

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee 2018

General Submission

William Winters 18 February 2018

Outdated Electoral Districts (EDs)

A recurring theme within submissions made to the Boundary Committee over the years, is that many people consider that their Local Electoral Area (LEA) does not take account of local and community identities and linkages as well as natural boundaries. "Putting People First, The Action Programme for Effective Local Government", published in 2012, identified this issue and stated that "*issues and anomalies that have affected local government such as outdated boundaries [...] will be removed.*"

Unfortunately, many issues and anomalies remain and it will be difficult for the Committee to address these issues. The problem is that Electoral Districts (EDs), which are the building blocks of Local Electoral Areas (LEAs), have in many cases illogical or outdated boundaries. Outside Dublin, most ED boundaries have remained unchanged since the 1850s. Therefore, where large scale development has since has traversed these ED boundaries, the relevance of the original boundaries is completely undermined and incomprehensible in terms of today's geography.

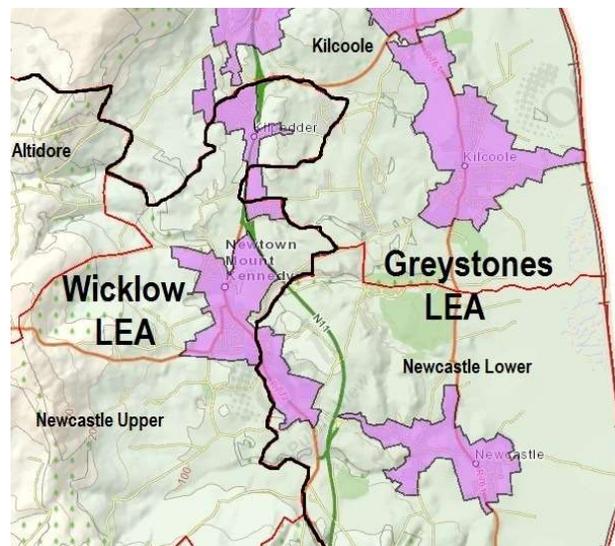


Figure 1

As an example, Figure 1 shows where the LEA boundary between Wicklow and Greystones criss-crosses the settlement of Newtownmountkennedy/Kilpedder four times inside 2 miles. This is an incongruous arrangement whereby neighbouring houses, along the same road, are serviced by two separate LEAs and in this case, to further confound the matter, two separate Municipal Districts.

There are numerous other examples across the country where the ED boundaries bear no relevance to how our communities have evolved since the 1850s and where the physical features upon which these boundaries were formed have long since disappeared. Kilmacanoge in Co. Wicklow, population 14,694, is another example. The ED crosses the physical barrier of the N11 dual carriageway and includes parts of the old Bray Urban Council and as well as the rural foothills of the Sugar Loaf mountain.

In Dublin, EDs were last updated in 1986. Since then, the Blakestown ED in Blanchardstown has experienced immense growth and now has a population of 38,924 (census 2016). Such large EDs reduce the committee's flexibility to create boundaries which properly take account of local and community identities and linkages within this area.

The boundaries of such EDs should be reviewed and reconfigured. With advances in geographic information systems (GIS) and satellite imagery the reconfiguration of EDs is no longer a complicated or arduous task. In the UK, electoral ward reconfigurations are triggered by the Boundary Commission whenever the population deviates from the average by 10%.

Recommendation

In your report to the Minister I suggest that the Committee recommend that a comprehensive review and reconfiguration of EDs is undertaken before the formation of any future Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee. This work will enable future Committees to fulfil the objective of "Putting People First" which stated, **"issues and anomalies that have affected local government such as outdated boundaries [...] will be removed"**.