

**From:** sharon tolan <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday 22 January 2019 22:17  
**To:** RSES  
**Cc:** Cllr Sharon Tolan  
**Subject:** Submission by Cllr Sharon Tolan on the Draft RSES for the Eastern & Midland Region

To Whom It May Concern, Please Accept the Following for Consideration:-

**Submission by Cllr Sharon Tolan on the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Region**

I warmly welcome the opportunity to have further input into the preparation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Region, and wish to thank all of the team for the engagement thus far with Local Authority Members. I attended the briefing in Naas, and found it very beneficial. I wish to offer my own thoughts in relation to the constituents that I represent in the Municipal District of Laytown-Bettystown in the County of Meath, although I will primarily focus on the urban areas of Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington, and the town of Drogheda which straddles both County Louth and County Meath. The constituents I represent will undoubtedly be impacted by future development, growth and investment in both areas, or lack thereof.

As per the 2016 Census, the population of the urban area of Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington was over 12,000. This makes Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington the third largest town in Meath. Meath remains one of the most active locations in the Region for residential construction, with 398 homes registered as completed in Q3 of 2018, according to the CSO new dwelling completions statistics. There is no doubt that the highest percentage of these homes were in the urban area of Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington, therefore, the population has undoubtedly grown significantly since the Census of 2016.

The CSO figures of 2016, coupled with the Transport Studies completed by Meath County Council, show that we are failing dismally to provide employment opportunities locally for the population of L-B-M, with 84% of employed people commuting out of the area to work. Meath County Council's own studies show that more than 22,000 vehicles travel through the village of Julianstown on a daily basis. This alone, proves that the prohibitive cost and unreliable service provided by Irish Rail on the Northern Line is impacting significantly on the number of cars remaining on our roads. The electrification of the Northern Line should see significant improvements to this service, however, the provision of an additional train station in Bettystown, between Laytown and Drogheda, would further encourage commuters to use the rail service. It is important that national infrastructure investment is leveraged to create sustainable communities, and the provision of a train station in Bettystown would result in significant changes to travel patterns for people traveling to and from Dublin City Centre.

I welcome the inclusion of the crucial R150 Laytown-Bettystown Link Road project, and continue to work with Meath County Council to see this road delivered. However, I believe that to ensure that the Strategic Vision of the RSES is delivered, ***(To create a sustainable and competitive region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all.)*** the future delivery of both the Slane Bypass and the Julianstown Bypass is critical. Whilst bypasses of other rural villages such as Dunboyne have been delivered, it is difficult to understand how Julianstown continues to be choked on a daily basis by 22,000 vehicles, and commuters are saddled with an additional 30 minutes to their already long commute, by sitting bumper to bumper in Julianstown.

As part of the strategy of improving connectivity and creating more sustainable communities, ongoing investment in walking and cycling infrastructure is required. The delivery of the Boyne Greenway, and indeed the Newgrange to Newbridge Greenway, would have a very positive impact on tourism, but more crucially would promote more

sustainable communities and a more active and healthy lifestyle and make walking and cycling a more natural choice for shorter journeys, such as from Mornington to Drogheda and vice versa.

As Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington is one of the fastest growing settlements, CSO figures show a growth rate in excess of 32% over the past 10 years, with a population now estimated well in excess of 12,000, it must be included in the list of settlements for which a Local Transport Plan will be required. Table 8.5 Strategic Park and Ride Projects for the Region refers to Dunboyne as a proposed project, however, the Park & Ride at Dunboyne is already complete and should therefore be omitted from this table. The strategic location of a Park & Ride facility in Laytown would ensure more commuters choose the Rail Network as a mode of transport, instead of remaining in their cars for the daily commute. The lack of parking facilities at Laytown Train Station is having a detrimental impact on local businesses and families, where commuters are using on-street and playground parking for long periods.

### Drogheda

I welcome the designation of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre, and welcome all of the Regional Policy Objectives, and in particular the inclusion of a Joint Urban Area Plan to be prepared by both Louth and Meath County Councils. However, the population target of 50,000 set by the RSES for Drogheda by 2031 is insufficient, in my opinion, based on the historic growth rates and enhanced status. I also believe the current population growth trends would suggest that an additional policy to 'Support development of a regional hospital to serve the north east of the country', should be included in the Policy Objectives for Drogheda. Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital has seen significant investment in recent years, and this should continue. This hospital serves the needs of the population of Louth, East Meath and the wider region of the north east.

In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasise that the rapid growth of the Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington area, which addressed a significant housing affordability issue in the Greater Dublin Area at the time, resulted in rapid urbanisation of East Meath. This community desperately requires investment in services, infrastructure and employment growth, that Meath County Development Plan seeks to deliver. In order to achieve this, support for this investment must be included in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region.

Yours,

Cllr. Sharon Tolan  
Peace Commissioner  
Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District  
Meath County Council

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