

**Submission to
Louth Development Plan 2021-2027**

On behalf of the

**Changing Places for Drogheda and Beyond
campaign group**

Changing Places for Drogheda and Beyond

We, the committee of Changing Places for Drogheda and Beyond are submitting this proposal on behalf of all the individuals and community organisations listed below. We believe that a Changing Places facility will be an added necessity and benefit Drogheda's disabled community, businesses and visitors to our town Drogheda.

Proposal

To procure and provide a Changing Places facility, in the right location in a public building, in Drogheda.

Objective

The objective of this project is to find the best accessible location for a Changing Places facility in Drogheda for the disabled community and disabled visitors to the town of Drogheda, either from the public or private sector. Ideally housing a Changing Places facility in a public building will ensure that it will be maintained and managed to high standards. The location is key and we believe that once a firm commitment by Louth County Council to install a Changing Place, the ideal location will follow in the best location amongst the buildings within Drogheda that the council own, like O'Reillys in Narrow West St, West Gate area, Dominican Church. It is also extremely important that the facility meets the criteria and NDA standards in order to be registered with Changing Places Ireland <http://www.changingplacesireland.ie/>

Introduction

Changing Places are life changing facilities for a significant percentage of the 600,000 people in Ireland with profound disabilities, of which 14% are in Louth, who are unable to use a standard WC or accessible toilet. Drogheda is the largest town in Ireland and it is incumbent that Louth County Council provide a Changing Place facility in the town centre, which would be readily accessible. Changing Places toilets are designed to support the disabled community and provide access to public toilet facilities that meet more complex needs, while offering more space and additional equipment. Changing Places toilets ensure people with disabilities can relieve themselves with dignity; whilst also providing room for a powered wheelchair or multiple carers. Without these vital facilities, carers are forced to change loved ones on a filthy dirty floor or be confined to their own homes.

These facilities provide much more than the standard 'Part M' disabled toilets. Going forward Louth County Council should adopt a policy in the County Development Plan that a Changing Place facility is included as a condition of planning for all new commercial and public buildings where facilities are required to be provided under planning regulations and become mandatory. The National coverage recently on social media and on the RTE news have highlighted awareness and the Minister for the Department of housing publicly announced that he would set up a working group to give consideration to providing for Changing Places in new large buildings and those undergoing works.

Requirements

The minimum area requirements for a Changing Places facility is 12 meters squared, for example 4m x 3m room with a ceiling height of 8ft.

An overview of the equipment expected in these facilities include:

- Full room covering Ceiling Hoist systems
- Height adjustable Changing Adult Benches
- Showering facilities (optional)
- Centrally located peninsular toilet with space both sides for transfer/carer
- Adjustable sink
- Privacy screen

Benefits

The benefits to the user and community have proven in other city and town settings with positive impacts on individuals and communities. Individuals can plan day long outings knowing that a Changing Place facility is within easy reach. Businesses benefit from extra footfall and increased revenue from individuals that in the past would have cut their shopping plans short or never have visited or shopped in Drogheda. Users of such Changing Places facilities love a good feel factor and as we all know good news travels fast. Documenting visits to Changing Places on their social networks will show Drogheda is leading by example and have a positive impact on press relations for the town.

Statistics

13.5% of the Irish population have a disability. Ensuring we provide suitable toilet facilities are vital to help create equality in our society. Many make the conscious decision not to visit somewhere if they feel they do not have a clean, suitable environment to toilet.

There are less than 15 registered Changing Places nationwide. Our nearest Changing Place is at Dublin Airport. With an increasing need for Changing Places more than ever before as people with disabilities are seen in the community, it is our responsibility to ensure they are included in society and their overall well being of security, safety, comfort and dignity achieve inclusion, independence, acceptance and above all equality.

Without these facilities people with disabilities and their families cannot take part in activities that most of us take for granted.

Below are statistics reflecting the increase in disabled individuals since the last 2 census and the projected 2021 census next year which will verify growth trends going forward, well into the future. If we sit back and do nothing now, we are denying people with disabilities access to our town and we will be left behind in infrastructure development.

- There were a total of 643,131 people who stated they had a disability in April 2016, accounting for 13.5 per cent of the population.
- This represented an increase of 47,796 persons (8%) on the 2011 figure of 595,335.
- In 2016, 311,580 (48.4%) persons with a disability were male while 331,551 (51.6%) were female.

In Louth there are 17,881 people living with disabilities that's 14% of the population, making Louth higher than the national average. Of which

- 8,732 are males living with disabilities
- 9,149 are females living with disabilities and
- 5,352 are carers

Given the above growth, we can expect a minimum overall increase of 51,450 (8%) on 2016 figure of 643,131 to reach 694,581 in 2021.

We are not the only town campaigning for a Changing Places facility. Currently Inishowen, Donegal are actively campaigning to add to the facilities already registered and in use around Ireland. These are:-

1. Dublin Airport terminal 1
2. Áras an Uachtarain
3. Trinity College Dublin
4. IKEA Ballymun Dublin
5. Marlay Park courtyard, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin
6. Dundrum Town Centre, Sandyford Road, Dublin 16
7. Dunnes Stores, Jetland shopping Centre, Ennis Road, Limerick
8. Tullamore Primary Care Centre, Church View, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
9. Athboy Convent Community Centre, Kildalkey Road, Athboy, Co. Meath.
10. The National Heritage Park (in conjunction with Wexford County Council).
11. The Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission
12. The Lime Tree Theatre, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.
13. Maynooth University, North Campus
14. The National Art Gallery Dublin

Financial

Using an existing public building eliminates the expense of ground works. Electricity, Sewage and mains water are already in situ. The costs that will be incurred given the optimal location assigned to this project could be minimised considerably given proper planning and consultation. The cost of the equipment needed is as follows

CHANGING PLACES EXAMPLE ROOM QUOTE

Product	Cost	VAT	Total
TOTCLOSOMAT CLOSOMAT PALMA VITA WASH/DRY TOILET WITH TOUCH SENSITIVE HAND SWITCH SUPPLY ONLY EXCLUDES INSTALLATION	€3650.00	€839.50	€4489.50
PRESSMODEL150 WALL MOUNTED ELECTRIC BENCH PRESSALIT NURSING BENCH 1000 INCLUDES INSTALLATION *POWER REQUIRED	€4594.00	€620.19	€5214.19
WASHBASIN POW.HEIGHT ADJUSTABLE WASH BASIN WITH LEVER TAP QUOTE IS FOR SUPPLY ONLY EXCLUDES INSTALLATION	€3437.00	€790.51	€4227.51
OPEOT2002FB OPEMED OT200 CEILING HOIST *TOTAL ROOM COVERAGE SYSTEM* INCLUDES INSTALLATION	€2895.00	€390.82	€3285.82
OPESCREEN PRIVACY SCREEN FIXED TO WALL INCLUDES INSTALLATION	€1648.00	€222.48	€1870.48
Total	€16244.00	€3138.53	€19362.53

These materials are examples of products available and estimated prices. Confirmation of products needed will need to be confirmed. A more detailed estimate of costs associated with the remodelling of an existing building will need to be obtained also, once a favorable location has been acquired.

There could be a possibility of achieving a nominal fee to use the Changing Places facility. In addition to keypad entry, users could purchase a skeleton key from a designated agency like the Irish Wheelchair Association to allow access to Changing Places nationwide. This fee could generate revenue for the upkeep and maintenance of the Changing Places facilities.

Making a Difference

I have been speaking to numerous individuals and organisations over the last number of years, from parents to carers, politicians to business people, and those that need and want Changing Places more than anyone else, the disability organisations that provide invaluable support to the disabled community and their families, all have expressed their desire to get behind the campaign and make a joint effort in securing a Changing Place for Drogheda.

The following are some of the views of individuals in our community

A Changing Place in Drogheda is so fundamental and vital to people with disabilities. People with disabilities should not face any barriers if they feel like coming to Drogheda town centre. It would take the stress out of planning a trip to Drogheda for the person with a disability, a family member or carer. If I want to go to the town I need to plan ahead and I'm constantly going to the same places as a lot of places don't have an accessible bathroom. To be able to get out and be independent, that for me is so important. When I can't be independent I feel stuck and useless. This is the impact that having no CP in Drogheda has on me. It can restrict my social life! If there was a CP in Drogheda it would mean people with disabilities or their families can make a spur of the moment decision and know there wouldn't be any barriers. This would make such a difference! Very often the experience of people with a disability is that their voices are not heard and no one cares about their opinions. People with disabilities should have the freedom to be able to do the same as an able bodied person. As long as there is no CP in Drogheda we can't! Nicola

'The lack of Changing Places Toilet Facilities greatly restricts people's everyday lives. a HCA who deals with adults on a daily basis said 'Not being able to go anywhere because of the lockdown is not new to me, it's my everyday experience. The people I care for have the same needs as everyone else but are unable to do these due to toilets not having the additional equipment that we need. We have to plan our activities/outings around these basic/essential needs, so if there is no facilities. We are restricted in where we can go and what we can do, we often have no choice.

Drogheda is seriously failing the disability community and their carers by failing to provide adequate toilet facilities. We badly need one. Not only will it help be used by locals, but it would attract visitors from all over who would appreciate the facilities'.
Colin, a carer

After using Changing Places facilities in the UK, my frustration with standard disabled toilets increased tenfold. Not only are they constantly being abused by persons that clearly don't need to use them, they are overcrowded by large bins or baby changing tables make them small and cramped and unfit for use and unable to accommodate both my son and myself, as his carer. The constant anxiety I feel while attending to my son's hygiene needs, that I am taking too long, puts pressure on me, which my son can sense, to the growing queue of mothers and their babies waiting to use this out of date disabled toilet that has been turned into a baby changing room. Annette, parent

Summary

To find and locate a proper Changing Places facility in the town of Drogheda, preferably within the public sector to support the disability community and allow them to carry out their daily activities, like everyone else, such as shopping, socialising and even working without any restrictions or compromise to their overall well being. For many a Changing Places facility in Drogheda is a necessity that they cannot do without.

Inclusion, accessibility and acceptance, as well as equality are paramount to enable a society to grow with each other and fulfill everyone's potential and happiness in life. Changing Places is a positive addition to any town and it will benefit our community and town of Drogheda greatly with increased footfall and much needed revenue and publicity.

Please give this proposal the go ahead.....you won't regret its impact on Ireland's largest town, Drogheda.

Thank you for your consideration and time in reading this proposal