

## Heather Cooke

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**From:** Breannán Casey <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 23 January 2019 16:10  
**To:** RSES  
**Subject:** RSES Submission - Draft Plan The Mill  
**Attachments:** The Mill - Draft RSES Response 23.01.2019.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Sir / Madam

Please see attached submission.

Regards

Breannán Casey  
Business Development Manager  
The Mill – Drogheda’s Enterprise Hub  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

“Now recruiting *Female Entrepreneurs for our Illuminate programme* commencing on Feb’ 18<sup>th</sup>,  
<https://themilldrogheda.ie/programmes/female-entrepreneurship-programme/illuminate-2019-course-content>”

[www.themilldrogheda.ie](http://www.themilldrogheda.ie) – “A supportive community where entrepreneurs with ambition can grow their business”

<https://www.meetup.com/Drogheda-Business-BookClub> - Drogheda Business Book Club

[www.M1PaymentsCorridor.com](http://www.M1PaymentsCorridor.com) – “Ireland’s Digital Payments Region”

[www.TEDxDrogheda.com](http://www.TEDxDrogheda.com) - “Ideas Worth Spreading”

[www.droghedayounginnovators.com](http://www.droghedayounginnovators.com) – “Promoting innovation in Drogheda secondary schools”

[www.RefreshBoyne.org](http://www.RefreshBoyne.org) – “Refreshing the creative, technical, and professional culture of the New Media industry in the Boyne region”



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



## **RSES Submission**

### **Response to Draft Plan 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019**

**Largest and fastest growing towns – CSO Press Release May 2017,**

*“Drogheda, with a population of 40,956 (up 6.2% since April 2011) remained the largest town in Ireland. Swords (39,248) and Dundalk (39,004) complete the top three. Ennis (25,276 persons) remained the largest town in Munster. Sligo with 19,199 persons was Connacht's largest town, while Letterkenny (19,274 persons) was the largest town in the three Ulster counties. The latter three towns experienced a slight decline in population since April 2011”.*

*(<http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/presstatementce nsus2016resultsprofile2-populationdistributionandmovements/>)*

**Submission by:**

Breannán Casey

BDM, The Mill Enterprise Hub, Drogheda, Co.Louth.

**[REDACTED]**  
**[REDACTED]**

## **About The Mill Enterprise Hub:**

The Mill's (Drogheda Enterprise Centre Ltd) mission is to promote a spirit of self-employment & enterprise to everybody in our community (Drogheda, South Louth, and East Meath area), and work with other relevant organisations across the region. The supports include training (personal & business skills), mentoring, access to subsidised office space, guidance from an experienced Centre Manager, sign-posting to sources of finance, and being part of a 'can-do' community.

The Mill Phase 1 building, completed in October 2013, proved that the Drogheda region is entrepreneurial, and has delivered significant entrepreneurial support on the ground. The Phase 2 building was completed in December 2016 and has been equally successful with 95% occupancy from April 2017. Our Capital projects are now fully operational, and we intend to concentrate on our programme support, including the M1 Payments Corridor project. We're a registered Charity, and have received significant support from local corporations, SME's, and public sector organisations (Louth County Council, Enterprise Ireland). Our voluntary Board consists of local entrepreneurs, Meath & Louth LEO, DKIT, Louth County Council, and experienced business contacts.

In its short existence, the Mill has created a number of critical economic development programmes to foster entrepreneurship in the region, for example:

- M1 Payments Corridor (included in NorthEast Action Plan for Jobs) – Designated region for Digital Payments Industry,
- FoodTech programme for companies providing IT and professional services to the Food & Beverage sector,
- Illuminate Female Entrepreneurship (partnered with DCU Ryan Academy) for early-stage entrepreneurs,
- Drogheda Young Innovators – supporting innovation from 9 local secondary schools.

M1 Payments Corridor's work to date includes:

- Two National ePayments Conferences: October 2015, and September 2016. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
- World's First 'Payments Dojo', Oct 2016 –Teenagers examining Digital Payments sector. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

- Steering Group formed of industry (State Street, PayPal, Coca-Cola International Services), Government Agencies (IDA, Enterprise Ireland, and Academia (DCU and DKIT)).

Breannán Casey, BDM at The Mill was the NorthEast co-ordinator for The Startup Ireland Gathering which was a key part of the Irish Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2015 strategy. This helped to cement our newly-formed position as a key player for enterprise support in South Louth / Drogheda / East Meath. With over 400 events for startups across the country, the Startup Gathering 2015 proved to be the biggest startup events in the world.

*Other Impacts include:*

- = Over 30 companies / Startups permanently based at The Mill;
- = Over 50 networking & training events for SMEs, with circa 800 attendees;
- = 100 free mentoring sessions with Startups.

## Submission:

- The growth Strategy for Drogheda is listed as “the promotion as a regional growth centre supported by a number of key towns and to focus on improving local economies and quality of life to attract investment”. *It is welcome that Drogheda’s position as a regional centre is recognised and imperative that its position is not watered down in the final plan.*
- Page 95 states “Sectoral Opportunities Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (including Dundalk and Drogheda) include Advanced manufacturing, smart manufacturing, biopharma, bioprocessing, applied nanotechnology, alcoholic beverages, marine energy, energy storage, wind energy, advance manufacturing, experiential tourism, and Fintech. *The [www.MIPaymentsCorridor.com](http://www.MIPaymentsCorridor.com) project, with management from Drogheda, should be specifically highlighted as a priority for regional development, as per the current NorthEast Action Plan for Jobs.*
- *The forecasted Drogheda population of 50,000 in 2031 (p 48 of draft plan) is significantly below reality* “The vision provided for in the draft RSES is that Drogheda will act as a Regional Growth Centre with a population target in the region of 50,000 by 2031”. This projection skews all propositions in draft plan as all new and improved services and policies are based on a number that is too low.
- Based on past % growth rate in last 4 census’, the population of Drogheda will significantly exceed 50,000 in 2031. Using same % growth rate, the population of Drogheda (excluding hinterland from 1 to 10km) will be 68,577 in 2036.
- The current population of Drogheda and Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington (LBM) is already over 50,000 (40,956 + 11,872). The draft plan doesn’t recognise growth of LBM (34<sup>th</sup> largest town in Ireland / 222% population growth in last 20 years) and how LBM and Drogheda are merging due to close proximity and ongoing construction in region.

		CENSUS FIGURES							
	Distance from Drogheda town centre	1996	2002	2006	2011	2016	Increase in pop from 1996 to 2016	% population increase from 1996 to 2016	Extend same 20 year % from 2016 to 2036
Drogheda		24,460	28333	28973	38,578	40956	16496	67.4%	68577
LBM	1-10km	3678	5597	8978	10889	11872	8194	222.8%	38321
Termonfeckin	7km	530	503	653	1443	1579	1049	197.9%	4704
Duleek	7km	1731	2173	3236	3988	4219	2488	143.7%	10283
AN Other									tbc
Total		30399	36606	41840	54898	58626	28227		121885

- The chart above highlights population growth within Drogheda and some of the surrounding towns. It excludes multiple towns within 1 to 10km zone (Tinure, Collon, Slane etc) but still has projected population of within 10km region of 121,885.
- Commuters / Startups: SMEs in the NorthEast are still pulled towards the Dublin region as that is where the largest amount of supports (incubators, specialised support agency staff) support are available. The Government needs to further prioritise regionalisation, but also recognise that support is not just for the 5 main cities in Ireland or the Atlantic coast. SMEs in the Northeast should be able to access the same level of supports as any city in Ireland. We want to be able to harness the skilled managers and owners that are currently commuting to Dublin and ensure that they can establish businesses locally and contribute to a sustainable

regional economy. The benefits will include greater productivity, reduced costs, improved work/life balance, greater regional growth, and lower carbon footprint.

- Drogheda has a migratory workforce of 6,845 people (a total workforce of 13,062) (CSO 2016) who travel to work outside of Drogheda, primarily to Dublin. This is a significant daily talent and resource drain to Drogheda. We need to see a move away from developing Drogheda as a commuter town and development region for Dublin's workforce. Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington *with 28 per cent of its 4,565 workers, had the highest percentage of persons with a long commute (over 60 minutes)* in Ireland.
- The plan should target the development of a Commuter project across Louth, Meath, Wicklow and Kildare to support commuters that wish to establish businesses in the region. The Mill Enterprise Hub is currently examining the creation of a programme. Equally, the region should develop a campaign similar to [www.lookwest.ie](http://www.lookwest.ie) to support companies and individuals that could move or partially move to the hinterland region. It is proposed that a co-ordinated 3-5 year Programme aimed at marketing & supporting the alternative of working from closer to home will be developed & delivered by the Enterprise Centres located in LMKW. The benefits from this win:win strategy are self-evident:
  - Greater Regional Growth
  - Less congestion on roads , rail .
  - Improved work life balance
  - Improved productivity
  - More balanced economic development
  - Less demands on our environment
  - Lowering of carbon footprint

Activities would include:

- Advertising / Marketing Campaign – Target newcomers to region, & those born in region but have always worked in Dublin. Benefits of region (Skillset, access to Dublin, cost base, housing etc).
- Promotion of Research Centres, Clusters, Funding, Enterprise Centres / Support structures, Success Stories



- Training (specifically for Commuters) – evening, networking element (introduce to support organisations), introduction to other ex-commuters/success stories, funding workshop.
  - Guide to Living in region
  - Website / Booklet
  - Encourages Councils / LEOs to co-operate– good ‘value-add’ for sustainability & other non-economic development joint opportunities.
  - Encourage population growth closer to where employment is located and is likely to be;
- The vision on page 1 states *“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”* - Drogheda and surrounding areas has one of the largest population increases in recent years. Since the 1970’s, Drogheda has replaced its traditional manufacturing business with Professional services companies. The proximity (25 minutes) to Dublin airport, lower housing and office costs (compared to Dublin) and ability to attract employees from the wider population area is a unique advantage to Drogheda
- As per CSO press release (cover page of this submission) above, Drogheda is already rapidly expanding. The EMRA RSES plan should be prioritising the development of Drogheda to alleviate some of the stress on Dublin’s infrastructure (housing, traffic etc). Drogheda is already expanding on a natural basis, in comparison to other smaller towns (Sligo, Ennis, Letterkenny) which are declining according to the 2016 status. Drogheda will not be able to manage this growth if it is not supported by the appropriate funding and designated support.
- Page 48 of draft plan states *“In order to enhance co-ordination of development in Drogheda where the town and its environs lie within the combined functional area of two Local Authorities, the preparation and adoption of a Joint Urban Area Plan (UAP) shall be a priority for Louth County Council and Meath County Council following the adoption of the RSES, to provide a coordinated planning framework to identify and deliver strategic sites and regeneration areas so that a minimum of 30% compact growth can be achieved. This requires a focused approach and coordinated*

*action amongst Local Authorities and other agencies.”* The greater Drogheda region is unique in relation to Spatial Strategy as it crosses two counties (Louth & Meath), and also traverses two Regional Assemblies (Louth is now based in Eastern Midland Region Assembly but, in addition, is also temporarily represented on the Northern & Western RA due to past position on BMW assembly. This fact poses difficulties for the Drogheda and Entire North-East region as its future spatial strategy is often based on information from one source, instead of focusing on the larger catchment area. It is critical that Louth and Meath Councils and support agencies work together to plan growth of Drogheda environs across enterprise development, services, tourism, housing etc.

- Page 6 states that Local Authorities will need to implement the plan. The planning and economic strategies will not be achievable if the current ad-hoc local governance is intended to deliver them, especially in situations like Drogheda crossing county boundaries. The proposed joint urban plan needs to include a short timeframe. A similar plan for co-operation was included in the Boundary Review by local government in 2016 but the joint activity is limited to date.
  
- The current RSES demographics indicates a high requirement for third level education in 2025-2030, if this is allowed occur with existing facilities it will increase the already critical transport and housing demand for Dublin, consideration should be giving to re-location of specific functions to educational campus closer to the centres (including Drogheda) where this requirement is greatest and to promote the use of communication technology to reduce travel requirements. Page 91 cites location of technology and university campus as primary drivers for identifying locations for strategic employment generation. Drogheda due to its location infrastructure and transport services has excellent access to universities and IOTs and to DIFE. The fact that there is not a University or IOT in the town/city should not preclude Drogheda as a location for strategic employment generation.
  
- On page 124 Under Greenways, Blueways and Peatways the Boyne Greenway (Boyneside Trail is now expanded from Newbridge to Newgrange) should be included. On page 126, in the Table Greenway opportunities, the following should be included “The Boyne Greenway (Boyneside Trail) which is partially complete with

the remainder at an advanced stage of planning has recently been expanded to become the Newbridge to Newgrange greenway as a collaboration between Fingal, Meath and Louth. This walking and cycling route will pass through, in a sustainable manner, a world class landscape of outstanding heritage biodiversity and culture, it will serve the largest population centre in the country and provide significant economic, tourism and health benefits and critical infrastructure linkages to transportation hubs” .

- There is not enough suitable office accommodation for FDIs or expanding SMES in the greater Drogheda region. The IDA Business & Technology park in Drogheda has not been developed in the past ten years, and only contains one large company. It is ideally located off the M1, but current IDA capital spend is limited to nine towns.
- A transition to low carbon society is better served by maximising the use of existing infrastructure and assets, to this end reviewing the underused return trips for trains and road travel will highlight the benefits of increased employment generation in areas where population increase based consumer desire is evident. Drogheda and its hinterland, as Irelands fastest growth area outside Dublin is one such example.
- Page 21 states “One of the key challenges facing the Region is the need for better alignment between population growth, location of residential development and employment to create healthy and attractive places, and this is reflected in the Vision Statement.” – Drogheda’s population is growing but is not currently aligned with services and policies due to lack of co-operation across local authorities and other agencies.
- Page 31 defines the requirement for cross boundary collaboration and the requirement for Joint Urban area plans for towns like Drogheda. Drogheda’s ability to flourish has been seriously hampered by the lack of such a plan and therefore there should be some time limit placed on this requirement. It is also important to recognise that Drogheda co-operates (and competes) with Dundalk for economic investment and with Navan for tourism positioning within the Boyne valley, it would be therefore inappropriate if the joint urban plan was developed without a strong Drogheda-centric

involvement (such as Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, BIDS or Mill Enterprise Hub) in the process.

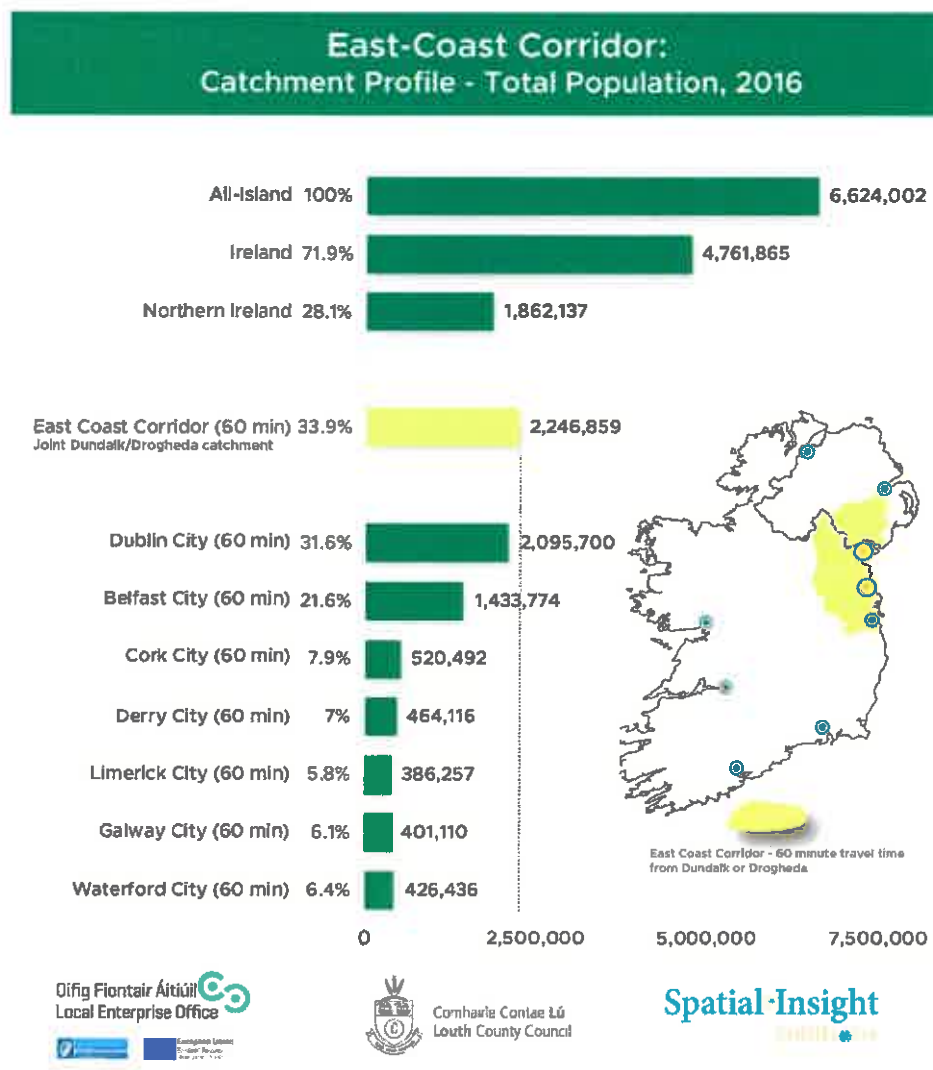
- Page 38 'section 4.2'. Drogheda is the only Regional Growth Centre in the Hinterland of Dublin. This provides a unique opportunity to develop another standalone sustainable centre that can complement Dublin whilst also offering an alternative within easy reach of Dublin's amenities and resources (Universities, population, R&D)
  
- RPO 4.8 mentions development of lands at McBride station as employment generation, this should specifically include the Marsh Road brownfield lands including between the R150 and the river Boyne as phase 1 and between The R150 and the railway as Phase 2.
  
- RPO 4.9 supports the relocation of Drogheda Port. This will offer an opportunity to develop the docklands as an urban centre for enterprise, retail, tourism and housing. This priority should be specifically included in the RSES plan.
  
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- P105 "The 'All Ireland Smart Cities Forum', supported by Maynooth University provides a platform for networked knowledge sharing between the cities of Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Belfast and Derry and includes the two regional initiatives of Smart Dublin and Cork Smart Gateway" – Drogheda should be added to this initiative as per RPO 6.24 on page 105

## Drogheda Region Profile:

According to the 2016 Census, 40,956 people live in Drogheda, an increase of 6.2% in the five years from April 2011, when it was also recorded as the largest town in the Republic of Ireland. The population within 10km of Drogheda is currently circa 80,000 people and is could grow to up to 250,000 by 2050.

Drogheda- LBM (Laytown-Bettystown-Mornington) provides a unique situation in Ireland, where two adjoining plus-10,000 settlements are physically merging. The population growth evidence points to Drogheda continuing its demographic growth of up to three times that of the State population growth rate since 1996. Since then it Drogheda has become and continues to be Ireland's largest town.

Drogheda and Dundalk have a population within a 1 hour catchment area of over 2.2 million along the East Coast Corridor, as per recent study on behalf of the M1 Corridor project by Louth Cunty Council. This is the highest rate for any urban area in Ireland.



The greater Drogheda region is unique in relation to Spatial Strategy as it crosses two counties (Louth & Meath), and also traverses two Regional Assemblies (Louth is now based in Eastern Midland Region Assembly but, in addition, is also temporarily represented on the Northern & Western RA due to past position on BMW assembly. This fact poses difficulties for the Drogheda and Entire North-East region as its **future spatial strategy is often based on information from one source, instead of focusing on the larger catchment area.** Drogheda's location in both County Louth and Meath, has traditionally had practical implications for enterprise support, as for example, IDA and Enterprise Ireland have different 'regional' contacts in both counties – Louth was part of Border region, whilst Meath was in Mid-East region. For example, at a very basic level, it would duplicate activities if Meath County Council established an additional Enterprise Centre in South Drogheda. Similarly, it is not practical for Meath and Louth to both have a separate FDI policy for the one town, which may or may not match be perfectly aligned.

Drogheda town is the closest 'urban' area to citizens of the Meath-based South Drogheda environs. It makes practical sense that they gravitate to Drogheda in relation to accessing economic development support, or other non-economic government support. At the moment, they need to apply to Meath-based agencies to access that support and can't access it if they decide to set up a business a couple of hundred meters up the road in the Louth part of Drogheda.

Over the past thirty years, Drogheda has become a commuter town with residents travelling to Dublin to work. If Drogheda is to truly prosper, it needs to have a local sustainable economy with the right mixture of FDI and indigenous businesses. To achieve this, it will need strong leadership, clear goals, and a cohesive plan for Drogheda, its environs, and its wider population. Going by past experience, the fact that two councils have to jointly deliver this leadership/cohesive plan, we believe the economic growth has not been as successful as it could have been.

A town is not just about economic development – people will only establish businesses (FDI or indigenous) in Drogheda if the living conditions are right. We need to encourage greater sporting, recreational, and artistic development in the town to ensure that a culture and identity is formed. For example, Drogheda Arts festival and Drogheda Maritime Port festival occur every year, and are supported by Louth County Council, and other private organisations on both side of the Louth/Meath border. These, and other festivals could be expanded if National agencies truly recognised Drogheda as the largest regional town. Additionally, Meath County Council's Arts focus does not cover the wider Drogheda area even though southern environs of Drogheda, with a population of 6000, are the Meath boundary

Drogheda council administrative borders are zig-zagged right across the town, and visitors to Drogheda (whether business investors or tourists) are most likely oblivious to whether they are in Louth or Meath. Drogheda is classified as a 'Flagship' town by the rural Economic Development Zone (REDZ), with a number of smaller towns of up to 10,000 population

within a 10-mile radius. The region is classified as an Intermediate Rural Area, defined as “Intermediate rural areas are associated with the smaller cities, larger towns and geographically small REDZs which contain a town that accounts for a large proportion of their total population”.

The region needs to capitalize on its proximity to Dublin, without becoming reliant on it – it needs to ensure that indigenous industries can access all the available support locally, including advice and funding.

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

Drogheda is an ideal situation (geographically & economically) to complement Dublin’s dominant economic position and absorb some of the strain on its resources. As the town with the largest population in Ireland, we believe that we can mirror the 5 cities in offering a focal point to drive growth, and to work with the smaller and larger (Dundalk, Navan, Swords) towns in our hinterland to develop pockets of regional and national innovation.

**The Mill Contact Details:**

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