

18.441

Submission re Galway City and County)

Dear Sirs

I would like to make the following submission re Galway City and County.

Galway City

There seems to be no need for any change in Galway City. The population of each area has increased slightly since 2011. There is a slight imbalance with Central being over represented and West under represented. I suppose moving Shantalla (1912) or Nuns Island (1474) would get the balance right and reduce Central to 5, but that would seem to be change for changes sake and produce a messy boundary. There seems to be a lot of sense to a 3x6 arrangement. I would therefore strongly suggest no change.

Galway County

This requires extensive change as each of Conamara and Tuam need to lose at least two seats and Loughrea needs to lose at least one seat to comply with the terms of reference.

On the basis of 4,600 people per councillor, the following is the current representation per area

Athenry-Oranmore 7.64

Ballinasloe 5.36

Conamara 8.38

Loughrea 8.55

Tuam 9.06

In essence in the east of the county Tuam needs to lose about 9,000 population and Loughrea needs to lose about 7,000.

In the west, unless there is to be a district forming a semicircle around Galway City, the existing Conamara needs to be split in two.

For Conamara, it seems to me that there are a number of "quasi suburban" DEDs adjacent to Galway City with over 20,000 aggregate population that justify five seats namely An Spidéal, Bearna, Cill Aithnín, Cill Chuimín, Galway Rural, Maigh Cuillinn, Na Forbarcha, Oughterard, Sailearna, Sliabh an Aonaigh, Tulaigh Mhic Aodháin and Wormhole. The more rural end of Conamara would then justify four seats. I think that the rural end is exceptional in terms of its area including islands and that the exception allowing for four seats can be properly applied. Conamara is currently over represented; however I don't think 2x4 would be acceptable and on balance it should retain nine.

I would suggest that to adjust Tuam downward you would exclude the areas around Headford being Annaghdown, Ballinduff, Beaghmore, Donaghpatrick, Headford, Kilcoona, Killeany, Killower and Killursa which have an aggregate 7,847 population. That adjustment probably of itself gets Tuam towards the 7 seat level. I think there has historically been a lot of concern about small pockets which are between Ballinasloe and Tuam and a small net transfer of areas towards Ballinasloe would possibly address those issues.

I would suggest that Cahermore, Castletaylor, Doorus, Drumacoo, Killeely, Killeenavarra, Kinvarra and Rahasane be moved from Loughrea - they have an aggregate population of close to 8,000.

Of course the net effect of all this is to increase the population of Athenry-Oranmore to justify over 10 seats (in fact almost 11) and therefore it has to be split. I think this is unavoidable as the areas to its east need to lose three seats and the most that Ballinasloe can absorb is one seat. I am suggesting that Oranmore/Clarinbridge/Kinvara become a five seat area (effectively an M18 corridor) and that Athenry/Headford form the second five seat area. Both of these areas will be slightly underrepresented, but as they are more urban than the other areas, I think this is justified.

I have considered whether there is merit in putting all the areas that form part of Roscommon-Galway Dáil constituency into the one area. However my sense is that that boundary will continually shift and that the current alignment within the county council is broadly more satisfactory. Similar considerations apply to the Galway East/Galway West boundary.

I am conscious that some of my suggestions are liable to split parishes. I think that particularly given the shape of DEDs this is impossible to avoid. However I think there is some scope within my framework to iron out any issues about rural DEDs (such as Cooloo referenced in other submissions) between Ballinasloe/Loughrea/Tuam, which can be a source of contention.

Brendan Heneghan