



**EMPLOYMENT GENERATION & ENTERPRISE
DEVELOPMENT**



CHAPTER 4

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

The key economic challenge, which the Borough is likely to face over the plan period, will be to cater for the growth anticipated over coming years. Drogheda is already Ireland's largest town and this growth is likely to continue. During the course of the previous plan period many people relocated to Drogheda to take advantage of its close proximity to all the facilities of Dublin city yet enjoy the benefits of much lower housing costs. Drogheda is now firmly established as being within easy commuting range of Dublin, consequently there is a growing pool of highly skilled workers based in the town and travelling to work in Dublin, Dundalk and other centres.. Most of these would be predisposed to employment opportunities nearer home. There is a ready supply of skilled labour in the region. Within a 30 mile radius there are 4 Universities and 4 Institutes of Technology.

Economic growth and the creation of sustainable employment must be generated from a variety of sources both internal and external. Any plan must address the creation of enterprise and employment opportunities indigenous to the Borough and its immediate hinterlands rather than continuing the unsustainable trend towards commuting to Dublin and other centres. There are many strengths, which the Borough can draw upon. These include the significant improvements made in infrastructure over recent years, particularly in road and public transport links, the success of Drogheda Port, the proximity to Dublin, Drogheda's location on the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor and the wealth of natural and man made tourist attractions both within and surrounding the Borough. The Borough can also draw upon its existing successful enterprises. The Borough is home of some of the best-known brand leaders in the world. Coca-Cola, Ryu-Syo, and Becton Dickinson are just some of the International companies that have found Drogheda a highly effective place from which to serve their respective markets. These businesses and many others chose Drogheda not only for its excellent commercial, social and recreational infrastructure, but also its easy access to Dublin.

However the Borough also has a number of structural economic problems, which must be addressed. These include the predominance of relatively small scale manufacturing firms serving primarily local markets, the lack of significant foreign investment in the Borough, an untapped potential tourist market, and relatively low participation rates in higher and further education.



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

Highest level of education obtained by population Census 2002

	Drogheda % of population	Co. Louth % of population	National % of population
No formal education / Primary education	25.6 (4904)	24.5	21.1
Lower secondary education (Junior Cert, Group Cert, 'O' Levels)	23.3 (4462)	24.8	21.6
Upper secondary (Leaving Cert, 'A' Levels)	26.7 (5127)	26.4	27.6
Non-degree qualification	9.8 (1878)	9.4	9.6
Degree or higher	11.7 (2202)	11.1	15.1

Table 1: Analysis Of Educational Attainment for persons 15 years and over in Drogheda Borough Council Area as per Census 2002 data.

The number of persons who have a degree qualification or higher is 2202 persons or 11.7% of the population. This compares with Co. Louth's figure of 11.1 % and the national figure of 15.1%. The numbers of persons with upper secondary or Leaving Cert / A level qualifications is 5127 persons or 26.7 % of the population. This compares to Co. Louth's figure of 26.4% and the national figure of 27.6%.

The numbers of persons with no formal education / primary education is 4,904 persons or 25.6% of the total population. This compares to 24.5% in Co. Louth and 21.1% nationally.

These trends underline the desirability of developing forms of third level or further educational facilities and opportunities in the town in the form of outreach facilities.

4.2 Employment activity in Drogheda

In 2004 the Borough had a number of employment generating centres at a variety of locations. The more significant of these included:

- East Coast Business Park
- Newgrange Business Park
- Marsh Road



Plean Forbairt 2005 – 2011

Development Plan 2005 - 2011

- Boyne Business Park
- Premier Perclaise Commercial area
- Drogheda Port
- Marley's Lane Commercial Area
- Drogheda Industrial Estate, Donore Road

4.3 Drogheda Industrial Estate, Donore Road

The Drogheda Industrial Estate, Donore Road, located in south west Drogheda is a long established industrial designated area. It is strategically placed close to the Donore Road motorway interchange and new IDA site just adjacent the Borough boundary in County Meath. The estate is home to a number of medium commercial units employing over 50 people each and larger enterprises employing in excess of 200 people. The largest enterprises in the estate include Becton Dickinson & Co. Ltd. (manufacturing disposable syringes) and the Atlantic Industries (Coca Cola) plant. Other enterprises in the medium sized category include Thorsman Ireland Ltd (plastic clips and wall fixings), Irish Flavours & Fragrances (flavours and fragrances); RyuSyo Ltd (electronic components); New Era Packaging Ltd. (adhesive papers, labels) and Irish Breeze (toiletries) etc. A number of the larger factory sites have become vacant since the last development plan including the Tellabs (a telecommunication components factory) and the Bissell factory.

4.4 Newgrange Business Park

Newgrange Business Park has been largely developed for retail manufacture and distribution but there are also a number of car showroom and garages with an NCT centre plus a number of offices and light engineering activities. Bus Eireann have a maintenance depot in the Park together with Lakeland Diaries which runs a grain drying operation from the Park.

4.5 East Coast Business Park

East Coast Business Park is a relatively new business Park which has been custom built with approximately 15 No. light commercial / industrial warehouses in 6 blocks with a total floor area of approximately 12,000 m². Natures Best (vegetable processing) is the largest operator in the business park with over 200 employees and. The operation predates the new purpose built light commercial / industrial units.

4.6 Boyne Business Park

Boyne Business Park on the north eastern side of Drogheda is a relatively new business park which has a range of business providers. Many of the units in the original phase of the development are small business incubator units which have a wide range of commercial uses.

There are a number of other large employers in various locations around the Borough including Premier Periclase (magnesia), Hilton Foods, a new food packaging plant on grounds owned by the IDA, both to the east (Termonfeckin Road) of the Borough and Glanbia (milk producer) to the south (Dublin Road)



The town has seen the closure of a number of prominent traditional industries around the town including “Tellabs” factory; “Thermal” factory; “Irish Edible Oils”; “Telematics” and a number of small engineering firms. It should be noted that, although not located within the Borough boundary, the Platin Cement Works near Donore employs a very high number of Drogheda based workers. The pattern of retrenchment of older industry in particular mirrors the experience of much of Irish industry over the late 20th Century.



New Enterprise, Donore Road

4.7 Economic Outlook

The “Bacon Report”, an Economic & Spatial Development Study of Drogheda and its Environs published in February 2001 concluded that no single manufacturing activity or enterprise stands out as a potential driver of economic development in the Drogheda area. Most employment is in relatively small firms and crucially the Drogheda economy has very few firms in the leading economic sectors. Most firms appear to exist to serve relatively local markets and manufacturers are concentrated in highly competitive sections such as furniture and metal and plastic products.

The only cluster type of enterprise may be the food sector where a number of food firms have emerged in specialist processing sectors. Hilton Foods, a food packaging plant, and Natures Best are the largest food operators in the town and they are supported by a number of smaller specialist food companies including Boyne Valley Foods in County Meath. These food processing plants tend to be niche players and as a result are somewhat insulated from the extreme difficulties that are confronting the larger, commodity type firms that dominate the food sector in Ireland. A number of the former food industries have closed during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, including W. & C. McDonnell Ltd. on the Marsh Road.



Like the manufacturing sector, service firms are also mostly concerned with local markets and contain a good range of professional business service firms as would be expected in a large town. No major foreign owned service firms are located in the area and there are no national service firms headquartered in Drogheda.

4.8 Occupations

Population Occupations as Per Census 2002 (Table 2)

	Drogheda % persons in occupations	Co. Louth % persons in occupations	National % persons in occupations
Farmers	0.6 (74)	3	5.6
Manufacturing workers	16.7 (2198)	15.1	9.2
Building & construction workers	7.8 (1031)	7.2	7.4
Clerical, managing, administrative, executive & government workers	17.4 (2282)	15.6	15.7
Communication & transportation workers	7.1(938)	5.9	5.9
Sales & commerce workers	13.2 (1741)	12.3	14
Professional, technical & health workers	15 (1967)	13.8	13.1
Services workers	11.2 (1469)	9.5	17.2
Other (including not stated)	11 (1446)	8.3	8.5
Total	13146	100	100

The majority of persons are employed in the following categories: manufacturing, clerical, etc., professional, technical & health, or sales and commerce.

The figure of 16.7% or 2,198 persons employed in manufacturing is higher than the 15.1% employed in the same sector in Co. Louth and significantly higher than the 9.2% employed in manufacturing nationally. The 16.7% of people involved in manufacturing is high compared to the national figure however this figure has declined significantly from previous levels when manufacturing almost accounted for a third of all the employment within the town. This reduction is reflective of the changed national economic climate within the whole country over the last ten years.

There are a large number of clerical, managing, administrative, executive and government workers living in the town. The figure of 17.4% is higher than Co. Louth (15.6%) and the



Plean Forbairt 2005 – 2011

Development Plan 2005 - 2011

national figure of 15.7%. There are 15% of people with occupations as described as professional, technical and health workers in the town. This compares to the Co. Louth figure of 13.8% and the national figure of 13.1% of the total population. This factor may be reflective of the new numbers of people who have moved into the town since the last census.

4.9 Unemployment:

The problem of long term unemployment remains deep rooted in certain parts of Drogheda, with a close correlation between low educational achievement and high unemployment. Louth County Development Board are tackling the causes of social and economic exclusion in disadvantaged areas, and it is envisaged that a number of existing initiatives, such as the RAPID programme, will effect significant improvement in these areas. Employment generating enterprises will be required both to sustain the projected population increases expected and to target the plight of the long term unemployed within Drogheda and its environs and as a result this will require significant job creation during the lifetime of this Development Plan and beyond.

Persons aged 15+ by economic status – Census 2002 (Table 3)

	Drogheda % persons 15+	Co. Louth % persons 15+	National % persons 15+
Employed	52.5 (11581)	50.5	53.1
1 st time job seekers	1.1 (235)	1	0.7
Unemployed	7.1 (1565)	6.8	4.5
Student	9 (1979)	10.3	11.4
Home duties	13.4 (2950)	14.7	14.2
Retired	10 (2190)	10.5	10.8
Unable to work	5.6 (1241)	5.1	4.2
Other	1.5 (323)	1.1	1.2
Total	22064	100	100

The total employed workforce in the town is equivalent to 52.5% of the persons 15 + within Drogheda or 11, 581 persons. This compares to 50.5% in Co. Louth and 53.1% nationally.

Drogheda has a labour force participation¹ rate of 61.7% which is higher than the county and national averages of 58.2 % and 58.3 % respectively.

However, Drogheda has a lower unemployment rate ² at 12.7% than the county average at 13.2 %, and significantly higher than the national average at 8.8%.

¹ Labour force participation rate is the total labour force (those at work, unemployed, and first time job seekers) as a percentage of the population aged 15 + years and over. *A low labour force participation force is an indicator of deprivation.*

² Unemployment rate is the total unemployed population (unemployed and first time job seekers) expressed as a percentage of the total active labour force (those at work, unemployed and first time job seekers). *A high rate is a measure of deprivation.*



4.10 Future trends in Enterprise Development:

The National Spatial Strategy highlights a number of future indicators for towns and cities. These include:

1. The majority of new jobs will continue to be created in services rather than manufacturing, with increasing number of new start up enterprises operating in the services sector.
2. Local services, health care, leisure and tourism will become even more significant as the population ages and disposable incomes rise in the high productivity and traded sectors.
3. The increasing importance of companies in the services sector will have spatial effects in the form of their preference for locations at or close to major points of consumer demand and end clients
4. Regions with a strong population base that can support high quality business infrastructure, technological development and innovation will continue to be major attractions.
5. Availability of a high quality environment, affordable housing supply and accessible transport locations shall be significant factors in attracting businesses.

The increased unemployment rate highlights the need to attract more industry to the Borough. The growth and prosperity of the Borough area has been and is dependent to a very great extent on the growth in manufacturing / industrial employment and to a lesser extent on the growth in building and construction activity. The growth in such employment has considerable spin-off or linkage effects of creating a demand for direct and indirect services (professional, retail, commercial). However national trends indicate that manufacturing / industrial based employment is unlikely to be the major economic force as the century progresses. The increased globalisation of world markets together with increased competition nearer at home in the form of EU accession nations, is likely to signify a shift in Ireland's economic fortunes. In this changed atmosphere the economy will increasingly develop to encompass Tourism, "New Economy" industries (mainly knowledge based) and Service Sectors.

In meeting the challenges posed by a changing economic environment a number of issues will have to be addressed. These include:

- Capitalising on existing and future assets both natural, human and infrastructural (e.g. The River Boyne, The Boyne Valley, The History of the Borough, the Motorway and the Rail Line)
- Improve the physical image of the Borough overall but particularly the attractive and historic Town Centre
- Initiate structural change in Drogheda's "Human Capital Assets" through comprehensive re-training in anticipation of the "New Economy" This could be best served through creating outreach centres and facilities linked to third level institutes in neighbouring areas There is also a need to address social inclusiveness in those parts of the Borough which are comparatively deprived.



Plean Forbairt 2005 – 2011

Development Plan 2005 - 2011

- Play a full role in the Borough's inclusion within the Border Region whilst lobbying the Greater Dublin Region for a greater say in that region's affairs, since Drogheda has historically looked southwards rather than to the north as defined by the Border Regional Authority.

4.11 Future Employment, Enterprise & Economic Strategy

The projected increase in population, allied to the last inter-censal population increase, with growth concentrated in the adult age groups, will result in increases in the labour force and in participation rates. The availability of a larger workforce could result in a comparative advantage in attracting inward, employment creating enterprises, provided the deficit in educational attainment is redressed, but will also require the creation of employment opportunities in Drogheda. The geographic position of Drogheda located on the economic highway between Belfast and Dublin bordering the Border & Midlands & Western Region on one side with the Greater Dublin Region on the other side marks Drogheda out as a strategic location for potential future investment.

The Planning Authority will support economic development, which will be determined in the first instance by market forces, and secondly by agencies with a remit for specific intervention in this area. The Planning Authorities can assist the development of all economic sectors by the implementation of policies relating to:

1. Supporting the provision of an efficient transportation system
2. The zoning of sufficient and appropriately located lands for industrial and commercial development
3. Supporting the provision of sanitary services and other urban infrastructure
4. Supporting the provision, in conjunction with other agencies, of enterprise centre provision and training infrastructure related to small and medium sized enterprises (SME)
5. The zoning of adequate residentially zoned lands and the creation of an attractive urban domain to facilitate residency of the projected labour force
6. Developing the public realm and amenities of Drogheda so that the quality of life of employees and residents can be improved
7. Working in partnership with other agencies and the private sector in order to promote economic development within the Borough

The Planning authority can assist in the establishment of a future vision for employment generating and business development within the town by putting forward a strategy to attract new business opportunities. The Planning authority can address existing deficiencies within the town's physical and social facilities by setting out a series of development objectives. Notwithstanding this however there is a need to attract new knowledge based and value added businesses to Drogheda and to give a local focus for change or innovation such as a research campus, a high technology enterprise park or a third level college. Major structural change is required within the commercial / business sector in order to capitalise on the potential that exists for the town. The traditional manufacturing industries can no longer fully provide the stimulus or the surplus wealth that is required in the modern Irish economy.



4.12 IDA Ireland Policy

IDA Ireland is targeting foreign direct investment into the Gateways as designated in the National Spatial Strategy and the key larger towns in the country. The emphasis in Drogheda, which has been designated a Primary Development Centre, under the NSS, will be on high value added activities particularly in the International and Financial Services sectors. Currently, approximately 10,000 people within the immediate environs of Drogheda migrate to Dublin each morning to work in these sectors and this labour pool can be harnessed to make the town attractive for FDI. IDA Ireland is completing the development of a new 25.5 Hectare (63 acre) Business & Technology Park adjacent to the Donore Road M1 Motorway interchange. While the Park will primarily be marketed for investment in the aforementioned sectors it can also accommodate manufacturing in the high skilled, high added value business areas particularly ICT and Medical Technologies.

4.13 The “New Economy”

Activities included within the definition of the “New Economy” may include: Hardware, consumer electronics, personal computers, mobile phones (all potentially labour intensive activities); Advanced, high technology hardware development and manufacturing including micro chip fabrication and other similar activities; Software development and programming; Software applications and e-business; Telecommunications based enterprise, telemarketing, logistics; Research and development; Media based enterprise. The foregoing list provides examples and is not intended to be exhaustive.

Specific Employment Generating Proposals:

4.13.1 Business Park/New Economy Business, Mell

A new Employment Generation / Business Park & Technology zoned site in the north western part of Drogheda along the Collon Road close to the Mell / Collon Road Motorway interchange is to be provided. This zone will also contain significant residential and amenity elements. This site is specifically earmarked for new economy businesses including office based national and corporate agglomerations. The business / technology based Enterprise Park shall be able to attract Office based industries which tend to be located in a range of suburban business parks in locations close to third level institutions and on sites considered to have high levels of car borne activity and the capacity for public transport servicing.

A master plan shall be prepared for the site to guide the potential future management of this parcel of land. It is anticipated that the design of the site would allow for a range of uses within a number of specific categories and these would be guided by a more detailed assessment of the needs of businesses and would specifically target commercial / business uses which were looking for strategic locations near Dublin with good access to the capital. Business and Technology based industries within the sectors of software development, information technology, telemarketing, commercial research and development e.g. laboratories, data processing, publishing, media recording would be appropriate in principle on sites zones for business and technology although this list is not exhaustive.



4.13.2 Donore Industrial Estate/East Coast Business Park/Newgrange Business Park/Boyne Business Park.

The existing zoned industrial lands in Donore Industrial Estate; the East Coast Business Park, Newgrange Business Park and the Boyne Business Park are rezoned to allow for a greater flexibility to attract appropriate businesses to these locations. It is suggested that a specific industrial assessment / appraisal is undertaken to define the capacity and potential for future development in each of the four industrial areas. This assessment should draw together the existing type of enterprises that would be considered locating within each of these estates.

Small enterprise incubator based units have generally tended to locate within the Boyne Business Park on the Termonfeckin / Newtown to Greenhills Road. Any further expansion of this sector shall be confined to this area of Drogheda.

The Donore & East Coast Business Industrial parks have varying degrees of occupancies and it is proposed that the reuse of these existing industrial buildings for both industrial light engineering and manufacturing works shall be maintained for the short to medium term.

4.13.3 Retail Park Provision

A new retail park area specifically designated at Waterunder will redress an existing retail deficiency identified in Drogheda. At present there is significant retail leakage outside of Drogheda for bulky goods and non town centre goods. The Newgrange business park has been operating on a limited level for the bulky goods sector however it has been developing without any specific policy or in the absence of suitable retail park policies. It is now proposed to address this imbalance by designating this industrial estate as a retail park to be located adjacent to the new retail park approved by Meath County Council on the Donore Motorway interchange just outside the Borough's Boundary.

The following are the objectives with regard to Employment & Enterprise;

OBJECTIVES

- ***ECON 1***
To ensure that adequate zoned lands are available for the development of future economic activity in a choice of locations that are attractive to potential users.
- ***ECON 2***
To ensure that Drogheda will attract economic activity through the provision of suitable, well managed industrial estates.
- ***ECON 3***
To encourage the provision of office space in Drogheda in order to facilitate its development as a centre for administrative, professional and commercial functions.
- ***ECON 4***
To promote the relocation of a Government Department as part of the government decentralization programme.



- **ECON 5**
To liaise and co-operate with IDA Ireland, Forbairt, the County Enterprise Board, and other relevant organisations and departments that can assist in the promotion of economic development in the town.
- **ECON 6**
To promote the diversification of the economic base.
- **ECON 7**
To continue to promote, and facilitate the development of smaller, low-cost, 'start up' units in order to ensure a balance in the economic base of the town.
- **ECON 8**
To seek the aesthetic, visual and environmental improvement of industrial estates and business parks.
- **ECON 9**
To secure the development of business linkages between local educational establishments and the industrial sector in order to promote further development and a greater diversity in employment activities.
- **ECON 10**
To encourage and secure the relocation of existing, inappropriate industrial and other commercial uses, located in the town centre area, to alternative and more appropriate sites.
- **ECON 11**
To provide accommodation for businesses of different sizes and to provide a choice of property in the market suitable for the demands of small, medium and large businesses.
- **ECON 12**
To provide for a diverse range of employment needs and promoting good balance in the quantities and diversity of employment opportunities so that people with a diverse range of skills levels can find work within the town.
- **ECON 13**
To promote a good quality working environment with access to essential local services within walking distance as far as possible.
- **ECON 14**
Market Drogheda as an attractive location for Corporate Business activity with excellent road and social infrastructure.

The Council will seek to promote the economic development of Drogheda and seek to maximise opportunities presented by its strategic location. Employment generating development proposals will normally be expected to locate within suitably zoned areas for business, commercial, industrial and mixed uses as identified on the zoning objectives map.