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From: Peter Judge <[REDACTED]>
Organisation: Sinn Fein

Message Body:
Please find file attached in relation to submission for Moate Local Electoral Area, Westmeath

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Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Submission Westmeath (Moate LEA)

1. Out of 55,793 citizens in Westmeath aged 5 and upwards according to the 2016 Census, only 5,257 use public transport whether it be bus, coach or train to get to and from work, school or college. This shows a fundamental lack of both investment and interest in providing adequate public transport services for residents, particularly within the Moate Local Electoral area where there is only access to a bus service, that has already seen said service greatly reduced with a threat to having it withdrawn from areas like Tyrrellspass that as we know is on the main Dublin Galway route. Greater engagement with the Dept of Transport and the NTA is needed in order to retain and build on these services.
2. While approximately 66% of homes have access to broadband across Westmeath, rural areas have continually dealt with inconsistency of service, particularly in relation to both download and upload speeds. It took a private company (Imagine) to provide high speed LTE broadband across the Moate urban and part of the rural area but areas outside of this company's reach are still stuck with either inferior hard line speeds or live in an area where they are unable to obtain strength of service to provide adequate 4G. This service is essential to our agricultural, business and student community.
3. Having touched on the Motorway access in point one. I believe that the advantages to said service being in such close proximity to towns like Tyrrellspass, Kilbeggan and Moate is not adequately taken advantage of in relation to attracting new business, industry and employment. A strategy group should be set up working in tandem with IDA representatives to examine the feasibility of attracting new business and industry to areas outside of the M50.

4. Rich aspects of tourism abound across Westmeath that need to be marketed properly, areas like the Distillery in Kilbeggan that generates a lot of visitors but the services around the town, particularly parking, phone service and lack of investment hinder growth and expansion with regard to this amenity.

Durrow Abbey which straddles the Westmeath/Offaly border that houses one of Irelands few remaining High crosses. Co-operative engagement with Offaly County Council and its heritage and arts officer would be advantageous in promoting the area and attracting interest.