

Cllr. Paddy Meade,

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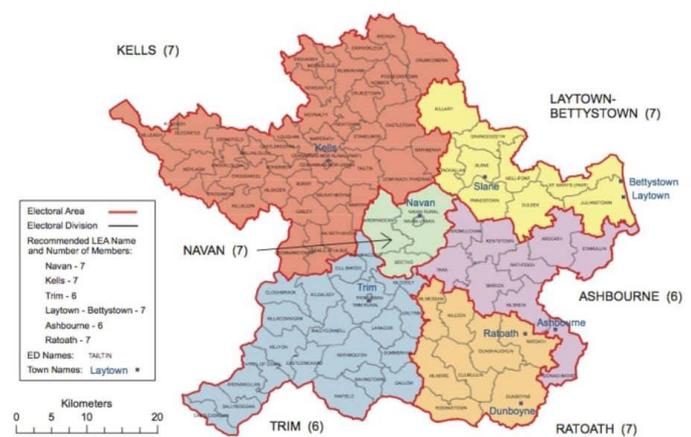
25th of January 2018

Secretary,
Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees 2017,
Room 1.67,
Custom House,
Dublin 1,
D01 W6X0.

Dear Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee,

I write to you today not only as an individual but as a representative of many of the people in county Meath. I wish to outline the importance of not only local government but also local government services as I believe not enough emphasis is been placed on the services end.

I believe you behold a very powerful position, I saw how the changes in 2014 had a positive effect on some and sadly an adverse effect on others. I care little for the councillors who lost their seats and I say this as I suspect you would fear I like most councillors write to you today for political benefit but alas I write for I have seen wrong committed because of the 2014 redrawing and I see justice. The councils may not control healthcare and so people may not be dying but there is clear differences in housing maintenance, housing supply and road maintenance from district to another and depending on where a county line or district line is drawn has a serious effect upon the time at which people will receive their entitlements.



In Meath having an extra districts since 2014 has meant more administration and less work on the ground:

I also ask that the commission be very aware of the practicality's of what they do, for while the changes in Meath upped us from 27 councillors in 5 council districts to 40 in 6 which was applauded by councillors as more seats ensured confidence in remaining in office the new proposals meant that our council would now have a new districts needing district engineers and sub engineers and there was no extra funding for this and so ground staff shortages emerged all over. (e.g. the Slane district in Meath lost a quarter of its land and roads in the redrawing of 2014 with most going into the Laytown Bettystown District, however the district still has 2 engineers, with 3 overseers and now 7 county councillors and 1 area manager governing over 12 ground staff.

These ramifications I don't believe were considered in 2014 and I really hope they are now, as in fairness I think people would care to see more work been done in their area rather than smaller districts with more administration and less work happening on the ground.

Background to current Meath districts design of 2013:

The current district came about following the 2013 draw for submissions which saw the Meath Fine Gael submission been adopted exactly as proposed.

However as a member of the Meath East Fine Gael Executive at the time I was angered it was adopted as there were a multiple of choices that could have been choosing and adopting one political parties street for street and house to house seemed a little odd, though it was suspected by many including myself prior to publication.

When Meath East and West Fine Gael Executives met up with the sitting Fine Gael Math County Councillors at the time drawn up our submission, a decision was taking to go with the existing option which was drawn up though the analysis of the Fine Gael vote in Meath in a hope of returning 14 seats in the 2014 election (we got 13) and not taking aspects like travel movements and village associations with each other into account. I personally found this very hard to comprehend, For this very reason in 2013 I made a stand and I heavily objected to the Fine Gael submission which I thought at that time would see adoption and notably it in turn was not adopted or submitted by Meath Easts Fine Gael Executive and thus if you look at the submission which was adopted street for street in Meath it was submitted and signed off by the sitting Fine Gael county Councillors and not by the Meath east executive.

I hope you take from this that there massive improvement required, we need to draw this up not only taking the easy option, but taking some common sense into the equation. The only question or worry I would have is would there political will to do so?

Areas where changes should be made:

1) District sizes in Meath are too small.

While rural county have complained of two large districts we must analyse where these complaints came from. They came from the political element of the council not from the ground. Thus our priority should be to draw up districts in a way that best gets services to the people.

Had Meath 4 districts instead of 6 we would have reduced admin, less district chair expenses, less district engineers and district area managers giving the county more funding for ground staff and ground work. This point must be observed.

However I understand under your remit the Navan district may be shrinking to a 5 seater, meaning 35 seats are to be divided and I understand dividing them into 5 more districts is the easiest option, but I would say it is not the best option. If the 35 could be divided into 3 districts there would be a considerable saving however reducing it to 4 outside of Navan would also make saving and would suit the countys layout.

2) North Meath on the Kells and Laytown-Bettystown border is badly devided.

I highly recommend in the strongest terms that the electrical divisions of Grangegeeth, Stackallen, Rathkenny, Killary, Castletown, Drumconrath and Domnach Phádraig should be in the same district due to their connectivity and if the District of Navan is to get smaller I would see Simonstown from Navan Rural been added as a very option.

Detail:

There appears to be massive disconcertment in this area which has worsened since the council areas where redrawn in 2014. The area been very disjointed split across two council districts with the districts populations located far away.

County Meath



Electoral division:	Made of the following Parish's:	In District:
Killary	94% of Lobinstown, 10% of Castletown	(Laytown-Bettystown MD)
Castletown	90% of Castletown	Kells MD
Rathkenny	Rathkenny (35%)	Kells MD
Grangegeeth	(Rathkenny (32%))	(Laytown-Bettystown MD)
Stackallen	Rathkenny (33%)	(Laytown-Bettystown MD)
Drumconrath	100% of Drumconrath, 6% of Lobinstown	Kells MD
Domnach Phádraig	Kilberry, Wilkinstown, Oristown	Kells MD

Detailed Info on some of these parishes and electrical divisions:

Killary, (Laytown-Bettystown MD - Currently) 94% of Lobinstown, 10% of Castletown.

A person like I living in Killary (Lobinstown) shops in Rathkenny, Castletown and gets there fuel in the local petrol station in Drumconrath as Lobinstown is absent of a shop or fuel station, thus crosses the boundary regularly and integrates with these areas. (Lobinstown has butchers which Rathkenny and Castletown come too, and most children in this area go to secondary school together.)

A Killary resident lives closer to the District capital of Navan, Kells, Kingscourt in Cavan, Ardee in Louth, Drogheda in Louth, and travels to Ashbourne via the N2 quicker than they travel to the actual district capital of Laytown or Bettystown. To travel from Killary to Laytown by the shortest route one will pass through the Mid Louth MD and Drogheda MD on this trip and pay the toll and travel up the M1.

This massive disconcertment has seen the area lose out bad as members don't travel to attend council engagements which are near all held in the populated area many miles away, this included civic receptions, consultations, development plan meeting etc.

It would also be my mind that this area misses out and will continue to miss out as the parochial nature of local politics has on multiple occasions see it loss out in funding to the populated areas where councillors live.

I trust your committee will observe this and agree change is required for the people living in Killary.

Rathkenny (Kells MD) Grangegeeth & Stackallen (Laytown-Bettystown MD) (Rathkenny Parish)

The division of Rathkenny parish into three electoral divisions with populations under 700 suited in times before good transport but the separation of one third the parish in a different district has led to a multiple of complication and loss of council funding to the area.

Locally there had been different policy took by Kells and L/B district which has infuriated locals that peoples in one part of the parish receive different treatment that on the other side, e.g. On the Kells part cul-de-sacs get patched, where as in L/B residence must pay 10% to get any work done on cul-de-sacs, however where the real problem is that rad salting policies are different and so as one travels in the morning to leave there kids at school from one side of the parish to the other a variation arises.

Regarding council funding Rathkenny has lost out for instead has been seen as a significant parish with a population of over 1800 it is divided between 2 districts where it applies twice for all council grants to two districts.

Most concerning is that there are roads within the parish split between district and much confusion is caused.

I highly recommend that Rathkenny parish which is united on so many levels including school, football, soccer, community hall be united in the same council district.

Castletown (90% of Castletown Parrish) (Kells MD)

Similar to Rathkenny parish, Castletown parish is split between two electoral divisions (Castletown and Killary) and two electoral districts, that been the Laytown Bettystown and Kells.

Castletown is a great area and has done well in the National Tidy Towns competition however only the Kells district part entered, with the part in the Laytown-Bettystown MD left out.

Castletown has a strong infinity with Killary (Lobinstown) as the parishes are joined up for underage football, Lobinstown people pass through Castletown on their way to Navan. Lobinstown people travel to Castletown for the shop and Castletown people travel to Lobinstown for butchers and Post Office.

Thus I strongly recommend that the parish of Castletown be reunited with itself and if that can only be done by placing the two electoral divisions its spread over into the same district I believe this should be looked at, thus Castletown, Killary and Rathkenny (Rathkenny, Stackallen and Grangegeeth) should be in the same district.

3) Unite the town of Duleek which is currently split between 2 districts.

The 2013 report split the town of Duleek in two with the boundary in part going down the main street, which has caused many problems.

Most of the town is in the electrical division of Duleek in the Laytown-Bettystown MD while the other side of the town is in electrical division of Ardcath in Ashbourne MD.

This does not make logic, the locals, the councillors and the council staff will agree and I wish to redraw your attention to the submission by the Laytown-Bettystown MD on the matter.

3) The Meath Cost must be united.



Electoral division:	Beaches Name:	In District:
St. Marys Drogheda (Meath)	Mornington to Bettystown	Laytown-Bettystown MD
Julianstown	Bettystown, Laytown, Mosney	Laytown-Bettystown MD
Stamullen	Gormenston	Ashbourne MD

County Meath has a great cost with a high level of tourism and amenity space for locals for water and sand sports.

In the last 3 years the Laytown-Bettystown have developed a multy million euro development plan for the beach, but despite Meath having the second shortest beach in Ireland it's plan leaves one km out of it, the kilometre in the Ashbourne district.

Since 2014 the beach area in the electrical division on of Stamullen in the Ashbourne has been left behind, whereas the Laytown-Bettystown MD beach received beach wardens and lifeguards as it is a priority of the Laytown Bettystown county councillors the Gorminston beach received nothing.

It is unlogical this current set up, it is also costing more money and so changes are needed urgently.

Conclusion:

In conclusion I hope you see the logic behind the areas I highlighted, I believe there is very few who would disagree with the perspective I put out.

I have shown 3 main areas I believe need to be conjoined in the same district; this to me is and should be a priority.

I assume if Navan district is to become a five seater the easy thing is to simply raise Ashbourne MD and Trim MD from 6 seaters to 7 seaters however I plead with you not to simply take the easy option and to reconfigure our districts so that connectivity is taking into the equation and if this means reducing the number of districts I fully support that.

Kind Regards,

Cllr. Paddy Meade.

Meath County Council.