Frank Pentony,
Development Plan Review,
Forward Planning Unit,
Town Hall,
Crowe Street,
Dundalk,
Co Louth

Date: 22nd November 2019
Re: Drogheda Port Company Submission in relation to Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 Issues Paper

To whom it may concerns,

This submission has been prepared by Brady Shipman Martin on behalf of Drogheda Port Company following notice given by Louth County Council to commence its review of the existing Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 and to prepare a new Louth County Development Plan for the period 2021-2027.

Drogheda Port is a long established presence in Drogheda town. As a source of primary employment and a key transport hub it has an import role in the local, regional and national economy. Drogheda Port is now in the process of preparing a Masterplan for its lands. Having released an Issues Paper in January 2018 and Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report in June 2019, Drogheda Port intends to publish its draft Masterplan in early 2020.

Policy Context

The Port is a key contributor to the Local, Regional and National economy and this role is reflected in corresponding policy. This policy context is discussed below and should be reflected in the new Louth Development Plan.
The National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF states: “To maintain economic growth, we must be capable of delivering additional port capacity in a timely and predictable manner.”

Drogheda Port is defined as a Port of Regional significance which ‘have an important role for regional employment and services’.

It is further noted that National Policy Objective 44 states: In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and develop the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility.

Eastern Midlands Regional Assemble (EMRA) - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

Overall Drogheda is to be a focus of future development. The RSES is supportive of both Drogheda town and the Port in the regional context.

RPO 4.12: Support the role of Drogheda Docklands and Port in particular by:

- Supporting and protecting the role of Drogheda Port as a port of regional significance
- Facilitate relocation of Drogheda Port subject to a feasibility study and appropriate coastal zone management.
- Supporting the future development of the Port Access Northern Cross Route (PANCR).

The Louth County Development Plan (LCDP) 2015-2021

The current LCDP seeks to focus development on strategic economic growth centres and supporting economic growth towns to allow County Louth to reach its potential and maximise its contribution to the economy in a sustainable manner. This growth will primarily be focused on the centres of Dundalk and Drogheda.

LCDP considers its three commercial freight ports and its access to A1/M1 motorway as a key economic strength.

National Ports Policy Context

The National Ports Policy (NPP) was prepared in 2013 by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. It aims to ‘facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services’.

It recognises the long term international trend in port and shipping is toward increased consolidation of resources in order to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale which has implications for vessel size, water depth and the type and scale of port transport connections. The NPP categorises Irish ports into Ports of National Significance (Tier 1), Ports of National Significance (Tier 2) and Ports of Regional Significance (Drogheda Port).
• Ports Policy and the Planning and Development System – this chapter discusses the relationship and interaction between the commercial ports sector and the planning and development system
• Environmental and Foreshore Issues – this section discusses issues associated with development such complex and sensitive areas which requires stringent oversight at both a national and European level. New planning and consent mechanisms for development on the foreshore is being developed by the Government and the Department of Housing is continuing to work on new legislation in this area.

The Report presents an overall picture of the ports including history, organisational and ownership structure, details of each port in the categories above in terms of type of goods/ownership and context (including Drogheda Port). The NPP then outlines some high level ‘Actions and Timelines’ for future Port policy.

**National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) - Consultation Draft**

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) launched the NMPF Consultation Draft for public consultation on 12th November 2019. The NMPF is a national plan for Ireland’s maritime area, setting out, over a 20 year horizon, how we want to use, protect and enjoy our seas. The NMPF sits at the top of the hierarchy of plans and sectoral policies for the marine area and presents a plan for each marine sector.

Chapter 14 of the NMPF relates to Ports, Harbours and Shipping. The NMPF sets out the following Objectives:

• **Safeguard the operation of ports as key actors in the economic wellbeing of the State through the provision of safe and sustainable maritime transport.**
• **Facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services.**
• **Sustainable development of the ports sector and full realisation of the National Ports Policy with a view to providing adequate capacity to meet present and future demand, and to adapt to the consequences of climate change.**

The NMPF is consistent with the National Ports Policy (NPP) acknowledging the role of Drogheda as a Port of Regional Significance. Further, Ports are considered key facilitators and enablers of economic development in general. As such, their strategic development is supported as a key objective in both National Ports Policy and the Government’s National Development Plan.

The NMPF also notes the objective in the National Planning Framework to improving Ireland’s overall national, regional and local road infrastructure, and access routes, to Ireland’s Ports through investment and upgrade.

In relation to employment the NMPF states: Proposals resulting in a net increase to marine related employment should be supported, particularly where the proposals are in line with the skills available adjacent to the maritime area.
Issues Paper Topics

Drogheda Port welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the forthcoming draft Louth Development Plan at an early stage in the process.

In regard to the Issues Paper we have the following comments:

Key Challenges No. 11 states: **Building on the provision of high quality employment and economic opportunities at appropriate and sustainable locations.**

Similarly, in relation to ‘Economic Development and Employment’ the Issues Paper states: **Louth benefits from outstanding road, rail, sea and air transport linkages, making it a prime location for all companies to access international markets.**

In this regard the Port has a vital contribution to make, as a source of local employment and vital transport link for other economic activity such as agriculture and mineral extraction.

As reflected in the Issues Paper this is particularly important given the challenging and changing economic climate that currently exists.

It is critical the importance of Drogheda Port is directly referenced in the Louth County Development Plan with regard to economic development, employment, transport provision, and international trade.

Future Development of Drogheda Port

As the Port begins its Masterplan consultation process, we submit that the support of the County Development Plan is essential in supporting this aim. As such the County Development Plan should include an objective to support the preparation of this Masterplan, to secure the future of Drogheda Port.

Conclusion

Drogheda Port plays an important role in the national, regional and local economy as a key piece of transport infrastructure and as a source of local employment. The Port will experience new challenges in the coming years such as adapting to new market conditions and increasingly larger vessels.

The forthcoming Development Plan should recognise the significance and importance of Drogheda Port as strategic infrastructure which underpins the economic functioning of the regional and national economy, and support new opportunities for its further development. We submit that the new Louth Development Plan should provide the necessary supporting objectives and policies to facilitate the development of Drogheda Port and associated activities.
Drogheda Port Company look forward to further engagement with Louth County Council in relation to the future role of the Port in the County.

Yours sincerely,

Pauline Byrne

for

Brady Shipman Martin

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