

# ‘Ag Forbairt Baile na hUaimhe’ ‘Developing Navan’



## The Sinn Féin An Uaimh Submission

to



comhairle bhaile na huaimhe  
*navan town council*

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## **1.0 Executive Summary / Achoimre**

### **1.1 Introduction / Réamhrá**

Navan is at a crossroads. In these uncertain economic times, in a period of transition three important developments will heavily influence the economic future of Navan.

- The opening of the M3 motor way in 09,
- The construction of the Regional Hospital
- The long awaited Phase 2 of the Dublin to Navan Rail line

These three pieces of infrastructure are so pivotal for the development of the county, that they have been central to Meath Sinn Fein's campaign for the last 10 years. Meath Sinn Féin will continue to use all the political capital at our disposal to ensure these 3 projects are fully delivered upon.

Despite being an ideal place in which to set up a business, Navan lags far behind other provincial towns of comparable size. It is therefore of the utmost importance to the town of Navan that a clear, robust and well researched strategic development plan is created. To this end Sinn Féin An Uaimh are making this submission on the basis of our own research, the needs of the people of Navan and the untapped potential for growth of the town.

This Submission will include a detailed Internal Appraisal including a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis of the core aspects of the town. It will also detail an External Analysis relevant to the town. These tools of analysis will indicate the optimum strategic development path for the town.

The focus of this report will be Economic Development and Social Cohesion. For further information in relation to Sinn Féin's Navan Town Development Plan please see 'Sustained Community Development for Navan' and Sinn Féin's 'Policing and Justice Submission to the Co Meath Garda Plan for Navan 2009.

### **1.2 Background / Cúlra**

The 2006 Census indicated that Navan has a population of 24,851 making it the 5th largest town in the south of Ireland. This figure indicated a doubling of population in 10 years. While it is estimated that in the medium term the population will increase to between 40,000 and 45,000, these estimations do not take into consideration the recent onset of recession. It is likely that the economic recession which is forecast to come to an end in 2011 will greatly reduce population growth in the next 5 years. The population of Navan is currently housed in 8,547 houses. 4,589 of these have been built since 1996.

### 1.3 Navan Town in 2008 / Baile na hUaimhe i 2008

Navan and Meath in general are islands of residential development surrounded by a sea of industry. The residents of Navan need only look a Kildare, Dublin, Wicklow and Louth to see the contrast between their home town and those more advanced with regards infrastructure, investment and employment. Indeed the facts are borne out by the following statistics. Although the statistics in the main relate to Meath it is possible to extrapolate similar trends to Navan.

- Over 50% of Meath's workforce commute to jobs outside the county every day.
- 40% of the population of Meath shop outside the county. This is one of the largest retail leakages in the country.
- The resulting low rate base has forced those businesses that do operate in Meath to suffer the highest rates base increase in the state.
- As a result of the low rates base Local Authority expenditure in Meath is at 62% of the national average and is the lowest in the state.
- Meath has the highest population per Local Authority member of staff in the state.
- 43% of Meath people commute distances of over 15 miles. This is the highest such figure in the state.
- Meath is a net contributor to the state. The county provides 3.4% of taxes but only received 2.7% of spending.
- Meath receives far less funding from Enterprise Ireland than any other comparable county in Ireland. For example for each of the last 4 years Enterprise Ireland allocated more money to Louth, Kildare or Wicklow.
- In 2008 Meath received a quarter of the investment Wicklow received, a third of what Kildare received and less than a seventh of what Louth received despite Louth having a population of 50,000 less than Meath.
- In relation to IDA investment, per Capita Meath has the second lowest number of IDA supported jobs in Leinster. If we compare Meath to Louth, Kildare and Wicklow, 3 other commuter belt counties which have experienced similar population growth over the last 10 years, the figures are startling. Per capita 12 times the number of people in Kildare, 4 times the number of people in Louth and 4 times the number of people in Wicklow are employed through IDA companies than in Meath.
- Meath is the most tolled county in Ireland and will soon have 2 new tolls with the opening of the new M3. Tolls will be placed at both sides of Navan on the M3 which will hurt businesses and commuters alike.

As the facts have shown, years of Fianna Fáil government policy has relegated Navan to the position of a dormitory town where many of Navan's residents work, shop and socialise in Dublin and return to Navan to sleep.

## 1.4 Sinn Féin's Submission Recommendations / Moltáí Shinn Féin

### Infrastructure / Bonneagar

- Sinn Féin supports the immediate construction of Phase 2 of the Dublin to Navan Rail line.
- Sinn Féin seeks the identification and purchase of a site for a New Navan Rail Station.
- The party supports the identification of a site for the construction of the new Regional Hospital.
- Sinn Féin recommends the completion of the Athboy Rd to Kells Rd, the construction of Commons Rd to Trim Rd, the Trim Rd to Dublin Rd, the Kentstown Rd to Boyne Rd within the lifetime of the plan. Levies should be levelled at developers who will ultimately use the road for their developments.
- Sinn Féin recommends that special importance be given to the construction of a Bus Station in conjunction with Bus Éireann which would service the centre of Navan.
- The party calls for the provision of Bus Lanes on appropriate roads in the town.
- Sinn Féin recommends that the N3 Primary Route between Academy Sq and the Kells Road Retail Business Pk (Woodies) which will revert back to Meath Co Council and Navan Town Council post the opening of the M3 be designated a special area and that a Development or Framework Plan for what will be a new street facing the Boyne be put in place.
- Sinn Féin calls for the upgrading of the N51 from its current dangerous condition to allow access to the Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor and the current Regional hospital.

### Navan's relationship with Central Government/ Caidreamh Baile Na hUaimh leis an Rialtas

- The negative rates base differential suffered by our councils must be tackled as a matter of urgency.
- Sinn Féin recommends that Navan Town Council along with Meath Co Council seek reprioritisation of Navan within the Spatial Strategy. Despite being the 5th largest town in the south of Ireland Navan is prioritised 29th in terms of the Government Spatial Strategy.

### Economic Planning / Pleanáil Eacnamaíochta

- Sinn Féin recommends putting in place under the authority of Navan Town Council and Meath Co Council a "Think Tank" of relevant stake holders to maximise Navan economic and social potential in a post M3 situation.
- We are calling for an inter Enterprise agency to make a Strategic Economic submission to the Think Tank discussed above indicating the prioritisation of Meath. This should be done in an effort to close the yawning economic gap that has developed between Meath and its neighbours in the last 15 years.
- We are also demanding that all relevant Enterprise Agencies take strategic direction from the new Think Tank.
- That Navan Development Plan identifies Areas or Zones suitable for the clustering of specific industries or businesses, ie Financial Sector Area, Health Industries, Eco industries and R and D.
- Sinn Féin recommends that Navan Town Council develops a specific Tourist Strategy for Navan.

### Enterprise Development / Forbairt Fiontar

- To help up skill our workforce and to attract Foreign Direct Investment, Sinn Féin is calling for the development of an enlarged 3rd Level Out-reach Campus in conjunction with the IDA in the Business Park in Johnstown with particular emphasis on developing skills in viable economic sectors.
- Closer co-operation between Local Authorities, FAS, the VEC, Meath County Enterprise Board and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Out Reach programmes in providing skills training for the people of the town.
- Sinn Féin believe that a Business Incubation Campus should be developed to act as an engine of indigenous growth and help those who have recently lost their jobs.
- Sinn Féin calls for the fast tracking of the development of the 20 acre Business Park in Liscarten.
- The current Navan Enterprise Centre has reached capacity. As a result Sinn Féin is calling for the development of a new enlarged facility. This facility could also house the previously mentioned Business Incubation Centre and the 3rd Level Out Reach Campus.

### Retail / Miondíol

- Sinn Féin strongly recommends that the process for pedestrianisation commence for the centre of the town.
- In order to combat the condensed nature of the retail space within the town and its resulting congestion, Navan Town Council should put into place tools which expedite and incentivise development on other lands currently zoned retail.
- Instead of increasing parking charges Navan Town Council could consider broadening the hours in which parking is charged.

### Local Authority / Údarás Áitiúla

- The failure to complete or in most cases to initiate work on Local Area Plans and Area Action Plans during the previous Development Plan period has been a major set back for Navan. In order to advance the 2009 – 2016 Plan major lessons need to be learned.
- Sinn Féin recommends putting in place an Implementation Team responsible to Navan Town Council to oversee and drive the Navan Development Plan.
- Sinn Féin calls for the extension of the boundary of the town to include all new and future housing developments. Currently 8,000 people or 1/3 of the population of the town reside outside the administrative and electoral Navan Town Council boundary.

### Transport / Iompar

- Sinn Féin supports the provision of designated bus stops.
- We recommend the overhaul of the local bus service and the provision of Saturday service.
- We seek the development of Cycle lanes throughout the town. The provision of these should start immediately to serve the local schools. No roads should be built or upgraded in the environs of the town without their provision.

### Community / Pobal

- We welcome the progress on the new Town Park and urge that its provision as a public amenity be a priority in the 2009.
- Sinn Féin demands the provision of necessary Community Infrastructure throughout our town including shopping areas, sub Garda stations, sub Post Offices, Community Centres, Schools, Crèches, Sports Facilities, Playgrounds, Public Transport Links etc.
- Sinn Féin calls for the putting in place of Joint Policing Committees
- The party demands the construction of Resource Centres/Community Centres suitable for each area population.
- Sinn Féin recommends that the 20 acres identified at Liscarten (Cow Plots) for local community devolvement groups should be advanced as soon as possible.

### Culture / Cultúr

- Sinn Féin supports the use and promotion of the Irish language in Navan and supports the strategic use of the language in the naming of new housing developments, roads, governments buildings etc. within the town.
- We support the appointment of an Irish language Officer and the use of Irish in correspondence, town logos etc.
- We are calling for equal and prominent use of the Irish Language on council signage, property and vehicles.
- Sinn Féin will support in the Development Plan the provision of a primary Gaelscoil in the Johnstown Athlumney area.
- If this Gaelscoil is feasible Sinn Féin recommends that provisions for lands to be made available for a Secondary Gaelscoil.
- Sinn Féin seeks the development of the former St Patrick's Classical School as the new County Museum.
- Sinn Féin proposes that a cultural and historical walk be developed in the town incorporating relevant locations of interest. The proposed Museum should be integrated into this route.
- Sinn Féin calls for the clearing of trees to allow for improved views of the medieval bridge at Kilcairn.

### Housing / Tithíochta

- Sinn Féin calls for the zoning of sufficient lands for local authority housing.
- Sinn Féin supports the purchasing of the necessary lands to provide for social housing.
- We demand the upgrading of all local authority housing to modern day standards with regard access, heating, insulation and safety.

## 2.0 Strategic Analysis / Mionscrúdú Straitéiseach

### 2.1 Strengths/ Neartaí, Weaknesses/ Fabhtaí, Opportunities/ Deiseanna and Threats / Bagairtí

#### Strengths / Neartaí

Navan is a natural location for business. Many of the essential ingredients of profitable ventures are available to the town.

- Population wise Navan is Ireland's fastest growing town in Ireland's fastest growing county.
- Navan has a large population of highly skilled and educated workers. It is estimated that over 8,000 workers in Navan currently commute to locations outside the county.
- 1.5 million people live within a 35 mile radius of Navan. This figure represents an attractive market for national and international business alike.
- The Navan Business Park has 28 hectares of available business accommodation.
- 1,764 people from Navan have registered themselves on the Working in Meath website indicating their desire to stop commuting and work in Navan. The sectors represented by those registered include Financial Services & Insurance, IT, Construction, Logistics, PR/Marketing, Engineering, Pharmaceutical, Retail, Education, Hotel & Catering, and Manufacturing
- Navan is geographically well placed for business.
  - Situated 30 miles from the capital, it is in easy distance from Dublin Airport and Dublin Port. Over 50% of the goods imported and exported from Ireland travel through Dublin port.
  - Navan is 16 miles from Drogheda Port along either National Road or existing Rail line.
  - Navan is 28 miles from the proposed new Deepwater Port at Bremore. This port will potentially be the largest port in terms of volume of goods in Ireland north and south
- Navan should be considered to be part of the fastest growing region in the country, the Dublin to Belfast economic Corridor.

#### Weaknesses / Fabhtaí

Despite being geographically well placed and being well populated with highly educated young workers, Navan has fallen well short of its potential.

- To date Navan is without a specific Strategic Economic Development plan of any kind.
- While communication exists between agencies, Navan has not enjoyed any inter development agency planning or organisation.
- Navan is given minimal priority under the National Spatial Plan.
- Navan does not have the necessary electricity infrastructure to attract large scale energy users. If firms such as IBM wished to locate in Navan to take advantage of the abundant Human Resource in the town they would be prohibited from doing so due to the lack of adequate electricity infrastructure. This needs to be put in place over the next number of years.
- Navan is without the basic infrastructure which Foreign Direct Investors consider essential for investment:
  - Rail

- Electricity
- 3rd Level Education and Business Incubation Services
- Motor Way (this will be somewhat resolved in 2010)
- Health infrastructure is being steadily closed down despite the existence of a promise of a Regional Hospital for the town.

### Opportunities / Deiseanna

#### Strategic Direction / Treoir Straitéiseach

As can be seen in the previous section a major weakness of Navan is its lack of an Economic and Business strategic direction. This strategic direction should take in to consideration global macro economic factors such as industry growth and contraction trends. It should also take into consideration the current skill sets within the working population of the town. On brief analysis of these areas it would appear that the following offer relative recession resistant growth opportunity plus they fit with future developments and skill sets within the town;

1. Information Communication Technology – innovation is central to the development of the ICT market. It therefore offers opportunity for high end Research and Development jobs and manufacturing of high value products. Installation of the high speed Broad Band infrastructure has increased Navan's capability in this area. ICT skills are second after Financial Services skills of those from Navan who have registered on the Working in Meath website.
2. Health Care Services – the new Regional Hospital may offer opportunity for Education Facilities, private Health Care Research and Development and Medical product manufacturing. The arrival of the Regional Hospital will allow for a critical mass of Health Care expertise to develop within the town and may promote future clustering.
3. Renewable Energy – this sector is a growing industry geared to combat global warming. High end skills in this market are in demand and it is likely that this will increase due to Global Warming and a volatile Oil. Navan should seek to capitalise on geological and mining experience in relation to geothermal exploitation.
4. Tourism – Navan is positioned at the centre of Meath, which is actively promoting itself as the heritage capital of Ireland. Navan is also only a few short miles from the only two east coast Gaeltachts in the country. Resources such as Tara and potential walking trips along the Boyne River need to be developed and optimised. The town's proximity to Dublin offers an opportunity for the Conference and Wedding market to be exploited. This heritage, history and hospitality mix needs to be developed into a coherent product offering.

Sinn Féin calls upon the Meath Enterprise Development Board, Meath County Council Economic, Development and Innovation Department, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Border Innovation Gateway and the Meath County Enterprise Board to carry out detailed research and analysis into the future strategic direction of Navan so that a clear economic and plan can be developed for the town.

Threats / Bagairtí

The output of the Celtic Tiger years for Navan was a housing boom. In comparison to the towns of Louth and Kildare, Navan did not experience similar growth in industry or retail. As a result Navan is faced with a number of major dangerous threats.

- The housing crash and the resulting lay offs mean that a considerable proportion of the male population are unemployed and are in need of retraining facilities and new business start up aid. This increases the need for the proposed educational facilities as previously discussed.
- The fall out from developer led development. In general this means that a large number of communities are still without community facilities. Shopping areas, sub Garda stations, sub Post Offices, Community Centres, Schools, Crèches, Sports Facilities, Playgrounds, Public Transport Links etc. The savage government cuts cannot be allowed to reduce essential community infrastructure. If it does, it will lead to a reduction in the quality of life, a break down in community cohesion and a rise in anti social behaviour.
- The fall in house prices in conjunction with spiralling unemployment has led to many within the 'Greater Dublin Area' coming under major mortgage pressure. This may lead to terrible personal financial predicaments, decreased occupancy rates and depleted communities. The Navan Development Plan must make funding available for a significant Social Housing provision in order to provide a safety net for those suffering from Negative Equity.
- The clear lack of infrastructure and the government priority will hit Navan hard in the coming years as regional competition increases for scarce investment.
- Navan will face two new tolls in the next year on the M3. Traffic heading north or south on the M3 will be hit by a toll. Experience has shown that heavy vehicles will avoid paying tolls by using the existing older infrastructure.

**3.0 External Analysis / Mionscrúdú Sheachtraigh**

In an increasingly volatile world Navan's future economic prosperity and social cohesion is determined by the economic well being of the state, the priority Navan receives within that state and the competitive health of the town.

In the main, the economic well being of the state is determined by factors external to Navan. The priority Navan receives as a town is determined by factors such as our government's spatial policy and the ability of our own representatives to determine government policy. In these areas, it is clear that the establishment parties have failed.

Most private sector investment is dependent on infrastructure. Infrastructure is dependent on where Navan is placed in the government's infrastructural priority list. To understand this, it is important to study Navan's position in the National Spatial Strategy.

### Partition / Deighilt

It is worth noting at this stage, the general orientation of development on the island of Ireland. Until very recently with the development of the Dublin to Belfast Corridor the majority of investment had been made in an area south of the Dublin to Galway line. This is true in relation to investment in Motorway, Rail, Health, Energy and Education.

This orientation has clearly been to the disadvantage of Navan as the town is located on the north western radial route from Dublin. This is an example of the cost of partition. While there have been some improvements made in relation to planning on an all Ireland level much has yet to be done to reverse years of 'partition planning'.

### **3.1 Government Priority? / Tosaíocht Rialtais?**

Navan is designated as a Primary Development Centre. This designation is dictated as part of the government's National and Regional Spatial Strategy and will run until 2020. According to this government strategy, Navan's designation is in the third tier of development priority hierarchy. In other words a 'Primary Development Centre' is government terminology meaning to be prioritised after 'Gateway Towns' and 'Regional Hubs'.

Firstly there are 13 Gateway Towns and Cities in Ireland including Sligo, Waterford and Dundalk. Secondly there are 11 Regional Hubs including Tullamore, Athlone, Cavan and Mullingar. Thirdly there are 7 Primary Development Centres designated by the plan including Balbriggan, Drogheda, Wicklow, Naas and Navan. All Primary Development Centres lie in the commuter belt of Dublin. In reality Primary Development Centres are designed to be commuter towns of Dublin.

### Navan's position / Ait na hUaimhe

Despite being the 5th largest town in the south of Ireland Navan is placed behind the 13 Gateway towns and the 11 Regional Hubs. Navan is in fact positioned 29th in terms of development priority in the government's National Spatial Strategy. This assertion is made on the bases that Navan is the only 'Primary Development Centre' without a motorway and without a rail line.

Sinn Féin is strongly in favour of a National Spatial Strategy which redresses the current development imbalance which has seen the east coast grow at the expense of the west Coast. However, even taking this into consideration Navan's priority position within the plan is an indictment against establishment public representatives and their ability to fight for Navan.

### **3.2 Enterprise Investment Priority / Tosaíocht Infheistíocht Fiontraíocht**

Navan has also suffered from enormous under funding in relation to the state Enterprise Development Organisations. Louth, Kildare and Wicklow are three comparable counties to Meath in terms of proximity to Dublin and population. Indeed outside Kildare, Meath has the highest population. But for each of the last 4 years Enterprise Ireland has allocated least to Meath. In 2008 Meath received a quarter of the investment Wicklow received and a third of what Kildare received.

## Enterprise Ireland Funding to Client Companies in Meath Pop 160,000

Year	Total Approvals
2005 - at 01.02.06	€1,540,347
2006 - at 06.02.07	€2,413,440
2007 - at 22.01.08	€2,572,708
2008 – ytd Nov 3 <sup>rd</sup> 08	€407,123

## Enterprise Ireland Funding to Client Companies in Wicklow Pop 126,000

Year	Total Approvals
2005	€1,742,020
2006 – at 06.02.07	€4,790,297
2007 – at 22.01.08	€3,874,081
2008 ytd Nov 3 <sup>rd</sup> 08	€1,767,938

## Enterprise Ireland Funding to Client Companies in Kildare Pop 186,000

Year	Total Approvals
2005 – at 01.01.06	€2,212,596
2006 - at 06.02.07	€5,625,400
2007 – at 22/1/ 2008	€4,166,157
2008 – ytd Nov 3 <sup>rd</sup> 08	€1,291,648

## Enterprise Ireland Funding to Client Companies in Louth Pop 111,000

Year	Total Approvals
2005	€4,870,784
2006	€3,737,186
2007 as at 21.1.08	€3,215,463
2008 ytd 3.11.08	€3,185,179

Meath received less than one seventh of what Louth received, despite Louth having a population of 50,000 less than Meath.

In relation to IDA investment, per capita Meath has the second lowest number of IDA supported jobs in Leinster. If we compare Meath to Louth, Kildare and Wicklow, 3 other commuter belt counties which have experienced similar population growth over the last 10 years, the figures are startling. Per capita 12 times the number of people in Kildare, 4 times the number of people in Louth and 4 times the number of people in Wicklow are employed through IDA supported companies than in Meath.

#### **4.0 Strategy / Straitéis**

Local factors also effect the economic health and well being of the town. It is these local factors that can be positively affected by the Development Plan.

#### **4.1 Enterprise Development / Forbairt Fiontraíocht**

In order to help up skill our workforce and to attract Foreign Direct Investment Sinn Féin is calling for the development of an enlarged 3rd Level Out Reach Campus for the town. We also believe that the Business Incubation Campus as detailed below should be developed to act as an engine of indigenous growth and help those who have recently lost their jobs

##### Third Level Out Reach Campus / Campas For-rochtana Oideachas Tríú Leibhéil

Third and fourth level education is one of the major attractors for Foreign Direct Investment. They are also central to the development of indigenous industry. Some development has already occurred in recent years in relation to the provision of 3rd level Out Reach training. The development of the Meath Initiative for Life Long Learning has successfully provided students with the opportunity to obtain formal qualifications in Navan. Unfortunately the development has occurred only on a small level and independently of strategic economic planning within the town. This development should now be greatly enhanced giving special emphasis to the strategic sector development decided upon by the enterprise development agencies. It is Sinn Fein's view that this Third Level outreach campus should be located with the proposed Incubation Centre and made central to the development of industry within the town.

##### Business Incubation Campus / Campas Gortlann Gnó

The Navan Enterprise Centre is currently operating at full capacity. A second Enterprise Centre is currently planned. It is Sinn Féin's view that a new Business Incubation Campus should be developed which would lead to the development of a critical mass of enterprise development, formal training, networking, skills development etc. This Business Incubation Campus could incorporate a new enlarged Navan Enterprise Centre, Meath County Enterprise Board and our proposed Third Level Outreach Campus. Given proper funding and strategic planning the Campus would operate as an engine of growth for the town. Sinn Féin proposes that the IDA make a site for the new Business Incubation Campus available to Navan Town Council at a cost lower than current market rates.

##### The Redevelopment of the Retail Heart of Navan / Athfhobhairt Croí Miondíol na hUaimhe

Sinn Féin is calling for the redevelopment of the retail centre of Navan. The town is currently missing a pedestrian heart. Sinn Féin believes that with the approval of the street's businesses, Trimgate St should be pedestrianised. This will give the shopper more freedom to relax with out the hustle and bustle of traffic. In the experience of other comparable towns such as Sligo, a pedestrianised Street will increase revenues for retailers. It is important that the necessary parking be provided near to Trimgate Street to allow for ease of access.

The retail heart of Navan town has become too concentrated. The dense location of shopping facilities in the Shopping Centre area has caused major difficulties in

relation to traffic. This may have been caused by land owners sitting on commercial development land for the purpose of preventing construction of competitor retail outlets. Sinn Féin believe that steps should be taken to prevent single developers monopolising commercial development land in the town. This near monopoly reduces development opportunities, stunts the growth of the town and reduces rates income in the town.

Sinn Féin is also of the view that the failure by the local authorities to ensure they fulfilled their legal requirements regarding Local Area Plans (LAP's) and the absence of the Development Plan Implementation Team approach has significantly reduced the opportunities contained within the towns 2004 – 2009 development plan.

#### Tourist Development - Boyne Walk / Forbairt Turasóireachta

Sinn Féin proposes that a new tourist walk encompassing the full length of the river Boyne be developed by Meath Tourism. In recent years there has been growth in Tourist interest in historical or cultural walks around the world. The El Comino de Santiago de Compostela and the Inca trail are two such walks. Hundreds of thousands of people flock to these areas every year to undertake these walks. Sinn Féin believe the river Boyne can be developed into one such trail.

The Boyne is lined with many of the finest historical monuments in all of Ireland. The Boyne Valley is blessed with Trim Castle, Bective Abbey, the Hill of Tara, Donaghmore , Slane Castle, the Hill of Slane, Newgrange and the other Brú na Bóinne monuments, the Battle of the Boyne, Townley Hall, and Drogheda. Other than these famous sites the river is also lined with dozens of less significant historical sites and beauty spots such as Holy Wells, Standing Stones, Stately Manors, Old Bridges, Old Church Yards and Old Mills. Navan is located at the centre of this walk and is ideally placed to benefit for increased numbers of tourists.

## **4.2 Infrastructure / Bonneagar**

### Road Infrastructure / Bonneagar Bóithre

Of the 'Primary Development Centres' Navan will be the last to be connected to the National Motorway Network. This is expected to happen in late 2009 or early 2010.

Further road infrastructure development is being proposed along the N51 from Navan to Drogheda and onto Naas. This road is proposed as an out orbital route bypassing the Dublin area. This road will face a number of major difficulties including the following;

- Funding shortfall due to recession
- Incompatible with National Spatial Plan
- General trend toward fuel price volatility
- Increasing EU fines in relation to CO2 output
- General trend toward public transportation

It is Sinn Féin's view that this Motorway is unlikely to be built. On this basis it is extremely important that the N51 be upgraded from its current dangerous condition as it is Navan's connection to the Dublin Belfast Corridor, the Port at Drogheda and the current regional hospital.

### Traffic Congestion / Brú Tráchtá

Traffic congestion in Navan town is now at a crises level. Indeed, private investment in the town has suffered as a result of traffic chaos. A number of private businesses have pulled out of the town due to this issue. There is no doubt that the opening of the new M3 will alleviate this issue some what however Sinn Féin believes that it is of critical importance that planned bypasses in the town are opened in the near future. These include the following;

- The Athboy Rd to Kells Rd.
- The Commons Rd to Trim Rd
- The Trim Rd to Dublin Rd
- The Kentstown Rd to Boyne Rd

These roads should be built immediately and not be dependent on future property development.

### Public Transport / Iompar Poiblí

Currently Navan's public transport users come 29th with regards infrastructure and service in the south of Ireland. This is despite the increasing importance of Public Transport within society. Sinn Féin seeks to develop progressive solutions and infrastructure which prioritises the users of public transport above other road users.

Public transport is a major part of the solution to;

- Navan's traffic congestion,
- Protecting the environment
- Reducing Ireland's CO2 fines
- Reducing exposure to oil price volatility
- Providing accessible transport to all within society

### Train / Traein

Co. Meath was once served by 25 operating railway stations. Now the county only has three. These three stations service the very edges of the county leaving Navan without any rail service. Rail is central to public transport provision and an important investment criteria for future potential industrial investors. Each FF administration since 1997 has promised the imminent arrival of the rail line. So far this has failed to materialise.

1. Given that the provision of rail is of central importance to the development of the town, it is necessary that Navan Town Council select and safeguard viable sites for stations at the centre of the town and at the northwest of the town.
  - a. The first station site should be close to the centre of the town to allow for foot passengers to access the town with ease. It should also take into consideration the location of the proposed new Regional Hospital.
  - b. The second station site will serve the northern half of the town and serve as a park and ride facility for commuters from Kells, Virginia and farther a field.
2. It is also necessary that future residential development is located as close to the station sites as possible in order to ensure a critical mass of users to access the new service

### Bus / Bus

1. Currently Navan is without an official Bus Station. Commuters are expected to line out on a daily basis in the elements at Market Square. This is an intolerable situation.
2. There are also no Bus Lanes in the town's environs and as such buses suffer greatly from traffic congestion.
3. The Navan Town bus service operates without demarcated bus stops and without an adherence to time tabling system.
4. Navan Town Bus Service also fails to provide a service on Saturdays, one of the busiest shop days of the week.

### Cycle Lanes / Rotharbhealach

Cycling is considered to be one of the best solutions available to combat the growing modern problems of congestion and pollution. Cycling can also help reduce incidence of Obesity and Diabetes which are fast reaching epidemic levels. Currently the provision of Cycle Lanes is piece meal at best. Vast tracts of road do not have Cycle Lanes and there are numerous examples of new roads being built without cycle lanes.

Sinn Féin believe:

1. that all new roads built in the town and its environs should have Cycle Lanes where possible as a matter of course
2. Cycle Lanes should be built as a matter of priority to and from all schools in the town
3. major road works such as sewerage pipe line installation should be used as an opportunity to install cycle lanes
4. to take advantage of the growing Cycling Tourism market the Town Council should ensure that road developments between the main heritage towns in the region and the town should have cycle lanes installed as a matter of course

## **4.3 Cultural and Political Development / Forbairt Cultúrtha agus Polaitiúil**

### Political / Polaitiúil

Due to the major short fall in Navan's rates base and the resulting pressure on local business and Local Government front line services funding from central government must be increased. Meath is a net contributor to the state. The county provides 3.4% of taxes but only received 2.7% of spending. This cannot be allowed continue in light of the research results contained in this report.

The Boundary of Navan Town should be extended to include all new and future housing developments. This will allow for the equal treatment of all the residents of the town. It will also greatly increase the influence of the town in relation to County Council and Central Government prioritisation and future investment.

### Irish Language / An Ghaeilge

The Irish language is a central part of the Irish culture and despite ubiquitous English language media, interest in the Irish language has increased in the last number of years. National statutory support for our language has also increased. Rathcairn and

Baile Gibb, located close to Navan, are unique in that they are the only east coast Gaeltachtaí in the country.

However despite the positive developments nationally and goodwill locally to the first language of the state, few steps have been taken by Navan Town Council to actively promote the language in the town.

In order to support our local Gaeltachtaí and further develop our heritage, Navan Town Council should take similar steps to Local Authorities in Galway and actively promote the language. This can be done by using Irish names for all new housing developments, roads, Business Parks, Schools, Parks, Government and Local Authority Buildings etc. It can also be done by council staff using a small amount of Irish phrases in dealing with the public such as 'Fáilte go Comhairle Baile na hUaimhe' etc. It can also be done by using Irish language signage on all buildings, bins and vehicles etc.

Sinn Féin also support the setting up of a primary Gaelscoil in the Johnstown/Athlumney area in the short term and a secondary Gaelscoil in the town in the long term. Sinn Féin also call on private enterprise to facilitate and promote the use of the language in spoken, internet and correspondence situations.

Navan is well positioned to become a leader with regards progressive development of the Irish Language. Using a certain amount of creativity this can be done for little cost. All that is needed is to translate good will into action.

#### Strategic Voluntary Planning / Plánáil Deonach Straitéiseach

Navan has a rich network of voluntary organisations ranging in purpose from care for the elderly to sports and athletics. This element of Navan's life is extremely important to the development of thousands of individuals and the town itself. As such this sector's development should not happen in a haphazard way.

It is Sinn Féin's view that each local organisation should be encouraged to develop a strategic plan for each 5 year period and a system should be put in place whereby they can formally submit these to the Town Council. This will allow for seamless planning right across all the sectors in the town.

#### Navan Sports Campus / Campas Spóirt Baile na hUaimhe

A large number of Navan sporting organisations such as Navan Boxing Club and Navan School Boys Soccer Club are without their own club venue. Sinn Féin believe that the development of the new Navan Park offers an opportunity for these organisations to find a permanent home.