

22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2020

Re **Submission to Louth County Development Plan**

To whom it may concern

In a draft plan in which the strategic vision sets out to deliver a county whose heritage is to be protected, the omission of the Irish Language from the Draft County Development Plan is alarming.

The LECP 2016-2022 identifies the importance of the Oriel heritage in Louth, where the Oriel Irish dialect was spoken until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a heritage to be protected and promoted. The LECP recognises the importance of the language and its relationship to self-esteem and pride of place in the community. The strategic vision of the Draft County development plan seeks to ensure that no individual or social group is excluded, ensure social sustainability and protected heritage, yet doesn't mention the Irish language.

Louth County Council should consider the importance of the Irish language to the county and give it due consideration when reviewing the draft plan, and include policies and actions that are supportive to the development of the language from 2021-2027.

I request that the following be included in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

**1. Co. Louth Irish Language Plan**

Develop an Irish Language County Plan in conjunction with various agencies and organisations across the county, in line with the National 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030

**2. Identified need for a plan to provide Irish medium education in the county with planning for Naíonraí, Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí in Louth within the lifetime of this plan.**

Louth currently has one of the lowest rates of provision of Irish medium education at both primary and secondary level in the country and is the lowest in Leinster.

The Louth Development Plan should prioritise the planning for additional Naíonraí and Gaelscoileanna in areas where population centres are set to increase as a result of new residential development. This need is not only evidenced by the oversubscribed Gaeilscoileanna and Naíonraí in Drogheda and Dundalk, but by the number of children currently travelling to Balbriggan from Drogheda and Dundalk to obtain post primary Irish medium education.

In addition to this, planning should be started for the provision of Irish medium education from Naíonraí level in the north of the county to support Louth County Council's aim to promote and protect the language and heritage from the Oriel region.

The Louth Development Plan should prioritise the planning for a Gaelcholáiste in Dundalk, to be included in the Louth County Development Plan, based on the approval in principle by the Department of Education for a satellite of Coláiste Ghlor na Mara in Dundalk, dependent on a suitable premises being identified, which will act as the nucleus for the gaelcholáiste. The gaelcholáiste will serve all of north, mid and south Louth as far south as Termonfeckin / north Drogheda environs, as the Balbriggan gaelcholáiste already serves south Drogheda.

**3. Equality of language on signage in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003.**

Make equality of language on signage a policy in the Louth County Development Plan, ensuring that the Irish spelling and grammar on signage is checked and correct for all signs produced by Louth Co. Council by the Oifigeach Gaeilge.

**4. Encouragement/promotion of business and shop signage in Irish or bilingual format**

As funding is now being provided for the preservation of Irish language business and shop fronts, the Development Plan should make it a priority to encourage and promote the use of Irish on business and shop fronts in the county.

## **5. Naming of new developments in Louth**

All planning applications granted for housing developments and new streets should include a planning condition that proposals for the naming of the development and associated roads and streets are either in the Irish language and/or in bilingual format and reflecting local heritage of Co. Louth in accordance with the Department Circular 'Naming of Streets and Roads, Numbering of Houses and the Use of Irish'.

Yours sincerely

John McBride