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Re Boundary Changes for Local Elections

Milford Area County Donegal

Dear Sirs

As the Editor of the above newspaper based within this electoral area I wish to make the following points in support of a return to having four elected Cllrs. in the Milford Area.

Milford is one of the most peripheral and remote areas in the country with a continuing decline in the more rural parishes. The decline is now a worrying factor since it is affecting the socio-economic structures of the community and the fabric of society is seriously threatened. Loss of vital services can be related to a decline in demand because there are not enough people there to avail of these essential services regardless of subsidy or government support.

The Milford Area needs a very strong voice at County Council level in order to participate fully in the processes of democracy: to bring more funding and action into the area so that future generations can be stabilised in Milford to ensure that it's future is positive and properly funded and financially supported.

Four Cllrs. is the basic requisite for a staging post to revitalise the area and to make the strongest case possible within the Council a better mandate to effect the essential changes that are now urgently required.

Milford has a tradition of farming; fishing and outsourcing the skills of the community elsewhere. We have not benefited from the economic boom like Letterkenny and our tourism industry is much too small to replace the indigenous jobs that are lost forever.

At the same time the politics of the area has been much too strident in putting party ahead of the needs of the electorate and this strategy has increased with only three members on the Council.

There are strong Gaeltacht communities in the area and as such these parishes are among the most under-represented in local government and as a consequence there is not one single member from the electoral area with a capacity to address the problems of the Milford Gaeltacht communities as Gaeilge.

Milford, in previous elections had four-elected Cllrs. and as such the system had much merit and worked very well for everyone including the political parties and the electorate. With the loss of one Cllr. ten years ago the machinations of party politics began to dominate, to the detriment of the people and their needs. A return to four Members would go a very long way towards restoring a proper balance of interest and serve the people in a much more positive manner in the future.

The concept of three Cllrs. in electoral area meetings is also highly unsatisfactory since these meetings cannot take place without a full presence of all of them.

Milford can be extended to include the Woodlands polling stations (now in the Letterkenny area). This is an integral part of the Ramelton area as well and would assist in maintaining the protocols for changes within the Dail constituency boundaries and would add balance to the electoral profile of the Milford Area.

At the same time if this proposal is not feasible I see nothing inherently wrong with a return to having the Creeslough in Donegal SW area returned to the Milford area.

Yours truly;
John McAteer.