. The St. Peter's ED, which had a population of 9,151 persons in 2011, is split into three parts in respect of the make-up of Drogheda: St. Peter's (part) (Drogheda Borough) (3,978 2011); St. Peter's (part) (Drogheda Environs) (2,202); and St. Peter's (part) (rest of the ED) (2,971). In 2011, the population of Drogheda Borough, consisting of the aforementioned five EDs, was 30,393. The population of the Drogheda LEA – the ringed area in dark blue on the map – was 41,925 in that year. The Drogheda LEA is considered to delineate the Drogheda hinterland area in Louth.



This map combines the ED maps of Louth and Meath. The highlighted area captures Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath), comprising Drogheda LEA and the EDs making-up the Meath hinterland of Drogheda. It will be noticed that the Meath hinterland of Drogheda includes some, but not all, of the EDs forming the Laytown-Bettystown LEA.

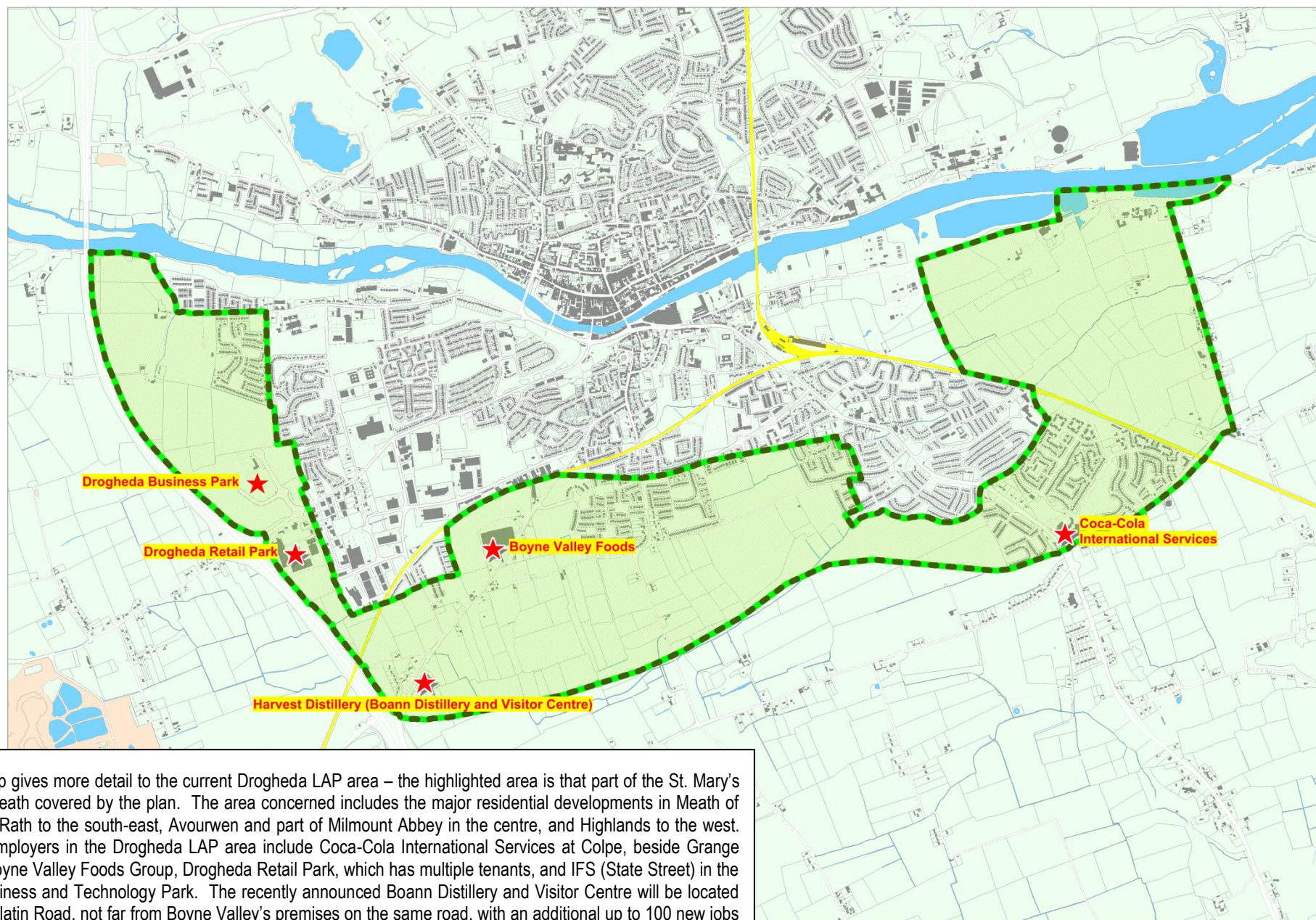
In the next map overleaf, we zoom-in to the delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland more closely.



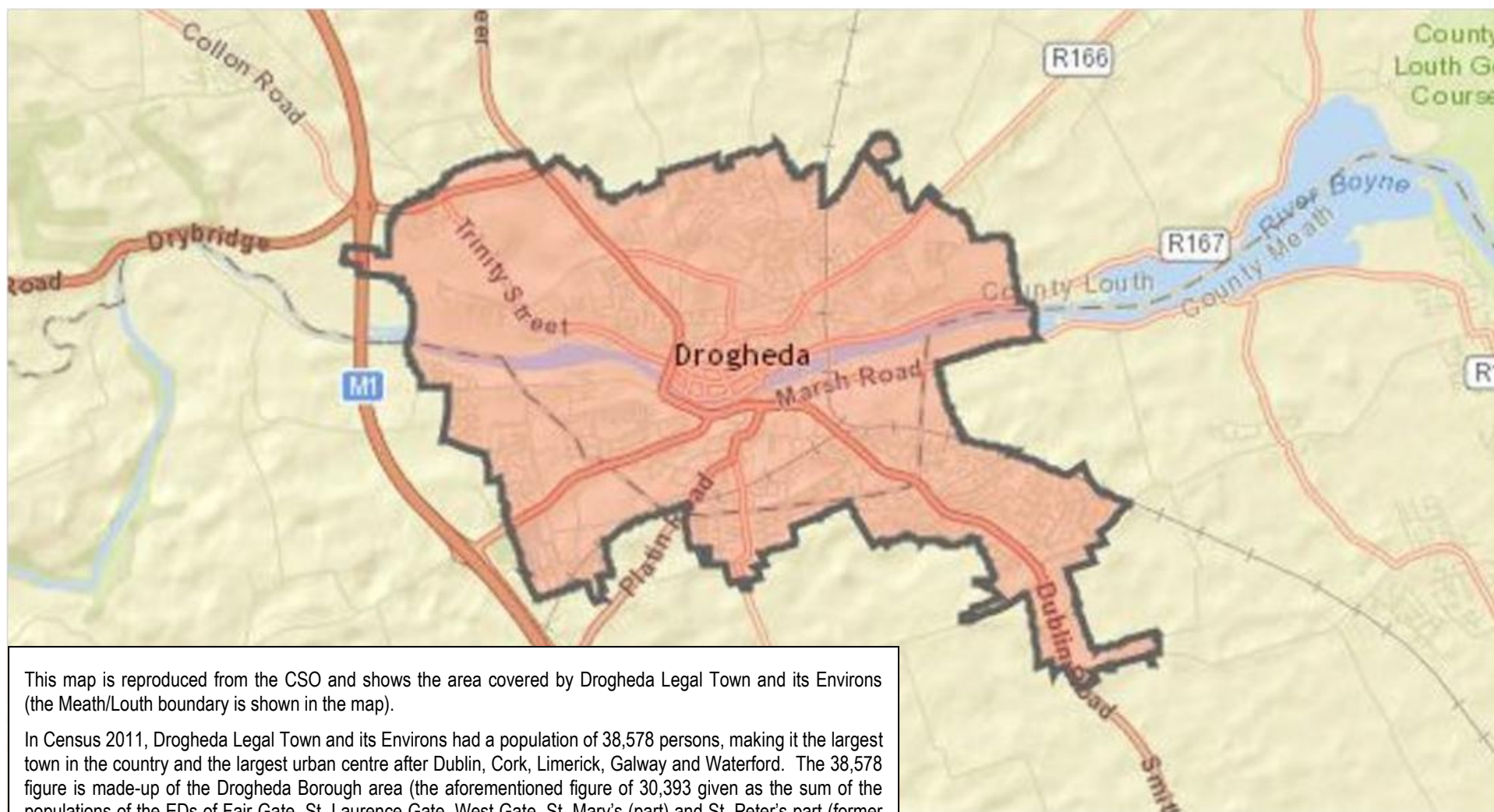


This map zooms in a little further to Drogheda – the pink parts are in Louth and the green parts in Meath. The blue boundary line, in Meath, is the area covered by the current Drogheda LAP. It is seen from the map that the (now former) Drogheda Borough area extends into the St. Mary's ED in Meath, which may be seen as comprising three segments: that containing the St. Mary's (part) ED in Louth, St. Laurence Gate and part of West Gate in Louth; secondly that comprising the current Drogheda LAP area in Meath; and thirdly the rest of the St. Mary's ED in Meath. In 2011, the St. Mary's ED in Meath had a population of 10,796 (including the aforementioned 5,965 persons in the part of the ED occurring in the Drogheda environs), making this ED the single largest among all of the EDs in Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth or Meath).

On the Louth side, the (now former) Drogheda Borough area extends slightly north of the triangular area in the map to absorb part of the large St. Peter's ED. As mentioned in the second map above, St. Peter's (part) (Drogheda Borough) had a population of 3,978 in 2011, St. Peter's (part) (Environs of Drogheda) 2,202 and the rest of the St. Peter's ED had a population of 2,971 in that year (overall population of St. Peter's was 9,151 in 2011). More detailed maps showing the occurrence of Drogheda into the St. Peter's ED were provided by MCC to the Review.



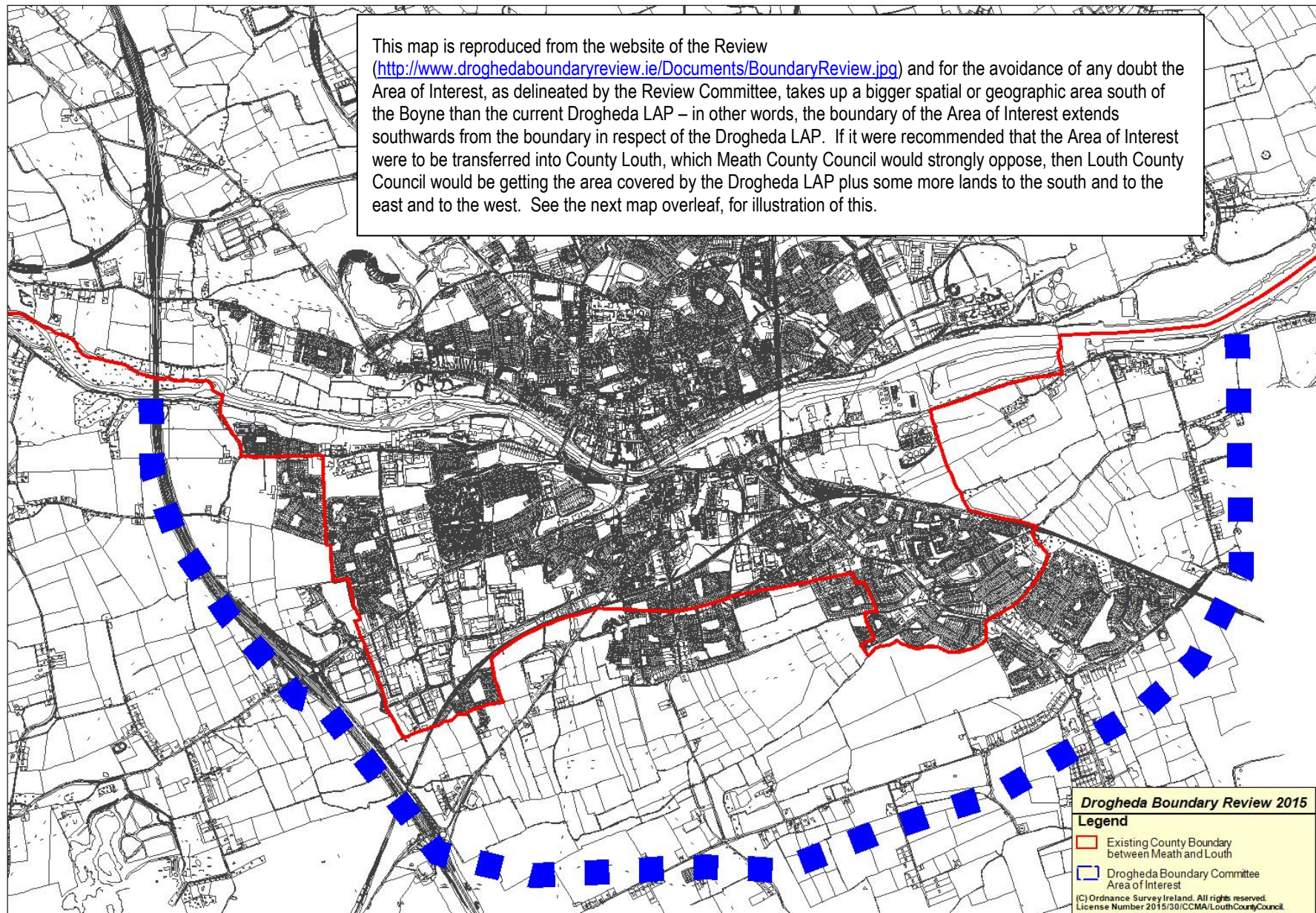
This map gives more detail to the current Drogheda LAP area – the highlighted area is that part of the St. Mary's ED in Meath covered by the plan. The area concerned includes the major residential developments in Meath of Grange Rath to the south-east, Avourwen and part of Milmount Abbey in the centre, and Highlands to the west. Major employers in the Drogheda LAP area include Coca-Cola International Services at Colpe, beside Grange Rath, Boyne Valley Foods Group, Drogheda Retail Park, which has multiple tenants, and IFS (State Street) in the IDA Business and Technology Park. The recently announced Boann Distillery and Visitor Centre will be located on the Platin Road, not far from Boyne Valley's premises on the same road, with an additional up to 100 new jobs in the Meath part of Drogheda.



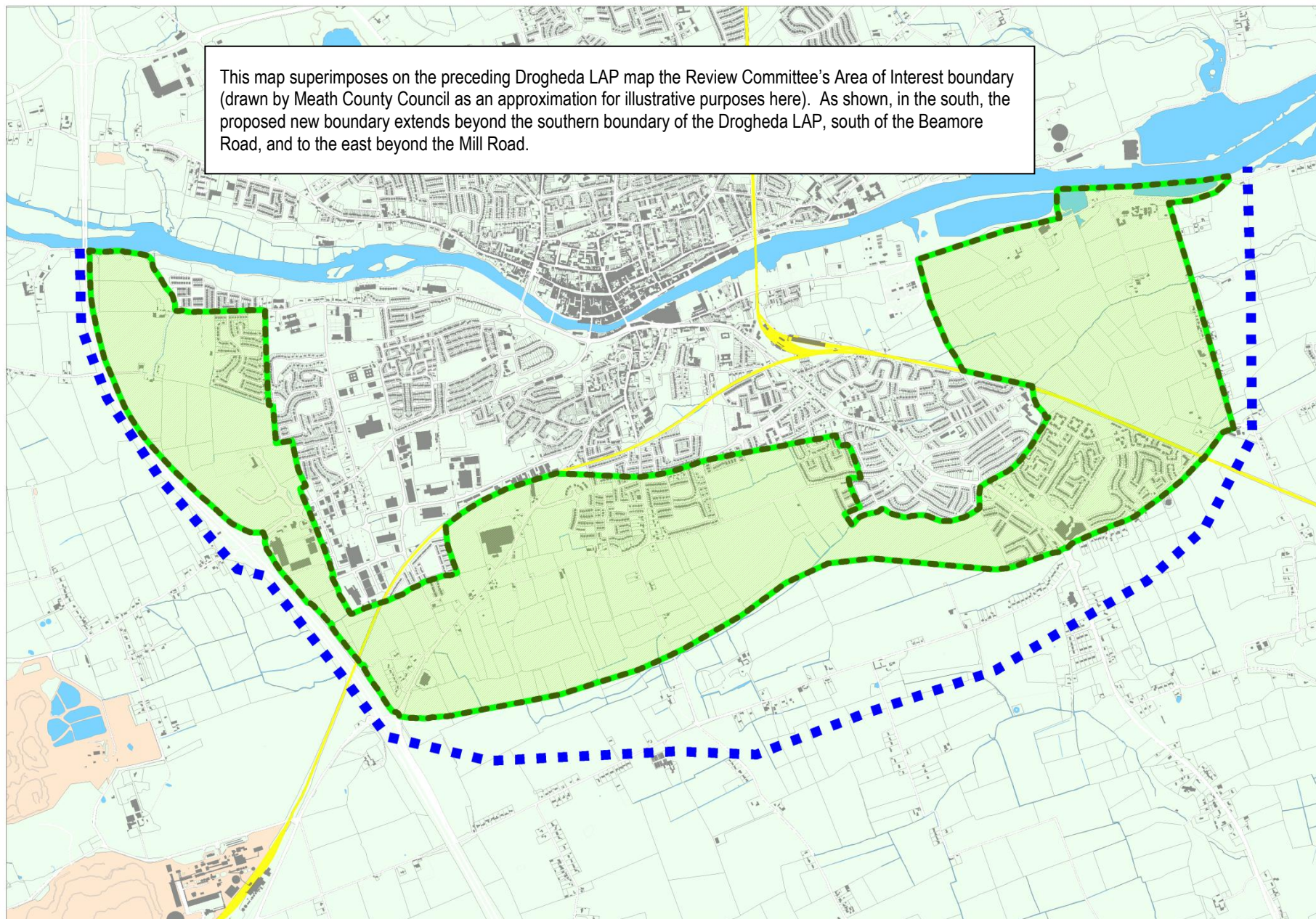
This map is reproduced from the CSO and shows the area covered by Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (the Meath/Louth boundary is shown in the map).

In Census 2011, Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs had a population of 38,578 persons, making it the largest town in the country and the largest urban centre after Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. The 38,578 figure is made-up of the Drogheda Borough area (the aforementioned figure of 30,393 given as the sum of the populations of the EDs of Fair Gate, St. Laurence Gate, West Gate, St. Mary's (part) and St. Peter's part (former Drogheda Borough area)) plus St. Peter's (Environs of Drogheda) (2,202) and the immediate environs of Drogheda in County Meath (namely St. Mary's (part) (Environs of Drogheda) (5,965) and Julianstown (part) (Environs of Drogheda) (18). Thus, the Louth part of the CSO's delineation Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs had 32,595 persons in 2011 and the Meath part had 5,983 in that year. The Louth-Meath boundary is also shown by the dashed line on the map.

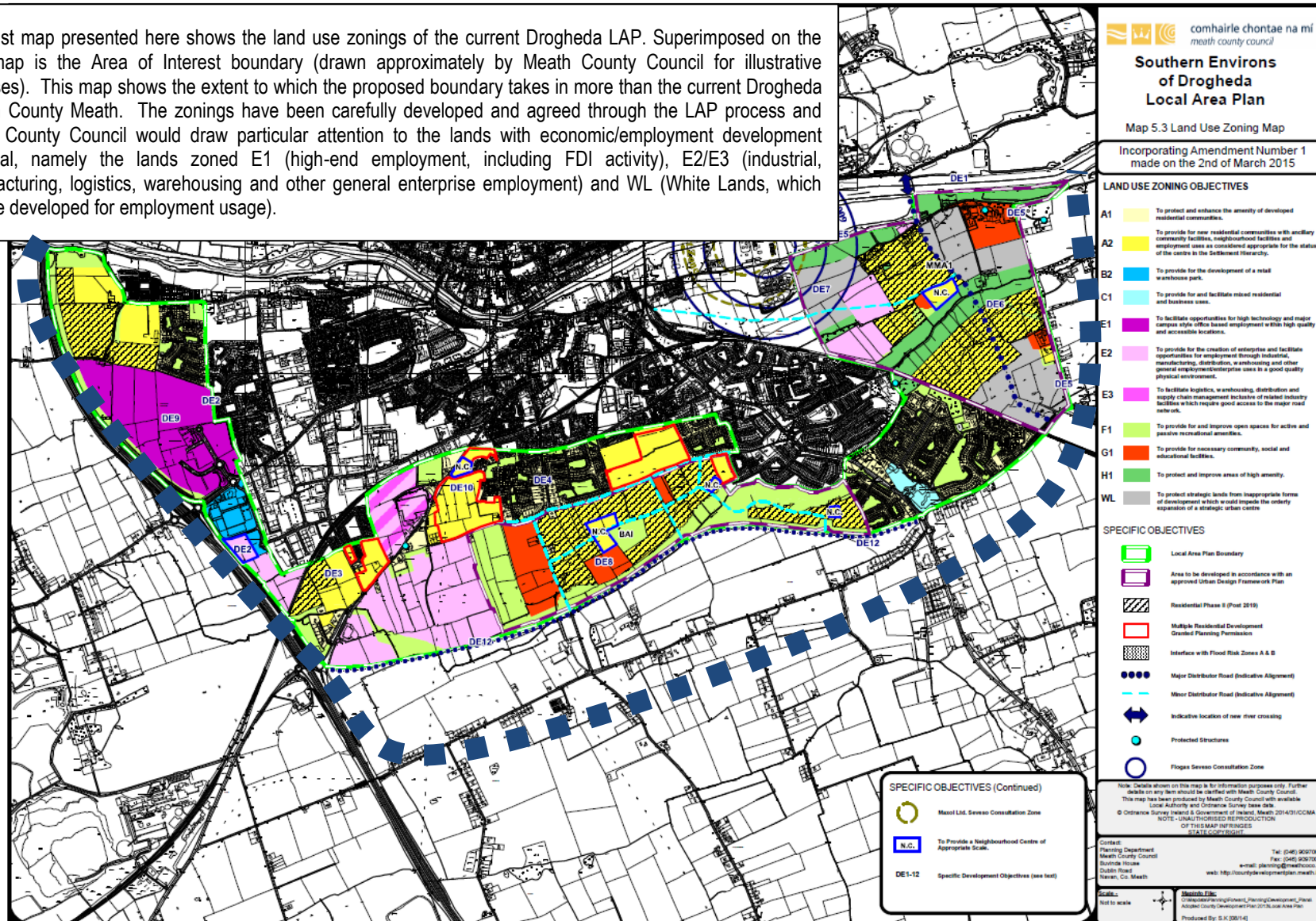
This map is reproduced from the website of the Review (<http://www.droghedaboundaryreview.ie/Documents/BoundaryReview.jpg>) and for the avoidance of any doubt the Area of Interest, as delineated by the Review Committee, takes up a bigger spatial or geographic area south of the Boyne than the current Drogheda LAP – in other words, the boundary of the Area of Interest extends southwards from the boundary in respect of the Drogheda LAP. If it were recommended that the Area of Interest were to be transferred into County Louth, which Meath County Council would strongly oppose, then Louth County Council would be getting the area covered by the Drogheda LAP plus some more lands to the south and to the east and to the west. See the next map overleaf, for illustration of this.



This map superimposes on the preceding Drogheda LAP map the Review Committee's Area of Interest boundary (drawn by Meath County Council as an approximation for illustrative purposes here). As shown, in the south, the proposed new boundary extends beyond the southern boundary of the Drogheda LAP, south of the Beamore Road, and to the east beyond the Mill Road.



This last map presented here shows the land use zonings of the current Drogheda LAP. Superimposed on the LAP map is the Area of Interest boundary (drawn approximately by Meath County Council for illustrative purposes). This map shows the extent to which the proposed boundary takes in more than the current Drogheda LAP in County Meath. The zonings have been carefully developed and agreed through the LAP process and Meath County Council would draw particular attention to the lands with economic/employment development potential, namely the lands zoned E1 (high-end employment, including FDI activity), E2/E3 (industrial, manufacturing, logistics, warehousing and other general enterprise employment) and WL (White Lands, which may be developed for employment usage).



4.4 Discussion of Drogheda and its Hinterland

4.4.1 Meath County Council's Delineation for the Purposes of the Review

Starting from the narrowest definition in County Louth and proceeding to consider wider geographic areas, taking into account Drogheda's catchment/hinterland areas in both counties, we may consider the following definition of Drogheda and its Hinterland (ED numbers are given in parentheses):

- **Drogheda Borough (Louth);**
 - Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)
 - St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)
 - West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)
 - St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)
 - St. Peter's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 041)
- **Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (Louth and Meath) (CSO's definition);**
 - Louth
 - Drogheda Borough (as above)
 - St. Peter's (pt.) (Environs of Drogheda) (ED 041)
 - Meath
 - St. Mary's (pt.) (Environs of Drogheda) (ED 047)
 - Julianstown (pt.) (Environs of Drogheda) (ED 045)
- **Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath);**
 - Louth
 - Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (that part in Louth)
 - Drogheda Hinterland
 - Rest of St. Peter's (ED 041) (i.e. not including St. Peter's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) and St. Peter's (pt.) (Environs of Drogheda))
 - Monasterboice (ED 039)
 - Termonfeckin (ED 042)
 - Mullary (ED 040)
 - Meath
 - Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (that part in Meath)
 - Drogheda Hinterland
 - Rest of St. Mary's (ED 047)
 - Rest of Julianstown (ED 045)
 - Stamullin (ED 048)
 - Ardcath (ED 043)
 - Duleek (044)
 - Mellifont (ED 046).

Looking at the widest delineation considered here, the definition of Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) may be simplified and re-expressed as follows (see overleaf):

- **Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath);**
 - Louth
 - Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)
 - St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)
 - West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)
 - St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)
 - St. Peter's (ED 041)
 - Monasterboice (ED 039)
 - Termonfeckin (ED 042)
 - Mullary (ED 040)
 - Meath
 - St. Mary's (ED 047)
 - Julianstown (ED 045)
 - Stamullin (ED 048)
 - Ardcaigh (ED 043)
 - Duleek (044)
 - Mellifont (ED 046).

The Louth part of Drogheda and its Hinterland coincides with the current Drogheda LEA in County Louth. The Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland is part of the Laytown-Bettystown LEA, which also includes the Meath EDs of Killary, Grangegeeth, Stackallen, Slane and Painestown as well as the St. Mary's, Julianstown, Stamullin, Ardcaigh, Duleek and Mellifont EDs making up the delineation here.

One of the advantages of considering Drogheda and its Hinterland in the context of this Submission, and in the Review, is that it permits examination of available independent and official data on a range of socio-economic indicators of relevance at ED level in both counties, including employment, unemployment, deprivation etc. These data are considered in detail in Section 5. The lowest level of geographical disaggregation at which official CSO data on employment and deprivation indicators are available is the ED level and the relevant data analysis on the above EDs making up Drogheda and its Hinterland is presented in Section 5.

4.4.2 Further Rationale for the Delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland

There is of course an element of judgment in delineating the hinterland or catchment area of Drogheda, or of any town or urban centre. However, the definition of Drogheda and its Hinterland given above reflects previous studies of the area, where mention was made earlier of the Indecon economic development strategy for Drogheda and its environs in 2009: sensibly enough, Indecon, who were commissioned by Louth County Council and Drogheda Borough Council at the time, considered the wider environs of the town as well as Drogheda Borough because presenting the town and its catchment area in this way would capture greater population, scale/critical mass and skills – all important features for promoting the urban centre as a place in which to invest and do business (Meath County Council were not in any way involved in the commissioning of the Indecon study but senior members of the Council duly met with Indecon members during the study, as requested by Indecon, and Meath County Council features as one of the principal stakeholders for the implementation of Indecon's recommendations for the economic development of the greater Drogheda area. There is no mention of the boundary or possible boundary change or extension in the Indecon Report.

Meath County Council's careful delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland here in this Submission also reflects local experience and is not just born out of arbitrary grouping EDs. For example, if one considers

the two best-known local newspaper titles in the area, the delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland proposed here appears appropriate and sensible.

The *Drogheda Leader* newspaper, distributed free-of-charge, states on its cover page that it is delivered in “Drogheda (Louth and Meath), Bettystown [Meath], Mornington [Meath], Laytown [Meath], Duleek [Meath], Julianstown [Meath], Donore [Meath], Tullyallen [Louth], Collon [Louth], Monasterboice [Louth], Dunleer [Louth], Clogherhead [Louth], Termonfeckin [Louth], Baltray [Louth]”.³⁸ On its website, the *Drogheda Leader* says that it reaches “70,000 readers each week”,³⁹ which is in the region of the population of our delineation of Drogheda and its Hinterland.

The Drogheda Independent, which costs €2, contains news items and reports/notes for the following parts of Louth and Meath, in its section entitled ‘Around the Districts’: “Ardcath/Clonalvy” [Meath], “Bellewstown” [Meath], “Julianstown” [Meath], “Laytown/Bettystown” [Meath], “Mornington” [Meath], “Donore/Rossnaree Village” [Meath], “Duleek” [Meath], “Stamullen” [Meath], “Broomfield & District” [Meath/Louth], “Slane” [Meath], “Tullyallen” [Louth], “Collon” [Louth], “Dunleer” [Louth], “Lobinstown/Newtown” [Louth], “Philipstown” [Louth], “Clogherhead” [Louth], “Monasterboice” [Louth], “Termonfeckin” [Louth].⁴⁰

The local radio station serving Louth and Meath is LMFM (Louth Meath FM) and broadcasts from Drogheda.

Another popular media title locally is *The Meath Coaster*, which is distributed free-of-charge and carries stories and regular columns of interest to readers primarily in the Meath hinterland of Drogheda – St. Mary’s, Julianstown, Stamullin, Ardcath, Duleek and Mellifont.

Many people residing in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda (south of the Boyne) would read the monthly *The Meath Coaster*, which carries news items in respect of local GAA and soccer clubs in East Meath, of which the residents would be members. For instance, St. Colmcilles GAA Club is located about 5km south of Drogheda town centre in County Meath and today is one of the largest GAA clubs in the whole country, let alone in County Meath, with around 2,000 members, most of whom would be juvenile and junior members (U7 up to minor) and their families, reflecting the population growth of the area. Not far from the GAA club are the soccer clubs of Donacarney Celtic and East Meath United, both in the Meath Environs of Drogheda, and which also cater for many young players resident in the Louth part of Drogheda as well as County Meath players.

³⁸ Counties in brackets inserted by Meath County Council.

³⁹ <http://droghedaleader.ie/>.

⁴⁰ The popularity of both (weekly) titles illustrates the wider community in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda and its environs. Independently of this submission, the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 contains a map (Figure 1.1), which illustrates local communities in County Meath (based on consultations with various stakeholders during the carrying-out of the report). The ‘East Meath’ part of the county shown in the map is based around the “Drogheda environs” and gives a summary of key economic advantages of the area (non-exhaustive). The map is reproduced here in the Annex (Figure A2, p. 86) and it can be seen that the East Meath segment broadly corresponds with the Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland delineated here.

4.5 Summary

This section of the Submission has looked at both the Review Committee's Area of Interest and the wider greater Drogheda area in both counties – delineated as Drogheda and its Hinterland, and consistent with previous studies and reports, including the 2009 Indecon study of the area. It will be recalled that the Indecon study did not suggest or propose in any way that there should be any boundary change or extension; in fact, there is no mention of any boundary in any part of the Indecon report. Having carefully set out the EDs in the Louth and Meath parts of the Area of Interest, we proceed in the next section to present relevant data analysis concerning the economic and socio-economic development and performance of Drogheda and its Hinterland by reference to an extensive range of indicators. The analysis highlights the importance of the St. Mary's ED in Meath, which includes the Area of Interest, as a strong performer economically and socially.

5 Economic and Socio-Economic Development and Performance

5.1 Introduction

In appraising the economic composition and significance of Drogheda, it is important to examine the town's wider catchment area, in both counties, because the 'hinterland' is intimately connected to Drogheda – historically, socially as well as economically. Thus, in what follows, we examine the economic composition and performance of what we have in the previous section delineated as Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) as well as considering the more narrowly delineated Drogheda town area, which can be interpreted as Drogheda Borough (Louth) or the CSO delineation of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (Louth and Meath). In other words, for the purposes of outlining, and properly understanding, the economic composition and performance of the greater Drogheda area, it is necessary to consider the narrowest, intermediate and broader geographical delineations of Drogheda.

As will become clear in this section of the Submission, the St. Mary's ED in Meath is of key importance to Drogheda: it is the single largest ED in population terms in Drogheda and its Hinterland and it contributes significantly to the area, in terms of employment, which has been growing rapidly, and being an area where many skilled people reside. *In short, the St. Mary's ED in Meath, in which the Review Committee's Area of Interest occurs, is a strategic asset for the future development of the whole town and its environs.* The development to date has been facilitated by Meath County Council, working in partnership with Louth County Council, and we remain fully committed to continuing to supporting the economic and socio-economic development of the ED and neighbouring EDs in the environs of Drogheda under our remit in the years ahead.

The Review Committee are also aware that the Meath Environs of Drogheda is ranked at the top of the economic hierarchy (along with Navan, the County Town) in the current Meath CDP 2013-2019 and in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022, which was completed and launched in 2015 and which is currently being implemented by the Council and integrated into the Meath CDP via Variation No. 3, which is on public display at the time of finalising and making this Submission.

5.2 Population

5.2.1 Population of Drogheda Borough and Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs

Table 5.1 overleaf details the composition of the population of Drogheda Borough (Co. Louth) and the CSO-delineated Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (Counties Louth and Meath) in each of the three census years of 2002, 2006 and 2011.

At the last census (2011), Drogheda Borough had a population of 30,393, up almost 5% from the figure of 28,973 in 2006 (remembering that the former Drogheda Borough Council and Drogheda Borough Council area no longer exist).

The CSO-delineated Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs in Louth and Meath adds to the (former) Drogheda Borough area the Meath Environs of Drogheda (5,983 in 2011), which means that this delineation of the town had a population at the time of the last census of 38,578, making it the largest town in the country, on which we comment further below.

Table 5.1: Population of Drogheda and its Immediate Environs in Counties Louth and Meath (2002-2011)

	Population Level			% Population Change		
	2002	2006	2011	2002-2006	2006-2011	2002-2011
Louth						
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	10,852	9,783	9,806	-9.9%	0.2%	-9.6%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	3,566	3,801	4,004	6.6%	5.3%	12.3%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	6,412	5,899	6,042	-8.0%	2.4%	-5.8%
4. St. Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	4,738	6,030	6,563	27.3%	8.8%	38.5%
5. St. Peter's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 041)	2,765	3,460	3,978	25.1%	15.0%	43.9%
6. St. Peter's (pt) (Environs of Drogheda) (ED 041)	554	1,330	2,202	140.1%	65.6%	297.5%
Meath						
7. St. Mary's (pt) (Environs of Drogheda) (ED 047)	2,133	4,774	5,965	123.8%	24.9%	179.7%
8. Julianstown (pt) (Environs of Drogheda) (ED 045)	14	13	18	-7.1%	38.5%	28.6%
Drogheda Borough (Co. Louth) (1-5)	28,333	28,973	30,393	2.3%	4.9%	7.3%
Environs of Drogheda (Co. Meath) (7-8)	2,147	4,787	5,983	123.0%	25.0%	178.7%
Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (Co. Louth/Meath) (1-8)	31,034	35,090	38,578	13.1%	9.9%	24.3%
Co. Louth	101,821	111,267	122,897	9.3%	10.5%	20.7%
Co. Meath	134,005	162,831	184,135	21.5%	13.1%	37.4%
State	3,917,203	4,239,848	4,588,252	8.2%	8.2%	17.1%

Source: CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis.

Note: According to the CSO (at the time of the last census), legal towns and cities are urban areas with legally defined boundaries and consist of the five cities (Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford), five boroughs (Clonmel, Drogheda, Kilkenny, Sligo and Wexford) and 75 towns as established under the Local Government Act, 2001 (SI 591 of 2001). The criteria for delineating legal towns and cities include the requirement that buildings being no more than 100m apart (which helps to explain the inclusion of part of the Julianstown ED in the definition of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs in Louth and Meath).

In terms of the eight (8) EDs making up the CSO-delineated Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs (Counties Louth and Meath), St. Mary's (part) (Environs of Drogheda) (Meath) was the fourth largest by population in 2011 (5,965), after Fair Gate (9,806), St. Mary's (part) (Drogheda Borough) (6,563) and West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (6,042), all of which are in Louth.

The Meath part of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs has grown more rapidly than the Louth part – between 2006 and 2011, the Meath part grew by 25% compared with 5% for the Louth part and during 2002-2011 the Meath part grew by 179% compared with 7.3% in respect of the Louth part.

The very rapid population growth of the Meath part of Drogheda reflects the unprecedented growth that occurred in some parts of the country close to the capital during the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' years (2002-2007), which we now know was fuelled by inappropriate pro-cyclical fiscal policies and mismanagement of the lending practices of the banks by the then financial regulatory structure. This understanding of the genesis of the property bubble and the subsequent collapse of the housing market and the banking sector have come to light following the independent reports by Regling and Watson (2009), Honohan (2010), Wright (2010) and Nyberg (2011), and the more recent retrospective examination of the period conducted by the Joint Oireachtas Inquiry into the Banking Crisis in Ireland, which is due to report in early 2016.

During the pre-crisis years, massive house price rises were occurring in the capital and many people working there could not afford to purchase accommodation – even very small houses in Dublin were out-of-reach of very many people with young families. Consequently, these people had no option but to look outside Dublin, where house prices were more affordable and the locations were viable because of transport connections and/or distance to the capital. Meath became a very attractive location for these people and Drogheda became one of the most attractive places for the newcomers to make their new home. Drogheda's attractions were (are) manifold – as well as the transport connections to the capital, in the form of the railway line, motorway and bus services, onto which private operators have entered since, Drogheda was (is) also a big town with a large and varied range of attractions and amenities as well having plentiful high quality residential accommodation, such as the housing estates of Grange Rath, DeepForde, Avourwen and Highlands in the St. Mary's ED (Meath) in the Area of Interest. In the space of a few years – as captured in the data analysis in the table above – the Meath environs of Drogheda became transformed with the arrival of many new people and families, all of which have served to enrich the Drogheda community.

The table of analysis above also shows that some parts of the Louth side of Drogheda also grew very rapidly during this time – St. Peter's – but it was the Meath side that experienced the biggest growth.

The very rapid population growth in the Meath Environs of Drogheda documented in the table above served and supported the growth of the National Gateway (Dublin) and took the pressure off housing demand in the capital and provided alternative, affordable high quality housing for many people whose jobs and careers were in Dublin. These new arrivals to Drogheda have integrated very well into the town and its environs. Their children today go to primary and secondary school in the Louth and Meath parts of the town. They and their children have become members of local sports clubs – the immediate Meath environs of Drogheda, for example, boast three soccer clubs, one of the largest GAA clubs in the whole country, let alone in County Meath, and various other sports and activities, such as golf, tennis, table tennis, hockey, badminton, athletics, bridge etc. All these features have been part-and-parcel of Drogheda's attractiveness for new residents and the Meath side, facilitated by Meath County Council, have enabled this development.

However, in the process, the suburbs of Drogheda – particularly in the Meath environs – became a large commuter location. We now know that 54% of all those living in County Meath and at work in any location do so outside of the county (mainly in the capital, which accounted for 76% of all the outbound commuters from Meath at the time of the last census). The proportion in the Meath environs of Drogheda is even bigger than the 54% figure – it is over 70%.

Nonetheless, there is a dynamic element to the development story, which does not end with the commuting from the Meath environs of Drogheda, and one that is particularly relevant to this whole Review. The commuters living in the Meath environs of Drogheda were and are relatively well-educated and skilled people, with good jobs, mainly in the capital (in the public and private sectors). The facts are well laid out in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022, which is currently being integrated into the Meath CDP 2013-2019. But there is a cost to commuting and many of the commuters, who spend on average more than 2 hours commuting to work every day, would likely prefer to be working closer to home. Recognising this and the economic potential of the local skills base, Meath County Council, in liaison with other State agencies, has been working hard to develop *employment opportunities* in the Meath environs of Drogheda.

As the detailed data analysis presented below clearly shows, the rate of employment growth has been more rapid in the Meath than in the Louth environs of Drogheda, and very positive and encouraging

progress is being made in regard to ensuring sustainable communities in the Area of Interest – *with employment growth now backing up the population growth*.

But Meath County Council is not resting on its laurels and we duly recognise that more effort needs to be applied with further employment growth (we are today an outputs-oriented local authority). This explains why we have put the Meath environs of Drogheda, along the M1 Corridor, at the very top of the economic hierarchy in the county, along with Navan, the County Town of Meath. To ensure the positive progress in respect of employment growth, and sustainable communities, continues in the years ahead, we are firmly of the view that the current arrangements in respect of the local administration of the Area of Interest provides the most effective means of ensuring that the favourable growth continues into the future. The current Drogheda LAP carefully sets out the zoning requirements of the Meath environs of the town, which include different categories of economic development tailored towards the needs of various enterprises and employers, along with provision for sustainable residential and community development. That plan was made in 2009 and due to the economic crisis has been largely in abeyance since then but it continues to be relevant today and in the coming years. Meath County Council considers that it is best-placed to realise the potential of the LAP in the coming years.

Before the economic crash of 2008, now commonly referred to as the Great Recession, there were plans to develop the northern environs of Drogheda in County Louth. However, the highly ambitious plan never materialised. The plan (launched with much fanfare in 2007) was based on the concept of developing a ‘new town’ in the northern environs of Drogheda, complete with new neighbourhoods, new schools, local parks and a new sports campus catering for an envisaged 20,000 additional people. The plan also included the much-heralded Northern Port Access Route and a proposed new railway station (in addition to McBride Station south of the Boyne that currently serves the town and its environs).

While the proposed new railway station was ambitious, not least given further calls to build another new railway station further north in Louth at Dunleer, the proposed Northern Port Access Route had merit, at least in principle. It would have connected the operational part of Drogheda Port (located at Tom Roe’s Point and the Drogheda docks areas north of the River Boyne on the County Louth side) with the N51 Road and thence with the M1 Motorway, and it was anticipated that the new ring road around the northern environs of the town would have removed around 3,000 vehicles from the centre of Drogheda every day, greatly improving traffic flow and easing congestion.

However, the developer-led plan to develop the northern environs plan became a casualty of the financial and economic crisis and, as reported locally by the *Drogheda Independent* in an article entitled ‘Northern Environs Consortium disbands’, 5 January 2011:

“The death knell for the much heralded €150m Sienna Valley project on the northside of Drogheda has been sounded with the news that Drogheda Environs Limited has been struck off the list of registered companies after the consortium behind it was disbanded”.

The same article reported that, when the Sienna Valley project was given the go-ahead (by Louth County Council), the Northern Port Access Route “had been on the drawing board for more than 15 years and had continually stalled due to lack of funding”.

While the ambitious plan has been in abeyance now over a number of years, and was overly ambitious (but of its time in the pre-crisis property bubble), there is a possibility that Louth County Council will re-visit elements of the scheme, including the northern access route, which, Meath County Council believes, would make Drogheda more attractive and competitive as a business and investment location.

If one visits the town today, it quickly becomes apparent that the town centre is severely hampered with significant traffic congestion, caused in large part by the steady-stream of lorries and heavy goods vehicles coming to and from Drogheda Port, whose main activities are in bulk cargo (serving the agricultural hinterland in Louth and Meath with cargo like imported animal feeds and fertilizers).

The traffic issues in the town centre may have been noticed by the Review Committee members on their site visit to Drogheda on 18 November 2015; Meath County Council would encourage the Review Committee to spend some more time in the centre of the town, on a normal week day, and to see/experience the traffic congestion causing delays to people and businesses going about their normal, everyday business.^{41 42}

5.2.2 Drogheda Ireland's Largest Town

Drogheda's status as the largest town in Ireland (2011) is confirmed in the chart below, where we also show selected other urban centres. After the five cities, Drogheda is the largest town in Ireland.

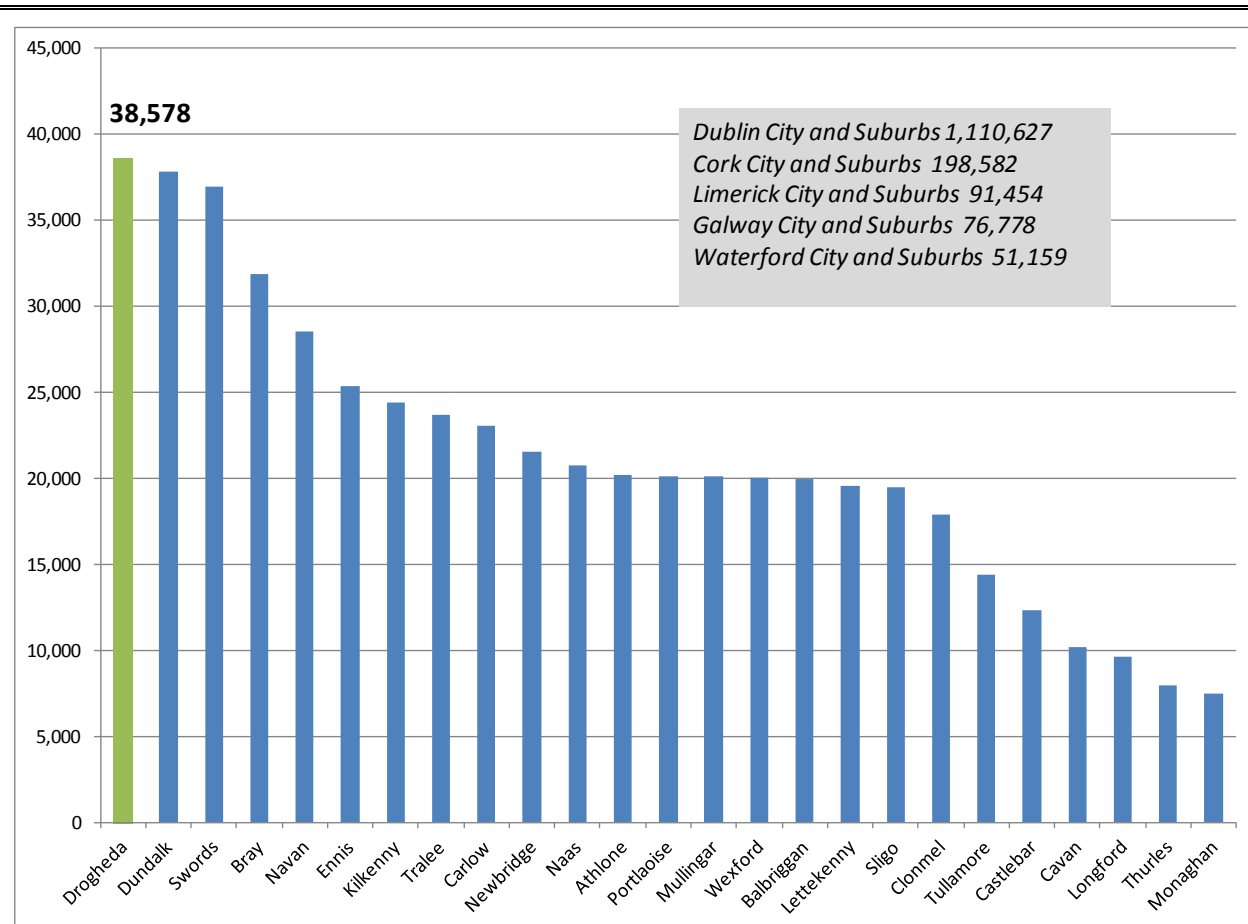
However, as outlined earlier, the fact that Drogheda may be the largest town in Ireland (at least in 2011), or the sixth largest urban centre, after Waterford, does not necessarily mean that Drogheda should be conferred with city status. Figure 5.1 overleaf also shows the population of Ireland's cities in 2011, where the skewness is striking – Dublin is the clear outlier and is way out of scale compared with the other cities and urban centres. It is the only true city in an international context and capable of credibly competing with the likes of other capital and second-tier cities with strong reputations, like

⁴¹ In a recent article in the *Drogheda Independent* (25 November 2015, by regular columnist Hubert Murphy, p. 16) entitled 'When will the Drogheda port access route finally get underway'. In the article, Mr. Murphy describes how he received a letter from a concerned reader, asking the question: "When (not if) will the new road [Northern Port Access Road] from the docks to the motorway [M1] begin? To my knowledge, the corporation (or council) have purchased and paid for most of the land required for this project". The author of the letter goes on to comment that "Dundalk got their by-pass many years ago so why has our new road it (*sic.*) not even been mentioned lately?" The letter author continues (Meath County Council's italics at the end): "This By-Pass is now needed very urgently; it will be a massive bonus to truckers, residents and businesses. When this road is complete (doesn't have to be anything fancy or extravagant) it will bring much more prosperity to the town of Drogheda. *Will you please encourage your readers to start a campaign by contacting their local politicians now; and do this before the elections*"[?] Clearly we have a reader/citizen of the town rightly exasperated by the lack of a route that would take the HGVs and port trucks out of the town centre and open-up new opportunities for commerce in Drogheda, which Meath County Council would support.

⁴² The same edition of the *Drogheda Independent* (25 November 2015) carried another story 'Town boroughs to make return?', which quotes local Minister Ged Nash TD as apparently having said that Labour returned to government after the next General Election in 2016 would restore Borough Status to Drogheda. The article contains a quote attributed to the Minister: "When Phil Hogan dreamed up the 'reform' of local government my colleagues['] eyes were off the ball, busy saving the country from economic ruin". The article goes on to say that the Minister said that "a careless and frankly stupid decision was taken by a Fine Gael Minister which emasculated towns like Drogheda, Wexford & Kilkenny as regional powers". The article proceeds to mention that the Minister said that: "Our major urban areas are the drivers of economic development. They need their own budgets, vision and civic leadership and we will restore those functions to Drogheda and other major urban areas". Meath County Council would consider that, in respect of the penultimate quote from the newspaper article above, Drogheda has never been a "regional power" (that position has been fulfilled by Dundalk in the North East); however, it is the aim of Meath County Council, working in tandem with Louth County Council, that Drogheda should become a regional economic power in the coming years and that this ambition for the town can be best achieved by both local authority working cooperatively under the *status quo* arrangements.

Copenhagen, Lisbon, Stockholm, Manchester, Liverpool etc. In the North, Belfast would also be a competitive and attractive city, although it is much smaller than Dublin (about half the population).

Figure 5.1: Population of Drogheda Legal Town and its Environs and Selected Other Urban Centres (2011) – Confirming Drogheda as the Largest Town in Ireland



Source: CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis.

Note: All towns delineated by the CSO on the basis of legal town and environs (like Drogheda), apart from Swords and Naas, which are delineated by the CSO as legal towns (see <http://census.cso.ie/areaprofiles/>).

5.2.3 Drogheda Not Alone in Having an Inter-County Boundary

Drogheda is not unique in Ireland as a town occurring across different counties or local authority areas. Table 5.2 overleaf lists the main cities and towns in Ireland like Drogheda in this regard, showing the 'core' county (with most of the population) and the 'other county' in each case. Only four of the listed towns – Drogheda, Athlone, Carlow and Waterford – are subject to boundary reviews currently. If only one boundary extension among these four towns were permitted, it might set a precedent among the other towns and cause perverse incentives more generally, in which no economic or residential development would occur at the periphery, where boundaries occur.

Table 5.2: Towns in Ireland Occurring in Two Counties

Town	Core County	Other County	2011 Pop
Limerick	Limerick	Clare	91,454
Waterford	Waterford	Kilkenny	51,519
Drogheda	Louth	Meath	38,578
Bray	Wicklow	Dublin (Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown)	31,872
Carlow	Carlow	Laois	23,030
Athlone	Westmeath	Roscommon	20,153
Clonmel	Tipperary	Waterford	17,908
New Ross	Wexford	Kilkenny	8,151
Portarlinton	Laois	Offaly	7,788
Ballinasloe	Galway	Roscommon	6,659
Carrick-on-Suir	Tipperary	Waterford	5,931
Birr	Offaly	Tipperary	5,822
Blessington	Wicklow	Kildare	5,010
Carrick-on-Shannon	Leitrim	Roscommon	3,980

Source: CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis.

5.2.4 Population of Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath and Louth)

The details of the population changes that have occurred in Drogheda and its Hinterland in both Louth and Meath during the past three censuses are presented in the Table 5.3 overleaf.

It is seen that by-far the most rapid growth in population has occurred in the Meath hinterland (72% growth during 2002-2011 compared with 19% growth during the same time in the Louth Hinterland).

Of all the EDs in the Area of Interest, the St. Mary's ED in Meath has grown most rapidly – almost doubling in population between 2002 and 2011, to attain a population of 10,769 in the last census. It is also seen from the table that the St. Mary's ED was the most populous in Drogheda and its Hinterland in 2011.

As a result, the population growth of the town and its catchment area has been unbalanced – the Meath hinterland has grown most rapidly, while, as outlined above, the ambitious plan to develop the northern environs of Drogheda, on the Louth side, collapsed as a casualty of the economic crisis.

Table 5.3: Population of Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2002-2011)

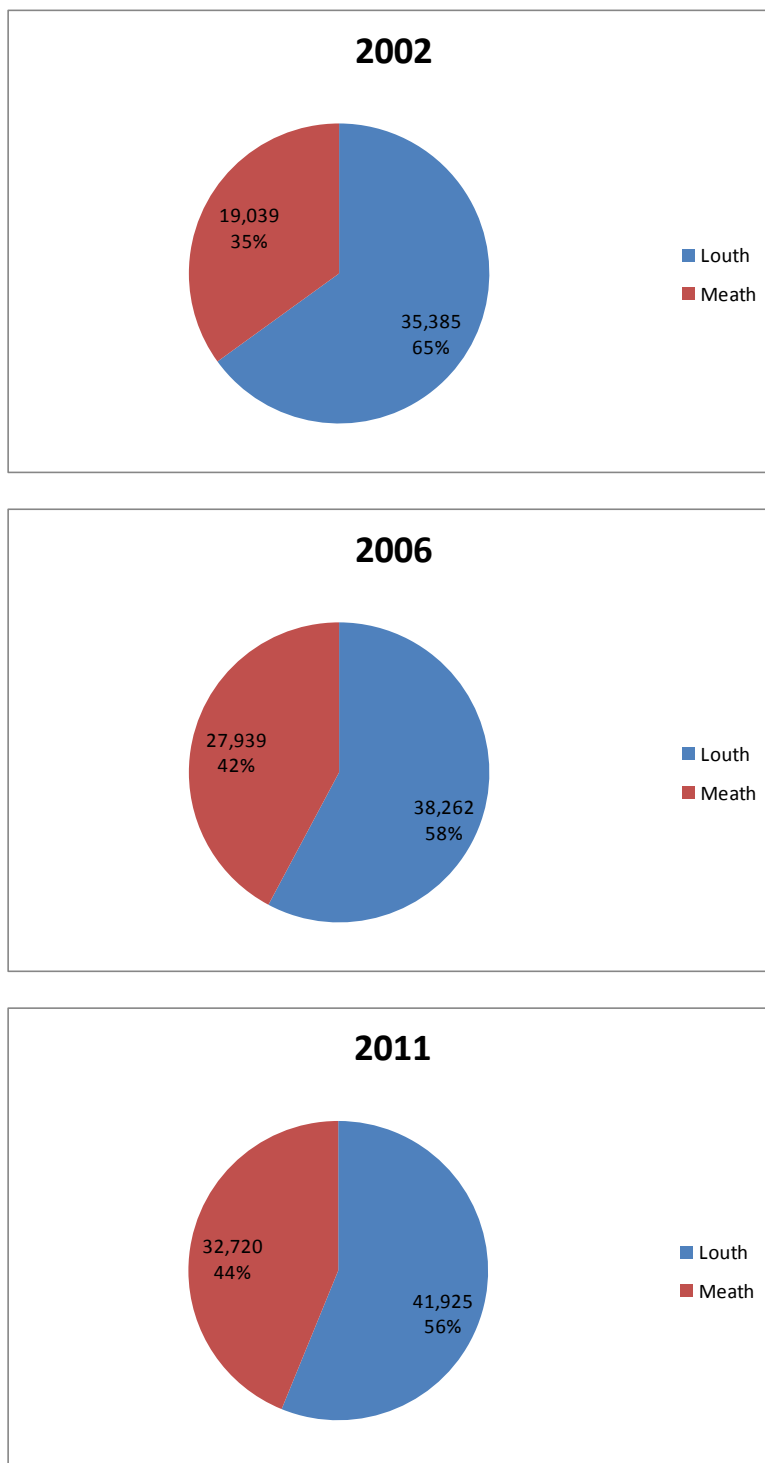
	Population Level			% Population Change		
	2002	2006	2011	2002-2006	2006-2011	2002-2011
Louth						
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	10,852	9,783	9,806	-9.9%	0.2%	-9.6%
2. St Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	3,566	3,801	4,004	6.6%	5.3%	12.3%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	6,412	5,899	6,042	-8.0%	2.4%	-5.8%
4. St Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	4,738	6,030	6,563	27.3%	8.8%	38.5%
5. St Peter's (ED 041)	5,406	7,482	9,151	38.4%	22.3%	69.3%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	1,130	1,164	1,342	3.0%	15.3%	18.8%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	2,033	2,575	3,294	26.7%	27.9%	62.0%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	1,248	1,528	1,723	22.4%	12.8%	38.1%
Meath						
9. St Mary's (ED 047)	5,457	9,044	10,769	65.7%	19.1%	97.3%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	5,806	8,289	9,606	42.8%	15.9%	65.4%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	2,329	3,844	4,696	65.0%	22.2%	101.6%
12. Ardcah (ED 043)	1,907	1,873	1,911	-1.8%	2.0%	0.2%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	2,941	4,366	5,177	48.5%	18.6%	76.0%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	599	523	561	-12.7%	7.3%	-6.3%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	35,385	38,262	41,925	8.1%	9.6%	18.5%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	19,039	27,939	32,720	46.7%	17.1%	71.9%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	54,424	66,201	74,645	21.6%	12.8%	37.2%
Co. Louth	101,821	111,267	122,897	9.3%	10.5%	20.7%
Co. Meath	134,005	162,831	184,135	21.5%	13.1%	37.4%
State	3,917,203	4,239,848	4,588,252	8.2%	8.2%	17.1%

Source: CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis.

5.2.5 Changing Shares of the Population of Drogheda and its Hinterland

Figure 5.2 overleaf provides graphical illustration of how the shares of the population of Drogheda and its Hinterland between the Louth and Meath parts have changed over time (2002, 2006 and 2011). Meath's share has progressed from 35% in 2002 to 44% in 2011, reflecting the extent of population growth in this part of the town and its catchment area.

However, population represents only a partial view of development. We need to also consider employment and in turn employment relative to population, which we turn to now.

Figure 5.2: Louth and Meath Shares of the Population of Drogheda and its Hinterland (2002-2011)

Source: CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis.

5.3 Employment

5.3.1 Employment Levels and Trends

The data used to conduct the analysis of employment come from the CSO's POWSCAR 2011 (Place of Work, School or college Census of Anonymised Records) and POWCAR 2006 (Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records). Both sources are comparable and the data were obtained from the CSO through special request as the POWSCAR and POWCAR data are not publicly available.

Looking firstly at the county level, the number of jobs within County Meath (held by residents and inbound commuters) grew by 17% during 2006-2011 to reach 38,822 in 2011; on the other hand, the number of jobs within County Louth remained more-or-less steady at around 33,000 during that time. Secondly, within the study area, the number of jobs in the Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland rose by 46% during 2006-2011 compared with 1.4% in the Louth part. The largest ED in the Meath part in respect of employment is the St. Mary's ED, where the number of jobs increased strongly by almost 50% during the period, reaching 1,363 in the last census year of 2011.

Table 5.4: Employment within the Electoral Divisions (EDs) making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)

	Employment Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	6,075	5,704	-6.1%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	595	774	30.1%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	849	1,353	59.4%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	2,152	1,771	-17.7%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	1,557	1,846	18.6%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	176	125	-29.0%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	420	390	-7.1%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	166	190	14.5%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	919	1,363	48.3%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	785	1,100	40.1%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	390	807	106.9%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	149	277	85.9%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	689	807	17.1%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	109	87	-20.2%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	11,990	12,153	1.4%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	3,041	4,441	46.0%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	15,031	16,594	10.4%
Co. Louth	32,663	32,809	0.4%
Co. Meath	33,176	38,822	17.0%
State	2,054,000	1,849,000	-10.0%

Source: CSO census data (POWCAR 2006 and POWSCAR 2011), International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook (WEO) data (State only), Meath County Council analysis.

Note: Fixed location jobs in each ED. POWCAR stands for Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records; POWSCAR for Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records. LEA denotes local electoral area.

5.3.2 Employment-to-Population Ratio

However, if we reflect on the employment figures presented in Table 5.4 overleaf, it will be noticed that the number of jobs in County Meath is not much larger than that within County Louth (c. 39,000 versus c. 33,000 at the last census in 2011), when, on the other hand, Meath has a much larger population (184,135 as opposed to 122,897 in 2011).

To incorporate both population and employment, we may look at the employment-to-population ratio in the counties and in each of the EDs making up the study area of Drogheda and its Hinterland.

The analysis of the jobs/population ratio in Table 5.5 overleaf reveals the following facts:

- The ratio is lower in Meath than Louth, both countywide and among the EDs being examined, even though employment growth in Meath as a whole and among the Meath EDs making up Drogheda and its Hinterland far exceeded the corresponding situation Louth during 2006-2011 (as shown in Table 5.4);
- The lower jobs/population ratio in Meath reflects the higher outbound commuting from Meath;
- Nevertheless, the rate of growth of the jobs/population ratio during the period (2006-2011) has been much higher in County Meath than in County Louth, and is also considerably higher in the Meath part than the Louth part of the study area (Drogheda and its Hinterland);
- This in turn reflects the efforts of Meath County Council to facilitate more employment in the Drogheda environs under its remit – and the efforts are being built upon through the current Meath CDP 2013-2019 and Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022.

Table 5.5 is thus an important table of analysis in the context of this Submission. It basically brings together the preceding Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 and reveals that the development of the greater Drogheda area (Drogheda and its Hinterland, both the Louth and Meath parts) since the beginning of this century (at least) has been largely one of *residential* development, in which many of those moving into the area to reside work outside the area, principally in Dublin. This is indicated by the fact that the (weighted) jobs/pop ratio in the whole study area (0.22 or 22%) is much lower compared with that in the State in 2011 (0.40 or 40%), and the jobs/population ratio has been especially low in the Meath part of the study area.⁴³

However, it is also seen from Table 5.5 that the jobs/population ratio has been growing very rapidly in the Meath environs of Drogheda and its Hinterland (by 25% during 2006-2011 compared with a decline of 7.5% in the Louth environs of the study area and a contraction of 2.1% countrywide). Thus, even though the Meath environs have started from a low base in regard to the jobs/population ratio, it is nevertheless seeing more rapid growth in employment compared with population and this will be one of the undoubted major challenges facing the area in the years to come.

Meath County Council in tandem with other stakeholders, including Louth County Council and the State development agencies, like the IDA, EI and Meath LEO, are on a journey working very hard to facilitate more balanced development in the Meath environs of Drogheda under our remit by ensuring employment growth as well as population growth, and keeping an eye on the jobs/population ratio.

Meath County Council considers that it is best-placed to continue this sustainable growth (*status quo*).

⁴³ The weights used in the calculation of the weighted averages in Table 5.5 are based on the respective population shares of each ED in respect of the Meath or Louth parts of Drogheda and its Hinterland and both the Meath and Louth parts (using the population figures presented earlier in Table 5.3, p.102). Subsequent tables of analysis showing corresponding weighted averages make use of the same methodology.

Table 5.5: Employment-to-Total Population Ratios within the Electoral Divisions (EDs) making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)

	Employment-to-Total Population Ratio		
	Level		% Change
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	0.62	0.58	-6.3%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	0.16	0.19	23.5%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	0.14	0.22	55.6%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	0.36	0.27	-24.4%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	0.21	0.20	-3.1%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	0.15	0.09	-38.4%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	0.16	0.12	-27.4%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	0.11	0.11	1.5%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	0.10	0.13	24.6%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	0.09	0.11	20.9%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	0.10	0.17	69.4%
12. Ardath (ED 043)	0.08	0.14	82.2%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	0.16	0.16	-1.2%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	0.21	0.16	-25.6%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth) (1-8)	0.31	0.29	-7.5%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	0.11	0.14	24.7%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	0.23	0.22	-2.1%
Co. Louth	0.29	0.27	-9.1%
Co. Meath	0.20	0.21	3.5%
State	0.48	0.40	-16.8%

Source: CSO census data (POWCAR 2006 and POWSCAR 2011), International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook (WEO) data (State only), Meath County Council analysis.

Note: Fixed location jobs in each ED. POWCAR stands for Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records; POWSCAR for Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records. LEA denotes local electoral area. Total population refers to all residents in each ED, county or State.

The preceding table (Table 5.5) looked at the employment-to-population ratio where the denominator is the total population in each ED, county etc. When we change the denominator to the *working age population* (in each case), the jobs/pop ratio increases (because the denominator has decreased).

Table 5.6 overleaf shows the employment-to-working age population (16-64 years) and the same pattern of results as in the previous table is apparent, only now that the growth in the jobs/pop ratio is even greater in County Meath compared with County Louth (7.7% versus -6.6%) and in the Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland compared with the Louth part of Drogheda and its Hinterland (33% growth versus 4.3% decline).

The differential in the growth of the jobs/pop ratio in favour of Meath may be interpreted as providing indication of the efforts by Meath County Council to facilitate more employment nearer to where people reside (aimed at addressing the outbound commuting from the county and in the study area of interest here, which has its social costs). These efforts to promote more sustainable development are continuing through the implementation of the current Meath CDP 2013-2019 and the 2014-2022 Economic Development Strategy.

It is the considered view of Meath County Council that continuing this important work in the Meath Environs of Drogheda would be best served through maintenance of the *status quo* in regard to the local authority arrangements currently in place in Drogheda.

Table 5.6: Employment-to-Working Age Population Ratios within the Electoral Divisions (EDs) making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)

	Employment-to-Work Age Population Ratio		
	Level		Change
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	0.89	0.86	-3.6%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	0.23	0.28	23.1%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	0.21	0.34	62.0%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	0.53	0.41	-22.6%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	0.30	0.32	4.3%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	0.21	0.14	-34.7%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	0.25	0.19	-25.8%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	0.17	0.18	4.3%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	0.15	0.20	32.5%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	0.14	0.18	27.7%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	0.15	0.27	83.0%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	0.11	0.21	84.8%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	0.22	0.24	8.2%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	0.32	0.25	-21.1%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth) (1-8)	0.46	0.44	-4.3%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	0.16	0.21	33.0%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	0.33	0.34	2.1%
Co. Louth	0.43	0.41	-6.6%
Co. Meath	0.30	0.32	7.7%
State	0.71	0.60	-14.8%

Source: CSO census data (POWCAR 2006 and POWSCAR 2011), International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook (WEO) data (State only), Meath County Council analysis.

Note: Fixed location jobs in each ED. POWCAR stands for Place of Work Census of Anonymised Records; POWSCAR for Place of Work, School or College Census of Anonymised Records. LEA denotes local electoral area. Working age population refers to residents aged between 15 and 64 years in each ED, county or State.

5.3.3 A Brief (Non-Exhaustive) Tour of Employment in the Meath Environs of Drogheda – Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Indigenous Jobs

5.3.3.1 Strong Employment Growth in the Meath Environs of Drogheda

Much of the strong employment growth in the Meath environs of Drogheda has occurred in the St. Mary's ED, which includes the Review Committee's Area of Interest. The CSO data reveal that there were 1,363 (fixed location) jobs in the St. Mary's ED in 2011 and that there were a further 3,078 jobs in the other EDs in the greater Drogheda area in that year (namely in the Julianstown, Stamullin, Ardcah, Duleek and Mellifont EDs).⁴⁴ During the period of the last two censuses (2006-2011), the number of jobs in the Meath EDs of the study area grew by 46% and that in the St. Mary's ED in particular rose by almost 50%. On the other hand, the number of jobs in the St. Mary's (part) in County Louth, which is one of the five EDs making up the (former) Drogheda Borough area (Louth), fell from 2,151 in 2006 to 1,771 in 2011, a decline of 18%; and the number of jobs in Drogheda LEA (the new Drogheda Borough District) in County Louth increased by just 1.4% during the period.

The rapid employment growth witnessed in the Meath environs of Drogheda during 2006-2011 occurred during the most severe recession ever encountered since the foundation of the State in 1922 (employment in the country as a whole contracted by 10%, compared with 0.4% employment growth in County Louth and 17% employment growth in County Meath). The number of jobs in the St. Mary's ED in Meath has continued to grow since the last census in 2011 and it is estimated that there are currently over 1,800 or close to 2,000 jobs in this particular ED, where Meath County Council is working proactively to support enterprise and employment development.

Earlier in this Submission, we produced a map (shown in Figure 1.2, p. 14) showing some of the major employers in the Area of Interest within the key St. Mary's ED in Meath, which, it is clearly evident at this stage, is a key part of the greater Drogheda area.

5.3.3.2 High Profile Foreign-Owned Employers in the Meath Environs of Drogheda

The Area of Interest within the St. Mary's ED in Meath is home to major foreign-owned enterprises in the form of Coca-Cola International Services (at Southgate, Colpe) and International Funds Services (IFS, part of State Street) (in the IDA Business and Technology Park off the Donore Road in County Meath). These FDI enterprises currently employ well over 500 people in this part of Meath, in high skilled jobs – accounting, finance, legal services, marketing and administration etc. The presence of these highly valued employers in the Area of Interest demonstrates the capacity for Drogheda to accommodate such sought-after investment and employment, and it is the stated goal and plan of Meath County Council to maintain its efforts in attracting further inward investment into the area in the coming years (as outlined in the Meath CDP 2013-2019 and the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022, which is currently being integrated into the Meath CDP by means of Variation No. 3). At the time of preparing this Submission, Meath County Council has been liaising with the IDA and with potential new inward investors in respect of setting up further employment in the area. We would also point that Coca-Cola was previously based in the Louth part of Drogheda in the 2000s (making concentrate for the firm's world famous drinks) and the company's presence in Drogheda was almost lost; thankfully, it moved operations to its present premises at Southgate within the Area of Interest.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See Table 5.4 (p. 74).

⁴⁵ The former concentrate plant in the Donore Road area of Drogheda (County Louth part) remains unoccupied today.

5.3.3.3 Prominent Indigenous Employers

The Irish-owned firms in the Area of Interest within St. Mary's ED in Meath include Boyne Valley Group, which has substantial premises on the R152 (Platin Road). The firm was started in Drogheda over fifty years ago and today is a household name throughout the country, responsible for distributing some of the country's best-known food and home brands (like Boyne Valley Honey, Don Carlos olive oils and Killeen cleaning products, to name but a few). Since its completion in 1997, we are reliably informed by the company that employment at the Platin facility increased from 43 in that year to 105 in 2009 and to 127 in 2015. According to Boyne Valley, the increase in staff from 2009 related to the investment in McDonnells curry plant and the recruitment of operatives, marketing and insight personnel in respect of this major milestone for the company. We are reliably informed by the Chief Executive Officer, whom is also a member of the MEF, that: "This increase in numbers could not have happened without Meath County Council and the permission to put the curry manufacturing plant in the Platin site".

Further along the Platin Road are the premises of a recently-established company active in brewing and distilling which announced its opening in 2015. The Boann Distillery and Boyne Brewhouse Development are due to commence operations this year and the new initiative will see the creation of 100 new jobs at Lagavorwen on the Platin Road in the Meath environs of Drogheda. The 50,000 square foot facility will be the only combined distillery and brewery of its kind in Ireland and it will be promoted as a major tourism attraction in the context of the Boyne Valley tourism product (which is promoted jointly by Meath and Louth County Councils) and in the wider context of Ireland's Ancient East. Visitors will be able to make a tour of the facility, with the opportunity to taste the products that will be made on site. There are also plans for a 120-seater restaurant, and space for conferencing and events. Behind this initiative is a local family, who transformed the Gleeson Group into becoming one of the largest wholesalers of drinks in Ireland, with brands including Tipperary Natural Mineral Water and Finches soft drinks. Meath County Council is very proud to be supporting important employment developments like this in Drogheda.⁴⁶

Across the Donore Road, opposite the IDA Business and Technology Park, is a recently-established retail park, which includes a range of retailing outlets – Aldi (recently-opened in 2015), Homestore & More, Harvey Norman, Tk Maxx, Argos, Halfords, Homebase, Costa Coffee, Tesco filling station and KFC. The park has also recently seen the arrival of an additional tenant, in the form of Beacon Renal, which provides a dialysis unit. The retail park has been in NAMA (National Asset Management Agency) and is currently being offered for sale: an article and advertisement within the commercial property supplement of *The Irish Times* (9 September 2015) refers to the park as having a "particularly low vacancy level, strong retail tenants, and, unlike many of the portfolios recently offered for sale, are not burdened with excessively over-rented shops" (p. 5). The Drogheda Retail Park in County Meath is a substantial shopping and employment hub, located adjacent to the M1 Motorway, and comprising almost 20,000 square metres of retail provision, with tenants not being affected by the sale. The last sentence of *The Irish Times* article observes that: "*The fundamentals were secured off the back of two*

⁴⁶ Articles covering the important employment announcement regarding the Boann development include: '100 new jobs are on tap at brewery: jobs boost as facility plans unveiled', *Drogheda Independent* (2 September 2015) and 'Over 80 jobs for Louth in distillery, brewery', *The Irish Times* (3 September 2015). The title of the latter article is erroneous because the new employment initiative will be located in County Meath and the article that was submitted to *The Irish Times* newspaper incorrectly refers to Dundalk as being the location of the new facility.

strong cities and thriving Dublin commuter town” (p. 5).⁴⁷

Moving back eastwards in the direction of Colpe, where Coca-Cola International Services is located, the Southgate Centre is also home to various other businesses, including Dunnes Stores (the anchor tenant) and other retailers. With the economic recovery gathering momentum, new businesses creating new jobs in this centre in the past year include Vintage Joys (furniture, home-styling and antiques) and Duenda Restaurant and Tapas Bar. Southgate has opportunities for further tenants, including prime office space that would be attractive for further FDI, given in addition the skill sets of the residents in the vicinity of the centre, the access to the wider GDA labour pool by virtue of the excellent transport links between Drogheda and the capital, and the proximity of Dublin Airport, which is important for FDI companies like Coca-Cola and IFS/State Street because it enables executives to travel into and from their Irish operations, which provide a range of international services activities on a round-the-clock basis.

A little to the south of St. Mary’s ED is another ED in the Meath environs of Drogheda – Stamullin – which, like St. Mary’s ED, is strategically located off the M1 Motorway, in the Dublin-Belfast Corridor. This part of the Drogheda catchment area includes the City North Hotel, an important landmark and meeting point on the motorway. Next to the hotel, the recently-established City North Business Campus is already home to a number of important and much-valued employers in business services, environmental services, professional services, engineering, life sciences and healthcare, and in research and development. In August 2015, one of the campus’ tenants – Hanley Energy – launched its new Data Centre Research and Development Hub.⁴⁸ Like Coca-Cola at Southgate, Hanley Energy used to operate in the Louth part of Drogheda, specifically at the Millmount incubation centre near the town centre, which was / is the only incubation space available to entrepreneurs in Drogheda. Hanley Energy was supported at Millmount by Dundalk Institute of Technology and then moved into its new and current premises at the City North Business Campus, where it has seen rapid employment growth, from just 2 people at the Millmount Centre in 2013 to 40 at the end of 2015 in Stamullin. The company, which started out in environmental services but is focusing more on data centre services, with clients worldwide, plans to develop further at City North with additional employment envisaged. Meath County Council will continue to support such valued employers.

It is estimated that there are now in the region of 200 people employed in the City North Business Campus and rising. Stamullin (sometimes spelled ‘Stamullen’ but we will employ the other spelling) is duly recognised in the draft Variation No. 3 of the Meath CDP 2013-2019, the aim of which is to integrate the Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022 into the county plan, as having the potential to develop into a Moderate Growth Town during the lifetime of the plan.

Across the M1 Motorway in the Meath Environs of Drogheda are two further major employers in the greater Drogheda area, namely: Irish Cement, the largest cement plant in the country and part of the CRH Group, the largest indigenous company in Ireland and a major (Irish-owned) multinational enterprise with subsidiaries around the world; and Indaver Ireland, a waste-to-energy facility that has been operating successfully from this part of County Meath since 2011 and helping to support the

⁴⁷ While it is correct to describe Drogheda as a “thriving Dublin commuter town”, it is the stated goal of Meath County Council (and we hope Louth County Council too) to facilitate more jobs being created locally in the town, so that commuter growth can be moderated (as provided for in the current Meath CDP and Meath Economic Development Strategy).

⁴⁸ Speaking at the official opening, Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mr. Ged Nash TD, said that Hanley Energy was a prime example of an Irish company that was founded in the midst of recession and yet has developed a world class set of technologies in other countries as well as in Ireland.

national policy objective of diverting waste away from landfill.

Not far from these two major employers is the historic town of Duleek, home to the Duleek Business Park where there is a range of employers in building materials and light manufacturing, and in which there are plans to further develop the park to accommodate more employment initiatives, including services and office/commercial employment. During 2006-2011, the number of jobs in the Duleek ED grew by 17% to over 800. Duleek is connected with Julianstown *via* the R150 road, which is a high quality and scenic route along the course of the Nanny River, with the Bellewstown esker to the south and some of the finest agricultural land in the whole country on either side of the road (this part of County Meath is reputed to be the home of the largest field in Ireland, at c. 365 acres). At Julianstown, in the past year, the former public house and restaurant have been re-developed into new premises that are proving to be popular with visitors and locals alike. In 2011, there were 1,100 jobs recorded in the Julianstown ED and that figure has been comfortably exceeded today, illustrating the vibrancy of the community in-and-around Drogheda.

5.3.3.4 Meath County Council Proud to be Supporting Jobs Growth in the Meath Environs of Drogheda

Meath County Council is proud to be part of the public support network for these and other businesses throughout the county, and looks forward to continuing to facilitate their growth and development, with more jobs locally (for residents of Meath and Louth, which are included in the wider functional EMRA region), in the coming years, and beyond. It is Meath County Council's strongly held view that this effort will be best achieved under the current arrangements and that a boundary change would be disproportionate and damaging to the economic and social performance of Drogheda and the wider region in which the two counties operate and cooperate.

5.4 Pobal Deprivation/Affluence Indicators

5.4.1 Introduction

The Pobal Deprivation index is based on three categories of socio-economic variables – demographic, social class and labour market situation – and expressed in terms of an *Absolute* Index Score and a *Relative* Index Score.

The Absolute Index Scores have a mean (average) of zero and a standard deviation (variation around the average) of 10 in 2006, with varying means and standard deviations in 2011 that reflect the underlying trends. The Relative Index Scores are fully standardised, with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 10 for each wave/year, in order to remove temporal trends and highlight differences in relative deprivation between areas at a single point in time.

When making comparisons over time, the more appropriate scores to use are therefore the Absolute Index Scores. When making a statement about a particular area at a particular point in time (e.g. 2011), the appropriate score to use is the (2011) Relative Index Score.

5.4.2 Trends in Affluence/Deprivation during 2006-2011

5.4.2.1 Countrywide and in Counties Louth and Meath

The Absolute Index Scores for the State as a whole and for each of Counties Louth and Meath fell substantially between 2006 and 2011, reflecting the severity of the economic crisis at the time.

The Absolute Index Score for the country fell from -0.2 to -6.8, meaning that the State became much more deprived during the period. The same occurred in Louth, only it was starting from an even more

deprived situation in 2006 (Absolute Index Score of -3.7 versus -0.2 for the State) and ended up in 2011 with even greater deprivation (Absolute Index Score of -10.5 as against -6.8 for the State).

The situation in Meath was different. Before the economic crisis, in 2006, its Absolute Index Score was 2.7, meaning that it was less deprived or more affluent than other counties in the State on average in that year. However, the recession had a dramatically adverse effect on the county, with the Absolute Index Score falling by -8.8 points to reach -6.1 in 2011. This growth in deprivation was the highest among all counties in the State between 2006 and 2011.

The biggest deteriorations in deprivation/affluence among all counties in Ireland occurred in the counties around the capital – the falls in the Absolute Index Score in Kildare and Wicklow were 8.1 points and 7.2 points respectively (those in Meath and Louth being 8.8 and 6.8 respectively). The three counties making up the NUTS 3 Mid-East Region (Meath, Wicklow and Kildare) experienced a fall of 8.1 points during 2006-2011, the highest among the 8 NUTS 3 Regions. The deterioration in deprivation/affluence in the Mid-East Region, and in Louth, reflects the counties' dependency on Dublin.

Table 5.7: Absolute Pobal Deprivation Indices in Louth, Meath and the State (2006-2011)

	Pobal Deprivation Index		
	Absolute Score and Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Co. Louth	-3.7	-10.5	-6.8
Co. Meath	2.7	-6.1	-8.8
State	-0.2	-6.8	-6.5

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at <https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>.

5.4.2.2 Absolute Index Scores in the Study Area of Drogheda and its Hinterland

The general pattern observed county-wide and country-wide in Table 5.7 above is also apparent within the study area of Drogheda and its Hinterland, as shown in the next table below.

In particular, in 2006, prior to the onset of the severe economic crisis that befell the country, the Meath part of the study area was characterised by lower/higher deprivation/affluence compared with the Louth part but then during 2006-2011 deprivation/affluence deteriorated more in the Meath part in the midst of the economic crisis; although nevertheless in 2011 the extent of deprivation in the Louth part of the study area was still appreciably higher than in the Meath part (double in fact, with Absolute Index Scores of -10.6 and -5.3 in the Louth and Meath parts).

In 2006, the St. Mary's ED in Meath was the most affluent or least deprived of all the EDs in the study area (with an Absolute Score of 7.6) and remained that way in 2011 (corresponding score of -2.7).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Please refer to footnote 43 (p. 105) regarding the calculation of the weighted averages in Table 5.8 and in Table 5.10-Table 5.22 overleaf (with the exception of Table 5.14 where no such weighted averages are required).

Table 5.8: Absolute Pobal Deprivation Indices in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006-2011)

	Pobal Deprivation Index		
	Absolute Score and Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	-9.0	-15.3	-6.2
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	-2.2	-9.0	-6.8
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	-10.4	-16.4	-6.0
4. St. Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	-0.9	-9.0	-8.1
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	1.1	-8.3	-9.3
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	5.0	-3.5	-8.5
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	4.2	-3.9	-8.1
8. Mullary (ED 040)	5.6	-5.0	-10.6
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	7.6	-2.7	-10.3
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	2.5	-5.2	-7.7
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	7.5	-2.9	-10.4
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	-2.6	-9.8	-7.2
13. Duleek (ED 044)	0.7	-11.3	-12.0
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	-1.8	-5.2	-3.4
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	-3.4	-10.6	-7.2
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	4.1	-5.3	-9.4
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	-0.2	-8.3	-8.1
Co. Louth	-3.7	-10.5	-6.8
Co. Meath	2.7	-6.1	-8.8
State	-0.2	-6.8	-6.5

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at (<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

5.4.2.3 Relative Index Scores in the Study Area of Drogheda and its Hinterland

Table 5.9 reports the corresponding Relative Index Scores for the study area of Drogheda and its Hinterland in 2006 and 2011. The following observations are evident from examination of the table:

- The Meath part of the study area was significantly more affluent or less deprived than the Louth part in 2006 and again in 2011 (with Relative Index Scores of 4.1 Meath v -3.4 Louth in 2006 and 1.7 Meath v -3.7 Louth in 2011);
- St. Mary's ED was the most affluent or least deprived of all the EDs in 2006 and 2011 (with Relative Index Scores of 7.6 and 4.2 respectively);

- The Absolute and Relative Index Scores therefore correlate regarding the relatively high affluence/low deprivation in the Meath part of the study area and the significance of the St. Mary's ED in being very important in the socio-economic and social performance of Drogheda.

Table 5.9: Relative Pobal Deprivation Indices in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	Pobal Deprivation Index	
	Relative Score	
	2006	2011
Louth		
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	-9.0	-8.3
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	-2.2	-2.0
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	-10.4	-9.3
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	-0.9	-2.1
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	1.1	-1.3
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	5.0	3.4
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	4.2	2.9
8. Mullary (ED 040)	5.6	1.8
Meath		
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	7.6	4.2
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	2.5	1.7
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	7.5	4.1
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	-2.6	-2.7
13. Duleek (ED 044)	0.7	-4.3
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	-1.8	2.2
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)		
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	-3.4	-3.7
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	4.1	1.7
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	-0.2	-1.3
Co. Louth	-3.7	-3.5
Co. Meath	2.7	0.9
State	-0.2	0.2

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at <https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>.

5.4.3 Other Relevant Socio-Economic/Deprivation/Affluence Indicators

5.4.3.1 Age Dependency Ratio

Pobal Version

The *age dependency ratios* (Pobal version – see the note to the table below) in Counties Louth and Meath were higher than the State in 2011 and the ratio grew faster in Louth and Meath compared with the State during 2006-2011; the age dependency ratio grew relatively rapidly in the study area during 2006-2011, especially in the Meath part, reflecting the rapid growth of Drogheda and its Hinterland over the past decade.

Table 5.10: Age Dependency Ratios (Pobal Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	Age Dependency Ratio (Pobal Version)		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	30.5%	32.4%	6.4%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	30.9%	30.9%	0.0%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	31.4%	34.0%	8.4%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	32.3%	33.8%	4.8%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	31.2%	36.0%	15.5%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	29.0%	32.9%	13.8%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	35.0%	36.4%	4.1%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	35.5%	37.3%	4.9%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	31.4%	35.5%	13.0%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	32.3%	35.9%	11.2%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	30.5%	35.7%	17.1%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	29.2%	30.2%	3.4%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	29.7%	35.8%	20.6%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	34.4%	38.1%	10.8%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	31.5%	34.0%	7.9%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	31.2%	35.4%	13.6%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	31.4%	34.6%	10.4%
Co. Louth	32.5%	34.3%	5.5%
Co. Meath	31.4%	34.1%	8.5%
State	31.4%	33.0%	5.1%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Pobal version of the age dependency ratio is the population under 15 years and over 64 years relative to the whole population (all ages).

Standard Version of the Age Dependency Ratio

The *age dependency ratio* (standard version, calculated by Meath County Council – see the note to the table below) shows the same patterns as in the previous observation, apart from the fact that the ratios are now larger than previously owing to the different denominators.

Table 5.11: Age Dependency Ratios (Standard Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	Dependency Ratio		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	43.9%	48.0%	9.5%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	45.1%	44.7%	-0.9%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	45.6%	51.6%	13.2%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	47.6%	51.1%	7.4%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	45.2%	56.2%	24.4%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	40.7%	49.1%	20.5%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	53.7%	57.2%	6.4%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	55.1%	59.4%	7.7%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	45.8%	55.0%	20.2%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	47.6%	56.0%	17.5%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	43.9%	55.5%	26.4%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	41.3%	43.3%	4.9%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	42.2%	55.7%	32.1%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	52.5%	61.7%	17.5%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	46.1%	51.7%	12.1%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	45.3%	54.9%	21.1%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	45.8%	53.1%	16.0%
Co. Louth	48.2%	52.2%	8.3%
Co. Meath	45.8%	51.7%	12.9%
State	45.8%	49.3%	7.6%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Standard version of the age dependency ratio is the population under 15 years and over 64 years relative to the working age population (15-64 years).

5.4.3.2 Youth Dependency Ratio

The *youth dependency ratio* (standard version, calculated by Meath County Council – see the note to the table below) was higher in County Meath than County Louth in 2011, but both were lower than the State in that year; the Meath ratio grew more rapidly compared with the Louth ratio during 2006-2011 and the same patterns are apparent in respect of the youth dependency ratio in the Meath and Louth parts of the study area (Drogheda and its Hinterland).

Table 5.12: Youth Dependency Ratios (Standard Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	Youth Dependency Ratio		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	23.6%	25.5%	7.9%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	26.4%	26.6%	0.7%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	26.6%	28.5%	6.9%
4. St. Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	42.6%	44.2%	3.8%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	38.5%	47.3%	22.8%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	29.4%	34.1%	16.1%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	41.0%	42.4%	3.4%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	44.1%	46.3%	5.2%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	36.8%	44.0%	19.4%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	37.1%	43.7%	17.6%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	34.9%	44.1%	26.4%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	30.1%	28.4%	-5.6%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	32.8%	44.0%	34.0%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	29.4%	33.4%	13.5%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	32.4%	36.2%	11.6%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	35.4%	42.8%	20.8%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	33.7%	39.1%	16.0%
Co. Louth	32.7%	35.5%	8.5%
Co. Meath	34.2%	38.3%	12.1%
State	29.7%	31.9%	7.2%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Standard version of the youth dependency ratio is the population under 15 years relative to the working age population (15-64 years).

5.4.3.3 Old Age Dependency Ratio

The *old age dependency ratio* (standard version, calculated by Meath County Council – see the note to the table below) was lower in County Meath than County Louth in 2011, and both were lower than the State in that year, but the Meath ratio grew more rapidly compared with the Louth ratio 2006-2011 and the same patterns are apparent in respect of the old age dependency ratio in the Meath and Louth parts of the study area (Drogheda and its Hinterland).

Table 5.13: Old Age Dependency Ratios (Standard Version) in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	Old Age Dependency Ratio		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	20.3%	22.5%	11.3%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	18.7%	18.1%	-3.2%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	19.0%	23.1%	21.9%
4. St. Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	5.0%	6.9%	38.6%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	6.7%	9.0%	33.3%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	11.4%	15.0%	32.0%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	12.8%	14.8%	15.8%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	11.1%	13.0%	17.9%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	9.0%	11.1%	23.4%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	10.5%	12.3%	17.1%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	9.0%	11.4%	26.4%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	11.2%	14.8%	33.0%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	9.4%	11.7%	25.1%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	23.0%	28.2%	22.6%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	13.7%	15.6%	13.4%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	9.9%	12.1%	22.1%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	12.1%	14.0%	16.0%
Co. Louth	15.5%	16.7%	8.0%
Co. Meath	11.7%	13.5%	15.3%
State	16.1%	17.4%	8.2%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Standard version of the old age dependency ratio is the population over 64 years relative to the working age population (15-64 years).

5.4.3.4 Demographic Structure

Details of the *demographic structure* of the population in the study area – showing the youth (0-14 years), working age (15-64 years), old age (65+ years) and total (all ages) in all EDs, Counties Louth and Meath and the State during 2006-2011 – are given in Table 5.14 overleaf.

The table shows that the Meath part of the study area (Drogheda and its Hinterland) during 2006-2011 had:

- Much greater growth in its youth population (32.7% versus 17.5%);
- Higher growth in its working age population (9.9% compared with 5.6%); and
- Bigger growth in its old age population (34.4% v 20.1%).

All of which underpin the more rapid growth in the overall population of the Meath part of the study area compared with the Louth part (shown in the final column of Table 5.14 and earlier in Table 5.3, p. 96).

Table 5.14: Demographic Structure of the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	Population aged 0-14 Years			Population aged 15-64 Years			Population aged 65+ Years			Total Population		
	Level and % Change			Level and % Change			Level and % Change			Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011	2006	2011	2006-2011	2006	2011	2006-2011	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth												
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	1,607	1,689	5.1%	6,799	6,624	-2.6%	1,377	1,493	8.4%	9,783	9,806	0.2%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	691	735	6.4%	2,619	2,767	5.7%	491	502	2.2%	3,801	4,004	5.3%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	1,079	1,135	5.2%	4,052	3,986	-1.6%	768	921	19.9%	5,899	6,042	2.4%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	1,741	1,921	10.3%	4,086	4,343	6.3%	203	299	47.3%	6,030	6,563	8.8%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	1,983	2,768	39.6%	5,152	5,857	13.7%	347	526	51.6%	7,482	9,151	22.3%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	243	307	26.3%	827	900	8.8%	94	135	43.6%	1,164	1,342	15.3%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	686	888	29.4%	1,675	2,096	25.1%	214	310	44.9%	2,575	3,294	27.9%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	434	501	15.4%	985	1,081	9.7%	109	141	29.4%	1,528	1,723	12.8%
Meath												
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	2,284	3,054	33.7%	6,204	6,947	12.0%	556	768	38.1%	9,044	10,769	19.1%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	2,084	2,689	29.0%	5,614	6,158	9.7%	591	759	28.4%	8,289	9,606	15.9%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	933	1,333	42.9%	2,671	3,020	13.1%	240	343	42.9%	3,844	4,696	22.2%
12. Ardcah (ED 043)	399	379	-5.0%	1,326	1,334	0.6%	148	198	33.8%	1,873	1,911	2.0%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	1,008	1,463	45.1%	3,070	3,324	8.3%	288	390	35.4%	4,366	5,177	18.6%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	101	116	14.9%	343	347	1.2%	79	98	24.1%	523	561	7.3%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	8,464	9,944	17.5%	26,195	27,654	5.6%	3,603	4,327	20.1%	38,262	41,925	9.6%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	6,809	9,034	32.7%	19,228	21,130	9.9%	1,902	2,556	34.4%	27,939	32,720	17.1%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	15,273	18,978	24.3%	45,423	48,784	7.4%	5,505	6,883	25.0%	66,201	74,645	12.8%
Co. Louth	24,568	28,662	16.7%	75,094	80,758	7.5%	11,605	13,477	16.1%	111,267	122,897	10.5%
Co. Meath	38,150	46,466	21.8%	111,657	121,347	8.7%	13,024	16,322	25.3%	162,831	184,135	13.1%
State	864,449	979,590	13.3%	2,907,473	3,073,269	5.7%	467,926	535,393	14.4%	4,239,848	4,588,252	8.2%

Source: CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis.

5.4.3.5 Lone Parent Rate

The lone parent rate was substantially lower in Meath than Louth in 2011 and the same pattern is evident in the Meath and Louth parts of the study area in that year; it is also apparent that the lone parent rate was higher in the EDs making up (the former) Drogheda Borough in 2011, although the rate grew strongly in the St. Mary's ED in Meath between 2006 and 2011 (but nonetheless the rate in that ED was still below the average in the study area (Meath part, Louth part or whole study area)).

Table 5.15: Lone Parent Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Lone Parents		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	32.2%	29.2%	-9.5%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	20.6%	22.6%	9.5%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	26.9%	29.0%	8.0%
4. St. Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	24.2%	29.4%	21.5%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	22.6%	22.5%	-0.5%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	8.7%	8.4%	-2.6%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	12.0%	14.2%	18.3%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	5.6%	9.1%	62.2%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	10.6%	14.6%	36.7%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	21.8%	21.2%	-2.8%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	9.6%	10.3%	7.5%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	13.8%	12.3%	-11.4%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	17.4%	16.5%	-5.5%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	11.8%	8.2%	-30.3%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	24.0%	24.4%	2.0%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	15.1%	15.9%	5.6%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	20.2%	20.7%	2.4%
Co. Louth	23.6%	24.3%	2.8%
Co. Meath	14.4%	15.7%	9.1%
State	21.3%	21.6%	1.3%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Lone parent rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of single parent households with at least one dependent child (aged under 15 years) as a proportion of all households with at least one dependent child (aged under 15).

5.4.3.6 Low Educational Attainment Rate

The *low educational attainment rate* was lower in Meath than Louth in 2011, while the rate for the State was in-between that for the two counties (i.e. higher than Meath but lower than Louth). The low educational rate fell in Louth and Meath, and in the country as a whole, during 2006-2011, which is a positive development for socio-economic progress. In the study area, the low educational attainment rate was much lower in the Meath part than the Louth part in 2011. The lowest rate among all EDs making up in the study area in that year was in the St. Mary's ED in Meath (which also had the lowest rate in 2006).

Table 5.16: Low Educational Attainment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Primary Education Only Ratio		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	29.1%	25.7%	-11.9%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	21.8%	19.1%	-12.5%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	32.7%	30.4%	-6.9%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	12.8%	11.8%	-7.7%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	13.4%	12.5%	-6.5%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	15.1%	14.6%	-3.4%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	13.7%	13.6%	-0.4%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	14.1%	12.0%	-14.8%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	11.1%	9.3%	-16.2%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	14.0%	11.4%	-18.8%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	12.7%	11.8%	-6.8%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	19.4%	17.5%	-9.8%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	19.5%	17.3%	-11.1%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	22.1%	19.6%	-11.2%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	21.2%	18.8%	-11.4%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	14.3%	12.2%	-14.4%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	18.3%	15.9%	-13.0%
Co. Louth	21.7%	18.7%	-13.8%
Co. Meath	15.6%	13.5%	-13.7%
State	18.9%	16.0%	-15.6%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Low educational attainment rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of the adult population with primary school education only (where the adult population are those aged 15+ years).

5.4.3.7 High Educational Attainment Rate

Conversely, the *high educational attainment rate* was higher in County Meath than County Louth in 2011 but the rate in the State was higher than that in County Meath. Within the study area, the high educational attainment rate was higher in the Meath part than the Louth part but the rate fell during 2006-2011, as it did in the whole counties of Louth and Meath (but it grew slightly during this period countrywide). The largest high educational attainment rate of all the EDs in the study area in 2011 was in the St. Mary's ED in Meath (also the biggest in 2006).

Table 5.17: High Educational Attainment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Third-Level Education		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	22.0%	20.4%	-7.1%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	29.8%	27.7%	-7.1%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	17.5%	17.2%	-1.4%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	34.7%	31.0%	-10.7%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	31.3%	27.1%	-13.4%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	31.2%	31.3%	0.1%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	35.3%	33.5%	-5.2%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	32.7%	29.2%	-10.5%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	37.9%	35.7%	-5.8%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	36.0%	33.4%	-7.2%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	33.2%	32.1%	-3.5%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	21.1%	20.3%	-3.6%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	23.3%	20.2%	-13.1%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	22.4%	26.0%	16.2%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	27.5%	25.5%	-7.2%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	33.0%	31.0%	-6.0%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	29.8%	27.9%	-6.4%
Co. Louth	25.9%	25.6%	-1.2%
Co. Meath	30.3%	28.9%	-4.4%
State	30.5%	30.6%	0.3%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at <https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>.

Note: High educational attainment rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of the adult population with third-level education (where the adult population are those aged 15+ years).

5.4.3.8 High and Low Professionals Rate

The *high and low professionals rate* or *high skills rate* was higher in Meath than Louth in 2011, while the rate for the State was in-between the rates in Louth and Meath (i.e. higher than Louth but lower than Meath), although nevertheless the rate has been growing comparably rapidly in Louth during 2006-2011. Within the study area, the rate was much higher in the Meath part than the Louth part and both have grown during 2006-2011. The highest rates within the study area were in the EDs of Monasterboice (highest), Mullary and Termonfeckin (all in Louth) and the highest rate in the Meath part of the study area, and one of the highest rates in the overall study area, was in the St. Mary's ED in Meath.

Table 5.18: High and Low Professionals Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Higher and Lower Professionals		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	21.6%	24.6%	13.5%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	29.6%	30.7%	3.7%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	19.3%	22.2%	14.6%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	31.5%	32.9%	4.3%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	30.5%	31.2%	2.3%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	40.5%	46.6%	14.9%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	44.2%	43.9%	-0.6%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	40.4%	45.3%	11.9%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	41.0%	43.5%	6.0%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	37.6%	38.2%	1.5%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	37.0%	38.5%	4.2%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	28.9%	30.2%	4.5%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	23.9%	28.9%	21.0%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	39.6%	36.5%	-7.7%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	28.2%	30.6%	8.6%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	36.0%	38.0%	5.8%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	31.5%	33.9%	7.6%
Co. Louth	29.1%	31.1%	7.0%
Co. Meath	35.3%	37.2%	5.3%
State	32.9%	34.6%	5.2%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: High and low professionals rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of persons in households headed by 'professionals' or 'managerial and technical' employees, including farmers with 100 acres or more.

5.4.3.9 Low Skills Rate

The proportion of semi and unskilled manual workers or low skills rate was lower in County Meath than County Louth in 2011, while the rate for the State was higher than Meath but lower than Louth. The low skills rate fell most rapidly during 2006-2011 in Meath. Within the study area, the rate was lower in the Meath than the Louth parts in 2011 and there is a correlation (inverse) between the EDs in this respect and the EDs in regard to the high/low professionals rate, with the EDs of St. Mary's in Meath and of Monasterboice, Mullary and Termonfeckin in Louth having the lowest rates of semi and unskilled manual workers in 2011.

Table 5.19: Low Skilled Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Semi & Unskilled Manual Workers		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	28.2%	26.6%	-5.6%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	22.0%	21.7%	-1.5%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	31.8%	29.7%	-6.6%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	20.2%	19.5%	-3.4%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	18.4%	18.5%	0.5%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	12.5%	12.8%	2.2%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	11.8%	13.7%	16.0%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	15.7%	10.1%	-35.9%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	13.8%	13.0%	-6.1%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	15.5%	13.3%	-14.2%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	13.9%	13.7%	-1.9%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	18.9%	17.4%	-7.7%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	25.6%	18.9%	-26.0%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	17.4%	18.9%	9.0%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	22.9%	21.6%	-5.7%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	16.6%	14.5%	-12.7%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	20.2%	18.4%	-8.7%
Co. Louth	21.7%	19.6%	-9.5%
Co. Meath	16.6%	15.9%	-4.3%
State	18.6%	17.5%	-5.9%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Low skilled rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of persons in households headed by 'semi-skilled manual' and 'unskilled manual' workers, including farmers with less than 30 acres.

5.4.3.10 Male Unemployment Rate

The *male unemployment rate* was lower in Meath than Louth in 2011, with the rate in the State higher than Meath but lower than Louth; however, the rate grew most rapidly in County Meath during 2006-2011, reflecting the fact that Meath was badly affected by the economic crisis after 2006. Within the study area, male unemployment was lower in the Meath part than the Louth part, and the highest rates of male unemployment in 2011 were in the EDs making up (the former) Drogheda Borough, although other EDs – like St. Mary's in Meath, and Monasterboice, Mullary and Termonfeckin in Louth, experienced comparably rapid growth in male unemployment during 2006-2011.

Table 5.20: Male Unemployment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Male Unemployment Rate		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	15.4%	35.6%	131.7%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	9.4%	25.5%	172.5%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	15.0%	32.8%	119.1%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	11.3%	27.4%	142.0%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	8.8%	24.1%	173.7%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	3.1%	17.7%	475.3%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	5.6%	19.5%	246.3%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	4.1%	17.2%	323.0%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	5.1%	17.4%	241.6%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	10.9%	20.5%	88.3%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	3.7%	16.9%	359.7%
12. Ardcath (ED 043)	7.1%	21.5%	201.2%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	5.8%	24.8%	325.3%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	5.8%	12.4%	113.9%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
<i>Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)</i>	11.3%	27.8%	146.3%
<i>Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)</i>	6.9%	19.5%	184.1%
<i>Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)</i>	9.4%	24.2%	156.5%
Co. Louth	11.3%	27.7%	145.8%
Co. Meath	6.1%	20.8%	242.5%
State	8.8%	22.3%	154.1%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at <https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>.

Note: Male unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of males in the labour force (aged 15-64 years who are in work, looking for work or out of work) who are looking for work or out of work.

5.4.3.11 Female Unemployment Rate

The *female unemployment rate* shows broadly the same patterns as the male unemployment rate, apart from the fact that the female rate was lower during the period and grew less rapidly. The problem of female unemployment was lower in the Meath part of the study area than the Louth part in 2011, although it grew more rapidly in the former and an unemployment rate in double-digits is always a source of concern for local authorities and central government.

Table 5.21: Female Unemployment Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Female Unemployment Rate		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	14.7%	22.4%	52.4%
2. St Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	8.7%	16.2%	86.2%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	12.4%	22.8%	84.0%
4. St Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	12.3%	19.0%	54.3%
5. St Peter's (ED 041)	9.9%	17.9%	79.8%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	5.7%	10.5%	83.1%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	7.2%	14.7%	103.3%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	4.0%	13.0%	228.0%
Meath			
9. St Mary's (ED 047)	6.2%	14.7%	138.8%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	11.6%	15.9%	37.1%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	5.0%	10.7%	114.8%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	9.1%	14.6%	60.6%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	8.1%	18.3%	126.9%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	4.9%	7.2%	47.2%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	11.2%	19.0%	68.8%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	8.1%	14.9%	84.5%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	9.9%	17.2%	73.6%
Co. Louth	10.9%	19.0%	74.1%
Co. Meath	7.2%	14.4%	100.4%
State	8.1%	15.0%	84.5%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at (<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Female unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of females in the labour force (aged 15-64 years who are in work, looking for work or out of work) who are looking for work or out of work.

5.4.3.12 Owner-Occupied Housing Rate

The proportion of owner-occupied houses was greater in Louth and Meath compared with the State in 2011, with the rate higher in Meath than Louth; however, the rate declined in all areas during 2006-2011 reflecting the housing crisis, which remains a major policy challenge, and the severe economic downturn.

Table 5.22: Owner-Occupied Housing Rate in the Electoral Divisions making up Drogheda and its Hinterland in Counties Louth and Meath (2006 and 2011)

	% Owner-Occupied Houses		
	Level and % Change		
	2006	2011	2006-2011
Louth			
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	71.8%	64.1%	-10.7%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	82.6%	71.9%	-12.9%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	78.0%	69.5%	-10.9%
4. St. Mary's (pt.) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	74.4%	64.4%	-13.5%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	80.6%	71.2%	-11.7%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	96.1%	93.8%	-2.3%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	90.3%	82.9%	-8.2%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	95.9%	94.4%	-1.6%
Meath			
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	90.0%	82.9%	-7.9%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	80.3%	76.4%	-4.8%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	93.4%	87.6%	-6.2%
12. Ardath (ED 043)	93.0%	87.8%	-5.6%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	84.2%	80.3%	-4.6%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	90.3%	88.2%	-2.3%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)			
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)	78.9%	70.9%	-10.2%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)	86.9%	81.6%	-6.0%
Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)	82.3%	75.6%	-8.1%
Co. Louth	80.2%	73.3%	-8.6%
Co. Meath	85.6%	79.4%	-7.3%
State	77.2%	70.8%	-8.3%

Source: Pobal based on CSO census data, Meath County Council analysis. Link to information on the Pobal Deprivation Index and tables available at

(<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Introduction%20and%20Reference%20Tables.pdf>).

Note: Owner occupied rate is defined by Pobal as the percentage of all permanent private households that are in owner-occupied status.

5.4.3.13 Summary of Pobal Deprivation/Affluence Indicators

Summarising the above, and taking an overall view, it is evident from the various detailed analysis presented here that the Meath part of the study area has performed more strongly than the Louth part, and the St. Mary's ED in Meath is particularly important to the economic and social performance of Drogheda, and is critically important to the Meath economy – and will continue to be so in the coming years, as reflected in the current Meath CDP 2013-2019 and in the Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014-2022.

The St. Mary's ED (Meath) in which the Area of Interest occurs is one of employment growth, favourable demographic structure, strong educational attainment and high skills. It is an asset for County Meath and for Drogheda; but it is Meath County Council's strongly held view that it should remain in County Meath and we will vigorously defend this position at all times.

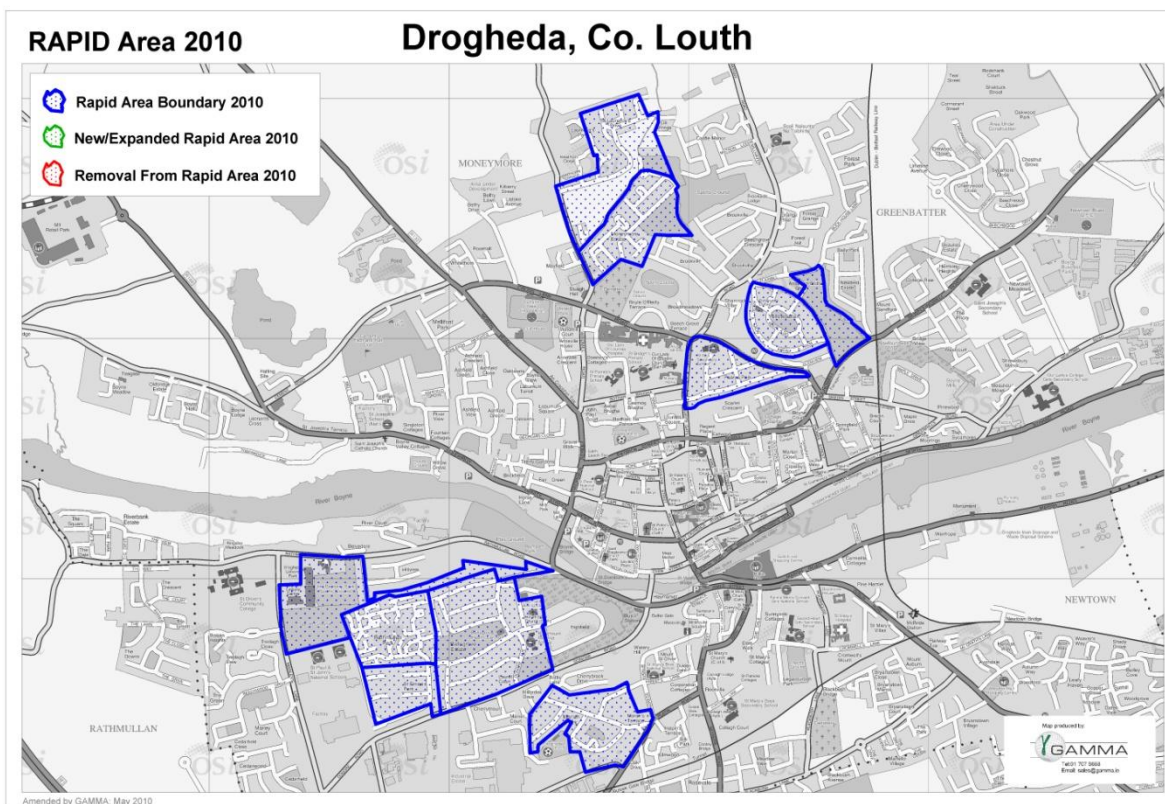
5.4.4 RAPID Areas of Drogheda (County Louth Part)

Conversely, the (former) Drogheda Borough area in County Louth exhibits a mixed economic and social performance. Drogheda's economic and social problems, which were significantly exacerbated during the economic crisis, remain today. These problems which were apparent well before the crisis and are reflected in the fact that large parts of Drogheda were designated RAPID areas, which are areas identified by the Government as urban areas of concentrated disadvantage.

RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) was set up in 2001 and the RAPID areas of Drogheda include seven estates, all in the County Louth part: Moneymore, Ballsgrove, Rathmullen, Finian's Park, Marian Park, Pearse Park and Yellowbatter.⁵⁰

Whilst the RAPID programme is no longer funded or managed by Pobal, the RAPID area boundaries are still in existence. A map showing the RAPID areas of Drogheda – all of the RAPID areas are in County Louth – is reproduced in Figure 5.3 overleaf.

⁵⁰ The RAPID programme is no longer funded by government or managed by Pobal.

Figure 5.3: Map of RAPID Areas in Drogheda (2010)

Source: Pobal.

Note: All the RAPID areas in Drogheda occur in County Louth. RAPID programme no longer in existence but the disadvantaged areas identified under the programme continued to be recognised today and the areas in Drogheda continue to have severe problems of joblessness, low educational attainment and skills, and high crime and disorder.

5.5 Other Relevant Socio-Economic Indicators

5.5.1 Recorded Crime Statistics

Table 5.23 overleaf presents an analysis of all recorded crime offences in Drogheda District (Louth Garda Division) and Laytown District (Meath Garda Division) in the years 2004, 2009 and 2014 (the statistics are compiled by the CSO).

By way of background to the table, there are 13 Garda Districts in County Louth and 16 in County Meath. The relevant ones here are Drogheda District and Laytown District. Generally speaking each Garda Division is commanded by a Superintendent, assisted by a number of Inspectors. Districts are in turn divided into Sub-Districts, each normally the responsibility of a Sergeant. Each Sub-District usually has only 1 station, the strength of which may vary (widely) from 3 to 100 Gardaí. There are 564 Garda Stations throughout the country.

Looking firstly at the overall number of recorded crimes in the two districts, the Drogheda District saw 2,397 recorded crimes in 2014, which represented 37.1% of all recorded crimes in the Louth Division in that year. This rate of recorded crimes is disproportionately large in Drogheda – Drogheda LEA had a population of 41,925 persons in 2011, representing 34.1% of all the total population of County Louth in that year; and Drogheda Borough's 30,393 residents in 2011 accounted for 24.7% of the population of Louth in that year. However looked at, the rate of recorded crimes in Drogheda relative to Louth was/is higher than the town's population share of the county.

On the other hand, there were 795 recorded crimes in Laytown in 2014, which represented 12.3% of Laytown District's share of Meath Division's recorded crimes in that year. In 2011, the eastern part of the Laytown-Bettystown LEA (comprising the EDs in Meath of St. Mary's, Julianstown, Ardcath and Stamullin, which we understand is approximately the area covered by Laytown Garda District) had a population of 26,982 in 2011, or 14.7% of County Meath population in that year. In Laytown's case, the recorded crime rate proportion is lower than the population share, in contrast to the situation in Drogheda.

This is not entirely unexpected, given the fact that Drogheda is a much larger urban area than any of the towns or settlements in the Laytown-Bettystown area and that social exclusion and marginalisation tend to be generally higher in areas of large population and/or greater population density. Nonetheless, parts of the East Meath are also known for their high rates of offending and social problems.

Looking at the changes that have occurred in the number of recorded crimes during 2004-2014, it is seen from the table below that offences rose rapidly between 2004 and 2009, before falling in 2014, which we understand reflects changes to the way the data were compiled. Noteworthy is that between 2004 and 2014, the number and percentage shares of each of Drogheda and Laytown have risen strongly as shown in the table below.

Table 5.23: Total Recorded Crime Offences in Drogheda District (Louth Garda Division) and Laytown District (Meath Garda Division) 2004, 2009 and 2014

Type of Crime	Recorded Crime Offences		
	2004	2009	2014
All recorded crime offences			
Drogheda District, Louth Division	2,205	3,274	2,397
Total Louth Division	6,134	8,730	6,464
Drogheda Share of Louth Division (%)	35.9%	37.5%	37.1%
Laytown District, Meath Division	375	931	795
Total Meath Division	5,061	8,462	6,468
Laytown Share of Meath Division	7.4%	11.0%	12.3%

Source: CSO recorded crime statistics, Meath County Council analysis.

Note: Total recorded crime offences are the sum of the following categories of offences: attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences; dangerous or negligent acts; kidnapping and related offences; robbery, extortion and hijacking offences; burglary and related offences; theft and related offences; fraud, deception and related offences; controlled drug offences; weapons and explosives offences; damage to property and to the environment; public order and other social code offences; and offences against government, justice procedures and organisation of crime

5.5.2 General Health/Subjective Wellbeing

In the 2011 Census of Population, the CSO asked people to rate their general health on a five-point scale from “very bad” to “very good” – the first time that an Irish census contained a question on subjective wellbeing. The proportions of people in the EDs of Drogheda and its Hinterland reporting their general health to be “very good” or “good” are shown in the table below.

First, at county level, the proportion reporting their general health to be “very good” or “good” was higher in Meath compared with the State, which in turn was higher than Louth (63.9% versus 60.3% v 60%). Second, in the study area, the proportion in the Meath part of Drogheda and its Hinterland was higher than the Louth part (89.9% compared with 87.1%). Third, within the Meath part, the portion in the St.Mary’s ED was highest (91.7%) and the second highest in the study area (after the ED of Mullary, 93.6%).

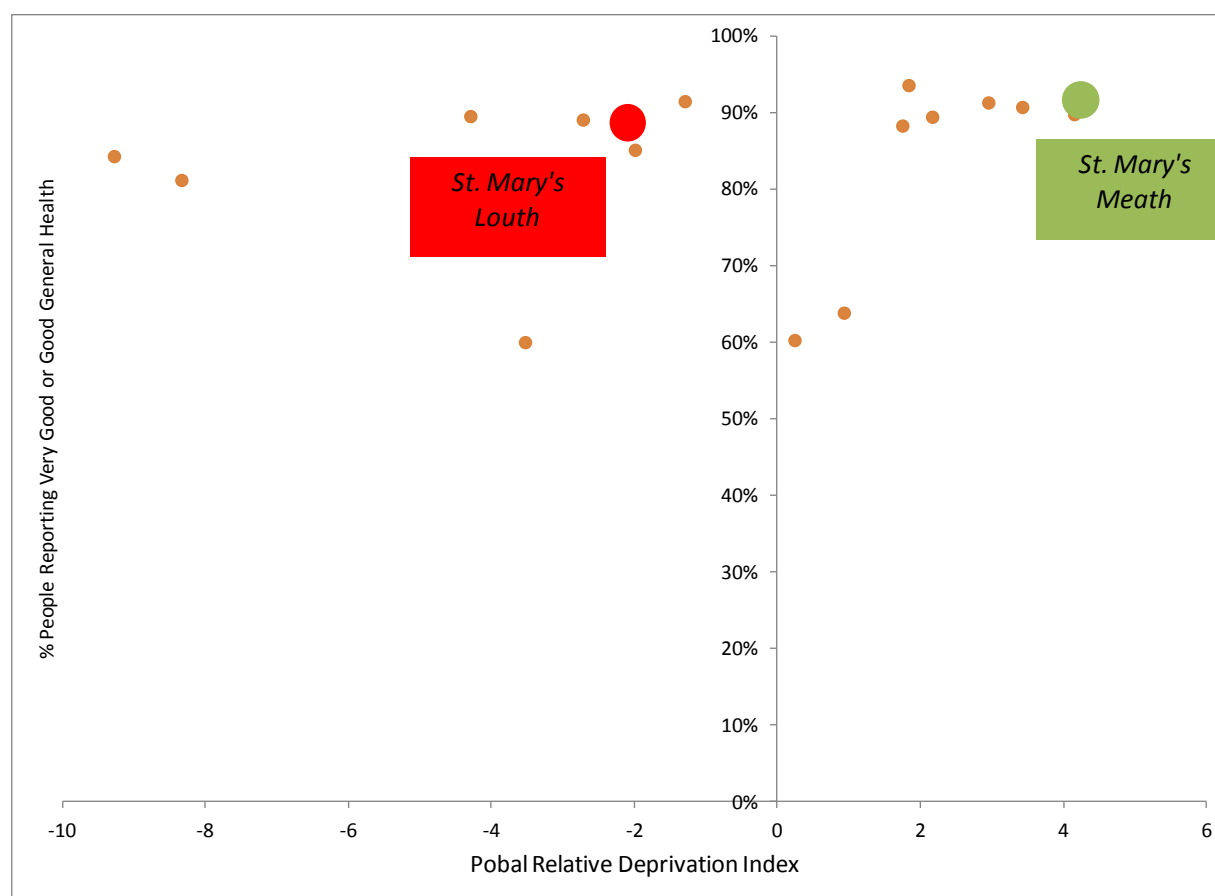
Table 5.24: Proportion of Residents in Drogheda and its Hinterland Reporting their General Health as being “Very Good or Good” (2011)

	<u>General Health - % of People Reporting (2011) "Very Good or Good"</u>
Louth	
1. Fair Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 001)	81.2%
2. St. Laurence Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 002)	85.2%
3. West Gate (Drogheda Borough) (ED 003)	84.3%
4. St. Mary's (pt) (Drogheda Borough) (ED 047)	88.7%
5. St. Peter's (ED 041)	91.5%
6. Monasterboice (ED 039)	90.8%
7. Termonfeckin (ED 042)	91.3%
8. Mullary (ED 040)	93.6%
Meath	
9. St. Mary's (ED 047)	91.7%
10. Julianstown (ED 045)	88.3%
11. Stamullin (ED 048)	89.8%
12. Ardcaith (ED 043)	89.1%
13. Duleek (ED 044)	89.6%
14. Mellifont (ED 046)	89.5%
Weighted Averages (Based on Respective Population Shares)	
<i>Drogheda and its Hinterland (Drogheda LEA, Louth) (1-8)</i>	87.1%
<i>Drogheda and its Hinterland (Meath) (9-14)</i>	89.9%
<i>Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath) (1-14)</i>	88.3%
Co. Louth	60.0%
Co. Meath	63.9%
State	60.3%

Source: CSO Census 2011, Meath County Council analysis.

Figure 5.4 below provides examination of whether higher subjective wellbeing is positively correlated with lower deprivation/higher affluence. Only a very weak positive relationship is evident among the EDs making up Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath parts). Each dot represents an ED in the study area. EDs occurring in the right hand quadrant have relatively low deprivation/high affluence, while EDs in the left hand quadrant have relatively high deprivation/low affluence. We have blown up the two St. Mary's EDs in the study area (one in Louth and the other in Meath) for illustrative purposes, where it is observed that the one in Meath has lower deprivation/greater affluence and residents have higher subjective wellbeing (general health), with the inference from the independent, official data being that residents in the Meath ED enjoy a higher quality of life on average (*because the Meath residents have comparably low deprivation as well as high subjective wellbeing whereas those in the Louth St. Mary's ED have high subjective wellbeing but relatively high deprivation/low affluence*).

Figure 5.4: Proportion of Residents in Drogheda and its Hinterland Reporting their General Health as being "Very Good or Good" and the Pobal Relative Deprivation Index (2011)



Source: CSO Census 2011, Meath County Council analysis.

Note: Each dot represents an ED in Drogheda and its Hinterland (Louth and Meath EDs). EDs occurring in the right hand side quadrant have relatively low deprivation/high affluence, while EDs in the left hand side quadrant have relatively high deprivation/low affluence. We have blown up the dots associated with St. Mary's EDs in Louth and Meath for illustrative purposes. Compared with the St. Mary's ED in the Louth part of Drogheda, the St. Mary's ED in the Meath part of Drogheda has comparably low deprivation or high affluence and its residents have a higher degree of subjective wellbeing (quality of life) (although the degree of subjective wellbeing in both EDs is high).

5.6 Summary

This section has considered a wide range of socio-economic indicators relating to the study area of Drogheda and its Hinterland, within which the Review Committee's Area of Interest is located. The evidence from the official data examined shows very clearly that the St. Mary's ED in Meath is noteworthy as being an area of comparably high employment, strong employment growth, favourable demographic structure, strong educational attainment and high skills. The comparably high quality of life enjoyed in the ED has arisen due to effective planning, contiguous to the Louth boundary of Drogheda and the Council is working hard to ensure that the balancing between employment and residential development continues in the coming years, with Meath County Council at the helm. The ED and the wider East Meath area is considered to be an important asset for County Meath and for Drogheda; but it is Meath County Council's strongly held view that it should remain in County Meath and we will vigorously defend this position at all times.

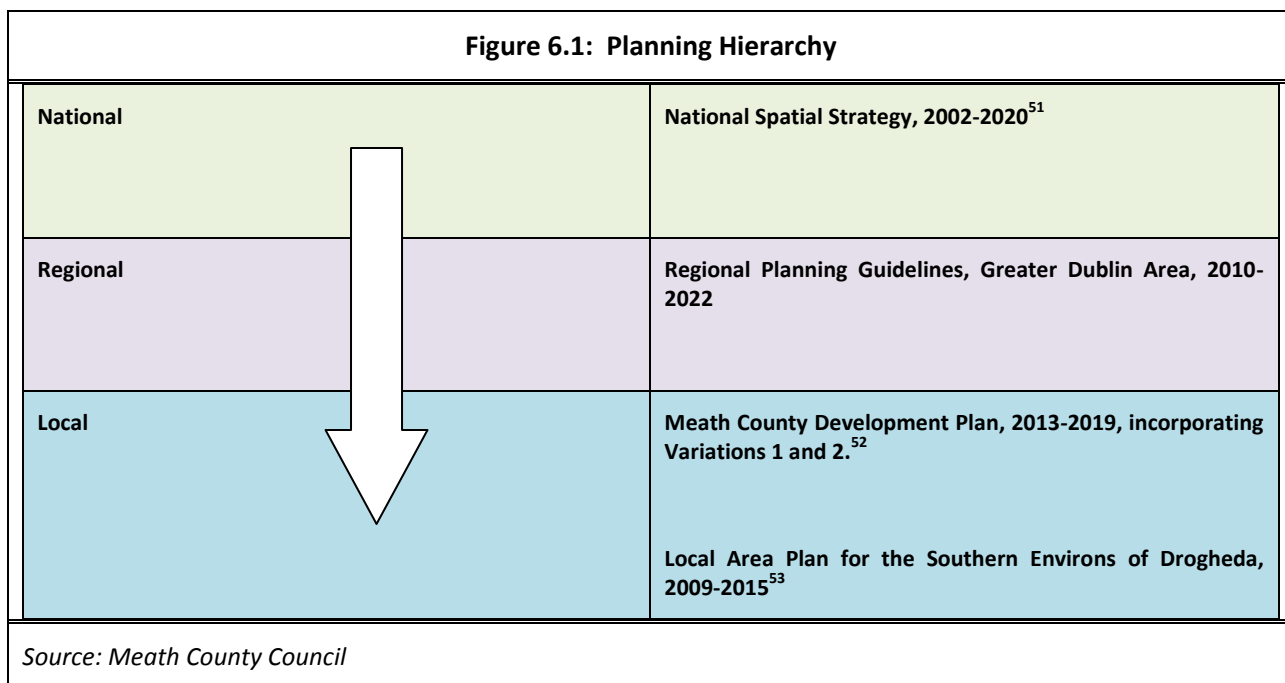
6 Planning and Development

6.1 Introduction

The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Alan Kelly TD, announced on 19 June 2015 the establishment of statutory committees to review local government boundaries in Athlone, Carlow, Drogheda and Waterford. In the press release the Minister stated that “the main rationale for boundary alteration is to bring the administrative jurisdictions into line with the current settlement and development position and the reviews I have announced are clearly warranted given the significant overspill of population in each of these cases into another county”.

The settlement of Drogheda is an industrial port town with a population of 38,578 in 2011. The former urban borough of Drogheda which historically operated as a separate Planning Authority for the area since 1964 is now, since 2014, administered by Louth County Council. The northern town environs also falls under the administrative remit of Louth County Council. The southern environs of Drogheda lie within the jurisdiction of Meath County Council. Drogheda is a multi-modal settlement with excellent links to the Greater Dublin Area as it is served by the M1 motorway which is located to the west of the town and by the Dublin-Belfast rail line to the east of the town centre.

This section provides an overview and analysis of planning policy documents from the National, Regional and Local planning perspectives.



⁵¹ Will be replaced in 2016 by the National Planning Framework

⁵² Variation No 3 on public display until 27th January 2016

⁵³ Work is shortly to commence on a review of this Local Area Plan

6.2 National Planning Policy

6.2.1 National Planning Framework

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has announced that a new National Planning Framework (NPF) will be developed to provide the context for national spatial planning for the next decade and beyond. This will involve reshaping and focusing the existing National Spatial Strategy (NSS) to meet future challenges. The new framework will:

- Identify national priorities with regard to future employment growth and development;
- Distinguish between the role of the larger cities in acting as our major international players and our regional towns in extending the influence of the cities; and
- Establish a clear policy framework within which there will be more dynamic participation by rural areas in overall regional development by re-emphasising the contribution from rural based enterprise in food, tourism, natural resource and innovation sectors.

This new framework will provide the strategic context for, amongst other matters:

- Investment in critical national infrastructure by both the public and private sectors in key areas like housing, transport, energy, water services, communications and waste management;
- Planning at regional and local levels for Ireland's requirements in relation to housing, commercial, office and industrial accommodation;
- Preparation of new Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies (RSEs) by the three new Regional Assemblies and the associated enhancement of the economic development focus of local authorities as provided for under the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

As part of the government's reform of local government as set out in Putting People First, the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the existing 8 regional authorities and 2 regional assemblies to be replaced by 3 new regional assemblies. The new assemblies were established with effect from 1 January 2015 by the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 (S.I. 573 of 2014).

The Regional Assemblies are as follows: (see figure 1.3 within Section 1.3.6)

- The Northern and Western Regional Assembly covers the county councils of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Galway, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon and Sligo and the city council of Galway.
- The Southern Regional Assembly covers the county councils of Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Wexford, the city council of Cork, and the city and county councils of Limerick and Waterford.
- The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly covers the county councils of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, South Dublin, Westmeath and Wicklow and the city council of Dublin.

The aim of the new assemblies is to co-ordinate, promote and support strategic planning and sustainable development and promote effectiveness in local government and public service delivery. Their main function will be to prepare RSEs. These will replace the current Regional Planning Guidelines and will be prepared in conjunction with the various enterprise and economic development agencies and infrastructure stakeholders. The existing Regional Planning Guidelines will remain in place until these new strategies are finalised and adopted.

County Meath and County Louth, with the establishment of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, are now located within the same region and both are part of the Eastern Strategic Planning Area (SPA).⁵⁴ The RSES prepared for the region will comprise of a consolidation of the individual plans from each of the Region's SPA areas.⁵⁵

6.2.2 National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) remains in place until its replacement by the National Planning Framework (NPF). The NSS is a twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions. Its focus is on people, places and building communities. It is essential to the NSS that the performance of the economy of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and surrounding counties is built upon so that its success, competitiveness and national role are sustained into the future. While Drogheda is an inherent part of the Border region its development is strongly influenced by its relative proximity to Dublin. In seeking to develop the potential future role of Drogheda the following are relevant factors for consideration:

- Drogheda's relationship with its own catchment;
- Its roles within the Border region/GDA;
- Its role as a significant port;
- Its role in the spatial development of the GDA having regard to the town's close functional and physical links with the area.

Fostering and developing these roles will be important to complement the functions of gateways and hubs identified by the NSS. Drogheda is identified as a Primary Growth Centre in the NSS and has much potential for development given its scale, established enterprise base, communications and excellent multi modal links with Dublin City.

6.2.3 Overview of National Policy

The following describes the main analysis, as it pertains to the Area of Interest from a national planning perspective:

- The National Spatial Strategy recognises the value of corridor development in driving the country forward. As far back as 2009, the NSS State of the Regions report stated: *"Corridors potentially provide a framework to developing more sustainable movement patterns and for creating critical mass through cooperation between areas along the corridors. Identifying means of building certain corridors provides a challenge in NSS terms into the future"*.
- Addressing this challenge requires the adoption of a collaborative approach by local authorities and agencies along the east coast. A boundary extension is not considered to present a long term solution to deliver sustainable growth patterns for the greater Drogheda Area.
- The current review is at best premature pending the completion of the NPF. Given that Drogheda is a top tier settlement in both counties Louth and Meath, it is considered that any extension of the boundary as proposed has considerable potential to exclude Meath from key urban regeneration initiatives set out at the national level under the NPF. This appears to be at variance with Meath's position in the national context i.e. part of the GDA and the Mid-East Region which will continue to be one of the fastest growing regions in Ireland.

⁵⁴ Also includes Wicklow and Kildare.

⁵⁵ The other SPAs in the region are Dublin SPA and Midlands SPA.

- Census data from 2006 suggests that the rate of population growth south of the River Boyne has outpaced growth north of the river. It is anticipated this trend is set to continue with Drogheda increasingly facing towards Dublin and in light of its proximity to national transport hubs. In this regard the Census of Population to be undertaken in 2016 will provide much needed up to date data to assist with strategic planning.
- The wider spatial management of long term planning for growth needs to be considered in the context of growth of South Drogheda *vis-a-vis* East Meath. Meath County Council has a suite of statutory plans in place to manage this growth and is better positioned to manage this part of the corridor in terms of managed amalgamation of south Drogheda or managed separation. A boundary extension would provide greater ambiguity along this growth interface in the long term.

6.3 Regional Policy

6.3.1 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, 2010-2022

The 2010 Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) replaced the 2004-2010 RPGs, which sought to implement the key tenets of the NSS as they relate to County Meath. Meath County Council, during the preparation of the current RPGs sought the inclusion of Drogheda in the document to ensure that the location of the Southern Environs of Drogheda within the GDA was appropriately acknowledged and that the role of Drogheda as a Primary Growth Centre in the NSS was suitably supported in the final document.

The spatial dimension of the RPGs supports the growth of polycentric gateway and primary economic growth towns linked by multi-modal corridors and focuses on identified Core Economic Areas including the Drogheda Core Economic Area. The Guidelines recognise the Southern Environs of Drogheda (within County Meath) as having a notable economic sphere of influence within the GDA in terms of service provision and attracting labour supply from Meath, Louth and Northern Ireland. Wholesale and retail trade, together with health and manufacturing, IDA supported businesses and employment in the areas of food processing and beverages. Continued growth in these sectors as befitting its primary economic growth centre status, is desirable and is highly beneficial to Co. Meath and the GDA in general.

County Meath has 2 Primary Economic Growth Towns, Navan and Drogheda, and these growth centres are seen as paramount in delivering balanced regional development by serving their urban and rural hinterland areas and should be prioritised for economic development and investment. The loss of the environs of Drogheda from County Meath would have significant adverse impacts in terms of delivering the sort of regional development envisaged in the guidelines. County Meath has been successful in attracting a number of businesses to the environs of Drogheda in recent times and is now in a strong position to build on these successes and enhance the employment base for the local population. This will be best achieved under the current local government arrangements for Drogheda.

6.3.2 Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Area 2010-2022

Drogheda is acknowledged in these guidelines as a strategic driver of growth in the region. The key Strategic Goals required to achieve the vision for the Region are as follows:

SG.1 *“To foster the development of the Region’s most important asset, its people by providing an improved quality of life for all people and communities living, working and visiting the Region.”*

SG.2 *“To ensure the development of the Gateways, Hubs, Drogheda and Carrick-on-Shannon as the strategic drivers of growth for the Region and also to facilitate integrated sustainable development between urban and rural areas.”*

In the Dundalk Gateway, a key challenge is to take advantage of the excellent transport infrastructure and its location midway between Dublin and Belfast. There is also a major challenge for Dundalk to combine its potential with that of both Drogheda and Newry, so that they can together realise their location potential in a coordinated manner. The critical mass of the combined areas needs to be exploited to further drive forward the eastern corridor in which they are located. As alluded to earlier, in Section 1.7, the Louth Economic Forum had intended to complete an action plan on realising the economic potential of the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry corridor within the wider M1 economic Corridor, but this did not eventuate, and no such action plan is available on the website of the LEF, which is hosted by Louth County Council.

6.3.3 Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area (Drogheda, East Meath, South Louth) 2007

The Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area was commissioned by Drogheda Borough Council, Louth County Council and Meath County Council in conjunction with the now DECLG to establish a cohesive and interlinked planning framework for the area. The estimates contained in the Strategy indicate that the existing zoned land bank in the town and environs in counties Louth and Meath could accommodate an additional 60,000 persons thereby potentially almost trebling the population of Drogheda to 90,000 persons. Set against this backdrop, the strategy sets out population targets for the town over four growth periods with an ultimate population horizon of 65,000 people for Drogheda and environs by 2024.

Some of the key objectives of the Greater Drogheda Planning Strategy Include:

- The provision of a Masterplan to guide development of the Bryanstown area;
- The development of Bryanstown in two phases in an east-westerly direction;
- The progression of a road link between the M1 and R132 (Old N1);
- The identification of a Strategic Land Reserve at the Mill rd/Marsh Rd area;
- The identification of the Donore Road Area as a key employment hub (incl. the IDA business park).

The strategy proposed a steering group comprising Meath and Louth County Councils and Drogheda Borough Council to implement the recommendations of the Strategy. Projects identified and progressed arising out of the completion of the strategy include better integration of land use and transport planning in the borough and environs area; progression of projects of mutual interest including tourist/amenity related; roads/footpaths/cycleways and development management issues in housing areas in the interface between the two authorities. This group also provided an opportunity to discuss joint initiatives on matters such as winter gritting routes, hedge cutting, road closures, watermain etc. Detailed reporting on the progression of the Border Regional Planning Guidelines and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area formed part of the work of this group which was attended by the County Managers (on occasion), Directors of Planning, Transportation and Economic Development and relevant planning, engineering and economic development staff.

The 2007 Strategy does not contain any reference to the boundary in Drogheda.

6.3.4 Indecon Report

Indecon International Economic Consultants prepared a Report for Drogheda Borough Council and Louth County Council in 2009 which concerns the formulation of an integrated Economic Development Strategy for Drogheda and its Environs for the period 2009-2015.

As outlined earlier in Section 1, the Indecon Report was commissioned by Louth County Council and Drogheda Borough Council and, like the 2007 Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area makes no mention of the boundary in Drogheda and gives a prominent role to Meath County Council in the various recommendations of the consultants,

The 'Study Area' or 'Drogheda and its Hinterland' defined in this Report comprises parts of Counties Louth and Meath in the vicinity of Drogheda. The detailed, evidence-based analyses presented in the Report reveal that the Study Area is characterised by a large number and a diverse range of economic strengths (in relation to other parts of the country). Taken together, the various economic pluses add up to a unique configuration of advantages having significant marketing potential in terms of attracting businesses to locate in the Study Area and of realising the significant tourism potential of the region, among other aims. Drogheda and its Hinterland is well-placed to harness its unique and impressive range of comparative economic strengths to win new investment as firms respond to the current economic challenges by seeking to become more competitive.

The vision for Drogheda as outlined in the report "is one of a flourishing urban centre with vibrant communities either side of the River Boyne. It was envisaged that the Study Area will have a population approaching 85,000 persons in 2015, representing an additional 22,000 persons compared with 2006. Most of the growth is estimated to occur in the northern and southern environs of Drogheda".

The following locations in Co. Meath were included as possible drivers/hubs of the economic development of the Study Area (not necessarily exhaustive):

- The Donore Road area, which includes the Drogheda Industrial Estate, the new IDA Business and Technology Park and a large range of commercial and retail developments that have become a focal point for businesses and shoppers;
- The South Drogheda Environs and adjacent lands with economic development potential (provided transport infrastructure is in place to facilitate access to the area).

6.3.5 Overview of Regional Planning Policy

The following describes the main analysis, as it pertains to the Area of Interest from a regional planning perspective.

- Subsequent to Meath County Council's historic identification of the potential of Drogheda, the Council took a lead role on Drogheda's behalf at regional level. As Meath is part of the GDA, the Council took the opportunity to promote for regional planning purposes the broader needs of Drogheda across a range of policy areas. Consequently through the aegis of Meath County Council significant policy pertaining to Drogheda's role as part of the GDA (the most economically dynamic and progressive area in the Country and the largest market in the State) were inserted into the final document.
- Section 3.7.4 of the RPGs acknowledge that: "though primarily located within the Border Region, the settlement extends into parts of Meath and has a notable economic sphere of influence within the GDA in terms of service provisions and attracting labour supply from areas such as Meath, Louth and Northern Ireland. Wholesale and retail trade, together with health and manufacturing have been prominent employment sectors in the town (Lourdes Hospital is a

large employment sector in Drogheda and a number of individual firms also make a significant contribution to employment in the areas of food processing, beverages and medical instrument production). Continued growth and employment opportunities for the town and its environs, availing of its multi-modal transport connections, as befitting its primary economic growth centre status, are desirable in order to strengthen the opportunities and benefits to the GDA of the E1 International economic corridor from Drogheda, through Meath, Fingal and to Dublin City and Wicklow.”

- With specific reference to the Southern Environs area, Section 3.7.6 of the RPGs discusses the Dublin- Belfast Economic Corridor and states as follows: “Such existing business bases, located in the existing urban areas of the Corridor, including, (but not limited to) South Drogheda Environs, Swords, Balbriggan and Dublin City will play a key role in the future economic development of this international multi-modal corridor.”
- The Eastern and Midlands Assembly has been established to promote effectiveness in Local Government and public services in its functional area which includes Louth and Meath with their existing boundaries. The revised regional assembly structures now means that Drogheda, in its entirety, is located within the Eastern and Midlands Region thus addressing the regional governance anomalies, as detailed above, that historically pertained to Drogheda.
- In recent years, regional governance has also been strengthened by the measures contained in the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 including the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator.
- The regional challenge is not one of just managing and directing population growth but also of delivering supporting sustainable economic development. The preparation of spatial and economic strategies at regional level with oversight by the Regional Assemblies will also ensure a targeted co-ordinated approach to delivering economic development at regional level.
- The Local Government Reform Act 2014 also requires the preparation of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP). Regional Assemblies are required to ensure consistency with the LECPs of the various counties within a particular Region, thus providing a mechanism to ensure consistency and integration.
- The recent introduction of Local Enterprise Offices in each county (LEOs) now provides a more effective structure at local level for stimulating jobs and growth. The Local Enterprise Fund⁵⁶ is seeking innovative approaches and initiatives to deliver the LEOs’ mandate. These may include joint initiatives between LEOs for delivery of service and for peer learning.
- Core strategies, a key building block of every development plan, will now be subject to oversight by the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly thus providing a co-ordinated approach to the development and growth of Drogheda. Therefore, there is little or no planning justification for a boundary extension as a means to provide a better planning model for the area.
- Recent legislative changes in the area of local government functions demonstrate that central government recognises that working jointly across boundaries rather than within existing boundaries represents best governance/administrative practice.
- It is noteworthy that neither the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area (2007) *nor* the Indecon Report (2009) recommended boundary change as a finding following on from their intensive analysis of the Meath Louth spatial and economic interface.

⁵⁶ <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/News/PressReleases/2015-Press-Releases/€250-million-plan-to-accelerate-jobs-growth-in-towns-and-villages-across-the-country.html>

- County boundaries are generally invisible to business, regional and national development. Ongoing uncertainty regarding the boundary issue is unfortunate at a time when the economic fortunes of Ireland are set to improve. Such uncertainty will undoubtedly harm future prospects for the effective marketing of the town by both counties.

6.4 Meath County Development Plan 2013 - 2019

The Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2013-2019 was adopted on 17 December 2012 and came into effect on 22 January 2013.

6.4.1 Core Strategy and Settlement

The settlement hierarchy for the county is detailed in Table 2.1 and is consistent with that set out in the RPGs. Drogheda Environs is included as one of only 2 Large Growth Town I in the County along with Navan and represents a key destination in the GDA as it is located on the M1/E1 international Corridor. Meath County Council sees the Drogheda Environs as a regional economic driver and envisages Drogheda achieving an ultimate population of 50,000 persons which will contribute to achieving critical mass in the centre. The housing allocations for the centre emphasises the importance of this. The commitment of Meath County Council to Drogheda Environs reaching its potential is emphasised by SS OBJ 8 which seeks to *“develop Navan and the Drogheda Environs as primary development centres in Meath and to ensure that the settlements grow in a manner that is balanced, self sufficient and supports a compact urban form and the integration of land use and transport”*.

CS OBJ 11 seeks *“to facilitate and encourage the sustainable development of designated core economic areas, such as would allow the creation of a critical mass, in terms of residential population and economic activities, sufficient to service the proposed expanded economic function of such centres. The promotion and facilitation of large scale employment generating developments will occur within the Primary Economic Areas/ Primary Economic Growth Areas and Secondary Economic Growth Areas.*

From a County Meath perspective, the stated centres are:

(i) Navan Core Economic Area with Navan as a Primary Economic Growth Town and including the Secondary Economic Growth Town of Kells and the town of Trim);

(ii) Drogheda Core Economic Area;

(iii) Secondary Economic Growth Towns of Ashbourne / Dunboyne; and;

(iv) The Environs of Maynooth and Kilcock located in the administrative area of Meath (in addition to Dunboyne / Pace and Clonee) are included in the Gateway Core Economic Area corresponding with the Metropolitan Area. Maynooth and Leixlip are identified as a Core Economic Area with the towns of Kilcock and Celbridge providing a supporting role.”

CS OBJ 14 seeks *“To promote the continued economic development of the Dublin-Belfast/M1 Economic Corridor”*

SS OBJ 8 has as an objective: *“To develop Navan and the **Drogheda Environs** as the primary development centres in Meath and to ensure that the settlements grow in a manner that is balanced, self sufficient and supports a compact urban form and the integration of land use and transport.*

6.4.2 Economic Development

In addition to the identified Primary and Secondary Economic Growth Towns, the RPGs also recognise the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor as it passes through the region. This builds on the recognition afforded to the Corridor under the National Spatial Strategy and the expressed need to secure and enhance the role of towns strategically placed along the Corridor. Economic strategies in each Council area must recognise the role of the Corridor in stimulating investment opportunities; engaging in branding and international promotional linkups and in working with State agencies, and in encouraging cooperation with other research and business bases located within the Corridor area. The Meath CDP provides that such existing business bases, located in the existing urban areas of the Corridor, including (but not limited to) South Drogheda environs, Swords, Balbriggan and Dublin City will play a key role in the future economic development of this international multi-modal Corridor. The role of Drogheda, as a key business base, is recognised in the Economic Strategy of this Development Plan.

The spatial dimension to the Economic Strategy within the CDP supports the growth of the National Gateway i.e. the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and Primary Economic Growth Towns in the Hinterland linked by multi-modal corridors and focused on identified Core Economic Areas. Meath County Council has identified high level economic development objectives for the area and include the Donore Road in Drogheda is identified as a key employment hub for ongoing intensification of development – close to the national road network yet readily accessible from the town centre and residential suburbs. There is significant scope in the IDA Business Park for further expansion. The Donore Road area was recommended as the second employment hub to complement the town centre in the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area 2007.

ED OBJ 3 serves to demonstrate the commitment of Meath County Council to enabling Drogheda to realise its status. *“ED OBJ 3 To ensure that sufficient and suitable land is zoned for sustainable large scale and general industry at the major employment centres of Navan, **Drogheda Environs**, Ashbourne, Dunboyne and Kells and to a scale and extent befitting their respective roles in the Economic Development & Settlement hierarchies”.*

The Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 identifies one of the five key strategic employment sites in Meath as being in Drogheda (IDA Business Park and adjoining lands). The strategy places a high emphasis on this strategic employment site to drive/anchor future jobs growth in this area of the county.

In the event of further growth in the south Drogheda area, the Council will explore the need for park and ride facilities and the reservation of land for this purpose as appropriate” and the intention to provide for the development of cycles/greenways and walkways throughout the area. In this respect ED OBJ 9 of the plan outlines the intention “to explore the provision of sustainable medium and long distance walking routes”.

6.4.3 Transportation

TRAN POL 7 states that it is the Council’s policy: *“To support the improvement of existing rail transport infrastructure including the Dublin/Sligo route with increased suburban services to Enfield and Kilcock, the existing Dublin – Drogheda rail service which serves the urban settlements of Laytown and Gormanston and to seek to have the proposed electrification of this rail line extended to Drogheda.”*

TRAN POL 39 states that it is the Council’s policy: *“To review, as part of the town development and local area plans processes, land at strategic locations adjoining urban related motorway junctions which has*

previously been identified for employment generating uses, subject to compliance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

In this regard, the following junctions will be examined:

M1 Motorway Junction 7 (Julianstown)

Junction 8 (Duleek)

Junction 9 (Drogheda - Donore Road)

M3 Motorway Junction 4 (Clonee)

Junction 5 (Dunboyne)

Junction 9 Navan (North)

N2 Rath Roundabout"

TRAN SO 1 has as a strategic objective: *"To prepare local transport plans for Navan, Drogheda Environs, Dunboyne, Kells, Trim, Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin, in accordance with the NTA's draft Transportation Strategy, in consultation with the NTA."*

TRAN OBJ 2 seeks: *"To facilitate and encourage the upgrading of existing railway stations, and protect as required lands needed for the upgrading of existing railway lines or stations or the provision of new railway stations throughout the County. Any such proposals for developments in Bettystown and south of Drogheda, will have to ensure that there are no adverse effects on the integrity of SPAs."*

TRAN OBJ 3 seeks: *"To facilitate the provision of adequate lands to provide for park and ride facilities at appropriate locations in the County. In the event of further growth in the south **Drogheda** area, the Council will explore the need for park and ride facilities and the reservation of land for this purpose as appropriate."*

TRAN OBJ 8 seeks: *"To promote and explore the development of the following linkages within the lifetime of the Development Plan subject to the appropriate environmental assessments, including Appropriate Assessment of the likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EC Habitats Directive;*

(i) To explore the feasibility of developing former disused transportation corridors for cycle / greenways.

(ii) To provide the development of a cycle / greenway on the disused Navan

– Kingscourt rail line in conjunction with Cavan County Council subject to the completion of a feasibility study obtaining the necessary statutory planning consent, landowner co-operation and the securing of the necessary funding.

(iii) To provide for the development of the Trim – Navan – Slane – Drogheda cycle / greenway along the River Boyne subject to obtaining the necessary statutory planning consent, the carrying out of Appropriate Assessment, landowner co-operation and the securing of the necessary funding.

(iv) To develop a system of cycle / greenways, subject to the availability of resources, along the banks of the Boyne and Blackwater Rivers, in such a manner so as not to significantly negatively impact on the conservation status of the Natura 2000 site either alone or in combination with other objectives in this or other plans.

(v) To explore the development of the following cycle/greenway options as part of the Dublin Galway cycle network a) along the Royal Canal located within the administrative area of Meath County Council in

consultation with relevant agencies or b) along the former N4 (R148) located within the administrative area of Meath County Council in consultation with relevant agencies or c) Combinations of the above.”

TRAN OBJ 17 seeks *“That the feasibility of a link road between the R132 south of Drogheda and the M1 will be examined and the scheme progressed if appropriate. The M1 to R132 Link Road will form an important component of the development of the Southern Environs.”*

TRAN OBJ 21 seeks: *“To co-operate with the NRA, NTA and other Local Authorities in clarifying and finalising the route of the Leinster Outer Orbital Route (linking Drogheda, Navan, Trim and Naas) proposed in the ‘Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area’ and the NTA’s draft Transport Strategy. This is particularly important in the vicinity of proposed major junctions along the route in order to protect the identified corridor from development intrusion.”*

6.4.4 Water, Drainage and Environmental Services

Meath County Council currently supplies approximately 45,000 cubic metres of potable water each day through 20 main water supply schemes and a watermain distribution network totalling approximately 1,800km. The provision of water and drainage services to meet projected future growth is a very significant challenge for the Environment & Water Services and Planning Departments of Meath County Council. It is the adopted policy of Meath County Council as contained in the Corporate Plan to investigate the reduction of the dependence on adjoining Authorities for critical water services infrastructure, particularly wastewater treatment and disposal. It is clear that a regional solution is required to cater for the medium to long term needs of this strategic area of County Meath. It is an objective of Meath County Council at WS OBJ 1 to reduce Meath County Council’s dependence on the water services infrastructure of adjoining Local Authorities to cater for the projected development needs of Drogheda and Environs, East Meath and the South East urban centres.

WS POL 5 states that it is the Council’s policy: *“To co-operate with the DoECLG, Louth County Council and Drogheda Borough Council in implementing the key findings and recommendations of the ‘East Meath, South Louth & Drogheda Water Improvement Scheme Report (July 2009)’, for a water supply scheme to meet the anticipated water requirements to serve this area.”*

WS POL 15 states that it is the Council’s policy: *“ To co-operate with adjoining Planning Authorities to increase services capacity where necessary, particularly in relation to the Drogheda Wastewater Treatment and Kilcock/Maynooth Wastewater scheme (i.e. lower Liffey valley sewerage scheme) to service settlements in North-East Meath and the Meath environs of Kilcock and Maynooth. To also jointly investigate proposals for the further upgrade/extension of the treatments plants to provide for a long-term solution for wastewater treatment in the north east region.”*

WS POL 16 states that it is the Council’s policy: *“To utilise the capacity allocated to East Meath from the Drogheda Wastewater Treatment Plant in an efficient and fair manner and in the best interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.”*

WS OBJ 1 seeks: *“To reduce Meath County Council’s dependence on the water services infrastructure of adjoining Local Authorities to cater for the projected development needs of Drogheda and Environs, East Meath and the South East urban centres.”*

WS OBJ 7 states that: *“Meath County Council will seek enhanced capacity to service the East of the County and the Drogheda Environs in conjunction with Fingal and Louth County Councils, Drogheda Borough Council and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government including where necessary the exploration of alternative options.”*

Subsequent to the adoption of the County Development Plan 2013 -2019, there have been 2 variations of the plan adopted, these are as follows:

- **Variation No.1** (adopted 4th November 2013) varied a number of the objectives in the Core Strategy of Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019.
- **Variation No. 2** to the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 was adopted on 19th May 2014. The Variation collectively forms Volume 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 and is entitled “Written Statement & Development Objectives for Urban Centres”.
- **Variation No 3** is on public display until 27 January 2016. The key purpose of this variation is to align the County Development Plan with the key tenets of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014 – 2022 as they relate to statutory land use planning. The Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022, was launched in June 2015. At its core, the strategy seeks to create 7,500 jobs up to 2022.

6.5 Southern Environs of Drogheda Local Area Plan 2009-2015

The plan lands extend to approximately 690 hectares wrapping in a horseshoe shape around the southern Drogheda town boundary. The area also has strong links to and is in physical proximity to the East Meath area.

The Local Area Plan sets out a development framework which will enable “*existing demand to be facilitated and future development to be directed in an orderly, economic, sustainable and coherent manner.*” The Local Area Plan divides the overall land banks into 7 Character Areas which are as follows:

1. Rathmullan Area;
2. Donore Road Area;
3. Duleek/Platin Road Corridor;
4. Bryanstown Cross Route;
5. Colpe Cross Area;
6. Bryanstown Area;
7. Mill rd/Marsh Rd Area.

The LAP sets out general principles and an overall development framework in respect of the entire LAP area in Chapter 5 and detailed/specific recommendations are provided in respect of each Character Area in chapter 6.

Chapter 5 outlines 3 key objectives which apply in terms of the overall development framework of future development in the Plan area, these are as follows:

DF1 “*All new development should be set in/ be mindful of the context of the existing built up area of Drogheda town and needs to demonstrate how it integrates with the town proper, both in terms of linkages and integration with the existing built form.*”

DF2 “*The sequential approach shall apply to all new residential development in that those areas closest to the existing built up area should be developed first.*”

DF3 “*All necessary physical infrastructure is required to be provided in line with all new development.*”

The LAP development strategy is grounded in a number of key principles of urban design including seeking to ensure that the Southern Environs develops into “a place with its own identity and character by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development and landscape.”

Chapter 6 provides a description of each Character Area, a brief analysis of the land use characteristics of each area and concludes by setting out specific policies for each Character Area.

The Rathmullan area is identified as the area which will accommodate the immediate residential expansion of Drogheda. The Donore Road area is identified as a successful employment area in the LAP and the framework proposed for this area in the LAP seeks to generate further employment development at this location. The Duleek/Platin corridor has a mix of land use zoning objectives and the LAP seeks that this area would develop in a balanced/orderly fashion. The Bryanstown Cross route area is a key location in terms of providing linkage between future development in Bryanstown and the town of Drogheda. The Colpe Cross area is almost fully developed with only any additional future uses at the commercial centre at Colpe to be considered in the context of commercial provision in the overall LAP area. The Bryanstown Area is one which is intended to accommodate a future sustainable community. The LAP provides detailed guidance at pages 60-62 as to how this should occur and the development framework requires the preparation of an urban design framework plan to set out detailed proposals as to how development will occur on these lands. A comprehensive phasing programme is required to form part of the urban design framework plan. The Mill Road/Marsh Road area is an area identified to accommodate future development subject to the preparation of an urban design framework plan which is required to include a comprehensive phasing programme. Detailed guidance regarding how this area should develop is provided at Pages 62-64 of the LAP.

6.6 Meath Development Contribution Scheme 2016-2021

Each Planning Authority is required to prepare and maintain a Development Contribution Scheme (DCS) in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Developments Acts 2000-2015. Such schemes are required to be reviewed and a new scheme prepared at least every six years. The Meath County Development Contribution Scheme 2016-2021 is the third contribution scheme to be made for County Meath and this scheme took effect on 1 January 2016. Table 6.1 below summarises the DCSs in Meath (the current 2016-2021 scheme), County Louth and in Drogheda Borough Council (2010-2014) as applicable in the greater Drogheda Area at the time of making this submission.^{57 58}

Table 6.1: Current DCS Rates in County Meath, County Louth and the Former Drogheda Borough as Currently Applicable in the Greater Drogheda Area

Meath County Council Development Contribution Scheme 2016-2021*	Louth County Council Development Contribution Scheme, 2010-2014*	Drogheda Borough Council Development Contribution Scheme, 2010-2014. *
Class 2 : Non-Financial / Non-Professional Services - €11 per sqm Class 3: Industrial Manufacturing/ Warehousing/Port Warehousing Property /Office Use Data Centres – €11 per sqm Businesses grant aided or supported by IDA, Enterprise Ireland or Údarás na Gaeltachta shall avail of a 50% reduction of the relevant standard rate of contribution.- €5.50 per sqm	Industrial/manufacturing/ warehousing/warehousing/ commercial/agricultural store (commercial)- €41.76 per sqm Manufacturing/ Internationally tradable/ financial services supported and certified by IDA and or Enterprise Ireland shall avail of a 50% reduction- €20.88 per sqm	Industrial/manufacturing/warehousing/ warehousing/ commercial/retail - €73.21 per sqm Derelict sites, crèche, industrial & manufacturing expansions, internationally tradable/financial services- €36.60 per sqm Manufacturing/ Internationally tradable/ financial services supported and certified by IDA and or Enterprise Ireland shall avail of a 50% reduction-
* figures exclude water and wastewater development levies	* figures exclude water and wastewater development levies	* figures exclude water and wastewater development levies

⁵⁷ The information on the County Louth, Drogheda Borough and Dundalk Town Council schemes are accessible from the following link: www.louthcoco.ie/en/Services/Planning/Development_Contribution_Schemes_Bonds/

⁵⁸ The information on the County Meath scheme area accessible from the following link:
<http://www.meath.ie/CountyCouncil/Publications/PlanningPublications/DevelopmentContributions/>.

Table 6.2 shows the previous DCS for Meath (2010-2015) and, for reference purposes, the Dundalk Town Council (2010-2014) DCS, currently applicable.

Table 6.2: Previous Rates in County Meath, and Dundalk Town Council (2010-2014) (as Currently Applicable in the former Dundalk Town Council Area)	
Meath County Development Contribution Scheme, 2010-2015 as amended in 2013* Class 2: Non-Financial /Non-Professional Services office use- €64.83 per sqm Class 3: Industrial Manufacturing/ Warehousing/Port Warehousing Property /Office Use Data Centres - €23.19 per sq	Dundalk Town Council Development Contribution Scheme, 2010-2014* Industrial/manufacturing/warehousing/ warehousing/commercial/retail - €39.69 per sq metre Manufacturing/ Internationally tradable/ financial services supported and certified by IDA/EI/LCEB shall avail of a 50% reduction- €19.84 per sq metre
* figures include water and wastewater development levies	* figures exclude water and wastewater development levies

It can be observed that the current scheme now in place in Meath puts the county in a more competitive position compared with previously and this reflects our goal of becoming more proactive in regard to facilitating economic development in the county, including in the Area of Interest. It is understood that the three schemes in Louth, which will be amalgamated, are currently under review⁵⁹, with the expectation that the overall scheme in Louth will become more competitive, independently of Meath County Council. This development in Louth would be welcomed by Meath County Council in Louth, not least in respect of the importance of the need to develop the northern environs of Drogheda in County Louth.

⁵⁹ "Louth County Council has commenced a review of all three Development Contribution Schemes operating in the County prior to March 2013, in line with Ministerial guidance. The new, unitary scheme will apply across the County and will be fully reflective of the need to promote economic activity, promote sustainable development, secure investment in capital infrastructure and be broadly consistent with other schemes across the State. Completion of the new scheme will be in mid 2014. In the interim the current Schemes below remain effective" (*supra* footnote 57).

6.7 Other Local Plans

Outside the immediate Area of Interest as identified by the Boundary Committee, the following plans are included for completeness in order to give a holistic view by way of context for information purposes only of the interaction of the Area of Interest with urban centres in the wider East Meath context.

6.7.1 East Meath Local Area Plan 2014-2020

The East Meath Local Area Plan was prepared in 2014 in respect of the settlements of Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington East and Donacarney-Mornington. The plan acknowledges that these settlements occupy a strategic location on the east coast within close proximity to the National Gateway of Dublin, Dublin Airport, the Dublin–Belfast railway line, the M1 Dublin–Belfast Economic Corridor and Drogheda. The location of the area together with its outstanding accessibility places it in a unique position to harness the potential for sustainable employment growth particularly through the tourism economy.

6.7.2 Duleek Written Statement (Meath CDP 2013-2019)

The main street of Duleek forms part of the R150 Regional Route which joins with the R152 to the northeast of the town. These respective roads connect Duleek with the large town of Drogheda and the various East Coast settlements (Julianstown, Laytown, etc.). Duleek is also located close to the National Motorway network with Junctions 8 & 9 (Drogheda) of the M1 Motorway being located approximately 5.5km to the northeast of the town. Duleek is therefore close to the Dublin-Belfast Corridor.

Duleek is identified as a Level 4 retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy as per the below extract:

5.1.1 Carranstown and Platin

There are a number of other significant employers outside of the town's development boundary positioned approximately 3km to the northeast in the Carranstown/Platin area off the R152 route (Drogheda Road).

9.1 Roads

Duleek has good road accessibility with the regional roads R150 and R152 intersecting close to the town. Duleek is also located within close distance of Drogheda town (circa 7.5km) and junctions 8 & 9 of the M1 Motorway are located approximately 5.5km to the northeast of the town. This forms part of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor.

6.7.3 Stamullen Written Statement (Meath CDP 2013-2019)

This statement provides that:

Stamullen is designated as a Small Town within the County Development Plan 2013-2019 and is situated within the Slane Electoral Area, to the north east of County Meath. The settlement is located approximately 13 kilometres to the south of Drogheda and is situated close to the M1 Dublin Belfast motorway and the R132 (former N1) regional route. Stamullen is located directly adjacent to the county boundary of Fingal with the River Delvin forming the boundary.

Stamullen is situated immediately west of the M1 Motorway approximately 40 Kilometres north of Dublin. It is an objective of the County Development Plan Volume I to advance the possible upgrading of M1 Junction 7 to improve its capacity inclusive of the facilitation of vehicular access to / from Stamullen via the City North Business Campus to the M1 Interchange

Stamullen is currently served by the train station at Gormanston some 4.5 km distant and is not served by a local bus service

6.8 Summary of Local Planning Perspective

- The Steering Group established as part of the implementation of the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area 2007 facilitated good communication and co-ordination regarding collaborative inputs into the statutory land use plans of the three authorities and regional plans for the GDA and Border Region. A blue print for a collaborative approach is therefore already in place. This provides an example of best practice and road map for future joint planning approaches within the Drogheda area.
- Many strategic policies relevant to Drogheda can be laid down at overall county level, while leaving detailed implementation to be decided at a more local level (top down and bottom up planning). This does not necessitate a boundary revision to deliver on same. Rather it requires greater collaboration/shared services, (which is now a mainstay of local authority functions), joint plans/initiatives and through the work of the LEOs and Public Participation Networks (PPN).
- The Economic Development Strategy for County Meath 2014-2022 and the current County Development Plan identifies the motorway network radiating from the National Gateway of the Metropolitan Area as a key spatial engine for the delivery of economic development for County Meath. The Area of Interest is one which has significant potential to grow employment because of its location in an access rich environment benefiting from motorway, passage and freight rail accessibility and proximity to the port.
- Meath County Council established the Meath Economic Forum in 2013 to guide and advise the Executive of the Council as to how the County could maximise its untapped resources and potential for sustainable economic growth. Some of the Forum members are involved in the delivery of the significant employment to this area.
- The IDA Business Park and associated lands at the Donore Road Interchange is identified as a one of the 5 Key strategic sites in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath. These sites are specifically designated to attract FDI to County Meath. One of the key targets of the Economic Strategy to re-balance the economy of the County is to increase the presence of FDI in the Meath economic model. The loss of this area would thus constitute a very significant setback to the delivery of the overall Economic Strategy.
- The Drogheda Retail Park at the Donore Road represents an economic success story in County Meath and is proving to be a very successful shopping location in the town along with Southgate, as revealed by the new B&A survey results.
Other notable employers in the Environs area include Coca Cola, Boyne Valley Foods, Boann Distillery (due to commence within 2016). There is strong evidence on the ground of a cluster/agglomeration employment effect operating in both counties South of the River Boyne.
- The current Development Plan Guidelines for Local Authorities 2007 state at section 2.16: *“Most of Ireland’s major cities and towns are composed of a number of planning authorities and therefore contain administrative boundaries between those authorities. The achievement of high quality, compact and sustainable urban development depends on the preparation and implementation of coherent and co-ordinated policies in a seamless manner across administrative boundaries. While the making of a development plan is normally the function of an individual authority, development plans may be made jointly for an urban area and its environs by an urban authority and an adjoining county Council or county Councils. It is strongly recommended that the above approach be adopted in strategic locations such as the Gateways*

and Hubs identified in the NSS or other major urban areas and where significant development is anticipated in both the urban area and its environs”.

- As highlighted in a 2 year progress report on the CDP 2013, the first phase of the Boyne Greenway is now open between Oldbridge Estate and the Ramparts in Drogheda. Work is ongoing in the preparation of the design of the second phase of this project which will connect the Brú na Bóinne Interpretative Centre to Oldbridge Estate. This project is an excellent example of a collaborative approach by both authorities in the delivery of a key piece of infrastructure.
- With the establishment of Irish Water in January 2014, water services are now managed on a national level by this new semi-state company. A similar situation arises when considering other previous local authority functions such as national roads, waste collection, driver licensing, etc. that are now carried out by semi-state or national operational bodies. The consequence of these overall functional changes weakens any potential barriers to development on boundary issues where Local Authorities would previously appear to compete for limited infrastructural resources.
- Through the proactive leadership of Meath County Council the Southern Environs of Drogheda is an exemplar for well planned sustainable communities with a quality range of housing, significant employment, high quality retail offer and excellent amenities. Meath has been demonstrably successful in developing the Southern Environs through the operation of sound planning and development policies and practices. It would be unconscionable if a adjoining local authority were to be penalised for its success by having one of its most developed and successful areas hived off to an adjoining County.

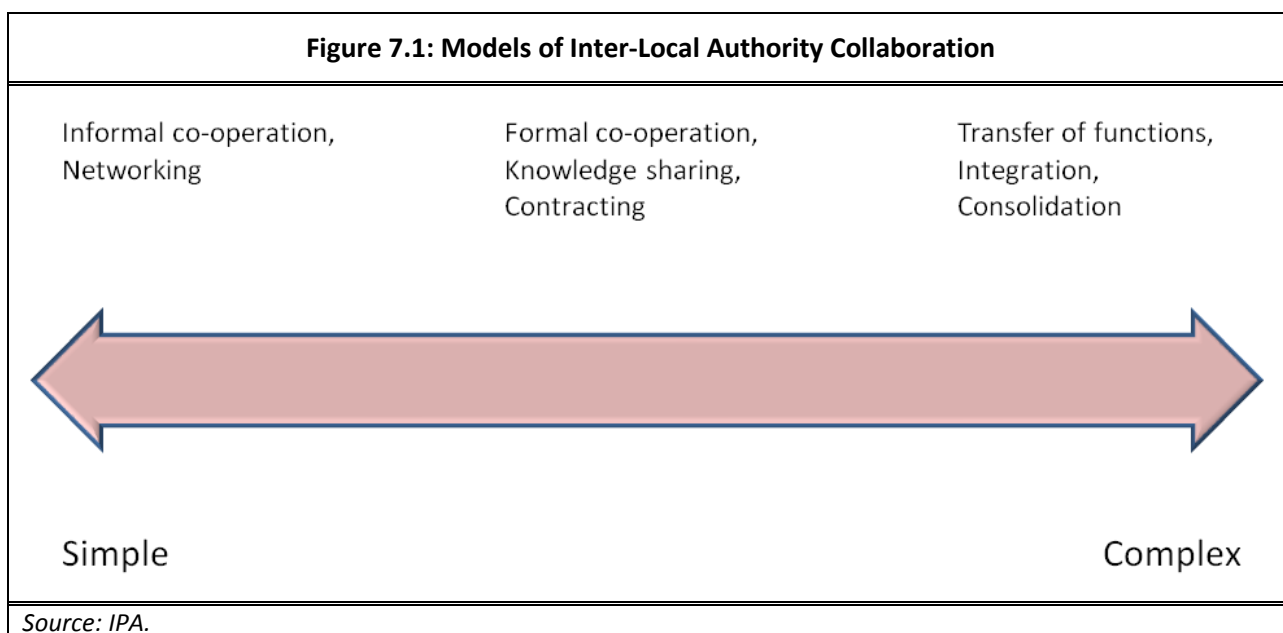
7 Inter-Local Authority Collaboration and Effective Services Delivery

7.1 Introduction

Meath County Council has a history of collaboration with Louth County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council in terms of effective local government services delivery in South Drogheda and East Meath, including the Area of Interest under review. One of the main principles of the 2012 Putting People First government document is the collaborative 'shared services' model for effective and efficient service delivery. The document recognises the ongoing and effective collaborative approach taken by local authorities across a range of services and emphasised the importance of continuing and building on this method of efficient service delivery. This section outlines the examples of cooperation between the two local authorities and, at the end of the piece, we suggest possible ways of further enhancing the cooperation, aimed at meeting the needs of residents, businesses and communities in the greater Drogheda area under our remit.

7.2 Models of Inter-Local Authority Collaboration

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) paper Strategic Collaboration in Local Government (O'Donnell, 2012) describes a continuum of collaborative forms, from simple collaborative activities to full integration of services.



The schematic above shows that the more complex the problem to be solved/addressed/tackled, the more likely that an approach to the right of the continuum will be required (i.e. the more complex, and the more challenging, the collaboration required).

Meath County Council considers that there is no issue or problem currently in the Area of Interest necessitating such a complex solution and that the first two types of cooperation – informal cooperation, networking, and formal cooperation, knowledge sharing and contracting – are generally

sufficient for effective and efficiency inter-local authority cooperation in respect of Drogheda and its environs. Such relatively simple and straightforward forms of cooperation have been in use by the two Councils in the Drogheda area to date. However, this is not to say that we should ignore possible deeper forms of cooperation, which might be merited in special circumstances – such as emergencies arising from natural or manmade events. Unfortunately for all of us, the world is generally a less safe place today than it was in the past and the increasing risks associated with climate change and the threat of international terrorism are causing governments around the world, at all levels, to be extra vigilant, and Ireland is no exception in this regard.

The IPA paper referred to above describes a number of case studies from Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom that demonstrate various models of strategic collaboration in existence. Briefly these include:

- *Regional jobs initiatives* – co-operation between the towns of Fresno and Clovis in California, US;
- *Waste collection* – inter-local service contracts in the Triangle region of North Carolina, US;
- *Strategic alliance* – resource sharing between three Councils in Central Tablelands, New South Wales, Australia;
- *Sister cities* – memorandum of understanding between two Councils to share and combine knowledge and experience across a range of services, which has occurred variously internationally.

The Review Committee may be aware of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Louth County Council and the then Newry and Mourne District Council in Brussels, March 2011.⁶⁰ The 2011 MoU between Louth County Council and Newry and Mourne DC was commended by the Directorate General (DG) Regio of the European Commission as a pioneering example of cross-border cooperation in the European Union (EU). The following April, at the Ballymascanlon Hotel in Co. Louth, a large number of private as well as public stakeholders from the East Border Region gathered to pledge their support for cross-border initiatives that would assist with the economic, social and cultural development of the cross-border region and complement other initiatives underway in the region. The Charter of Commitment to Cross-Border Cooperation signed that day in 2011 illustrated the depth of support for cross-border cooperation across the region that has been evident for many years. The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) was the first organisation to sign the Charter on that day in April 2011. It is understood that Louth County Council envisaged that the cross-border cooperation should extend *throughout County Louth*, and that the *Newry-Dundalk-Drogheda* corridor would become a key part of the M1 Dublin-Belfast Corridor.

The LEF, which was established in 2009, following the Indecon studies on economic development in County Louth and Drogheda,⁶¹ had as one of its action plans the task of providing for the Newry-Dundalk-Drogheda corridor but that particular action plan of the LEF has not, to the best of our knowledge, come to light since.⁶²

⁶⁰ As a result of the local authority reform process in NI, which came into effect in 2014, then former Newry and Mourne DC is now merged as part of the new Newry City, Mourne and Down District.

⁶¹ Outlined in Sub-Section 1.2.4.

⁶² We would refer the Review Committee and the general reader to the website of the LEF, which is hosted as part of Louth County Council's website (http://www.louthcoco.ie/en/Services/Economic-Development/Louth_Economic_Forum_/). The website mentions the "Drogheda Dundalk Newry Economic Corridor" as part of its plans but the actual plans completed by the LEF, as available on the LEF's website, do not include the said corridor. The actual action plans completed and available on the LEF's website are: Louth

Quoted in the aforementioned IPA paper, the New South Wales Department of Local Government in a guidance paper (2007) described the aim of strategic cooperation as such that “communities benefit from the productive use of cumulative resources available to Councils” and “maximising capacity in addressing community expectations and enhancing staff skills and experience”. The aims and benefits of strategic collaboration are summarised below:

- Aims of collaboration;
 - Capture and share knowledge and innovation
 - Connect Councils in maximising service delivery opportunities to meet common community needs
 - Reduce costs through elimination of duplication
 - Access economies of scale
 - Develop an effective local platform to work with other levels of government to achieve better whole of government outcomes for the community
- Benefits of collaboration;
 - The provision of more comprehensive services at the local and regional level
 - Promotion of joint cultural and economic development
 - Strengthened relationships between Councils and other government entities
 - Improved local governance through modelling, information exchange and joint problem solving
 - Opportunities for integrated planning across local government
 - Increased access to a wider range of skills, knowledge and specialist services
 - Better use of and access to available technology
 - Better utilisation of capital and other assets, including improved investment strategy options
 - Improved economies of scale resulting in better products at a cheaper price, freeing up resources for other uses.

These aims and benefits can be seen in the history to date of collaboration between Meath and Louth local authorities and can also be seen to be appropriate to the goal of sustaining and improving the quality of life of Meath and Louth citizens in the greater Drogheda area.

7.3 Service Delivery and Resource Assignment

In considering the issue of the assignment of resources (both staff and financial), it may be noted that Meath County Council has a relatively recent history of area-based service provision, with the consequent assignment of staff and financial resources to geographic locations throughout the county. This arrangement has been the subject of review particularly since 2008 and the implementation of the requirements of ‘Putting People First – A Programme for Effective Local Government’ and the Local Government (Reform) Act 2014, and has led the organisation to a ‘function-based’ approach to service delivery rather than a ‘location-based’ approach.

Age Friendly Business Action Plan; Indigenous Industry Action Plan; Sustainable Energy Action Plan; Tourism and Heritage Action Plan; Education and Training Action Plan; Agricultural Food and Fisheries Action Plan; Louth Economic Forum Report 2012; and Foreign Direct Investment Action Plan 2015. In the latter document, on which we commented earlier in this Submission, we noted the proposal of the LEF that Drogheda should be promoted for FDI (foreign direct investment) as part of Dublin, which we consider as a strange recommendation, when the LEF, which is supported by Louth County Council, should be promoting Drogheda in this way as much as Dundalk or any other part of the county.

By doing so, Meath County Council has made significant advances towards improving overall customer service and delivery of services so as to ensure the most effective (including most cost-effective) and efficient service to the public.

As outlined in Section 2, Meath County Council has a current workforce of 685 staff (632 whole-time equivalent) across a range of disciplines (e.g. management, clerical/administrative, technicians/engineers/planners/scientists, general services supervisors/general operatives/water caretakers/wardens, fire-fighters etc). The Council manages its human resource function by way of a suite of HR policies, including workforce planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management through the PMDS process, and diversity and equality.

While there has been a significant reduction in staff resources available to the Council since 2008, with the overall staff number dropping by 20% to the current resource level, the Council, in line with the challenges arising from the national public service agreements and through the commitment and flexibility of our staff, has delivered a range of efficiencies within the local authority in recent years, while ensuring the continued effective delivery of services. Efficiencies have arisen by way of ongoing and continuous review of how services are delivered.

The Council will continue to forward plan, by way of the workforce planning process, in order to ensure the continued development of our current staffing cohort and the provision of appropriate staffing across the organisation in order that we may meet the requirements and objectives outlined in our Corporate Plan.

While there is a cohort of staff physically based in offices, depots, libraries and water/waste-water treatment plants in the Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District, this is irrelevant for the purposes of reviewing the delivery of effective and efficient services in the Area of Interest. The requirement for efficiencies across the organisation has resulted in a shift towards the delivery of services on a *planned* 'function-based' approach rather than a *reactionary* 'location-based' approach, which normally entails the assignment of staff to particular geographic areas. The majority of Meath County Council services are managed and planned from a central point with day-to-day services delivered on a planned programme basis in various geographic locations throughout the county.

This is particularly the case in terms of the delivery of Transportation & Operations activities, Water Services, Environment and Housing-related activities, as well as general Customer Service. These services are managed at a central point on the basis of a planned programme for the county (e.g. Schedule of Municipal District Works), including a provision for reactionary works as required.

While staff assigned to these departments have various bases throughout the county (offices, depots, libraries, plants etc), they are not tied to specific geographic areas as each of the functions outlined above are provided on the basis of the priority of workload provision.

Due to the review of service delivery throughout the Council in recent years, it is the case that the Area of Interest under consideration here is serviced by a high proportion of our staff in one way or another whether *via* the Customer Service Team, Water Caretakers, Operations Engineers, Litter and Dog Wardens, Finance staff, Planners, General Services Supervisors, Fire Officers, Housing Officers etc.

Services are delivered in the Area of Interest by the relevant staff as and when required and these services are provided in the same manner, and same degree of effectiveness, as services provided in any other geographic location in Co. Meath.

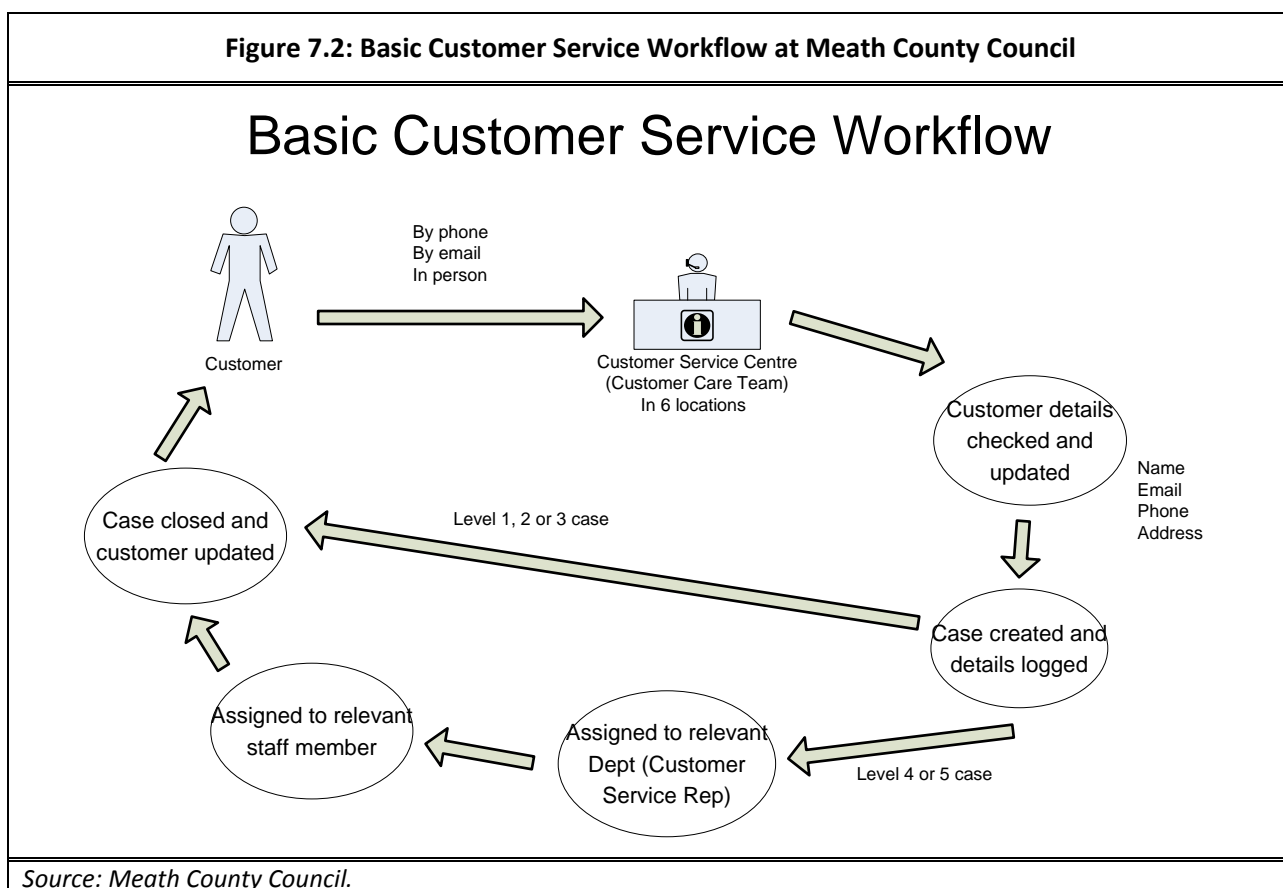
Outlined below are a number of key examples of collaboration and effective service delivery under the various functional areas.

7.4 Customer Service

With a view to further building on the provision of effective and efficient customer service, a new model for customer service delivery was rolled out during 2015 throughout Meath County Council in order to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Customer Charter and to ensure the provision of high quality customer care across the organisation.

The new approach followed the dissolution of the three former Town Councils (Navan, Trim and Kells) and five previous Electoral Areas, and the establishment of six new Municipal Districts and the further centralisation of functional service delivery. The purpose of this new customer service model is to ensure the most effective, efficient and consistent handling of customer queries/issues throughout the Council. This is carried out by way of (a) a team of highly trained, skilled and experienced Customer Service staff, and (b) a Customer Service IT system for recording, dissemination, and monitoring of queries/issues raised by customers. The following diagram outlines the basic model workflow.

Figure 7.2: Basic Customer Service Workflow at Meath County Council



Since implementation of the new model in June 2015, there have been a total of 1,344 customer queries/issues logged on the Customer IT system in relation to service issues in the Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District. Some 1,065 of these queries are now highlighted as being 'closed' (i.e. dealt with and a response issued to the customer) and the remaining 279 queries are either 'in progress' (i.e. being dealt with) or awaiting attention. It must be noted that these 'logged' calls only represent the queries/issues that cannot be dealt by the Customer Service staff. Queries/issues which have been responded to by Customer Service staff are not, as of yet, recorded on the Customer Service

IT system. It is safe to outline, however, that these queries/issues would be a multiple of the number of queries actually logged in the IT system.

This new arrangement is a fundamental support to the function-based service delivery approach in that issues are dealt with as best as possible by the Customer Service staff. More complex issues are recorded and referred to the appropriate service departments. Responses are then monitored and followed up by the Customer Service staff so as to ensure the most efficient response to the customer. This process is based on best practice models and is consistent across Meath County Council and the county as a whole. It is a function-based response system which transcends all Meath County Council services including Planning, Water Services, Transportation, Environmental Services, Finance, Community Services etc.

The Customer Service staff work very closely with all service departments in order to ensure effective communication with the public on all relevant matters. This has proved very useful to all service departments to date and has been particularly successful during periods of higher activity e.g. weather related issues, emergencies etc.

7.5 Development Plans

There is a history of collaboration between Meath County Council, Louth County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council in relation to planning in the subject area and the greater Drogheda area. The most significant example of this joint approach has been the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area, which was compiled and incorporated into each of the three local authority Development Plans in 2007. This strategy set out the vision for the future development of the greater Drogheda area.

Other plans which have required a collaborative effort between the three local authorities for the benefit of the greater Drogheda area, and Area of Interest, include the following examples:

- South Drogheda & Environs LAP 2009-2015
- Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017
- Meath County Council County Development Plan 2013-2019
- Louth County Council County Development Plan 2009 – 2015

7.6 Road Projects and Maintenance

Collaboration and effective/efficient service delivery is clear in relation to the area of roads and transportation. For the purposes of inter-connectivity and good future planning, an efficient joined-up approach is required, usually with the necessity for one local authority to take the lead on particular projects or general maintenance work. The ability to respond to requests for assistance on a cross-county boundary basis is also a key requirement and this is something that both local authorities have reacted to well over the years.

Roads Projects

For the purposes of highlighting good collaboration and effective service delivery please note the following schemes/works which have been provided and implemented by Meath County Council, with the agreement of Louth County Council, and on behalf of the two local authorities:

- **Oldbridge/Dunleer Motorway Scheme** (part of overall M1 Northern Motorway Scheme which commenced in 1993) – Meath County Council and Louth County Council entered into a Section 59 agreement on 11th November 1993 agreeing that the powers, functions and duties of Louth County Council in relation to the Oldbridge/Dunleer Motorway Scheme would be exercised and

performed by Meath County Council. This scheme was part of the overall M1 Northern Motorway Scheme. The works were carried out under three contracts with a total construction value of approximately €92 million. The works included a 7.41km section in Co. Louth and included the construction of the iconic Boyne Valley (Mary McAleese) Bridge which straddles the county boundaries. This included the planning and preparation of the Motorway Scheme, for submission to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for approval, the construction of the motorway in accordance with relevant statutory provisions, land acquisition matters, construction of all necessary bridges and obtaining Bridge Orders.

- Under the Sustainable Transport grants available from the NTA for schemes in the Greater Dublin Area (which includes Co. Meath but not Co. Louth), Meath County Council has completed two schemes which required a Section 85 agreement with Louth County Council (or the former Drogheda Borough Council) as follows;
 - **Boyne Greenway – Phase I (2013/2014):** the Boyne Greenway Phase 1 provides a premium cycle and pedestrian facility from the Drogheda Ramparts to the entrance of the Oldbridge Estate Visitors Centre, Co. Meath. The first phase of the Greenway runs for 3.8km utilising an existing pathway from the Drogheda Ramparts to the intersection with the Rathmullan Road (county boundary) and from this location the greenway will follow the route of the existing carriageway to the entrance to the Oldbridge Estate. Value of scheme: €1.2m. Value of remedial works carried out on the Ramparts (excl. Consultancy fees) €45,000. This facility is of great benefit to the people of Drogheda.
 - **R152 Platin Road Safety Scheme (2012):** to provide for traffic-calming and pedestrian access underneath R152 Platin Road, Duleek Gate Bridge providing connectivity for pedestrians from Co. Meath including residential development at Avourwen into Drogheda Town. The scheme provides for continuation of the public footpath provided as part of the Avourwen development and connection to the public footpath within the Borough boundary just east of Duleek Gate Bridge. Value of scheme: €22,000.
 - In addition to the above Boyne Greenway Phase 1 scheme, the NTA has committed to fund a technical consultant to provide the main services for the Drogheda link between the constructed Phase I of the **Boyne Greenway/Cycleway** from the Ramparts in Drogheda at St. Dominic's Park to the proposed Boyneside Trails Pedestrian/Cycleway greenway along the Boyne estuary incorporating links to both the Train and Bus stations. Meath County Council has proposed to work jointly with Louth County Council, in this regard, with Meath County Council as the lead authority.
- **Cusack's Bridge, Meath/Louth border (2013):** Meath County Council entered into a Section 85 Agreement with Louth County Council in April 2013 allowing for Meath County Council to exercise and perform all of the statutory powers, functions and duties of Louth County Council, necessary to achieve the repair of Cusack's Bridge on the Meath/Louth Border in accordance with the provisions of the Roads Act 1993 to 2007.
- **Weight Restriction (2015):** agreement was reached between Louth County Council and Meath County Council under the Road Traffic Acts 1961-2014 for the implementation of a Weight Restriction on vehicles using the LT10039/LP1521 from Matthews Lane South to the junction with the R152 Platin Road in Drogheda with effect from 6 December 2015.
- Meath County Council tendered in November 2015 for the construction of an infill section of footpath leading to a crèche in Millmount Abbey in Drogheda, which will result in a continuous pedestrian linkage to the nearby education facilities in Co. Louth.

- Meath County Council contributed 50% of the funding towards the construction of a pedestrian crossing at the Highlands housing estate in Drogheda which is also of benefit to residents in adjacent housing estates in County Louth.

It is important to note that it is of significant benefit to Louth County Council, and Drogheda town in particular, that Meath County Council is assigned as the project lead on inter-county projects such as those outlined above, as Co. Meath is part of the Greater Dublin Area and can therefore seek funding for projects which are based on the Meath-Louth/Drogheda and Environs border area. Therefore while Louth County Council, and particularly Drogheda and the Area of Interest under review, currently benefits from this funding arrangement, they would not do so were Meath County Council not the project lead.

The effectiveness of a collaborative approach to roads projects is also evident from works carried out in conjunction with other counties including the following:

- *Fingal* – Meath County Council was the lead authority on the 17km N2 Finglas to Ashbourne Road scheme. Meath County Council managed the design, statutory process, land acquisition, and construction process. This was an approximately €180m scheme which opened in May 2006. Meath County Council is currently working with Fingal County Council (lead authority) on a study on the M3 which is looking at mainline and junction upgrades on Junctions 1-5.
- *Kildare* – Meath County Council has a Section 85 agreement with Kildare County Council for the Maynooth Outer Orbital Road where Meath County Council is taking the lead on developing the design. The Part 8 documentation is currently being prepared. Meath County Council will also be co-operating with Kildare County Council (and Westmeath County Council) on the construction of the Royal Canal Greenway as part of the Dublin-Galway cycle network.
- *Westmeath County Council* – Meath County Council has interaction with Westmeath County Council on the next phase of the proposed N51 Dunmoe improvement scheme. The Westmeath-based National Road Design Office is the designer on the project and Meath County Council envisages finalising the Part 8 process for the scheme in 2016.
- *Cavan County Council* – when Meath County Council was responsible for a National Road Design Office, we carried out the route selection on a project on the N3 called Edenburt-Cavan.

Maintenance/Operations

In relation to road maintenance it must be noted that Meath County Council works closely with Louth County Council in relation to emergency issues, road closures, road-works, general maintenance and operational activities in the South Drogheda area. In 2015, as well as implementing the new Customer Service model, Meath County Council also reviewed and revised the provision of operational activities throughout the county and implemented a new centralised 'Operations' division within the Transportation Directorate. This new department consolidated the operational activities role previously carried out by staff based in the former Town Councils and area-based Civic Offices.

As outlined earlier, the Council today operates on a function-based service delivery approach with a view to ensuring the most efficient delivery of services throughout the county as well as the most effective use of staff and financial resources. To date the new department has very successfully devised and implemented six Schedules of Municipal District Works as well as centralising and implementing a range of new protocols and procedures in relation to various operational services delivery activities.

7.7 Water and Waste-Water

Over the past decade, Meath County Council, as lead authority, has been proactive in terms of advancing and investing in drinking water capacity in order to benefit Drogheda, the Meath Environs of Drogheda and East Meath. Primarily as a result of these works, additional capacity has been made available at Staleen Water Treatment Plant which principally benefits Drogheda and the Meath Environs of the town.

Meath County Council holds a formal agreement with Louth County Council for the provision of additional capacity at Drogheda Wastewater Treatment Plant in order to provide for the future development and growth of the town in Louth, the Meath Environs of Drogheda and the Meath Coastal villages. Meath County Council, in conjunction with Louth County Council, has proactively and substantially invested in the provision of essential wastewater capacity for the current and future development and growth of the Meath Environs of Drogheda.

In relation to water services, there is a long and successful history of partnership and collaboration. As far back as 1965, both Meath County Council and the former Drogheda Corporation saw the benefit of working closely together in order to provide a high quality, resilient water supply to Drogheda and the East Meath Area when it was agreed to jointly develop and thereafter run a major new water supply scheme. On foot of this agreement, a new water treatment plant was built at Staleen, Donore, Co. Meath. This plant remains in existence to this day. It treats water abstracted from the River Boyne and it continues to be the principal source of drinking water for Drogheda, and much of East Meath. Under the longstanding agreement that is in place, both Meath and Drogheda benefit equally from the capacity available and until the establishment of Irish Water in January 2014, the costs associated with operating and maintaining the Staleen facility were shared between the two local authorities.

Throughout the past 50 years, a collaborative and open relationship has developed between Meath County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council. This has been important to the sustained success of this shared, major infrastructure which has been, and continues to be, fundamental and essential in terms of the planned development and growth of the area. During this long period of successful partnership, both Meath County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council have had the joint foresight to plan, invest in and successfully deliver capital upgrade works which have ensured the constant availability of water capacity and a secure, reliable and high quality water supply for the benefit of the many residents and business users served.

As recently as 2009, Meath County Council, as lead authority, undertook a major study entitled the Drogheda, South Louth and East Meath Water Improvement Scheme, in order to plan for the drinking water requirements of the greater Drogheda area for the following 30 years. This major study identified the need for further capital investment of over €160m, the realisation of which will require a continued unified partnership approach in terms of engaging and working with Irish Water.

With regard to wastewater, in recent years Meath County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council utilised their close working partnership to develop a major expansion of their shared wastewater treatment plant. As a result, over 27% of the capacity at the wastewater treatment plant is reserved for Meath County Council to serve the Meath Environs of Drogheda and the Meath Coastal Villages of Mornington, Donacarney, Bettystown, Laytown and Julianstown.

As with the water treatment plant, until the establishment of Irish Water in January 2014, Meath County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council, proportionally shared the ongoing costs associated with operating and maintaining the wastewater treatment plant. As a result of the very substantial funding invested by Meath County Council and the former Drogheda Borough Council, the area is now

served by a modern wastewater treatment facility which has ample spare capacity to cater for the further planned development and growth of Drogheda and the Meath Coastal Villages.

Meath County Council and Louth County Council (since the dissolution of Drogheda Borough Council) have in place preliminary plans for a further expansion of the shared wastewater treatment plant when the demand for same arises.

Collaboration with other counties

Meath County Council has long recognised the importance and necessity of proactively engaging and working with neighbouring local authorities in order to promote and advance essential Water Services capacity to facilitate economic and residential development and growth, to the mutual benefit of both local authorities. In this regard, Meath County Council has over the past decade proactively and collaboratively worked with adjacent Councils such as Kildare and Fingal to put in place agreements for the provision of shared essential water services infrastructure. Examples of such successful collaboration are:

- Meath County Council and Kildare County Council's agreement in relation to water and wastewater provision for Maynooth;
- Meath County Council and Kildare County Council's agreement in relation to water and wastewater provision for Kilcock;
- Meath County Council and Kildare County Council's agreement in relation to water and wastewater provision for Enfield and Johnstownbridge;
- Meath County Council and Fingal County Council's agreement in relation to water and wastewater provision for Dunboyne and Clonee;
- Meath County Council and Fingal County Council's agreement in relation to wastewater provision for Ashbourne, Ratoath and Kilbride.

7.8 Social Housing

While Meath County Council and Louth County Council are the housing authorities for their respective counties, there is a history of collaboration in terms of housing services in the South Drogheda area.

Currently there are 3,100 social units in stock and managed directly by Meath County Council, with 13.8% of this stock (428 units) located within the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District area. There are 36 social housing units owned and managed directly by Meath County Council within the St Mary's ED in which the Area of Interest occurs.

In respect of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), currently there are 425 RAS tenants in the county, 60 of which are within the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District area. There are 13 RAS tenants within the St Mary's ED.

To date Meath County Council has delivered 120 units under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative (SHLI) since 2009, including unsold affordable units, local authority-sourced units and units delivered by the approved housing bodies. Fifty-seven leasing units are located within the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District area. There are 15 leasing units located within the St Mary's ED.

In terms of the Homeless Service, while Meath falls within the Mid-East Homeless Forum Region (Meath, Kildare and Wicklow), there is a natural link to Louth given the close proximity, particularly in terms of accessing services (e.g. Drogheda Homeless Aid, where Meath County Council have has access to two beds).

The Housing Department operates on a function-based service delivery approach in that, while services are provided throughout the county, the function is managed centrally with staff and resources assigned to tasks throughout the county as required. The Housing Department works closely with the Customer Service staff in order to ensure that appropriate services are dealt with as close to the customer's base as possible.

7.9 Tourism

The Meath and Louth Tourism Development Plan which was commissioned by Fáilte Ireland recommended that Meath and Louth County Councils work together jointly on tourism development and promotion. It recommended the appointment of a Boyne Valley Tourism Development Officer working on tourism for both Councils. This commenced in 2012.

Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012-2014

The Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012-2014 was produced on behalf of the two Councils. This was the first time a tourism plan was developed and implemented on a joint basis. The Boyne Valley Destination provides the opportunity for an integrated tourism service across both counties and can create greater cooperation and a seamless experience for the visitor.

Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020

The two Councils recently appointed consultants to develop a five-year tourism strategy for the Boyne Valley for the period 2016-2020. A comprehensive consultation plan is being implemented at present in order to draw up an innovative and creative tourism strategy which will make the Boyne Valley a leading destination within the newly outlined Ireland's Ancient East destination. It is expected that the strategy will be launched before the 2016 season commences.

A Working Group has been established with representation from Meath and Louth to oversee the preparation of the draft five-year Boyne Valley Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 to drive tourism forward. This new strategy will focus on a development plan for tourism in order to gain maximum economic outputs for tourism within the region. The overall objective of the strategy is to identify actionable recommendations to guide and stimulate tourism development for the purpose of maximising the length of stay, level of enjoyment and economic return from national and international visitors.

Boyne Valley Drive

The two Councils have worked with Fáilte Ireland in order to develop the Boyne Valley Drive and Meath County Council implemented the signage plan on behalf of Fáilte Ireland. The Boyne Valley Drive links 29 heritage sites across Counties Meath and Louth through brown directional signage. It also included the installation of 7 town signs at key locations in each of the towns to encourage visitors on the Boyne Valley Drive to shop, lunch and overnight in the main towns: Drogheda, Navan, Slane, Kells, Trim. Marketing material was produced on a joint basis to include the new Boyne Valley guide with map insert and language translations.

Promotional Shows

Meath and Louth County Councils have been jointly marketing the Boyne Valley at promotional events. The tourism trade is invited to showcase the Boyne Valley at a significant number of promotional shows since 2012. In 2015, the Boyne Valley was promoted jointly between the two Councils at 20 shows.

Work with Tour operators

Since 2012, the two Councils together through the Boyne Valley initiative have been working with tour operators to bring familiarisation trips to the Boyne Valley in order to showcase the tourism product. During 2015, three familiarisation trips were worked on which brought a number of groups to the Boyne Valley on a 2-day trip.

Boyne Valley Tourism Conference & Exhibition 2014 & 2015

In February 2014 and 2015, the very successful Boyne Valley Tourism conference and exhibition took place with the theme 'Showcasing a Unique Destination – The Boyne Valley'. It was attended by over 250 delegates including tour guides, tour operators and the tourism trade, and was undoubtedly a great success. As well as the Conference and Member Showcase, on the Thursday evening, a tour guide visit to the Battle of the Boyne, Oldbridge and a reception in Drogheda has been arranged each year (2014 at the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda; 2015 the d Hotel, Drogheda). The exhibition showcase of tourism businesses was the highlight with 50 businesses from Meath and Louth showcasing their offering during the conference.

Golf

Boyne Valley Golf Guide – A Boyne Valley Golf Guide was produced on a joint basis and includes Seapoint and Baltray and thirteen Meath golf courses. Organised and launched by International Golfer Des Smyth and a networking event took place on May 29 2013 at Headfort Golf Club, where all the golf courses and accommodation providers attended.

Online & Digital Marketing

The two local authorities have worked with Fáilte Ireland to create the new www.discoverboynevalley.ie website. Social Media accounts for the Boyne Valley have also been set up (also a joint project between the two local authorities).

Response from the Tourism Trade

The Meath Food Series changed to the Boyne Valley Food Series on our recommendation to include local food producers throughout the Boyne Valley. Events run from May to September each year and offer forty food related events including a Taste of Drogheda, over the summer months and received extensive media coverage both locally and nationally and was featured in the Irish Maritime Festival. The Boyne Valley Garden Trail is another example of true cross county cooperation and a tourism offering of interest to niche markets and to garden tour operators.

7.10 Fire and Emergency Services

Under Section 10 of the Fire Service Acts 1981 and 2003, Meath County Council is obligated to have plans in place in order to provide a Fire Service within its designated boundary and may put in place an agreement with a neighbouring Fire Authority so as to ensure the provision of such a service by way of a joint service.

Meath County Council has a longstanding arrangement with the former Drogheda Borough Council (since 1952) for the provision of fire services in East Meath by the Drogheda Fire Station due to its geographical proximity in terms of first response. Following discussions with Louth County Council in 2015, a new agreement was prepared and agreed by the two local authorities arising from amendments in legislation.

While the arrangement initially arose out of necessity due to the geographical location and proximity of both Drogheda and Balbriggan Fire Stations to East Meath, the External Validation Group Report (June 2015) commissioned by the DECLG has identified good practice and consistency in terms of methods of service delivery.

Louth County Council Fire Service is committed to delivering a Fire Service in the area, as per the agreement, to a population of 25,510 people.

Meath County Council also works in conjunction with the other three counties in the North East Region (i.e. Louth, Monaghan and Cavan) in relation to emergency planning. Regional meetings and exercises are held on a regular basis in this regard in order to ensure preparedness in the event of a regional major emergency.

Mutual aid arrangements also exist between the Civil Defence organisations in the region as well as counties adjacent to the south (Dublin and Kildare) and west (Westmeath and Offaly).

Meath County Council Fire Service recognises the importance, and operational effectiveness, of working with neighbouring Fire Authorities and has collaborated with neighbouring authorities by way of the following:

- Utilising the training facilities in both Dundalk, Co. Louth, and Tullamore, Co. Offaly, in order to complete mandatory instruction to fire personnel and continuous assistance by way of providing training instructors;
- The migration of the CAMP project to Dublin Fire Brigade, who provide the mobilisation centre, has resulted in the alignment of approaches to call handling processes and procedures for public who need to use the 112/999 system. Equally, Meath County Council analogue aerials are utilised by neighbouring Fire Authorities;
- Meath County Council Fire Officers have been seconded to the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management to advance issues such as the fleet specification & procurement and 'Home Fire Safety Checks';
- The roll-out of the Fire Service National Incident Command System was carried out on a regional basis incorporating Meath Louth, Monaghan and Cavan, This involved each of the four fire authorities providing facilities, equipment and personnel;
- Meath County Council Fire Service are regional partners in the delivery of the Critical Incident Stress Management system, with Kildare County Council as the lead authority;
- Neighbouring Fire Authorities provide fire cover to adjoining areas of County Meath and provide assistance with resource, equipment and fire personnel on a regular basis.

7.11 Community Development, Environmental and Cultural Services

7.11.1 Community Development

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 significantly strengthened and expanded the role of the local authorities in local and community development, with particular focus on promoting the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities. Meath County Council has a pivotal role in improving the delivery of services for the citizens of Co. Meath through facilitating collaboration between service providers and the community and voluntary sector.

Under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, each local authority is directed to set up a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The LCDC was established for the purpose of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development in the county. In Co. Meath, the LCDC consists of 19 members from the public and private

sectors. The LCDC has a direct role in the management and oversight of specific local development funding streams, namely the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme 2015-2017 (SICAP) and the LEADER Programme 2014-2020. SICAP is now operational in the county.

In addition, the LCDC is charged with developing a six-year strategic plan for the county (Local Economic Community Plan, LECP), which provides a blueprint for the overall priorities for all local development funding that is expended within the county, over the period of the plan. The development of the LECP is currently at an advanced stage, which has involved an extensive consultation process with local communities and voluntary and state agencies.

Linked to the recent local government reform, the establishment of the Public Participation Network (PPN) has been facilitated by the Community Department, with its constituent sub structures now established, including the Secretariat and linkage groups.

In addition to the above, the following initiatives form part of the advancement of the community sector within the County, as supported by Meath County Council:

- Meath Age Friendly Initiative;
- Comhairle na nOg;
- Pride of Place;
- Community Grant Scheme;
- Carranstown Grant Scheme;
- Knockharley Grant scheme;
- Unity Centre, Navan;
- Joint Policing Committee.

All of the initiatives above extend county-wide, and are available for participation by all citizens, including the Area of Interest subject to the boundary review. Specifically, initiatives such as the Pride of Place, the Community Grant Scheme and PPN participation are all actively availed of in the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District of Co. Meath.

Given the breath of new activities now falling under the remit of local authority Community Departments, there is close liaison and networking on an ongoing basis with neighbouring local authorities. In the case of South Drogheda and East Meath, Meath County Council and Louth County Council share good practice and learning in the field of local development, and the operation of the new local development structures, so as to fully realise the potential and spirit of the Putting People First document and the Local Government Reform Act 2014, for the benefit of our respective communities and citizens.

Meath County Council and Louth County Council work closely in relation to the number of community based networks and organisations such as the Age Friendly Alliance. The Councils also work together as part of the region in order to share and exchange ideas and initiatives.

The Meath Local Sports Partnership (LSP) works in conjunction with the Louth LSP in relation to community and sports facilities, with such facilities in South Drogheda e.g. Grange Rath previously receiving support from Meath County Council in terms of assistance with applying for capital grants. Meath LSP has also supported the Boyne Rugby Football Club in Bryanstown (in the Area of Interest) and has provided training to club members under the Coach Education Programme. The Meath LSP actively engages with the club in terms of delivering programmes directly to national school children within the catchment area (further information on the LSPs is contained in Section 10 – Community Interest).

7.11.2 Environment

In terms of environmental issues, Meath and Louth County Council engaged in a successful joint campaign in 2013 in respect of the roll-out of Brown Bins pursuant to the Household Food Waste Regulations 2013. Such collaboration included joint education and awareness and media campaigns as well as workshops with the Waste Collectors servicing both counties, many of whom operate in both counties. This collaboration also resulted in significant savings in having promotional material printed, as well as for newspaper and radio advertisements.

Meath and Louth County Councils collaborate in respect of sampling and information sharing in respect of actions under the Bathing Waters Regulations and particularly with regard to incident notifications on either side of the county boundaries.

The two Councils both operate under contracts with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) in respect of the carrying out of certain veterinary functions on behalf of the FSAI and particularly in respect of food control services. While a formal agreement under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2001 is in the process of being drawn up, the reality has been that each county has assisted in the past and continue to assist the other in ensuring continuity in the provision of such services where for example the County Veterinary Officer is on leave or absent for whatever reason.

Under the old Regional Waste Management Planning Structure, the two Councils worked in close collaboration with the other constituent counties (Cavan and Monaghan) in the North East Region in adopting the Regional Waste Management Plans and implementing very successfully the many policy objectives and targets set out in the said plans – the region was and continues to be the only region of the ten waste management regions where the full range of waste infrastructure was implemented.

Meath and Louth County Councils issue notifications on successful prosecutions taken by either authority under the Waste Management Acts 1996 as amended and their waste enforcement teams work in close collaboration on waste related issues straddling the county boundaries

7.11.3 Library Service

Meath County Council Library Service has engaged with Louth County Council in order to provide a mobile Library Service to East Meath. The service is operated by Louth County Council on an agency basis and integrates the Laytown/Bettystown area into the Louth mobile library schedule. The mobile service is operated on a fortnightly basis stopping at Laytown National School. The collaboration has been in operation since September 2008 and is one of only two such shared services in the country. The other initiative is a cross-border service between Donegal County Council and Libraries Northern Ireland. The service meets an immediate need in Co. Meath and is complementary to the service Louth County Council offers *via* their main branch in Drogheda.

7.11.4 Arts Service

The Arts Services of Meath and Louth collaborate with regard to the development of new projects and initiatives across their respective areas. The Music in a Healthcare Setting conference and seminar, developed as a Meath/Louth partnership project in association with Kids Classics and DKIT, is an excellent example and has led to the establishment of a pilot 'Training Notes' accredited training course. In 2016, the two arts services will collaborate on an arts in education programme ('Born' a children's theatre piece by playwright Deirdre Kinahan) in commemoration of the events of 1916.

7.12 Rationale and Possible Impacts of Further Collaboration beyond the Existing Collaboration

7.12.1 Introduction

The above examples highlight a number of areas of effective and efficient collaboration which advise that further collaboration is not only possible, but very achievable. Such further collaboration would also assist towards the best application of resources.

Where required, collaboration on various services/projects takes place so that there is a joined-up approach on cross-county boundary issues, where Meath County Council has worked successfully with Louth County Council in this regard. As a result, it could be contended that local government service delivery, for the Area of Interest, as currently managed from County Hall, Navan is as effective as it would be if managed from County Hall, Dundalk.

In the context of collaboration, effective and efficient service delivery, and the best use of resources, it is important to note the shared services initiatives that have been implemented in recent years. Numerous local, regional and national examples of successful collaboration across the local authority sector include:

1. MyPay – shared service for payroll & superannuation – based in Laois County Council;
2. Waste Collection and Facility Permits – based in Westmeath and Offaly County Councils;
3. Regional Authorities/Assemblies for the purposes of regional planning requirements;
4. Employee Support Services shared service – based in Leitrim County Council;
5. Provision of operational Fire Services by one county in a neighbouring county by way of Section 85 agreement;
6. Various Finance and Procurement Management Systems;
7. Shared recruitment e.g. Meath, Kildare and Wicklow for Clerical Officer recruitment – facilitated by Meath County Council.

Aside from the examples above, there are numerous other areas where Meath County Council has worked in conjunction with neighbouring local authorities in Fingal, Kildare, Westmeath, Cavan and Monaghan. Good communication and collaboration between local authorities is essential particularly in the areas of transportation, water services, the environment, planning and fire/emergency services. Local authorities have always strongly relied on good working relationships in order to ensure that both day-to-day and long-term strategic development issues are delivered.

Shared services, and therefore the collaborative service delivery approach, across the local government sector is very much part of current service delivery. Meath and Louth County Councils have enjoyed a very good collaborative working relationship in relation to adjoining areas, and particularly in the South Louth/East Meath area.

Meath County Council is very familiar with the Area of Interest as it has been under the control of Meath County Council to date and the Council understands the needs, requirements, and values held by the residents and businesses of the area. Therefore continued delivery of local government services in this area by Meath County Council is essential with continued and further collaboration with Louth County Council in terms of service delivery as necessary going forward.

7.12.2 Towards a Model for South Drogheda

As has been demonstrated previously, there are, and have been for many years, fine examples of collaboration between the local authorities of Meath and Louth. These have varied between informal co-operation to more formal joint initiatives (in line with the model of cooperation illustrated earlier in Figure 7.1, p. 153). These will no doubt continue to exist and grow but the scope of this document is restricted to how such initiatives might develop in the future to further enhance the quality of life of the citizens in the greater Drogheda area. Some possibilities as to how this might develop include the use of contracts and service level agreements and the establishment of forums for knowledge sharing.

7.12.2.1 *A Framework for Collaboration – Welsh Local Government*

In 2012, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) published a briefing note (A Collaboration Toolkit),⁶³ which offers a simple guide for local authorities wishing to embark on collaboration and joint working. The guide aims to answer key questions related to collaborative activities:

1. What is the point of local authorities collaborating?
2. Who should we collaborate with?
3. How do we control collaborative arrangements?
4. How do we manage the performance of a collaboration?
5. How do we scrutinise collaborative activity?
6. How do we engage employees in collaboration?
7. How do we pay for collaboration?
8. How do we make it happen?

The guide identifies six main categories of collaboration, namely:

- An Informal Network;
- A Shared Appointment;
- A Contractual Arrangement;
- Delegation of Functions – Lead Authorities and Joint Committees;
- A Special Purpose Vehicle; and
- A Joint Venture.

As can be seen in the examples above, such as tourism, fire services and transportation, Meath and Louth counties have successfully implemented collaborations across various of these categories. What is possible now is to grow the collaborative activity on a service-by-service basis, seeking to implement the most appropriate model for the citizen or business problem to be solved. In moving forward, the aim would be to focus on the areas where collaboration would have the most beneficial outcomes.

7.13 Summary

In this section, we have demonstrated that Meath and Louth County Councils have a long history of successful collaboration in delivering services to meet the needs of the community. In the context of shared services, we see that collaboration growing in the future and at the end of this section we have offered a systematic model for future collaboration worthy of consideration and one that would obviate the need for any boundary realignment.

⁶³ <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/wlga-regional-boards-publications/a-collaboration-toolkit>.

8 Financial Matters

8.1 Introduction

Meath County Council can demonstrate that it has advanced and delivered significant capital investment in the Area of Interest with the long term view that commercial, residential and other economic activity would provide an economic return on this investment for the benefit of the Area of Interest in question and also the county at large.

Key income categories are analysed covering, commercial rates, local property tax (LPT) and development levies. In the event of any adverse boundary change to Meath, the loss of current and potential future income would have a material impact on the ability of Meath County Council to deliver investment and services to the county.

The financial overview in Section 2.7 shows that there have been significant improvements in Meath County Council's revenue account performance as outlined in the NOAC report published in 2015. At the same time, Meath has faced funding issues, which have meant that expenditure per capita has fallen below the national average. There has been a very rapid rise in the population of the county which has not been matched by corresponding economic investment but the Council have been working very hard to rectify this situation with demonstrable progress achieved, including in the Area of Interest, as shown in Section 5. The Council is committed to ensuring continuation of the positive achievements of recent years. It should be noted that the results of the household survey (summarised in Section 11) show that people in the Area of Interest are highly satisfied with their quality of life and with the services received from Meath County Council.

8.2 Expenditure

For the purposes of this review a detailed examination of all historical financial information on Meath County Council's financial management system up to Nov 2015 was undertaken.

Meath County Council has invested €20.6m directly in projects in the townlands that fall within the Area of Interest (Mornington, Sheephouse, Rathmullen, Bryanstown, Colpe, Pilltown, Donnycarney, Kiltrough, Lagavooren, Stagrennan, Beymore, Painestown).

€6m has been spent in social and affordable housing, €9m in regional and local road improvements, surface dressing, footpaths and safety measures, €5.6m in water infrastructure and drainage and flood relief initiatives.

Table 8.1: Meath County Council Expenditure within the Area of Interest

Service	Area of Interest
Roads	€8,871,157
Housing	€5,861,209
Water & Sewerage	€5,456,545
Environment	€418,736
Development	€57,844
Grand Total	€20,665,490

Source: Meath County Council

Furthermore, Meath County Council has made substantial investment in the Drogheda environs in County Meath which although relates to projects just outside the Area of Interest, has been directly and substantially beneficial to the residents and businesses within the Area of Interest.

Table 8.2 below provides details by service division of the expenditure both revenue and capital incurred by Meath County Council in the Area of Interest and in the Drogheda environs. This investment is significant relative to the overall expenditure in the County as a whole (15.25%).

The investment has been funded from Meath County Council's revenue budget resources, development contributions and grants from various state agencies.

Table 8.2: Meath County Council Revenue and Capital Expenditure within Area of Interest

Service	Area of Interest	Drogheda Environs	TOTAL	M.C.C Cumulative Exp
Housing	€5,456,545	€35,423,617	€40,880,161	€746,323,489
Transport*	€418,736	€523,938,654	€524,357,390	€1,489,627,507
Water & Sewerage	€57,844	€31,393,157	€31,451,001	€664,333,015
Development	€8,871,157	€1,617,995	€10,489,152	€438,290,327
Environment	€5,861,209	€5,535,557	€11,396,766	€195,845,695
Recreation/ Amenity		€4,669,438	€4,669,438	€165,266,732
Misc		€2,008,008	€2,008,008	€400,114,150
	€20,665,490	€604,586,426	€625,251,916	€4,099,800,916
% of Overall Exp	0.50%	14.75%	15.25%	100.00%

Source: Meath County Council

*Note: *The above investments include the expenditure relating to the Drogheda Bypass project and associated works.*

Meath County Council has advanced and delivered significant capital investment for the benefit of the Area of Interest with the long term view that residential, commercial and other economic activity would provide some return on this investment.

8.2.1 Revenue Budgets and Service Delivery

Local government service delivery has become more streamlined and efficient in recent years. As set out in Section 7, Putting People First (2012) provided for the reorganisation of the administrative and governance structures, with a more centrally based service delivery mechanism now place. In order to avoid difficulties in making comparisons from year to year, the Council has set out below the revenue budgets by service division for 2015 and 2016 for effective comparisons with new structures.

Table 8.3 shows the 2015 and 2016 budgets for Meath County Council by service division.

Table 8.3: Meath County Council budgets for 2015 and 2016		
Budget by Service Division	2016 Budget MCC	2015 Budget MCC
Housing	€18,394,459	€15,428,110
Transport	€30,778,005	€29,588,095
Water & Sewerage	€9,110,210	€9,898,945
Development	€8,981,106	€8,572,124
Environment	€12,577,232	€11,836,715
Recreation/ Amenity	€7,165,071	€6,744,326
Misc	€13,933,279	€15,790,681
TOTAL	€100,939,362	€97,858,996
<i>Source: Meath County Council</i>		

Most of the Council's services are delivered centrally which accounts for 70% of revenue budget on an annual basis. The remaining 30% of expenditure refers to the operational activities within the individual Municipal Districts as outlined in the Schedule of Municipal District works (Table 8.4).

Table 8.4: Schedule of Municipal District Works				
MCC Budget M.D/ Central	2016 Budget	%	2015 Budget	%
Municipal Districts	€30,733,000	30%	€27,381,829	28%
Central	€70,206,361	70%	€70,477,168	72%
TOTAL	€100,939,361	100%	€97,858,997	100%
<i>Source: Meath County Council</i>				

8.2.1.1 Revenue Budgets

The budgets for 2015 and 2016 are split out showing details of expenditure under the headings of pay, operational, administration and establishment cost as outlined in Table 8.5 below.

Table 8.5: Analysis of Expenditure				
Expenditure	Budget 2016	Budget 2016	Budget 2015	Budget 2015
	€	%	€	%
Payroll	41,972,462	42%	41,811,121	43%
Operational Expenses	39,666,539	39%	36,995,995	38%
Administration & Establishment Expenses	19,300,360	19%	19,051,881	19%
Overall	€100,939,361	100%	€97,858,997	100%

Source: Budget Meath County Council 2015 & 2016, (detailed analysis available)

Given that Meath County Council has developed an efficient and predominantly centrally delivered service structure there will be no discernible savings should there be any adverse alteration to the Boundary.

As discussed earlier in Section 2.7, it was outlined that 2015 expenditure per capita was 61% of the national average having fallen from 67% of the national average in 2002. Meath County Council identified this funding shortfall and made funding submissions to the Department of Environment in 2005, 2006 and 2015. Having analysed the sources of income, it is apparent that government grants to Louth County Council are 71% higher than government grants to Meath County Council. If the same funding model as currently operates in Louth County Council were extended to the Area of Interest, it would require additional exchequer funding of €1.4 million.

Payroll accounts for 42% of the operating revenue budget of Meath County Council. At the end of 2013 there were 612 staff in Meath County Council and 635 in Louth County Council (expressed as whole time equivalent). Meath has the lowest level of staff per head of population, with 3.3 staff per 1000 of population compared to Louth's 5.17 and a national average of 5.8. In view of this, it would not be possible to release any staff from Meath County Council to Louth County Council in the event of any adverse boundary change. See table 8.2.5 overleaf.

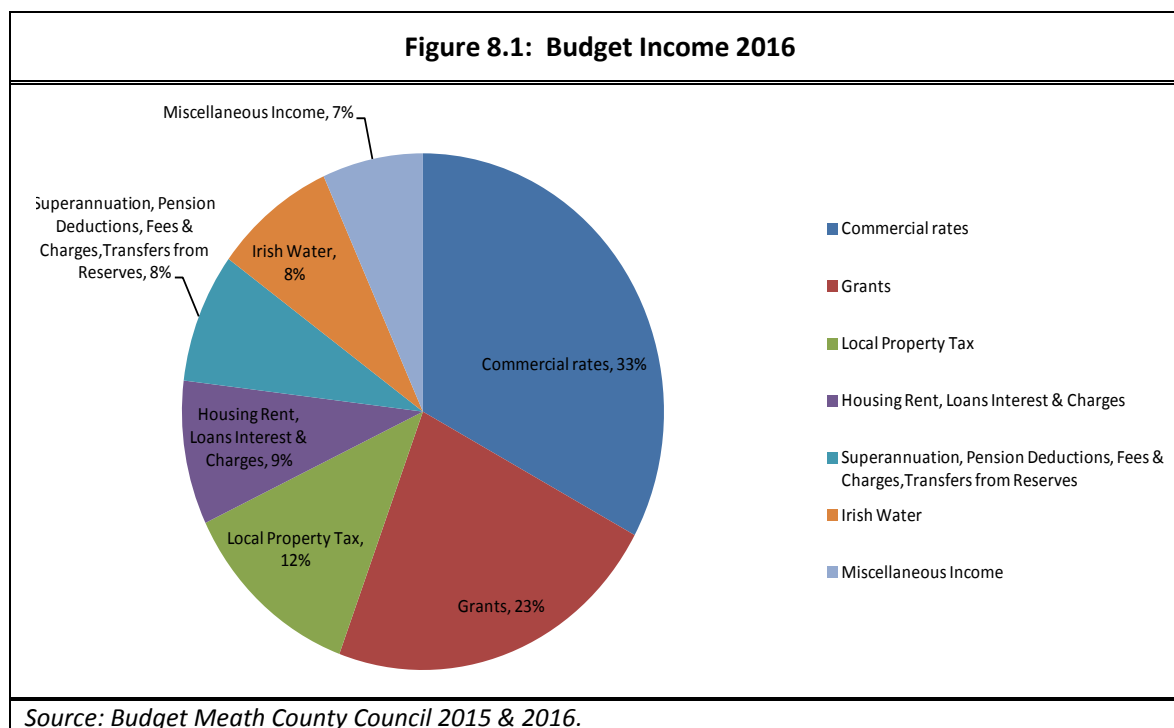
Table 8.6: Whole Time Equivalent Staff

LOCAL AUTHORITY	December 2013 Wte	Staff per 1000 of population
Leitrim	258.98	8.14
Kerry	1,101.61	7.57
Longford	289.8	7.43
Mayo	963.73	7.38
Dublin	8,960.77	7.04
Waterford	781.64	6.87
Sligo	429.28	6.56
Tipp South	576.53	6.52
Roscommon	414.59	6.47
Clare	749.88	6.4
Tipp North	447.85	6.37
Cork	3,267.89	6.30
Monaghan	369.83	6.11
Donegal	873.31	5.42
Limerick	1,035.89	5.40
Wicklow	709.65	5.19
Kilkenny	494.02	5.18
Louth	634.98	5.17
Cavan	370.1	5.06
Westmeath	431.59	5.01
Offaly	379.7	4.95
Wexford	715.65	4.92
Carlow	265.37	4.86
Galway	1,165.88	4.65
Laois	341.93	4.24
Kildare	815.4	3.88
Meath	611.56	3.32
National Average	1,016.94	5.79

Source: Quarterly Staffing Return DoECLG

8.3 Income

The chart for revenue budgeted income in 2016 below highlights that two of the most significant sources of income for Meath County Council are Commercial Rates and Local Property Tax. These income sources allow for the full discretion of the Council in the type of services and facilities that can be provided.



8.3.1 Commercial rates

The 2016 budget for Meath County Council includes €33,251,874 for Commercial Rates. This is the single largest source of income for the county and represents 33% of the total revenue budget.

The Area of Interest contributes considerably to the commercial rates Income. The rate customers in the Area of Interest are high end contributors with average rates income of €19,848, which is 2.6 times the county average. These customers account for 1.27% of rated properties in the county but equate to 3.35% of the commercial rate income. Table 8.7 below gives an overview of commercial rates in the Area of Interest and the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District.

Table 8.7: Area of Interest Commercial Rates Overview		
Area of Interest	Commercial Rates	No of Rated Properties
Boundary Review Area of Interest	1,111,486	56
Remaining Laytown - Bettystown MD	3,704,490	496
Total Laytown - Bettystown MD	4,815,976	552

Source: Meath County Council Analysis

The Area of Interest also has a higher than average collection rate when compared with the county as a whole, 89% as opposed to 81% as outlined in Table 8.8 below.

Table 8.8: Collection Rate Percentage		
Boundary Review Area	Invoices	Collection Rate
Meath County Council	33,251,874	81.00%
Boundary Review Area of Interest	1,111,486	89.00%
<i>Source: Meath County Council Analysis</i>		

8.3.1.1 Future Position

The commercial rates income potential from the 120 hectares of available lands zoned for employment purposes in the Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda 2009-2015 is very difficult to predict but there is no doubt that the area of zoned lands has huge potential to develop due to the FDI and large indigenous industries in the area. For example, the FDI employment equates to circa 40% of all FDI employment in the county.

8.3.2 Local Property Tax (LPT)

Local property tax (LPT) was introduced in 2013 through the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012. It is the third highest income source for Meath County Council and will represent 12.3% of the total budgeted income for Meath County Council in 2016.

Recognising the need for the continued and improved level of investment within the county the Councillors thought fit and agreed not to reduce the rate of LPT for 2015 and again for 2016. The Councillors accepted the recommendations of the executive that any reduction in the rate of LPT would impact negatively on the service delivery plans of Meath County Council.

On the other hand, Louth County Council reduced their LPT rate by 1.5% in 2015 and again by 1.5% in 2016. The total cost to the exchequer of this reduction was in excess of €271,000.

The Area of Interest contains 1,982 residential properties yielding approximately €624,000, which represents circa 4% of the total LPT liability in the county. It should be noted that the Area of Interest has live planning permissions granted for 1132 residential units.

Table 8.9 overleaf shows the estimated impact of the loss of LPT on Meath County Council's financial position.

Table 8.9: Local Property Tax and its Implications for Meath County Council

	LPT Meath County Council 2016	Laytown /Bettystown MD	Area of Interest	% of Total
LPT Total	17,577,679	3,025,212	624,330	4%
LPT Collection	17,050,349	2,934,455	605,600	4%
80% RETENTION MCC	13,640,279	2,347,564	484,480	4%
No of Households	66,100	11,728	1,982	3%
Average LPT per House	258	258	315	

Source: 2016 LPT allocation Meath County Council (Circular Fin 7/2015)

8.3.3 Development Levies

Development Levy income is a vital source of Capital funding for any Local Authority including Meath County Council, thus enabling investment in infrastructural and amenity facilities throughout the county.

The loss of future potential income within the Area of Interest would have a very detrimental impact on Meath County Council's ability to deliver its current and future Capital investment programmes. The Council has entered into significant commitments which depend on the levies collected in the Area of Interest. One example of this is the R150 Strategic Regional Road. This project had a total outturn cost of €26.6 million and is funded partly by government grants of €12.7 million and the balance of €13.9 million to be funded from development levies.

The viability of current and future capital projects in Meath is reliant upon the collection of development levies from all Municipal Districts within the county.

8.4 Other Relevant Financial Measures

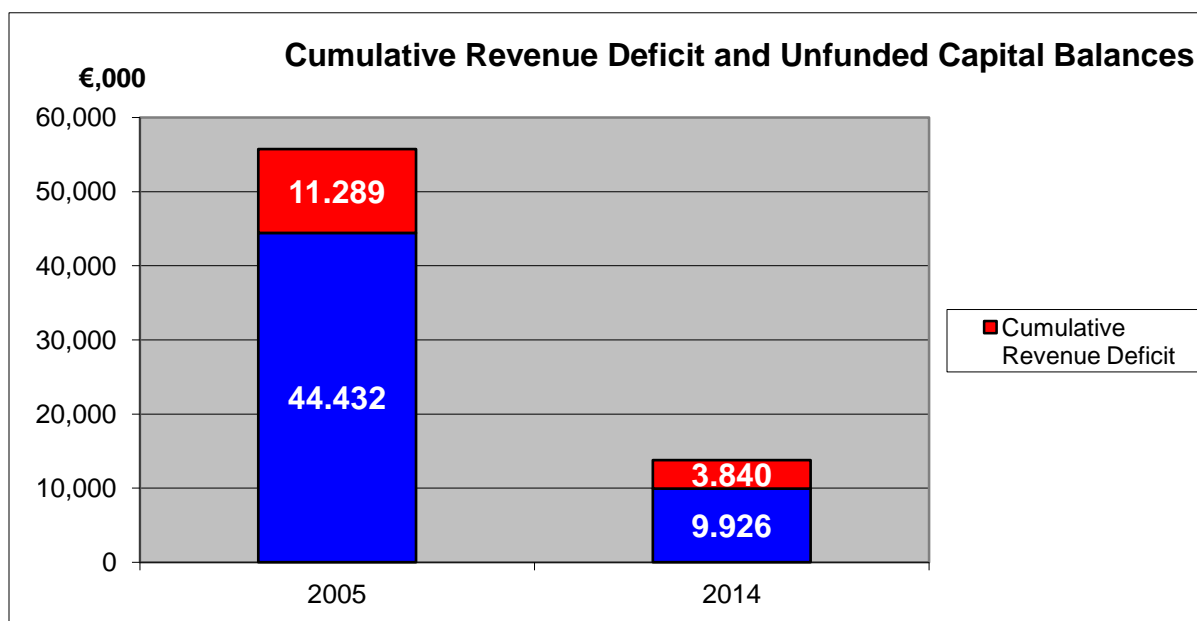
Meath County Council historically had a low central funding base and this was exasperated by the significant growth in population that the county experienced. From 1996 to 2011, Meath's population grew by 67.8% which was the largest growth rate in the state. The funding model for local authorities did not compensate the county for this significant growth. Meath County Council has operated and continues to operate at a significant funding disadvantage to all other counties and as mentioned earlier, government grants to Louth County Council are currently 71% higher than government grants to Meath County Council.

8.4.1 Meath's Strategy for Financial Recovery

The financial investment in the Area of Interest is integral to delivering the economic development strategy for Meath County Council and continuing the financial stability of the Council.

Servicing the demands of the increased population growth in the county created unprecedented pressure on resources and in particular the financial resources of Meath County Council. By the end of 2005, this resulted in a cumulative revenue account loss of €11.289 million and an unfunded capital balance of €44.432 million. Meath County Council had to develop comprehensive strategies to reduce this combined funding deficit totalling €55.721 million.

Figure 8.2: Cumulative Revenue Deficit and Unfunded Capital Balances



Source: Meath County Council.

Note: Cumulative figures relate to the most recently available audited accounts.

Against a background of very challenging economic conditions, Meath County Council embarked on an extensive programme of rationalisation, reorganisation, cost reduction, income maximisation and asset utilisation. This strategy also included a progressive drive to grow the economic and rate base of the county. The delivery of such a comprehensive organisational change program has resulted in a reduction of over €42 million in the deficit facing the Council.

The National Oversight and Audit Committee (NOAC) indicators in Table 8.10, overleaf, show that after Dublin City, Meath County Council has recorded the largest cumulative revenue surplus of any local authority in the Country.

Table 8.10: Movement in Revenue Account Balances 2010 to 2014

Authority	Revenue Balance 2010 (€)	Revenue Balance 2011 (€)	Revenue Balance 2012 (€)	Revenue Balance 2013 (€)	Revenue Balance 2014 (€)	Change 2010 v 2014
Dublin City	15,384,124	20,113,211	16,186,509	16,576,645	28,354,582	12,970,458
Meath County	-8,328,417	-7,149,012	-7,385,723	-4,544,412	-3,837,962	4,490,455
Kildare County	-3,833,735	-2,585,424	-2,251,727	-1,815,805	-1,445,710	2,388,025
Kerry County	4,659,570	5,418,545	5,847,957	6,093,078	6,184,008	1,524,438
Westmeath County	-1,219,398	-1,039,857	-982,392	-951,062	27,702	1,247,100
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	9,109,484	9,550,465	9,601,934	9,648,543	9,699,927	590,443
Carlow County	-16,164	81,605	54,410	100,223	366,510	382,674
Cork City	400,584	458,945	549,743	734,369	772,919	372,335
Galway City	-67,743	44,603	61,283	192,170	254,693	322,436
Laois County	-519,500	-499,962	-494,535	-493,027	-393,286	126,214
Roscommon County	72,909	99,816	110,589	149,312	166,812	93,903
Kilkenny County	-104,307	-600,931	-155,280	-138,666	-68,390	35,917
Clare County	-834,554	-1,031,196	-1,390,003	-1,411,673	-800,990	33,564
Limerick City & County	594,107	112,544	-22,982	573,822	597,517	3,410
South Dublin County	12,083,109	12,093,400	12,095,145	10,729,452	12,051,637	-31,472
Tipperary County	5,641,981	5,579,540	5,676,314	5,503,094	5,545,536	-96,445
Cavan County	1,915,467	1,916,065	1,917,053	1,742,633	1,742,757	-172,710
Longford County	265,311	-172,844	-107,413	-109,957	-34,755	-300,066
Galway County	-1,372,635	-1,390,913	-1,884,518	-1,898,994	-1,891,838	-519,203
Waterford City & County	-7,571,170	-7,508,460	-8,484,387	-8,886,424	-8,567,745	-996,575
Leitrim County	-123,121	-117,645	-1,479,205	-1,579,451	-1,426,331	-1,303,210
Monaghan County	-1,220,210	-943,259	-1,485,128	-3,309,389	-2,879,914	-1,659,704
Fingal County	17,650,810	17,673,622	17,476,011	15,947,275	15,967,583	-1,683,227
Wexford County	-7,668,596	-7,552,979	-8,563,365	-10,267,403	-9,873,539	-2,204,943
Offaly County	-2,463,992	-4,609,616	-5,782,975	-5,293,325	-4,731,779	-2,267,787
Wicklow County	-1,143,247	-1,420,281	-1,393,802	-4,084,330	-3,783,860	-2,640,613
Mayo County	-1,975,407	-1,699,872	-2,524,603	-5,394,107	-5,059,930	-3,084,523
Donegal County	-11,616,173	-10,660,644	-15,581,989	-15,752,132	-14,966,588	-3,350,415
Cork County	20,564,757	21,014,047	16,278,256	11,277,149	10,601,829	-9,962,928
Louth County	7,459,608	7,228,037	4,052,228	1,442,529	-2,607,460	-10,067,068
Sligo County	-11,433,513	-14,790,779	-17,512,053	-26,027,015	-26,602,276	-15,168,763

Source: NOAC Indicators.

8.5 Summary

Meath County Council has demonstrated that it has advanced and delivered significant capital investment for the benefit of the Area of Interest and the county generally, with the long term view that residential, commercial and other economic activity would provide an economic return on this investment.

The Council's revenue account expenditure shows that Meath County Council has developed an efficient and predominantly centrally delivered service structure and in this context the Council consider that there will **be no discernible savings should there be any adverse change to the Boundary.**

As shown above, the key income categories have been analysed including commercial rates, local property tax and development levies. Any loss of current and potential future income would have a material impact on the ability of Meath County Council to deliver services and future investment in the county. Government grants to Louth County Council are currently 71% higher than similar grants to Meath County Council. If the same funding model as currently operates in Louth County Council applies, additional exchequer funding would be required.

The financial overview in section 8.4.1 showed that there have been significant improvements in Meath County Council's revenue account performance as outlined in the NOAC report 2015. The potential financial implications which would materialise if the boundary extension were to go ahead would affect the financial stability of Meath County Council and the economic recovery of the county.

9 Governance and Accountability

9.1 Introduction

Launched in 2012, Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government outlined government policy for the reform and development of the local government system in Ireland. The Action Programme provided that municipal districts would form a new tier of local governance at sub-county level, with each county council to comprise a number of municipal districts.

Subsequently, the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013 made recommendations for the boundaries and number of elected members per local electoral area within each county, with municipal districts to be based on those newly defined local electoral areas. Among the terms of reference for the Boundary Committee's work was the requirement to reduce the number of local government seats nationally to not more than 950. The total number finally reached in the report's recommendations was 949.

9.2 Formula for the Number of Elected Members per Local Authority

The formula applied by the Boundary Committee in 2013 complied with their terms of reference, namely:

The terms of reference provide that subject to a minimum total of 18 and a maximum total of 40 members of every other council –

- *there should be one member for every 4,830 population in each council area;*
- *in addition, and subject to a maximum of four additional members per council except where Councils are merging:*
 - *in counties where there are existing town councils there should be four additional members per Borough Council and one additional member per Town Council, and*
 - *in cases where the city and county councils are being merged, i.e. Limerick and Waterford, there should be five additional members.*

In defining the make-up of each local electoral area, the terms of reference also stated that “within any city or county the variance in representation of each local electoral area from the average for the city or county should, as far as practicable, be within a range of +/- 10%”.

It is worth noting that specific clarification was sought by the 2013 Boundary Committee with regard to the electoral boundaries to apply in the Drogheda area.

3.9 Clarification provided to the Committee on county boundaries

In the course of its work, clarification was provided to the Committee by the Minister on a point regarding the electoral boundaries that are to apply in respect of counties Carlow, Laois, Louth and Meath.

The Local Government (Boundaries) (Town Elections) Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 114/1994) altered the boundaries of Drogheda and Carlow towns for the purposes of local elections. Paragraph 5(a) of this statutory instrument altered the boundary of Drogheda town to include part of the electoral division of St. Mary's (Meath) in county Louth for electoral purposes. Paragraph 5(b) altered the boundary of Carlow Town to include part of the electoral division of Graigue Rural (Laois) in county Carlow for electoral purposes.

The Minister advised the Committee, as follows, that the county boundaries should be used in making recommendations on the local electoral areas for these counties:

"I am writing to you as Chairman of the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee and further to the establishment order and terms of reference dated 15 November 2012. I wish to clarify the position on the Local Government (Boundaries) (Town Elections) Regulations 1994 – S.I. No. 114/1994 which altered the boundaries of Drogheda and Carlow towns for the purposes of local elections. Previous Committees had regard to these regulations in making their recommendations. However, having regard to the Action Programme for Effective Local Government and in particular the Government decision to integrate town and county governance, I would ask your committee not to have regard to the boundary changes for electoral purposes provided for in S.I. No. 114 of 1994 (made under section 17 of the Local Government Act 1994) and to have regard to the county boundaries concerned when making recommendations for counties Carlow, Laois, Louth and Meath."

The Committee's recommendations have regard to this position and are therefore based on the county boundaries in these counties.

9.3 Political Representation of the Area of Interest

9.3.1 Current Situation

Applying the formula and guidelines laid out in their terms of reference, the 2013 Boundary Committee made the following recommendations in respect of Meath and Louth.

9.3.1.1 Meath

Table 9.1 below explains the total number of elected members in Meath, following the Boundary Committee's recommendations.

Table 9.1: Meath County Council Current Overview of Elected Member	
Elected Members Calculations	
Meath Population	184,135
1 Member per 4,830	38
Plus 1 for each former Town Council	3
Number of Members (Max = 40)	40
Population per Member	4,603
<i>Source: Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013.</i>	

It can be seen that based on the 2011 Census population of Meath the number of elected members is set at the maximum of 40. In terms of overall representation in the county, this provides for one elected member per 4,603 persons.

The Boundary Committee then recommended the configuration of local electoral areas/municipal district as outlined in Table 9.2 overleaf.

Table 9.2: Current Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal districts – Meath				
Local Electoral Areas / Municipal Districts	Number of Members	Population 2011	Population Per Member	Variance from County Average
Ashbourne	6	27,164	4,527	-1.7%
Ratoath	7	31,894	4,556	-1.0%
Kells	7	31,534	4,505	-2.1%
Navan	7	32,934	4,705	2.2%
Laytown-Bettystown	7	31,557	4,508	-2.1%
Trim	6	29,052	4,842	5.2%
Total	40	184,135		

Source: Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013

It can be seen that the representation per elected member across the local electoral areas is relatively evenly distributed, well within the intended maximum deviation of plus or minus 10% from the county average.

9.3.1.2 Louth

The total number of elected members in Louth, following the 2013 Boundary Committee's recommendations is outlined in Table 9.3 below.

Table 9.3: Louth County Council Current Overview of Elected Member	
Elected Members Calculations	
Louth Population	122,897
1 Member per 4,830	25
Plus 1 for each former Town Council and 4 for each former Borough Council, maximum 4	4
Number of Members (Max = 40)	29
Population per Member	4,238

Source: Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013.

It can be seen that based on the 2011 Census population of Louth the number of elected members is set at 29. In terms of overall representation in the county, this provides for one elected member per 4,238 persons.

The Boundary Committee then recommended the following configuration of local electoral areas, and further recommended that the two Dundalk local electoral areas should form one municipal district.

Table 9.4: Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal Districts – Louth

Local Electoral Areas	Number of Members	Population 2011	Population Per Member	Variance from County Average
Ardee	6	27,890	4,648	9.7%
Drogheda	10	41,925	4,193	-1.1%
Dundalk Carlingford	6	24,589	4,098	-3.3%
Dundalk South	7	28,493	4,070	-4.0%
Total	29	122,897		

Source: Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013.

It can be seen, in Table 9.4 above, that the representation per elected member across the local electoral areas is within the intended maximum deviation of plus or minus 10% from the county average. A 10-member local electoral area was recommended for Drogheda. This is the maximum number of councillors that can be assigned to a single electoral area.

9.3.2 Implications of Boundary Amendment

The population of the Area of Interest is estimated at circa 6,000 persons. In the event of a boundary change, the population of Co. Meath would reduce from 184,135 to 178,135. However, the total number of elected members in the county would remain at 40. When the population of Co. Louth is amended by the same figure, the population would increase from 122,897 to 128,897. This would result in an increase in the total number of elected members for the county to 31 from 29. Thus, there would be a net increase of two elected members across the two counties, increasing the number nationally to 951, above the 2013 Boundary Committee's terms of reference maximum of 950.

At the local electoral area level, the implications are more pronounced. In Meath, the reduction in population in the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District, and the change in the overall average number of persons per elected member would result in a variance of -18%. This is well outside the intended maximum variance of plus/minus 10%. In Louth, the number of members in the Drogheda area would reach 12, which is above the maximum of 10 per local electoral area. In addition, Ardee's representation would vary from the county average by 11.8%, again outside the intended maximum of plus/minus 10%.

It would appear that in both counties a consequence of this change would be a wider re-apportionment of elected members across local electoral areas and potential redrawing of internal local electoral area boundaries, coming less than two years after the implementation of the Putting People First changes in 2014.

9.3.2.1 Meath

Table 9.5 overleaf explains the total number of elected members in Meath, based on a reduction in population of 6,000 persons.

Table 9.5: Potential Meath Elected Members – Population Reduction

Number of Elected Members (Proposed)	
Meath Population (reduction of 6,000)	178,135
1 Member per 4,830	37
Plus 1 for each former Town Council	3
Number of Members (Max = 40)	40
Population per Member	4,453

Source: Meath County Council.

The total number of elected members would remain at 40, while the average representation for the county would be 4,453.

Applying the change to the existing configuration of local electoral areas would result in representation as tabulated below.

Table 9.6: Potential Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal Districts within Meath

Local Electoral Areas	Number of Members	Population After Change	Population Per Member	Variance from County Average
Ashbourne	6	27,164	4527	1.7%
Ratoath	7	31,894	4556	2.3%
Kells	7	31,534	4505	1.2%
Navan	7	32,934	4705	5.6%
Laytown-Bettystown	7	25,557	3651	-18.0%
Trim	6	29,052	4842	8.7%
Total	40	178,135		

Source: Meath County Council.

It can be seen that the representation level in the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District would be well outside the intended variance from the county average, most likely resulting in re-apportionment of elected members across local electoral areas and potential redrawing of internal local electoral area boundaries.

9.3.2.2 Louth

Table 9.7 overleaf explains the total number of elected members in Louth, based on an increase in population of 6,000 persons.

Table 9.7: Potential Louth Elected Members – Population Increase

Number of Elected Members (Proposed)	
Louth Population (increase of 6,000)	128,897
1 Member per 4,830	27
Plus 1 for each former Town Council and 4 for each former Borough Council, maximum 4	4
Number of Members (Max = 40)	31
Population per Member	4,158

Source: Meath County Council.

The total number of elected members would increase to 31, while the average representation for the county would be 4,158.

Applying the change to the existing configuration of local electoral areas would result in representation as listed in Table 9.8 below.

Table 9.8: Potential Configuration of Local Electoral Areas/Municipal Districts within Louth

Local Electoral Areas	Number of Members	Population After Change	Population Per Member	Variance from County Average
Ardee	6	27,890	4,648	11.8%
Drogheda	12	47,925	3,994	-3.9%
Dundalk Carlingford	6	24,589	4,098	-1.4%
Dundalk South	7	28,493	4,070	-2.1%
Total	31	128,897		

Source: Meath County Council.

As the number of elected members (12) in Drogheda would exceed the maximum of 10 per local electoral area, and as the representation in Ardee would vary from the county average by 11.8%, it can be seen that a re-drawing of local electoral area boundaries and re-apportionment of elected members across local electoral areas would be necessary as a consequence of any boundary change in Drogheda.

9.4 Summary

The current governance and political representation structures were put in place as recently as 2014 following the 2012 Putting People First – Action Programme and the 2013 Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Reports.

A shift in population estimated in the region of 6,000 within the Area of Interest has been shown to necessitate wider changes to local electoral area configuration in Meath and Louth, as well as increasing the total number of elected members nationally by +2, pushing the national total above the 2013 Boundary Committee terms of reference maximum of 950.

As can be seen by reference to the new survey results in Section 11 of this Submission, there is no evidence that the impacts described above are warranted with regard to local satisfaction with existing governance arrangements.

10 Community Interest

10.1 Introduction

Drogheda and the East Meath area currently benefit from a well developed physical and economic infrastructure with excellent prospects for growth into the future. The area also benefits from a well developed social and community infrastructure, which is closely linked to the social connectivity inherent to a large town with well developed environs. Residents in the greater Drogheda area benefit from facilities on both sides of the county boundary. A key factor in people's satisfaction with their quality of life is the availability of a large range of community supports, groups, clubs and societies in the town. In this regard, a high level of satisfaction was indicated in the survey carried out by B&A to inform this Submission. Meath County Council has also been successful in securing community gain from infrastructural development by means of private sector funded grant schemes, which benefit clubs and societies in the Laytown Bettystown Municipal District. The former Greenstar Knockharley and more recently the Indaver Carranstown Community Grant Schemes have contributed €1.7m to community organisations in East Meath. The Indaver Grant Scheme, which has disbursed €0.64m to date, benefits sporting and other organisations in close proximity to the Area of Interest. The residents of the Area of Interest would no longer benefit from this valuable community resource if the proposed boundary change takes place.

Under the new local government arrangements, Meath County Council through the Local Community Development Committee will be responsible for the disbursement of funds under the Leader Programme which will also benefit residents of the Municipal District.

Meath County Council continues to be very accommodating to clubs and businesses alike in the Drogheda Environs. For example, Meath County Council assisted Drogheda Town FC to expand in Meath when no land was available in Louth. When, during 2015, the Dawn Paper Company was forced to relocate due to a fire, the Council's Economic Department was able to facilitate the emergency relocation of the Company.

Outlined below are details of the extensive range of community organisations active in the Area of Interest and East Meath (Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District).

10.2 Inventory of Clubs and Societies

10.2.1 Meath Local Sports Partnership

Meath Local Sports Partnership (Meath LSP) was established in 2002 by the Irish Sports Council to plan, lead and coordinate the development of sport and physical activity in County Meath.

The Meath LSP uses the definition of sport established by the Council of Europe which encompasses "all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels."

Meath LSP provides a leadership role for the co-ordination, development and delivery of sport and physical activity opportunities in County Meath within the framework of its strategic plan and the resources available. The work of the organisation includes the provision of information on sport and physical activity, the facilitation of education and training opportunities and supporting the development and implementation of programmes and events that encourage greater participation.

Meath LSP works with and supports the work of the staff and volunteers of its partners and stakeholders in promoting participation in sport and physical activity. It is supported in this role by Meath County Council along with national agencies, statutory bodies, sporting organisations and community and voluntary organisations.

Table 10.1 outlines a listing of well over 50 local clubs in the Meath LSP occurring in the Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District.

Table 10.1: Meath Local Sports Partnership Clubs-Laytown/Bettystwn MD	
Name of Club	Sport/Activity
Slane Active Retirement	Active Retirement Club
Duleek Bellewstown Active Retirement	Active Retirement Club
East Meath Active Retirement	Active Retirement Club
Tir na nOg Active Retirement	Active Retirement Club
Duleek Anglers	Angling Clubs
Rossin, Slane & District Anglers	Angling Clubs
Drogheda & District Anglers Club	Angling Clubs
Gormanston & District Angling Club	Angling Clubs
Star of The Sea AC	Athletics Clubs
Duleek & District AC	Athletics Clubs
Cilles Athletics Club	Athletics Clubs
Boyne Juv. Badminton Club	Badminton Clubs
Stamullen Badminton Club	Badminton Clubs
Julianstown Badminton Club	Badminton Clubs
Boyne Badminton Club	Badminton Clubs
East Coast Cavaliers Basketball	Basketball Clubs
St. Mary's Baton Twirlers	Baton Twirling Clubs
Phoenix Baton Twirlers	Baton Twirling Clubs
Stamullen Bowls Club	Bowling Clubs
Silver Bridge Kayak Club	Canoe and Kayak Clubs
Duleek Community Games	Community Games Clubs
Stamullen Community Games	Community Games Clubs
Slane Community Games	Community Games Clubs
Stamullen Road Club	Cycling Clubs
Adventure Diving	Diving Sub Aqua Clubs
Castlehill Equestrian Centre	Equestrian Clubs/Centres
St. Mary's Juv. GAA	GAA Clubs - Juvenile
St. Colmcille's Juv. GAA	GAA Clubs - Juvenile
St. Colmcilles Ladies GAA	GAA Clubs - Ladies
Duleek - Bellewstown Ladies GAA	GAA Clubs - Ladies
St. Mary's GAA	GAA Clubs - Mens
Slane GAA	GAA Clubs - Mens

St. Colmcilles GAA	GAA Clubs - Mens
Duleek Brownies (Plum Tree Park)	Girl Guides
Julianstown Golf Course	Golf Clubs
Laytown/Bettystown Golf Club	Golf Clubs
Bellewstown Golf Club	Golf Clubs
Laytown/Bettystown Ladies Golf Club	Ladies Golf
Laytown Taekwondo Club	Martial Arts Clubs
Julianstown Golf and Pitch & Putt	Pitch Putt Club
Laytown Pitch & Putt	Pitch Putt Club
Bellewstown Pitch & Putt	Pitch Putt Club
Bellewstown Racecourse	Racecourses
Boyne Rugby Club	Rugby Clubs
East Coast Sand-yachting	Sand-yachting Clubs
Laytown United FC	Soccer Clubs
Rossin Rovers FC	Soccer Clubs
East Meath Utd. FC	Soccer Clubs
Duleek Schoolboys and Girls FC	Soccer Clubs
Duleek FC	Soccer Clubs
Mosney Utd FC	Soccer Clubs
Donacarney FC	Soccer Clubs
Slane Wanderers FC	Soccer Clubs
Stamullen Soccer Academy	Soccer Clubs
Donore Rovers FC	Soccer Clubs
Laytown & Bettystown Tennis Club	Tennis Clubs
Julianstown Foroige Club	Youth Clubs
Bellewstown Foroige Club	Youth Clubs
Laytown Foroige Club	Youth Clubs
<i>Source: Meath Local Sports Partnership</i>	

10.2.2 Louth Local Sports Partnership

Similarly, on the Louth side of Drogheda are a large and varied number of clubs under the remit of Louth LSP, as outlined in Table 10.2 overleaf.

Table 10.2: Louth Local Sports Partnership Clubs-Drogheda

Name of Club	Sport/Activity
Drogheda & District Anglers	Angling
Drogheda Coarse Anglers Club	Angling
Boyne A.C.	Athletics
Drogheda & District A.C	Athletics
Lourdes A.C.	Athletics
Drogheda Dockers Australian Rules Football Club	Australian Rules
Boyne Badminton	Badminton
O'Raghallaighs Badminton	Badminton
Bullets	Basketball
Drogheda Ladies Basketball Club	Basketball
Drogheda Amateur Boxing	Boxing
Holy Family Boxing	Boxing
Mill Hill CPS Club	Clay Pigeon / Target Shooting
Drogheda North Community Games	Community Games
Drogheda South Community Games	Community Games
Tullyallen/Monasterboice Community Games	Community Games
Drogheda Wheelers Cycling Club	Cycling
Drogheda Sub Aqua Club	Diving
Boyneside Riding Club	Equestrian
Boyne Rovers F.C.	Football
Drogheda Boys F.C	Football
Drogheda Town FC	Football
Drogheda United	Football
Drogheda United Ladies Soccer	Football
Money more FC	Football
Walshestown J.F.C	Football
Glen Emmets G.F.C	GAA Football
Hunterstown Rovers G.F.C	GAA Football
Newtown Blues G.F.C.	GAA Football
O' Raghallaigh's G.F.C.	GAA Football
Oliver Plunketts G.F.C.	GAA Football
St. Nicholas G.F.C.	GAA Football
Wolfe Tones G.F.C.	GAA Football
Irish Girl Guides Drogheda	Girl Guides
County Louth Golf Club	Golf
Seapoint Golf Club	Golf
O' Raghallaigh G.F.C.	Handball
Ferrard Ramblers	Hill Walking
Tredagh Trekkers	Hill Walking

Boyne Indoor Bowling Club	Indoor Bowls
Greenfield Indoor Bowls	Indoor Bowls
Greenhills Indoor Bowls	Indoor Bowls
St Josephs Indoor Bowls Club	Indoor Bowls
Silverbridge K.C.	Kayaking
Boyne Valley Taekwan-Do School	Martial Arts
Drogheda School Of Karate	Martial Arts
Drogheda Tdk School	Martial Arts
Family Martial Arts Academy	Martial Arts
Genbukan Ninpo Drogheda Dojo	Martial Arts
North East Motor Sports	Motor Sports
Cement Pitch and Putt	Pitch & Putt
Morgans Pitch and Putt	Pitch & Putt
Drogheda and District Road Bowls	Road Bowls
Boyne R.F.C	Rugby
St Olivers Scout Group	Scout Group
Albion Rovers	Soccer School
Drogheda Boys	Soccer School
Grove Rangers Boys and Girls AFC	Soccer School
Holy Family FC	Soccer School
Drogheda Special Olympics	Special Needs
O'Raghallaighs G.F.C Squash Club	Squash
Saint Pauls Table Tennis Club	Table Tennis
Naomh Martin Tennis Club	Tennis
Drogheda Water Polo Club	Water Polo
<i>Source: Louth Local Sports Partnership</i>	

10.3 Levels of Civil Society and Volunteering

Engagement with the community and community development has always been a fundamental role of local authorities, however, this was developed substantially by the Local Government Act 2001 and again in the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Public Participation Networks (PPNs) were established as part of the 2014 Act for the purposes of further developing the role of the community & voluntary sector in local government and local development issues.

Table 10.3 overleaf contains a list of over 50 groups registered with PPN in the Laytown/Bettystown Municipal District.

Table 10.3: Laytown / Bettystown Municipal District PPN Groups

Name of Organisation/Group	Category
Laytown Tidy Towns	Voluntary
Duleek Bellewstown Active Retirement	Voluntary
Slane Community Forum	Voluntary
Shalon Buddhist Temple	Voluntary
Duleek Fair Committee	Voluntary
Hill of Slane Tours	Voluntary
Duleek AFC	Voluntary
The Association of Beach Grove Residents	Voluntary
Duleek & District News	Voluntary
Julianstown Drama Group	Voluntary
Limetree Community Theatre Group	Voluntary
Laytown Village Enhancement Committee	Voluntary
Duleek Bellewstown GFC	Voluntary
Drogheda Town Football Club 'East Meath'	Voluntary
Cilles Athletic Club	Voluntary
Meath East Community Association (M.E.C.A.)	Voluntary
St Cianans Boxing Club	Voluntary
Ledwidge Hall Residents' Association	Voluntary
Plum Tree Pack Brownies	Voluntary
Laytown Development Association	Voluntary
Duleek Festival	Voluntary
Duleek & Bellewstown A.R.A.	Voluntary
Meath Coast Men's Shed	Social Inclusion
Slane GFC	Voluntary
Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club	Voluntary
Irish Power Kiting, Kite Buggy and Sandyacht Sports	Voluntary
How Are You Feeling Today	Social Inclusion
Saint Colmcilles East Meath GAA	Voluntary
Sevitt Hall Residents Association	Voluntary
Slane Community Centre Limited	Voluntary
Duleek Drama Players	Voluntary
Julianstown & District Community Association	Voluntary
East Coast Sandyachting	Voluntary
Duleek Tidy Towns Committee	Voluntary
Duleek & District Text Alert	Voluntary
Development Perspectives	Social Inclusion
Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland	Environmental
Boyne Branch of Inland Waterways Association of Ireland	Voluntary
Duleek Development Association	Voluntary

Sonairte The National Ecology Centre	Environmental
Slane Youth Café	Voluntary
Duleek Revival Programme	Voluntary
Kilsharvan Community Group	Voluntary
Duleek & District Athletic Club	Voluntary
Broomfield Men's Shed	Social Inclusion
Beauparc Active Retirement Club	Voluntary
St Vincent's Gaelic Football Club	Voluntary
Francis Ledwidge Museum & War Memorial Centre	Voluntary
Slane Tidy Towns	Voluntary
Duleek Women's Forum	Voluntary
Julianstown Stamullen Meals on Wheels	Voluntary
<i>Source: Meath County Council</i>	

Similarly, there are over 50 groups registered with PPN in the Drogheda Borough District, as outlined in Table 10.4 below.

Table 10.4: Drogheda Borough District PPN Groups	
Name of Organisation/Group	Category
Drogheda Resource Centre for the Unemployed	Community Provider
Connect Family Resource Centre	Community Provider
Upstate Theatre Project	Community Provider
The Barbican Centre	Community Provider
Drogheda Community Services Trust	Community Provider
Culture Connect Ltd	Culture Connect
Drogheda Special Olympics Club	Disability
Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Louth Branch	Disability
Louth Community Drug & Alcohol Team	Drugs & Alcohol
Footsteps Family Support	Family Support
Gary Kelly Cancer Support Centre	Health
SOSAD Ireland	Health
Dignity4patients	Health
Old Drogheda Society	Heritage
Drogheda Homeless Aid Association Ltd	Homeless
Redemption Way Centre	Intercultural
Boyne Research Institute	Nature
Drogheda & District Support 4 Older People	Older People
Clogherhead & Callystown Leisure Time Group	Older People
Drogheda Senior Citizens Interest Group	Older People
Carers Association	Older People & Disability
Ashfield Drogheda Residents Association	Residents
Baltray & District Residents Association	Residents

Boice Manor Residents Association	Residents
Boyne Hall Residents Association	Residents
Brookville Residents Association	Residents
Forest Hill Residents Group	Residents
Matson Lodge & Mullhaven Residents Association	Residents
Rowan Heights Grass Committee	Residents
The Paddocks Residents Association	Residents
Lourdes Community & Recreation Centre	Sports
Holy Family Community Sports Group	Sports
Dreadnots G.F.C.	Sports
Drogheda & District Anglers Club	Sports
Albion Rovers FC	Sports
Drogheda Waterpolo	Sports
Tredagh Amature Boxing Club	Sports
Walshestown FC	Sports
Drogheda Boys FC	Sports
Oliver Plunketts GFC	Sports
Costa Alaiinn	Tidy Towns
Louth Volunteer Centre (Drogheda Branch)	Volunteer Centre
Youth Work Ireland Louth	Youth
Streetball Nationwide CSBND	Youth
Development Perspectives	Youth
Drogheda Youth Development	Youth
Foroige Cable Project	Youth
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)	Youth
Youth Advocate Programme	Youth
Boyne Garda Youth Division Project	Youth
Southside Community Youth Project	Youth
Autism Support Louth	Youth & Health
ABACAS School	Youth & Health
<i>Source: Louth County Council</i>	

10.4 Inter-Local Authority Collaboration in Support of Community Interest

Examples of collaboration between Louth and Meath County Councils were outlined earlier in the Submission, in Sub-Section 7.11.

Another example of the collaboration between the two counties is in the education sector, in which the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 provided for the establishment of sixteen new education and training boards to replace the existing thirty-three VECs. On 1 July 2013, Co. Louth VEC and Co. Meath VEC merged to form Louth & Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB).

LMETB manages eighteen post-primary schools and one primary school and is also responsible for an extensive range of adult education and training Services throughout both counties, including Adult Learning Services, Community Education, Back to Education Initiative, VTOS and Adult Guidance. There are eight Youth Reach centres spread across the two counties. Since July 1st 2014 Dundalk Regional Skills & Training Centre is under the governance of LMETB, having been transferred from SOLAS on that date. LMETB is patron to 6 Community Schools and it is planned that the organisation will be headquartered in Drogheda.

10.5 Summary

There is a strong social and community infrastructure in the greater Drogheda area and the Laytown Bettystown Municipal District which benefits the Area of Interest. From survey evidence, residents are satisfied with the quality of life they are experiencing. There is also additional community funding available in the Municipal District which is area specific and is awarded to Meath based organisations such as local GAA clubs. Unless Co. Louth has equivalent funding available this would place residents of the Area of Interest at a disadvantage.

Meath County Council works diligently for the community in the Drogheda environs and has been successful in meeting their needs.

In conclusion, the interests of residents in the Area of Interest are well served by the existing arrangements and their situation would not be improved in any way by the proposed boundary revision.

11 New Survey Evidence – Residents and Businesses

11.1 Introduction

As an important part of this Submission to the Review, we commissioned Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A) to carry out market research specifically on the Review, its relative importance in people's everyday lives and its impacts, if any. As our work progressed during the autumn of 2015, we determined that any new survey evidence on the Review should include businesses' views as well as those of householders/residents. Accordingly, multiple surveys were carried out by B&A over the Christmas period 2015-2016 and a summary of the results is presented in this Section of the Submission. The full results document, prepared by B&A, is included as part of our Submission (under separate cover).

11.2 Synopsis of the Survey Results

The new survey evidence shows that the Drogheda boundary is not a major issue among local people and it is even less of an issue for local businesses. The definition of the council area in which people live received the lowest level of importance among a range of alternatives, including local health services, the cost of living, job security and distance to/from work. These findings occur pretty consistently in the Louth and Meath sides of Drogheda and a salient finding is that people are to a very large extent satisfied with their *day-to-day living in their respective local areas and with the general quality of life in their areas* (98-99% of residents in the Area of Interest are either "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" in these ways, with the corresponding proportions in the Meath or Louth parts of Drogheda being 93%, lower compared with the residents within the Area of Interest). The inference is that people living in Drogheda (Louth or Meath parts) are generally very happy and satisfied with their lives, with those in the Area of Interest in Drogheda showing an even greater degree of happiness and satisfaction. Two-in-three people are satisfied with their local council in terms of upkeep of their local area, which means that people in either side of the town express the same level of satisfaction with their local authority, whether Meath County Council or Louth County Council. These independent findings support what we have been saying throughout this Submission, namely that the current arrangements are working effectively and there are no grounds for seeking to alter the *status quo*.

In regard to shopping, it is very interesting, and indeed comforting, to find that people tend to have greatest affinity with their local shopping centres (i.e. they are most likely to visit these ones). If we were to roll back time by 10 years or so, five of the shopping locations at which people were surveyed as part of the B&A market research – Southgate Shopping Centre, Drogheda Retail Park, Scotch Hall, M1 Retail Park and St. Laurence Shopping Centre – did not exist and it was generally felt at the time that the supply of retailing in Drogheda was insufficient to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population. The new survey evidence from B&A suggests that the traditional retail leakage from Drogheda, to other centres like Dundalk, Swords and Dublin itself, has been addressed to a large extent and that today the shopper benefits from a large and varied choice of outlets in-and-around the town. This has to be commended as one of the biggest achievements for Drogheda over recent years, as the town at the beginning of the century was to a large extent bereft of real choice and competition in regard to shopping and retailing.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ For example, the Review Committee might recall the local grass-roots campaign in the town in 2005 calling for the opening of a Lidl store in the town, after the grocery representative body RGDATA tried to block the discounter from opening a store in the town. Today, there are two Lidl stores in Drogheda (one on each side of the Boyne) and similarly two Aldi stores (one on the south and north of the Boyne).

In regard to the *impact* of the Review, the new survey evidence reveals that residents of the Meath part of the Area of Interest are more concerned than their counterparts in Louth, and the worries of the former include preferring to be/remain part of Meath, not wanting a change, concerns over access to schools/services and costs of services/car insurance/tax etc. For those living in either the Louth or Meath parts of Drogheda, 81% are of the view that the outcome of the Review will have no impact on them personally (71% among those living in the Louth part).

We interpret these findings as evidence that people living in either part of the town believe that the Review will make no difference to their everyday lives. In this regard, the survey evidence suggests that any boundary change in Drogheda would be at variance with the principles, spirit and intentions of Putting People First (2012).

Turning to employers, businesses surveyed by B&A said that they specifically chose their current location (in Meath) as the site for their business (85%) and 85% are happy/satisfied with it. There is limited awareness of the Review among businesses, with only 5% having heard a great deal about it. Overall 91% of business surveyed felt the outcome of the Review would not make a significant difference to their business operations. This provides yet further evidence as to the futility of the Review.

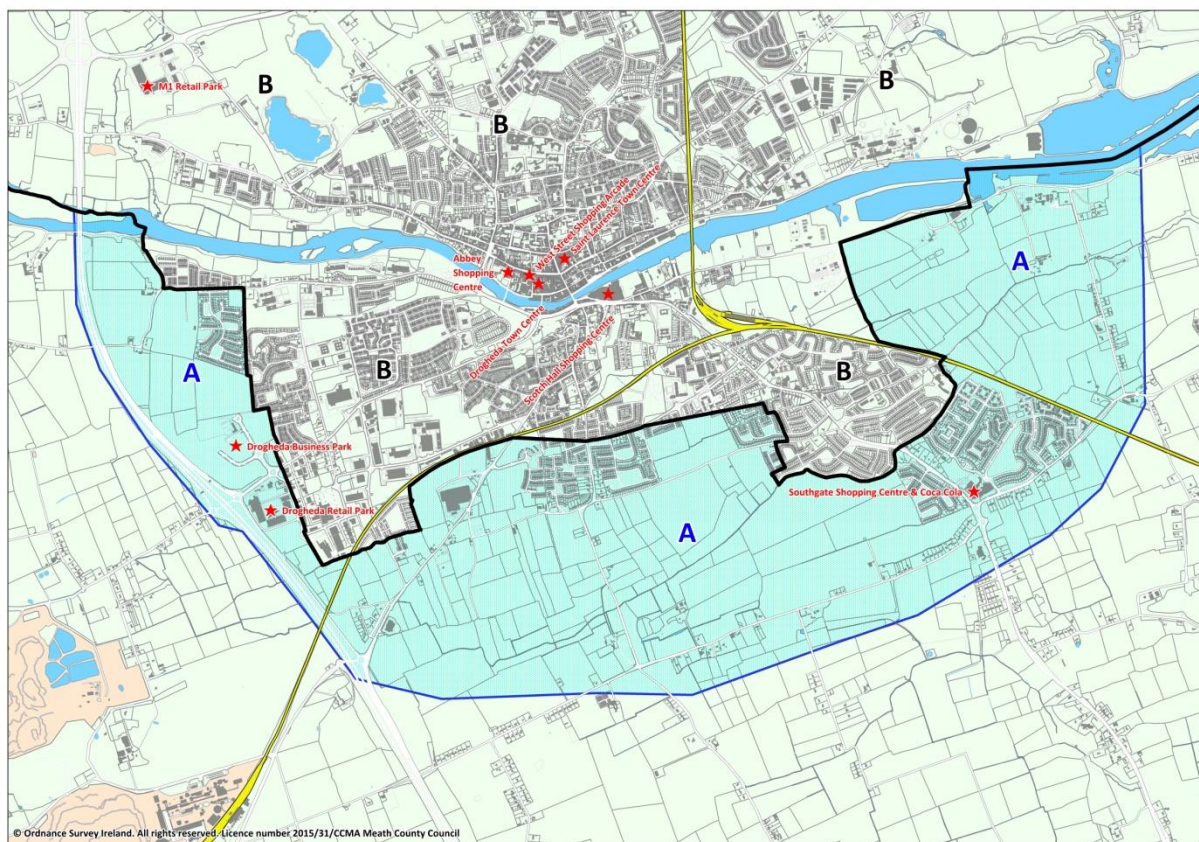
The new survey evidence supports the overall case being advanced in this Submission, which is to say that the current arrangements are working well and that the *status quo* should be maintained. *Where warranted* (that is, in response to an identified need or market failure), we would be prepared to sit down and work with Louth County Council for the overall betterment of Drogheda: continued inter-authority cooperation represents a more reasonable, proportionate and less restrictive, and less damaging and divisive, way of proceeding compared with any *ad hoc* or other change of the boundary, whether in our favour or in Louth's.

11.3 Methodology

Two surveys were carried out by B&A over the Christmas and early new year period (2015-2016). Survey 1 was a survey of stakeholders within the Meath environs of Drogheda, having regard to the Meath part of the Review Committee's Area of Interest. Survey 1 comprised (1) a face-to-face survey of 252 residential adults aged 18+ years and (2) a telephone survey of 20 commercial/business customers of Meath County Council within the Area of Interest. Survey 2 was an on-street survey of people/residents in Drogheda (Louth or Meath parts), questioned at different shopping locations during the period – Southgate Shopping Centre (Meath part of the Area of Interest), Drogheda Retail Park (Meath part of the Area of Interest), Scotch Hall Shopping Centre (close to Drogheda town centre, Louth), M1 Retail Park (Louth environs of Drogheda, north side of the town) and a further four shopping centres in the town centre (Louth) (namely Abbey Shopping Centre, West Street Shopping Arcade, Drogheda Town Centre shopping mall, which runs between West Street and Dyer Street, and St. Laurence Shopping Centre). Survey 2 consisted of 206 residents of Louth and Meath.

The map contained in Figure 11.1 overleaf splits the town into two parts: Area A being the area in which Survey 1 was conducted (Meath part of the Area of Interest) (i.e. both the residential and business surveys); and Areas A and B being the area in which the on-street Survey 2 was carried out (Louth/Meath parts of Drogheda).

Figure 11.1: Map Utilised in the Behaviour and Attitudes Survey of Drogheda Residents and Businesses (2015/2016)



Source: Meath County Council, B&A.

Since there are in fact three components to the survey results, the findings are presented as follows:

- Results of the Residential Survey in the Meath Part of the Area of Interest (Area A);
- Results of the On-Street Survey in the Louth and Meath Parts of Drogheda (Areas A and B);
- Results of the Business Survey in the Meath Part of the Area of Interest (Area A).⁶⁵

11.4 Results of the Residential Survey in the Meath Part of the Area of Interest (Area A)

The key findings of the residential survey (sample size of 252) in the Meath part of the Area of Interest (Area A in the Map in Figure 11.1) are summarised overleaf as follows:

⁶⁵ In hindsight, we are very happy (if not also very fortunate) that the B&A survey was conducted when it was – *after* the Review Committee shared with us the (*ad hoc*) Area of Interest map, which was produced late in the Review process.

- 35% of the residents in the said area were born in Dublin – while this may include a number of people born in Dublin maternity hospitals whose families were living in Louth or Meath at the time, the high proportion of 35% nevertheless fits in with the widespread perception that many of the residents of the housing estates in the Meath environs of Drogheda have moved to the area from Dublin;
- 50% of those resident in the Meath part of the Area of Interest are not members of any clubs, societies or groups (sporting, recreational etc.) in Drogheda – which would give support to the view that many of these people are time-poor (due to commuting);
- Of the other 50% of the residents who are members of clubs, societies or groups in Drogheda, around one-quarter do so in the Meath part of the Area of Interest (and almost 30% are members of clubs, societies or groups in the Louth part of Drogheda), which suggests that both parts of Drogheda are serving residents well (St. Colmcilles GAA club and the soccer clubs in the Meath environs of Drogheda – Donacarney Celtic and East Meath United, for example – would be important for residents/children);
- A very high proportion of residents have access to broadband at home (91%) and most would have access to broadband at work (59%) (but the former figure is particularly noteworthy);
- The vast majority of residents (89%) use online/internet/broadband to carry out transactions, which would include online motor tax and would obviate the need to travel to Navan to tax their cars/vehicles;
- The important things in people’s lives current – ranked as “very important” in their responses;
 - Local health services (92%)
 - Job security (79%)
 - Cost of living (76%)
- On the other hand, 41% of residents in the Meath part of the Area of Interest said that the definition of the council area in which they lived is “very important”, while 40% said that council area is “not particularly important” or “not important at all”;
- Virtually everyone living in the Meath part of the Area of Interest is satisfied with *day-to-day living* in their area (67% “very satisfied”, 32% “fairly satisfied” and just 1% expressing no satisfaction);
- Similarly, basically everyone living in the Meath part of the Area of Interest is satisfied with the *general quality of life* in their area (68% “very satisfied”, 30% “fairly satisfied” and only 2% expressing no satisfaction);
- Almost 2-in-3 (65% of) residents are “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with their local council in terms of upkeep of the local area (namely the Meath part of the Area of Interest);
- Of the residents of the Meath part of the Area of Interest, over half (53%) consider that the handiest/most convenient shopping location is Southgate Shopping Centre and 28% favour Drogheda Retail Park in Meath in this regard;
- Furthermore, 60% of the most-liked shopping areas for the residents are those within Area A (i.e. the Meath part of the Area of Interest);
- These results suggest good planning in terms of retailing availability close to where people reside in the Meath environs of Drogheda;
- One quarter of the residents have a good knowledge of the Review – higher for males, those aged 35+, those originally born in Meath and those active in clubs/societies/groups in the area;
- One-third (32%) feel the Review outcome will make a great deal of difference to their lives, with one-quarter feeling it will make some difference and 42% that it will make no difference to their lives;

- Those residents who feel the outcome of the Review will have a personal impact do so due to concerns around changes in access to services/schools and the potential changes in the cost of services/car insurance/tax etc.;

The key results of the residential survey are that virtually all (98-99%) of those living in the Meath part of the Area of Interest (Area A) are satisfied with their day-to-day living in the area and with the general/overall quality of their lives in the area, and that approximately 2-out-of-every-3 of residents in the said area are happy with their local authority (Meath County Council) for the upkeep of the local area in which they live.

11.5 Results of the On-Street Survey in the Louth and Meath Parts of Drogheda

The main findings of the on-street survey (sample size of 206) conducted in both the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda (Areas A and B in the Map in Figure 11.1) are summarised presently:

- Just over half of those residing in the area (52%) have done so all their lives and the remaining 48% have lived in Drogheda between up to 10 years (13%) and over 10 years (35%), reflecting the rapidly changing structure of those living in the town over the past decade or so;
- While a significant proportion (80%) have access to online/internet/broadband at home, the proportion here (in both the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda) is lower than that in the Meath part of the Area of Interest (91% from the residential survey), suggesting in turn that broadband penetration is higher in the Meath than the Louth part of the town;
- Almost four-in-five people living in the town (Louth and Meath parts) use online/internet/broadband to conduct transactions, which is significant but lower than the corresponding proportion observed in the Meath part of the Area of Interest from the residential survey (89%), which lends support to the view emerging here that people in the Meath part are more active online than those in the Louth part;
- The results of the importance of issues in people's lives in both the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda are similar to those in the Meath part of the Area of Interest, in that the cost of living (88% saying it is "very important"), local health services (76%), job security (74%) and distance/travel to/from work (59%) all ranking ahead of the definition of the council area in which one lives (41% said that it is "very important" but also 46% said that it was either "not particularly important" or "not at all important");
- Throughout the town, therefore, the definition of the council area in which one lives is low down on people's priorities;
- Turning to life satisfaction and quality of life, in both the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda, a very high proportion (93%) of people said that they are "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with day-to-day living in their area, which is very impressive but lower than the corresponding proportion observed in the Meath part of the Area of Interest, where we observed that 99% of people are "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with day-to-day living in their area;
- Similarly, 93% of those living in either the Louth or Meath parts of Drogheda said they are "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with the general quality of life in their area, which again is very strong but is lower than the corresponding proportion observed in the Meath part of the Area of Interest, where we earlier saw that 98% of people are "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with the quality of life in their area;
- Taken together, therefore, the results indicate that people in each part of Drogheda are generally very satisfied and happy with their lives in the areas where they live but the extent of happiness/satisfaction is even higher in the Meath part of the Area of Interest, which echoes the

CSO 2011 Census evidence on subjective wellbeing examined earlier in Section 0 (see Table 5.24, p. 132, and Figure 5.4, p. 133, and the commentaries around these tables);

- About 2-in-3 are satisfied with their local council in terms of the upkeep of the local area in either the Louth or Meath parts of Drogheda, about the same proportion (65%) as observed in the Meath part of the Area of Interest;
- Perhaps not surprisingly, Scotch Hall was found to be the favourite shopping location for people living in either part of Drogheda to visit, with 48% of those surveyed saying that they would visit this particular retailing location, which benefits from having a central location in the heart of the town as well as providing a pleasant shopping experience;
- In terms of impact, 81% of those living in the Louth or Meath parts of Drogheda feel that the Review outcome will make no difference to their lives in the area (71% for those residing in Area B (Louth part of the town));
- Of the 4-in-5 who feel the Review outcome will make no difference to them personally, the main reasons for this view centre on “not important”/“doesn’t matter or affect me”;

The key results of the on-street survey are that a very high proportion (93%) of those living in either the Meath or the Louth parts of Drogheda (Area A or Area B of the survey map) are satisfied with their day-to-day living in their area and with the general/overall quality of their lives in their area. This is a very high endorsement for their respective local areas, although not quite as high as the extremely strong satisfaction level expressed by residents of the Meath part of the Area of Interest (Area A), where 98-99% of those responding said they are “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with day-to-day living and the quality of life in the area in which they live. About 2-in-3 residents in either the Louth or Meath parts of Drogheda are satisfied with their local authority (Louth County Council or Meath County Council respectively) for the upkeep of the local area in which they live. Most of those living in either the Louth or Meath part of the town, according to the on-street survey results, believe that the Review will make no difference to their everyday lives. These results strongly suggest that the current arrangements are working effectively and that people are generally satisfied with their local authority and that any change from the Review would have little or no affect on people’s lives from day-to-day.

11.6 Results of the Business Survey in the Meath Part of the Area of Interest (Area A)

The results of the B&A business survey conducted over the holiday period at the end of 2015-beginning of 2016 are summarised as follows (sample size of 20, out of 38 valid addresses provided to the market research organisation in the data we provided to B&A):

- Over the course of a typical year, businesses operating in the Meath part of the Area of Interest dealt with Meath County Council 30% of the time – this in our experience would not be unusual for businesses across the whole county and private sector enterprises generally like to get on with their everyday operations;
- 85% of businesses in the said area say that they are happy with their location, with 50% expressing “very happy” and 35% “fairly happy” – 10% said they were “not particularly happy” and 5% “not at all happy”;
- Echoing the residential and on-street surveys of residents, the definition of the council area operating in is low down on businesses priorities – the key thing is that they are getting a good reliable and supporting service from their local authority;
- While Meath County Council scores reasonably well on its *level of support for local business* and on the *quality of its services for local business*, the new survey evidence nevertheless also shows

that we can improve our offerings to businesses in these respects and we will continue to work towards this in the coming weeks, months and years;

- Businesses in the Meath part of the Area of Interest have a limited knowledge of the Review, with just 5% saying that they “heard a great deal about it” and the remaining 95% saying that either they “heard something about it but did not know much about it” or that they “heard nothing about it”, which may reflect other concerns among businesses (if the Review really matters to an enterprise then it would make it its business to find out more about it and adjust accordingly);
- 91% of businesses feel that the outcome of the Review would not make a significant difference to their business operations, which chimes with the earlier household/residents surveys.

Given the low profile of the Review among businesses, in terms of featuring so low on their radars and having such a low perceived level of impact, one therefore wonders what was the motivation of the Drogheda Chamber of Commerce when it sought to raise the issue of the Drogheda boundary?

According to our records, there are over 2,000 businesses of various sizes in different sectors of the economy operating from Drogheda and its environs (Louth and Meath parts). According to the Drogheda Chamber’s website, in early January 2016, it lists in its Members Directory as having 193 members, implying that it would account for less than 10% of all businesses in “Drogheda and District”, as it describes itself.

11.7 Summary

The new survey evidence commissioned from B&A by Meath County Council provides strong evidence that backs up our position in regard to the Review. The results from residents (in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda) and businesses (Meath part of the Area of Interest) reveal:

- **A very high level of satisfaction among residents and businesses;**
 - People are generally highly satisfied with their lives in either part of the town and with the overall quality of their lives – the levels of satisfaction are especially high among residents in the Meath part of the Area of Interest, with virtually all respondents being “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with their daily lives and/or quality of life
 - People are to a large extent satisfied with the level of service from their local authority, with approximately two-thirds of respondents expressing that they are “very happy” or “fairly happy” with their local council for the upkeep of area in which they live
 - Businesses have a very high level of satisfaction, with 85% being “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with being located in the Meath part of the Area of Interest
- **The Drogheda Boundary Review does not loom large in people’s or businesses concerns;**
 - The Review ranks much lower compared with other issues in people’s day-to-day lives, namely the cost of living, employment/job security, local health services and distance/travelling to/from work (commuting) – a common finding observed in the Louth and Meath parts of Drogheda
 - A very high proportion of businesses (95%) have little or no knowledge of the Review – if the Review really mattered to them, they would make it their business to know more
- **People and businesses believe that the Review outcome will have no impact on their lives;**
 - Over 81% of residents in Louth or Meath have this view and 91% of businesses in the Meath part of the Area of Interest share this belief.

12 Concluding Remarks and the Seven Questions

12.1 Concluding Comments

In summing up this Submission, we will keep our remarks brief by saying that the various strands of evidence presented in the course of this document – based on official data (CSO, government etc.), the new survey evidence from residents and businesses, and our own experience of working in the area over many years – show conclusively enough that the current arrangements are generally working effectively in Drogheda (Louth and Meath parts). In particular, residents and businesses are generally satisfied with living and operating in the town and its environs and are also generally happy with the level of service received from their local authorities, whether Louth or Meath County Council. The *status quo* is working. It is not broken. A boundary change is not warranted. It lacks any evidence. It would create winners and losers, and would be divisive. Meath County Council has a very clear roadmap for supporting the Meath environs of the town in the coming years, based on working towards the goal of facilitating more jobs in the area so that people can work closer to where they live and therefore support sustainable communities. All the ingredients necessary to make this happen are in place – the big challenge now is to realise the goal and this will necessitate being proactive with entrepreneurs and wealth creators, and with government and State agencies, who may otherwise lack information on the true prospects concerning the area. The fundamental job of the Council is to promote and champion the qualities of the town to enable new investment, employment and enhanced standards of living to take effect in the years ahead. Our Economic Development Strategy, which is currently being integrated into our County Development Plan, is very clear on this process and outcome.

The Review outcome will not make any difference to our plans and ambitions for Drogheda; and the new survey evidence reveals the views among residents and businesses that the outcome will have no impact on their everyday lives and commercial operations.

The Drogheda City Status Campaign is separate to the boundary review and Meath County Council considers that the Drogheda City Status campaign is without merit and this appears to be borne out by Minister Kelly's formal reply to a Question put to him in the Dáil (January 2015).

Those in support of this venture say that the town's future will be best met if the whole town is given responsibility for its future. What they fail to spell out is how this would occur in practice. What would happen to Meath County Council's stake in the town? What would happen to Louth County Council's stake? Who would be responsible for the overall administration of the town? Is it envisaged that some new local authority would be created, independent of any existing council? Or would any new city council created to administer the new city instead be part of Louth or Meath County Council? How would such changes fit with government's plans to reform public services and to make local authorities and other arms of the State more efficient and effective? It seems to us that any new arrangements to support a city in Drogheda would merely serve to burden the town rather than improve it.

Drogheda is a great town. It has great people and resources, great communities and tremendous economic development potential. We are prepared to work hard to ensure that the opportunities are realised and we look forward to continuing to work with Louth County Council for the betterment of the town in the coming years and into the longer future.

12.2 Meath County Council's Responses to the Review's Seven Questions for Public Consultations

12.2.1 Question 1: How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder the retention or creation of employment and the general economic performance of the area?

It is likely that any alteration of the boundary would hinder employment and economic development in the Area of Interest. The facts have been well-established in the course of this Submission. Looking at the number of jobs within the St. Mary's (Meath) ED (the ED being the lowest level of geographical disaggregation for which employment data within a given area is made available by the CSO), there were 1,363 jobs in this particular ED in 2011 (latest available data), representing very strong employment growth of 48.3% on the 2006 jobs level. Taking all the EDs in the Meath environs of Drogheda – Julianstown, Stamullin, Ardcaigh, Duleek, Mellifont as well as St. Mary's (Meath) – the number of jobs within the Meath Hinterland of Drogheda grew by 46% to 4,441 in 2011. The corresponding rate of growth in the Louth Hinterland of Drogheda, comprising the former Drogheda Borough Council area and the Louth EDs of St. Peter's, Monasterboice, Termonfeckin and Mullary, was only 1.4% (taking the number of jobs in the Louth area to 12,153 in 2011). At county level, during 2006-2011, the number of jobs in Meath grew by 17%, those in Louth by 0.4% and the number of jobs countrywide contracted by 10%. These facts suggest that Meath has a stronger employment growth record than Louth and might lead one to conclude that Meath County Council is much better than Louth County Council in respect of employment and economic development. But, as shown in the course of our Submission, the reality is more complex than this. While the rate of growth of employment has been very strong and impressive in County Meath and in the Meath environs of Drogheda during the past two censuses, and while it has held up very well too since 2011, there is still a large body of effort to be applied to counter the pattern of outbound commuting from the Area of Interest. This is the principal economic priority that we have set for ourselves in the coming years and has been informed by independent expertise (in the form of the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath) and backed by our local representatives. Thus, we have a job of work to do in the Area of Interest and our best response to this question is to say that we strongly consider that we (Meath County Council) are best placed to continue to realise the employment and economic development potential of the Area of Interest. We will continue to proactively promote appropriate serviced sites in the Meath environs of Drogheda under our remit for FDI (including the IDA Business and Technology Park on the Donore Road) and we would hope that Louth County Council would do the same in regard to similar sites occurring within the Louth parts of the town (notwithstanding the LEF's curious proposal). Both Councils have common incentives here – by facilitating new FDI or other forms of employment in the town, the whole town will benefit and the Councils will profit accordingly through knock-on economic impacts. A final note is that, in the event of any boundary change, which we are strongly opposed to and would strongly resist, there would be no change in the status of the IDA Business and Technology Park, currently located in Meath. It would not then become eligible for enhanced financial incentives by becoming part of Louth. This is because the EU Regional Aid, which determines these financial supports to firms, has already been decided upon and drawn by the European Commission. It will endure until 2020 and cannot be altered.

12.2.2 Question 2: How might the alteration of the boundary help or hinder the identity or cohesion of local communities in the area?

We consider that any boundary change would make no difference to the identity or cohesion of local communities in the area. We would reference the surveys commissioned for this Submission which

reveal that people living in either side of Drogheda have a very high level of satisfaction with their lives and they also have a very strong quality of life, and they also believe that the impact of any change of the boundary would be low. People living in estates like Grange Rath, DeepForde, Avourwen and Highlands (Meath) have developed strong local communities, through membership of clubs and societies and through their children going to local schools, where parents have the opportunity to meet each other repeatedly. This is how communities are developed and social capital created. The community and social capital bonds are already established in these estates and areas, and any alteration of the boundary would make no impact in this respect.

12.2.3 Question 3: How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder delivery of services by local government to ensure that the needs of the local community are met now and in the future?

The survey results reveal that the majority of people (around two-thirds) in either the Louth or Meath parts of Drogheda are satisfied with the level of services received from their respective local authorities. It is very difficult to see how any change from one local authority to another would alter the delivery of local services. A more proportionate and less divisive way of ensuring that the needs of the local communities are met in the future is for the two local authorities to continue to work together for certain essential services, like fire services, water and waste-water, and to engage in further enhanced cooperation in areas where warranted (e.g. in the event of flood relief or where local authority inputs to emergency services might be necessary – a severe cold spell etc.).

12.2.4 Question 4: How might alteration of the administrative boundary help or hinder the need to maximise efficiency and value for money in local government?

Efficiency and value for money are important for the operation of local government. Keeping control on costs is particularly important so as to maintain a competitive supply of services for residents and businesses. Meath County Council has made significant improvements in its financial performance since the beginning of the decade – as illustrated in the NOAC performance indicators report published at the end of 2015. If one also factors in the strong jobs growth county-wide and in the Area of Interest over time, combined with the reduction in staff numbers within the Council, one would have no hesitation in concluding that we have become a leaner and more efficient local authority. But that is not the whole story. A local authority also needs the appropriate resources to cater for its residents and businesses, and to be able to meet the cost of infrastructure and repairs as they arise. It would therefore be unwise to put too much focus on mere accounting standards without also ensuring that we cater for the needs of our dependents and for the wider infrastructural needs of the county. Alteration of the boundary would not, in our view, result in any significant efficiency savings because, as the evidence shows, the current arrangements are working well, judging by the feedback gained from the surveys carried out independently by B&A.

12.2.5 Question 5: How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder the Planning and Development needs, as administered by the local authority, of the community?

Any alternation of the boundary would likely hinder planning and development needs because it would create a winner and a loser, and tension among the two local authorities. Given the tremendous economic development potential that we see in the Meath environs of Drogheda, no amount of financing could compensate us in the event of the environs being transferred into Louth. We would be losing a key part of our whole county plan and future income, and employment. The loss would leave a

very bitter taste and we would have to re-visit our whole county plan to adjust for the loss. We doubt if it would be possible to adjust in this way because the Meath environs of Drogheda, occurring along the M1 Corridor, is unique and presents unique opportunities. That is why we are so committed to maintaining our jurisdiction of the Area of Interest, now and in the future. And that is why so many of our councillors have come out strongly in support of Meath's position.

12.2.6 Question 6: How might alteration of the boundary help or hinder the delivery of effective and accountable democratic representation?

As outlined earlier in this Submission, it is estimated here that alteration of the boundary in favour of Louth would mean that the people and businesses of Meath in the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District would lose one councillor. Given the strong level of satisfaction expressed by people and businesses in the Area of Interest with their everyday lives and quality of life, and the high satisfaction with current local authority provision, the loss of such local representation would mean a loss of local democracy in the area. We would remind the Review Committee that 10 local councillors from Meath County Council made the effort of going along to the Public Information Meeting on the Review hosted by Drogheda Chamber and the Minister in September 2015 (as opposed to only one local councillor from Louth County Council, a member of the same political party as the Minister) and that 26 Meath councillors were present to engage with the Review Committee on 18 December 2015 in regard to the Review (versus just 6 Louth councillors on the same day, at the Boyne Valley Hotel in Drogheda, 2 of which were councillors in the Borough District of Drogheda).

12.2.7 Question 7: What strengths or weaknesses do you see in current local authority administrative boundary arrangements in the area?

The strengths are readily apparent from this Submission, where the new survey evidence reveals strong levels of satisfaction among residents (Louth and Meath) and businesses (Meath) (businesses in the Louth part were not surveyed) plus strong levels of satisfaction with their local authorities among residents. The current arrangements are working well and there is no evidence of any failure of governance or administration adversely affecting people. According to the survey, issues arise in respect of health, employment prospects and the cost of living – these are issues largely of national policy rather than local government policy.

Annex: Supplementary Information

Meath County Council Documents Uploaded to the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee's Internal Website

Tabulated overleaf are the Meath County Council documents shared with the Review Committee on the Committee's internal website (using the Alfesco software) (not to be confused with the public website to which submissions are to be sent by 22 January 2016). All of the documents given overleaf will have been made available to the Committee following the submission deadline. Meath County Council in addition furnished a copy of the document list to the Committee at its meeting (in Navan) on Wednesday 20 January 2016.

CLASSIFICATION			DOCUMENT	AVAILABLE ON ALFRESCO
ALFRESCO FILE LOCATION: Document Library/ Meath County Council/ 1. Background Documentation/				
1.1 Organisational Structure and Information	1.1.1	Organisation Information	MCC Corporate Plan 20152019.	☑
	1.1.2	Organisation Information	MCC Workforce Plans.	*
	1.1.3	Organisation Information	Meath Municipal District Change Scenarios.	*
	1.1.3	Organisation Information	Local Electoral Area Committee Report 2013.	☑
	1.1.5(a)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2015.	*
	1.1.5(b)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2015 Housing.	*
	1.1.5(c)	Organisation Information	Transport Winter Services Plan 2015 - 2016 Meath.	☑
	1.1.5(d)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016 - Transport Operations - MD Keyplan.	☑
	1.1.5(e)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016 - Transport Operations - MD.	☑
	1.1.5(f)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016 - Transport Operations - Duleek Keyplan.	☑
	1.1.5(g)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016 - Transport Operations - Duleek.	☑
	1.1.5(h)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016 - Transport Operations - Slane Keyplan.	☑

Annex: Supplementary Information

	1.1.5(i)	Organisation Information	Schedule of Municipal District Works 2016 - Transport Operations - Slane.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.5(j)	Organisation Information	Customer Service Laytown Bettystown - MD Activity Report.	*
	1.1.6(a)	Finance	MCC Annual Budget 2015.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.6(b)	Finance	MCC Draft AFS 2014 Book.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.6(c)	Finance	MCC Draft Six year Capital Expenditure Programme.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.6(d)	Finance	MCC Provisional LPT Allocation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.7(a)	Economic Development	Economic Development Local Enterprise Office Meath Development Plan.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.7(b)	Economic Development	Economic Development Local Enterprise Office Meath Development Plan - Appendix 1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.7(c)	Economic Development	Economic Development Local Enterprise Office Meath Development Plan - Appendix 2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.8	Economic Development	Economic Development MCC LEO Activity Report.	*
	1.1.9	Economic Development	Boyne Valley Tourism Plan 2012 - 2014.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.10	Economic Development	Louth & Meath Tourism Development Study.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.11	Housing	Laytown Bettystown MD Social Housing Statistics.	*
	1.1.12	Housing	Social Housing Strategy 2020.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.13	Housing	Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 - 2018.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.14	Environment	Waste Management Plan EMR 2015 - 2021.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.15	Environment	Litter Management Plan 2015 - 2017.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Annex: Supplementary Information

	1.1.16	Emergency Services	Major Emergency Plan 2015.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.17	Emergency Services	Emergency Services - Flood Response Plan (Appendix 16 (Severe Weather).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.18	Emergency Services	Adopted FS Operational Plan 2015.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.19	Emergency Services	MEM Regional Plan - North East.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.20	Community Development	Meath Economic Development Strategy 2014 - 2022.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.1.21	Community Development	LCDC Meath Membership Details.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.2 State Agencies	1.2.1	Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation	Action Plan for Jobs Mid-East Region 2016-2017.pdf	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.3 Planning	1.3.1	Planning	Local Area Plan for the Southern Environs of Drogheda 2009 – 2015 (Incorporating Amendment #1).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(a)	Planning	Meath Development Plan - Volume 1 Written Statement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(b)	Planning	Variation to Volume 1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(c)	Planning	Introduction to Variation No. 2.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(d)	Planning	Meath Development Plan - Volume 2 Appendices FINAL Revised 24 th of September.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(e)	Planning	Meath Development Plan - Volume 3 Book of Maps.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(f)	Planning	Volume 5 Written Statements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(g)	Planning	Volume 5 Book of Maps.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(h)	Planning	Meath Development Plan - Volume 4 Strategic Assessment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Annex: Supplementary Information

	1.3.2(i)	Planning	SEA Environmental Report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(j)	Planning	SEA Statement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.2(k)	Planning	Natura Impact Statement.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.3	Planning	Greater Dublin Area Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 - 2022 Volume I.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.4(a)	Planning	Development Contribution Schemes 2010 - 2015.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.4(b)	Planning	Draft DCS 2016 - 2021 Version 5.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.5	Planning	Laytown Bettystown MD 2014 Planning Statistics.	*
	1.3.6	Planning Draft and Lapsed	DRAFT - Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.7(a)	Planning Draft and Lapsed	LAPSED - Meath County Development Plan 2007.pdf	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.7(b)	Planning Draft and Lapsed	LAPSED - Meath County Development Plan 2007 Volume II Text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.7(c)	Planning Draft and Lapsed	LAPSED - Meath County Development Plan 2007 Urban Detail Map 10.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.3.8	Planning Mapping	DBR Boundaries.	
	1.3.9	Planning Mapping	Development Area Boundary.	
	1.3.10(a)	Planning Mapping	Aerial Photo Map No 1.	
	1.3.10(b)	Planning Mapping	Aerial Photo Map No 2.	
	1.3.10(c)	Planning Mapping	Aerial Photo Map No 3.	
	1.3.10(d)	Planning Mapping	Aerial Photo Map No 4.	
	1.3.10(e)	Planning Mapping	Aerial Photo Map No 5.	

	1.3.10(f)	Planning Mapping	Aerial Photo Map No 6.	
	1.3.11	Planning Mapping	Employment Lands.	
	1.3.12	Planning Mapping	Residential Clusters.	
	1.3.13	Planning Mapping	Residential Zoned Land.	
1.4 Democratic Representation	1.4.1	Democratic Representation	Local Representatives by Electoral Area.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.5 Population Profile and Census	1.5	Population Profile and Census Statistics	Detailed analysis included in MCC Submission document.	
1.6 Mapping and Statistics	1.6.1	Mapping and Statistics	Drogheda Legal Town & Environs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.2	Mapping and Statistics	Drogheda Legal Town and Environs Aerial Overview.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.3	Mapping and Statistics	Drogheda Aerial Overview	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.4	Mapping and Statistics	Population Statistics per Electoral Division.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.4(a)	Mapping and Statistics	Population Statistics per Electoral Division – Meath.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.4(b)	Mapping and Statistics	Population Statistics per Electoral Division – Louth.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Annex: Supplementary Information

	1.6.5(a)	Mapping and Statistics	Population Distribution per Electoral Division 2011.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.5(b)	Mapping and Statistics	Population Distribution per Electoral Division 2006.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.6	Mapping and Statistics	Electoral Divisions per Municipal District.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.7	Mapping and Statistics	County Settlements Hierarchy.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.8	Mapping and Statistics	Meath-Louth Housing Estates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.9(a)	Mapping and Statistics	Planning Land Use Zonings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.9(b)	Mapping and Statistics	My Plan - Land Use Zonings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.9(c)	Mapping and Statistics	My Plan - Land Use Zonings Legend.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.10(a)	Mapping and Statistics	MCC Landholdings Map.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.10(b)	Mapping and Statistics	MCC Landholdings – PRAi Folio Reference Details.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	1.6.11	Mapping and Statistics	Road Infrastructure.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Document will be made available after the submission deadline.*

Chronology of Events during the Drogheda Boundary Review Process, as Recorded and Assembled by Meath County Council

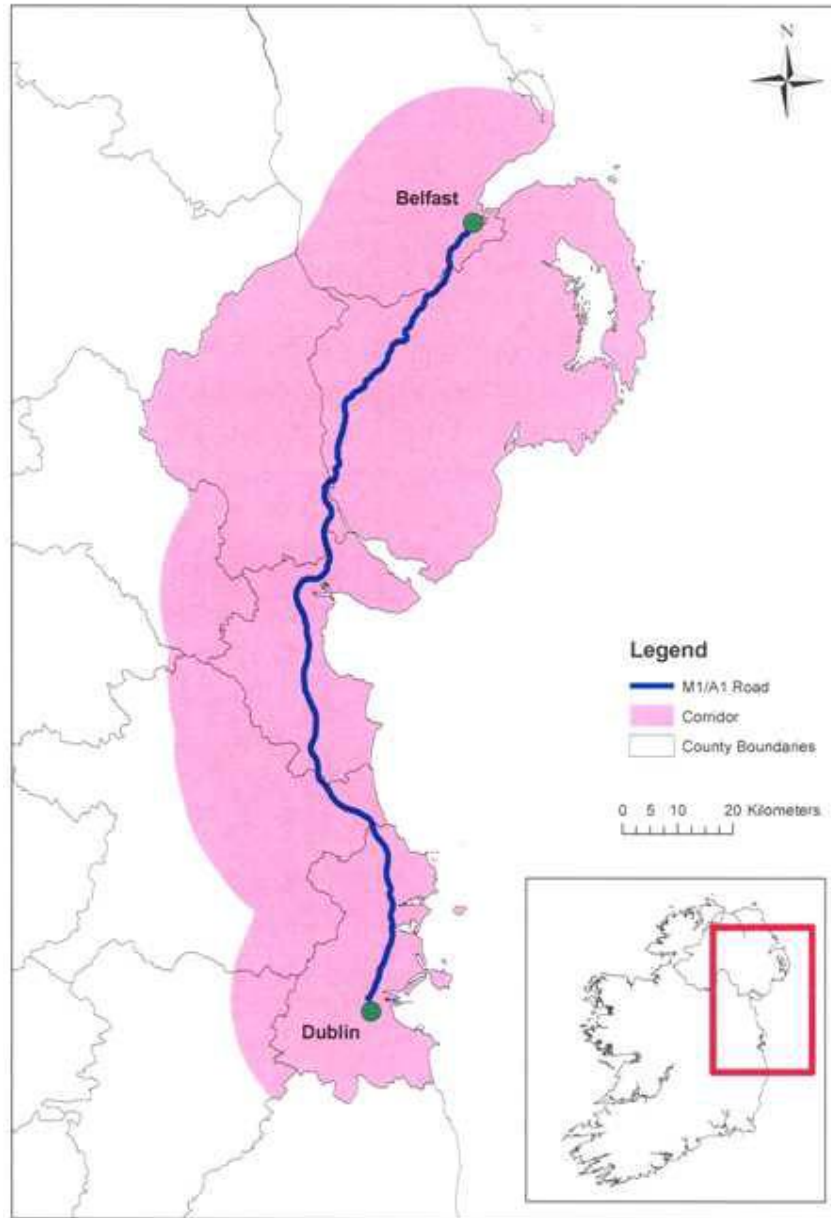
What follows overleaf is a tabular summary of the chronology of events during the Review to date, prepared by Meath County Council. It is not meant to be exhaustive of all events, but instead is a high-level record of events to date, prepared internally within the Council, which we will maintain, review and update, if necessary.

Annex: Supplementary Information

DATE	Communication and Subject
22.06.15	Email to the Chief Executive with a copy of a letter and enclosure from the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to the reviews of local government boundaries in Drogheda, Athlone, Waterford and Carlow.
22.07.15	Email from DECLG advising of Introductory meeting with the Drogheda and Athlone Boundary Committee and support staff of all affected Local Authorities and advising that lead authorities (Louth & Westmeath County Councils) would be working on a draft public notice and a website for the committee.
31.07.15	Inaugural meeting of the Drogheda Boundary Committee with Local Authority representatives held in IPA offices
25.08.15	Second Meeting of the Drogheda Boundary Committee with Louth and Meath County Council representatives held in Meath County Council offices
07.09.15	Email Notification of resignation of Boundary Committee members from the Chair of the Committee
10.09.15	Email Notification from the Chair of the Committee confirming cancellation of the full Council meetings with the Boundary Committee scheduled for October
02.10.15	Email to the Chief Executive from the DECLG advising that the Minister had extended the deadline for review of all Boundary Reviews to 31.Mar.16
06.10.15	IPA issue initial list of documentation required by Committee (Email Correspondence from Chair)
18.10.15	New Committee members announced, required documentation outlined and dates for site visits (Email Correspondence from Chair)
30.10.15	Introductory meeting held with new Committee, IPA representatives and Chief Executives of Meath and Louth County Councils. Held in Meath County Council offices
08.11.15	Email correspondence from Chair advising date of Site Visit, Meeting with Elected Members, Doodle and Alfresco requirements.
08.11.15	Email correspondence from IPA representative providing doodle link
18.11.15	Site Visit completed by Committee and Liaison Group., followed by meeting held in Boyne Valley Hotel, Drogheda
19.11.15	Follow up email from IPA representative regarding Doodle and Alfresco details and links
20.11.15	Email issued from IPA providing final approved Public Notice and advising closing date for submissions will now be the 22nd of January 2016
24.11.15	Map of Area of Interest being considered by the Committee received
24.11.15	Drogheda Boundary Review website launched and live
25.11.15	Revised Documents for public display received via Louth County Council
25.11.15	Public Notice published by Louth County Council in local media (Meath Chronicle & 5 no. Louth publications)
26.11.15	Area of Interest Map circulated via Louth County Council
03.12.15	Meath County Council Public Documents delivered to Boundary Review Secretariat for availability of Committee. Documents also uploaded to Boundary Committee Alfresco site.
18.12.15	Committee meeting with full Council members (Meath County Council members 11am, Louth County Council members 2pm) in the Boyne Valley Hotel, Drogheda.
05.01.16	Proposed submissions reminder Notice and Letter to Stakeholders issued by Louth County Council (Email Correspondence)
06.01.16	Committee meeting held in Boyne Valley Hotel, Drogheda with Liaison Group
06.01.16	Standard Framework for Evaluation for Boundary Committees (Drafted Nov.15) referred to at meeting and received via IPA (by email correspondence)
06.01.16	Submission reminder Public Notice published by Louth County Council in Meath and Louth publications
06.01.16	Schedule of Boundary Committee meetings to be held with Liaison Group circulated via Secretariat
20.01.16	Committee meeting held with Liaison Group in Meath County Council offices
22.01.16	Meath County Council submission delivered to Boundary Review Secretariat and uploaded on Boundary Committee Alfresco site

Other Maps Referred to in the Submission

Figure A1: Indecon Map of the M1 (Dublin-Belfast) Corridor



Source: Reproduced from the report entitled M1 Economic Corridor Development Study (Draft Final Report, January 2010), prepared for Fingal County Council, Meath County Council and Louth County Council by Indecon International Economic Consultants.

