

February 12th 2018

Secretary
Local Area Boundary Committees
Room 1.67
Custom House
Dublin 1

boundarycommittee@housing.gov.ie

Ref: Committee No. 1

Dear Secretary,

As you and your committee contemplate re drawing the boundaries of our Local Areas I ask that you not only take note of the population size of each Local Electoral Area, but that you primarily take into consideration the links between the citizen and the State, the voter and their local authority, the resident and their local representatives and the importance of a continued relationship between them.

Local people, their feelings, their sense of place and linkages are often neglected when Boundary Committees are busy trying to even up numbers across a spread of Electoral Districts.

The result is citizen disengagement as the voter feels disconnected from a political process where they no longer recognise links with their new local authority area or the politicians and candidates running for election, Municipal District Managers, Area Engineers and so on.

It is imperative that your committee strives to keep communities in one Municipal District and avoid splitting parishes who have a shared identity, such as Kilrush / Askamore; Ferns / Tombrack; Ballyvaldon / Blackwater - parishes currently split between Gorey and Enniscorthy Municipal Districts.

We live in a representative democracy – public representatives need input from interested and informed citizens in order to create a better future for the area. This does not happen where Local Electoral Areas are constantly shifted from one Municipal District to another as people tend to become disaffected, disengaged and disconnected from local electoral politics. Lack of continuity between local

government and an area leads to public dissatisfaction with the process, and this is not a good way to encourage strong local government.

Where this happens, representation is splintered, with many voters having no link with the Municipal District or indeed the Public Representatives of the M.D. in which they are placed following successive Boundary Committee reviews. Many people feel disenfranchised. They are so far removed from the Municipal Districts in which they are placed that they don't even recognise any of the candidates on the ballot paper if they do go to vote.

I ask you to take particular care when drawing boundaries of areas where towns are already divided by County Boundaries. Please do not splinter these areas further as such towns (Bunclody, for example) need the support of strong Local Government to allow them to grow and prosper to create energetic communities, strong community leadership and vibrant local economies - not further splintering of its natural hinterland. Indeed the work of the Boundary Committee can help to strengthen towns like Bunclody and secure its future by ensuring the surrounding area consistently remains in the same Municipal District as the town.

As you carry out your work, please remember the effect your decisions will have on the people on the ground, and do not move a townland or area from one Municipal District to another to simply balance your boundaries and make up numbers. Your actions effect lives and have consequences.

There should be no area or voter feeling left behind once your process is concluded.

I hope you take my comments into consideration

Yours faithfully,

Barbara-Anne Murphy MCC

Wexford Co. Council