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Date: 13/03/2008 00:46
Subject: Boundary review Dublin City and Council/other cities

Dear Sirs

I wish to make the following submission re the boundaries in Dublin City and County and a few brief (and obvious!) comments about other cities. Please acknowledge receipt asap, so that I know you have this on time.

General

I note the term of reference related to Dail constituency boundaries. This is noted as a third priority behind (1) electoral areas with an urban or neighbourhood focal point or points and (2) the desirability of preserving natural communities or the hinterlands of population centres. A number of areas cry out as cases for 1 and 2 and in these cases Dail boundaries should be treated as a subsidiary factor. Dail boundaries also suffer from the following issues in Dublin.

1. the ratios in the city constituencies all give quite different fractional levels of representation Dublin Central 104,674 (10.73 seats), Dublin NC 75,276 (7.73 seats), Dublin NE 47,087 (4.83 seats) Dublin NW 66,416 (6.82seats), Dublin SC 111,377 (11.44 seats) Dublin SE 100,305 (10.30 seats) (some figures difficult to calculate because of split areas).
2. constituency boundaries split natural communities and disadvantage them severely, if the pattern is repeated for local elections. Witness the range of comments re Swords and my own submission re Terenure and Harolds Cross. I think this could also arise with Santry and Beaumont. I think the least these communities can expect from your commission is that they are united for local election purposes.
3. I know the bureaucracy on city council loves their five sub regions and don't want change. I cannot seriously believe that shifting relatively small areas into a different area could cause serious inconvenience on this score. If so, no electoral boundary could be shifted so the committee would have little point.
4. Some areas such as Artane are split across a number of constituencies and radical surgery would be needed to split the pieces.

Dublin City North

The population here is 294,529 and justifies 30.25 seats as against a current allocation of 31. Given that much of the area has declining population I think it is trending towards the 30 and should be so configured. The current Finglas and Ballymun Whitehall have 33,914 and 27,301 respectively and justify 6.28 seats. I suggest they should be combined into a single 6 seater, not least to get rid of the three seater. It would be possible to have a 7 seater comprising the constituency but this would involve dismembering the Artane ward and consequent serious surgery.

Artane and Donaghmede should each become 4 seaters, with the transfer of

appromimately 4,000 from one of the Grange divisions to Artane. This is the loss of a seat in Donaghmede,

Clontarf (4.83), Cabra/Glasnevin (4.58) and North Inner City (6.17) should remain unchanged as to area and North Inner City should get an extra seat. However consideration should be given to including that part of Phibsborough currently in Arran Quay into Cabra/Glasnevin so that all of Phibsborough is in one area.

Dublin City South

This area has 211,682 people and justifies 21.74 seats. From a lower population base, it has increased by 6,500 (as opposed to 4,000 northside) over 2002/2006, so there is a trend to support 22 seats. The area of Ballyfermot and South Inner City W and E are also close to 10 seats and should get an extra seat. There are 4 3 seaters southside and these need to be abolished as per the terms of reference.

For the reasons outlined above I do not think the constituency boundary is a sensible divide. The areas within the canal are quite different from the rest of the south city and I believe if these areas are subsumed into districts further south, the current representatives, who I think are familiar with the areas' issues and problems may struggle to get elected. I fear that these communities who need representation most will lose out if this is done. Further south the constituency divide splits Harolds Cross and Terenure and I have already expressed my significant concern about that iniquity. I am suggesting therefore that the south inner city and Ballyfermot be split into two five seaters, The other three areas should be split into three 4 seaters (although I suppose thought could be given to two six seaters).

I am suggesting that the areas called Merchants Quay be transferred to the existing South East Inner City bringing population to 50,301 and five seats. The balance of South West Inner City and Ballyfermot to be put together with 47,787 population and 5 seats. This unites the areas of Ballyfermot, Inchicore and Kilmainham, which traditionally have been grouped politically.

Pembroke needs an additional seat and Rathmines East A and D should be added bringing it to 37,116 population. The areas Terenure A to D should be added to Rathmines bringing it to 37,825. It is noted incidentally that the city council website says that Terenure is in south east area, which is not I believe correct. Crumlin/ Kimmage would reduce to 4 seats with 39,729 people.

Dun Laoghaire

It seems to me that ignoring constituency boundary issues, the existing Ballybrack, Dun Laoghaire and Blackrock LEA's need no revision apart from perhaps including one of the split DED's Monkstown or Stradbroke within Blackrock entirely to balance the population. Two DED's in Ballybrack are in Dublin South but their aggregate population of 8,500 approx does not fit neatly into an extra seat in Glencullen. Also putting them in Glencullen splits Cabinteely as a community, so I favour no move.

In the western end Dundrum's population has drifted towards 5 seats and there are two existing 3 seaters to be abolished. If Clonskeagh Belfield and Clonskeagh Roebuck are moved to Dundrum that gets Dundrum right almost exactly. The rest of Stillorgan and Glencullen should then be merged into a new 6 seater. If obsession with constituency boundaries (current or proposed?) has its way, Glencullen would get 7 seats and Ballybrack 5, but I don't think the example of Terenure Rathfarnham is a good precedent for big 7 seaters.

Fingal

This is fairly simple as Howth and Malahide should each lose a seat. They should then be merged into one 5 seat area. Mulhuddart should get an extra seat taking it to 5, with Castleknock staying at 4 (a possible minor boundary alteration between the two might be considered).

Swords and Balbriggan together justify 10 seats. It seems anomalous to me that part of Lusk and all of Donabate (7,600) should be included in the Swords area. They have far more in common with the other coastal towns further north and should be put into Balbriggan which then becomes a five seater. Needless to say I agree 110% with the submission that dividing Swords as per the proposed Dail boundaries is nonsensical for local authority purposes.

Thus we end up with Howth/Malahide (5 seats) Mulhuddart (5 seats) Balbriggan (5 seats) with the other two staying as are.

Dublin South

This is one of the more difficult area, with the highly unsatisfactory Terenure/Rathfarnham 7 seater. On the easy side Lucan justifies an extra seat, with enough for 5.24. Clondalkin is a bit light for 5 but perhaps should stay as is with the possible addition of Rathcoole and Saggart to follow the Mid West boundary, but they add 6,574 population and cause an area with a growing population to be underrepresented. It is probably however the solution that best keeps communities together, as Newcastle, Rathcoole and Saggart are most likely to have a representative for a rural area if they are all together.

There is a lot to be said (apart from our old Dail boundary problem) for putting together the areas south of the Dodder and called Ballyboden, Bohernabreena, Edmondstown, Firhouse and Rathfarnham. They have an aggregate population of 53,855 and justify 5.5 seats. If Bohernabreena were excluded, it would bring the ratio nearer to 5.

This leaves 11 seats to be distributed between Terenure, Templeogue and Tallaght. If Terenure, Templeogue and Tallaght East (Avonbeg, Glenview, Kilnamanagh, Kingswood, Millbrook and Tymon) are grouped together this produces a population of 46,050 which is about 5 seat territory. The balance of areas called Tallaght seem to have 43,831. The issue of which gets 6 and which gets 5 seats turns on where Ballymount, Belgard, Ballinascorney and Bohernabreena end up. and I leave that to you.

I therefore suggest Lucan (5), Clondalkin (5) with Rathcoole and Saggart.

Rathfarnham/Firhouse (5), Tallaght East with Templeogue(5/6) and Tallaght West (5/6).

I trust the above is helpful. If I can help you with any issue that needs to be clarified, please let me know.

Other cities

Cork city seems broadly fine and not in need of much surgery.

Limerick City seems to be overrepresented in area 1 and under in area 4. I really don't know enough of the detail to input meaningfully

The West and South wards of Galway City 2 and 3 need some adjustment with about 3,500 population to move. I understand there are natural boundaries between the two which militate against change however.

Brendan Heneghan