

98 College Park,  
Longford.

13<sup>th</sup> March 2008

**Submission to Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee**

**Re: County Longford Electoral Areas**

Dear Sir,

Noting the terms of reference of the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee established by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government I wish to make the following submission in relation to the electoral areas for County Longford.

Following the previous review in 1998 County Longford has 4 electoral areas at present namely:

Longford electoral area(7 members)  
Ballymahon electoral area(6 members)  
Granard electoral area (5 members)  
Drumlish electoral area (3 members)  
Total Number of Members: 21

I note that the terms of reference indicate that there is to be no change in the total membership of each local authority and therefore the number of members to be elected to Longford County Council at the next local elections will be 21.

Census 2006 figures indicate the population of Co Longford is 34,391. This represents an average of 1638 persons per elected member. Taking account of the census figures for each electoral area there is a clear over representation and under representation in certain areas of the county as follows:

Longford electoral area 13,104 representing a population for 8 members.  
Ballymahon electoral area 9260 representing a population for 5.65 members  
Granard electoral area 7819 representing a population for 4.77 members  
Drumlish electoral area 4208 representing a population for 2.57 members

Having regard to these figures alone it is clear that the current electoral areas require to be changed to comply with the terms of reference and to ensure proportionality. Having regard to the fact that the number of councillors representing an area shall not be less than 4 or more than 7, except in exceptional circumstances, it is clear the changes will have to be made to the current electoral area is to provide for a more balanced representation throughout County Longford.



**It is noted that the Committee shall have an objective to draw up electoral areas which (alone or in combination) would, as far as practicable, have an urban neighbourhood focal point (points). The committee shall also take due account of the desirability of preserving natural communities or the hinterlands of population centres. The desirability of aligning local electoral area boundaries with Dail constituency boundaries does not arise in the context of County Longford.**

**In relation to County Longford, Longford town is the major population centre having a population of 7622 in the town area and 1214 in the hinterland/environs. This represents a total population of 8836 or 25.7% of the total population of the county. As matters currently stand this area of Longford and environs has a population for 5.4 members.**

**For a county such as Longford with a large rural community the Parish unit is very important and is the main basis of preserving natural communities. A number of parishes such as Clondra/Killashee, Clonguish, Killoe and Colmcille are split between various electoral areas at present and, in the reformulation of the electoral boundaries, I believe that the Committee should have regard to this fact and endeavour to avoid the splitting of parishes as far as practicable.**

**With that in mind I wish the committee to consider of the following proposal:**

**County Longford will be divided into 4 electoral areas as follows:**

**Longford electoral area (6 members)  
Ballymahon electoral area (6 members)  
Granard electoral area((5 members)  
Drumlish/Newtownforbes electoral area (4 members)**

**The Longford electoral area currently has a population for 8 members. The proposed new Longford electoral area of 6 numbers would represent the reduction of the population by approximately 3300 persons to provide proportionality.**

**I would suggest that the Longford electoral area would comprise the current Longford Urban polling district , the current Longford rural polling district, the current Glack polling district and the current Stonepark polling district. These polling districts represents the main Longford town and its hinterland and voting takes place in Longford town in the case of all polling districts except Stonepark. This suggested electoral area would allow some flexibility to take account of further population increases which will arise in Longford town and environs.**

**The new Drumlish/Newtownforbes electoral area of 4 members would include the current Drumlish electoral area together with the Lisbrack polling district and probably the Melview polling district. The main population centres for this new electoral area would be the towns of Drumlish and Newtownforbes. Regard should**

also be had to ensuring that the Colmcille Parish is comprised as far as practicable in this proposed electoral area.

The other electoral areas of Ballymahon and Granard would obtain increased population, to ensure proportionality, from the current Longford electoral area. For example the polling district of Clondra would be included in the Ballymahon area to ensure that the Parish of Clondra and Killashee are in the same Electoral Area.

There has been some suggestion about County Longford been divided into three electoral areas of 7 seats. I believe that the division of County Longford into such areas would not assist in preserving natural communities or the hinterlands of population areas and would not facilitate proper representation for the public. The current scheme of four electoral areas has worked well in the past and I believe is the proper manner in which County Longford should be divided.

I ask the Commission to give due regard to my submission which I believe accordance to the terms of reference given to you by the Minister and I believe that my proposal, if adopted, will ensure proportionality in representation for the electorate of County Longford.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Alan Mitchell