



City Status group fighting for 'families of the region'

HAVING made a substantial submission to the Drogheda Boundary Review process, in advance of a Brexit meeting hosted by Minister Simon Coveney on this Thursday evening, 19 January at 8 pm in the Boyne Valley Hotel, the Drogheda City Status Group have called on the Minister to include Drogheda in the government's cities strategy, currently being updated.

The City Status Group is supporting the boundary extension as the next step towards achieving city status for the benefit of every family in the area.

"For too long, Drogheda, South Louth and East Meath have been the "Cinderella" communities of Louth and Meath," said Vincent Hoey, Chairman of the Drogheda City Status Group (DCSG), adding "the dissolution of Drogheda Borough Council was the last straw". The people of the Greater Drogheda Area need to engage with Minister Coveney and his local colleagues to ensure that they have the area's best interests at heart for the sake of their children and future generations."

The Group has stated that a number of key initiatives need to be urgently tackled by the Government to address the 'neglect that the communities of Drogheda, South Louth and East Meath have endured for too long'. Their first priority is to have the boundary extended, and in tandem with this, that Government appoint a Review Body to examine and accelerate Drogheda's well founded case to become Ireland's next city, ending the current 'chaotic situation' where the area is managed by two different local authorities.

"Far too many people in Drogheda, South Louth and East Meath make a long commute daily to the Dublin area for employment or edu-

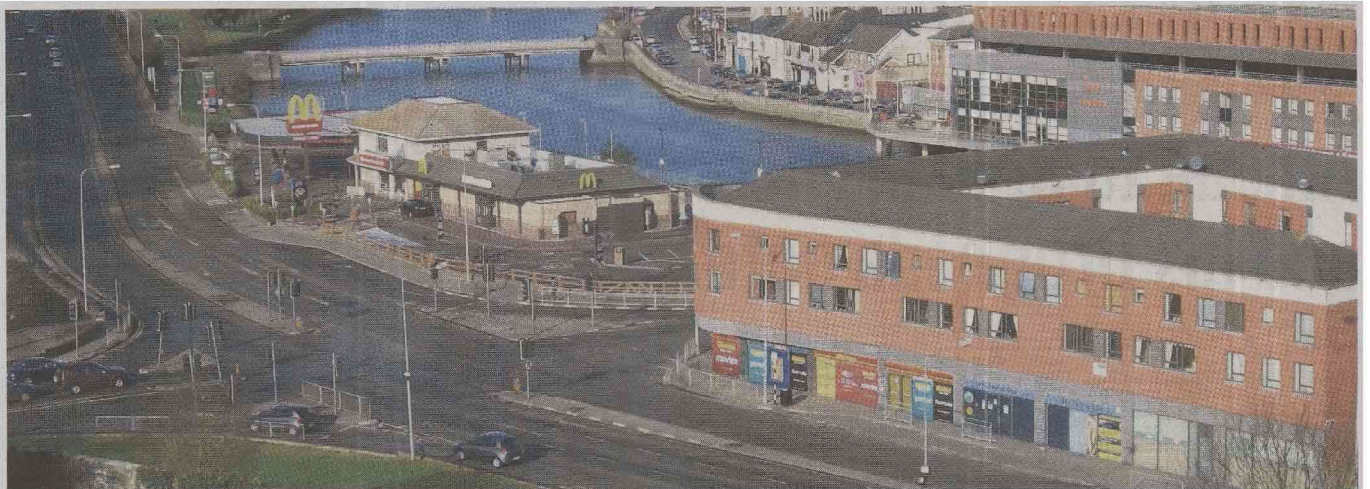
cation. Given the huge social and economic cost, we need those jobs and facilities to be available locally. In the meantime, local people need to demand fairer rail fares, which can be two and a half times more expensive than travelling from Balbriggan," said Vincent Hoey.

Pending the outcome of a City Status Review, DCSG is also calling on Government to restore the Drogheda Borough Council, with senior local authority staff (appropriate to Drogheda's status and scale) to be based in Drogheda, with the Chief Executive of Louth Co. Council "hot desking" in Co.Louth's (and Ireland's) largest town for at least 50% of their work commitments.

"This will be necessary to plan an orderly transition from town to city - and for example, Drogheda will need a dedicated Town/City Architect. Smaller heritage towns such as Westport have seen the enormous benefits of having a Town Architect which has enhanced the appeal of the town for residents and visitors alike. Drogheda with its unique history and heritage is long overdue a Town Architect to protect and enhance its archaeological and historical heritage, which was acknowledged by all attending last year's **RIAI** Colloquium.

Being 'The Gateway to the Boyne Valley,' the town's potential as a major visitor centre generating much needed employment has yet to blossom" said Vincent.

Six years in existence, the DCSG has 'noted how Drogheda has failed to secure jobs through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and is now calling on Government and Louth Co. Council to ensure Drogheda is prioritised in the forthcoming review'.



Drogheda should be included in cities strategy say City Status Group