

Droichead Bán,
Glens,
Dingle,
Co. Kerry.

7th March 2008.

Secretary,
Electoral Area Boundary Committee;
Room 203,
Custom House,
Dublin 1.

Re: Submission Dingle/An Daingean Electoral Boundary.

Dear Secretary,

I wish to make a submission re the Dingle Electoral Area Boundary in order to ensure that it is left as it is since its incorporation in 1998.

Terms of Reference Part 1.

The total population for County Kerry as per the CSO figures in 2006 is 139,835 people and with a total of 27 councillors representing the county: this works out at average of 5197 per councillor. In the Dingle Electoral Area the population as per the same CSO figures is 14,477 persons. With three councillors presently representing this area, this works out at 4825 persons per councillor. Therefore this figure meets the population requirements and comes within the range of + or – 10% which is allowed. We clearly meet population requirements.

Terms of Reference Part 2.

The Boundary Committee has an objective while drawing up a boundary would as far as practicable, have an urban or neighbourhood focal point.

Clearly, the focal point for West Kerry where the boundary has already been established is Dingle /An Daingean.

The majority of people living within the present electoral boundary travel to Dingle and avail of the services being provided, i.e., Banks, Post Office, Fire Brigade Services, Medical Centre, Dental Services, Chemists, Optical Services, Library, Hospital, Ambulance Services and other Service Providers. This is just the tip of the iceberg as:

- Kerry Co. Council has its local Headquarters located in Dingle
- The Garda Headquarters for the whole Peninsula is based in Dingle
- Kerry Agri Business for the whole peninsula is based in Dingle
- Fáilte Eireann Headquarters for West Kerry is based in Dingle
- Second Level Educational Services are based in Dingle
- All Fish Processing Factories in the Peninsula are based in Dingle
- Dingle Mart provides their services for all of West Kerry in Dingle Town
- Udarás na Gaeltachta Headquarters for the Munster Area is based in Dingle

In short this electoral area has a unique and distinctive focal point which has taken centuries to establish.

Terms of Reference Part 3.

It is recommended that the local electoral areas take due account first of the desirability of preserving natural communities and the hinterlands of population centres.

- (A) The constituency currently stretches almost 80km and takes over 1½ hours to travel. Given that West Kerry is a Peninsula, a very natural and geographical boundary already exists.
- (B) If we were to join Tralee, Castleisland, Killorglin or Killarney, the natural Gaelic Speaking Community would be destroyed on the Peninsula. The Dingle Electoral Area is the largest Irish Speaking Gaeltacht in Munster with 6500 native speakers (Source: CSO 2006). Changing the boundary would cause irreversible and irreparable damage to the Gaelic speaking community.
- (C) West Kerry has a well established sporting entity and has always been represented in County Championships at all ages. The Dingle Council Electoral Area is exactly the same as the whole of West Kerrys Gaelic Football Catchment Area. The football communities of Castlegregory, An Gaeltacht, Lispole, Dingle, Annascaul, Castlemaine are all bordering each other and take part in West Kerry league and championship games at all ages.
- (D) This Local Electoral Area as a whole is in the South Kerry Dáil constituency. Increasing or dividing this Electoral Area could result in the Peninsula being in two different Dáil constituencies.

Terms of Reference Part 4

This recommends that a geographical size of an Electoral Area should not be disproportionately large. The natural community in West Kerry reside on a Peninsula which clearly stands on its own from a physical point of view. Given distance from Dun Chaoin to Milltown or Tralee is approximately 80km, this clearly shows that the Electoral Area is quite large. Despite being a vast mountainous area, all areas are intrinsically connected through sheep farming, dairy herds, fishing, tourism and business. Increasing the Electoral Area will lead to an excessively large geographical area with little or no natural interaction with larger towns in the constituency.

In conclusion, increasing or dividing the Electoral Area will have devastating implications for the population of the Peninsula. Currently we meet the population requirements, we have a clear urban focal point, we have a natural community which needs preserving and the area is sufficiently large enough. Any alteration will have a negative impact on the vibrancy of the community.

It makes no sense to change the present situation which is working very well and with which the people of the area are very happy with. Kerry County Council has spent years structuring its services to suit the demands of the people who live and work here.

Trusting you will give this submission a full and favourable consideration.

Is mise le meas:

Seamus Cosai Fitzgerald
Seamus Cosai Fitzgerald MCC