

Secretary
Electoral Area Boundary Committee
Room 2.03
Custom House
Dublin
Tel: 01 888 2092

From: .
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The Green Party
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Submission to the Electoral Area Boundary Committee

Dear Sir,

The Baltinglass Ward, which is all the area of West Wicklow, covers an area of approximately 630 sq kilometers (approximately 1/3 of the county). It borders the counties of Dublin, Kildare and Carlow and is separated from the rest of County Wicklow by the Wicklow Mountains. Its' major town is Blessington, with a population of 4,018 people (2006 census). Blessington is also the fifth largest town in County Wicklow. The first four, Bray, Arklow, Wicklow Town and Greystones have town councils, as well as enjoying representation on Wicklow County Council. This effectively means that 60% of the population of the Greystones, Arklow, Bray and Wicklow wards enjoy double representation at local government level.

The Baltinglass Ward, currently a three seater, has seen a population growth of 33% since 1996. The Blessington/Burgage electoral division in this ward, alone, has seen a population increase during this period of over 60%. Taking the huge size of the ward into account, plus the increasing population, it is not possible for the area to continue to be represented effectively at local level by only three, part-time, county councilors.

Population trends 1996 to 2006 for the five Wicklow wards:

Ward	Pop '96	Pop '06	No of Cllrs	cllr/head of pop '06	% increase in Pop
Arklow	20,692	26,152	5	5,230	26.39%
Balt	12,749	16,992	3	5,664	33.28%
Bray	31,363	35,426	7	5,061	12.95%
Greystones	16,678	21,132	4	5,283	26.71%
Wicklow	21,201	26,492	5	5,298	24.96%
Total	102,683	126,194	24	5,258	22.90%

The Baltinglass Ward has shown the greatest percentage population increase of the five wards, with Bray showing the least. Baltinglass Ward also has the highest average population per councilor which is 7%+ greater than the Arklow, Greystones and Wicklow wards and 12% greater than Bray.

The town of Blessington is now adjoined by the growing areas of Kilmalum and Blessington Manor. Though both are in Kildare, they form part of the natural community of Blessington town.. It makes sense to formalise this by extending the Blessington town boundary to include these two areas. Estimates of the current population in these two areas is about 450 people, and growing.

In the Wicklow Development Plan the indicative population for the town of Blessington by 2010 is 6,500 people. Combined with the growing population of Kilmalum and Blessington Manor we could have a town population of over 7,000, one year after the 2009 local elections. This is similar to the population of Wicklow Town (6,930, 2006 census), an area which has a town council.

Changes in Local Public Representation:

- 1) County Council: We recommend that the Electoral Area Boundary Committee increase the county council representation for the Baltinglass Ward from 3 to 4 councilors. This will recognise the significant - and continuing - population growth in the area over the past ten years.
- 2) A Blessington Town Council: The recognition that Blessington Town is fast moving towards the day when it's population will match that of present day Wicklow Town. It's important that West Wicklow, isolated as it is from the eastern half - and administrative center - of the county, should have a strong local center of growth, backed up by local government administrative powers. Serious consideration must be given to eventually conferring town council status on Blessington. This will greatly benefit the wider West Wicklow area and remove the sense of isolation, and lack of political representation, widely felt throughout West Wicklow.

Yours sincerely
Pat Pidgeon

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