



NPF Submissions,
Forward Planning Section,
Dept. of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government,
Custom House,
Dublin D01 W6X0

RE: Submission on Relevant Planning Issues in Co. Kilkenny

As a concerned citizen of County Kilkenny I wish to express my opposition to any proposed boundary changes between Kilkenny and Waterford.

Co-Operation:

I believe the majority of people living in the South East Region would agree that a strong Waterford City is essential to the whole region generally, both now and also looking forward to the timeframe for NPF 2040. It is only with the co-operation of the people and organisations of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford that the aspirations of the region will be achieved. The recent Waterford Boundary Review Committee report states *"it is our analysis that collaboration between the two authorities is significantly less in evidence at strategic level than it is at operational. For example, no joint Retail Strategy has been developed between the authorities, and there is no implementation plan or joint working group to deliver the jointly-adopted Planning and Land-Use Study since its initiation in 2004."* In my opinion Waterford City and County Council (WCCC) have the most to gain by developing the Gateway status for Waterford that has been agreed upon in recent years. As a result, WCCC should have taken a leading role in the region in recent years by co-operating with the other 4 authorities to promote the region as a whole with Waterford City at its hub. Unfortunately the opposite has been the case as stated by Kilkenny County Council (KCC) *"an Implementation Committee was subsequently established which met on three occasions with the most recent meeting in 2008. A further request (to WCCC) by KCC seeking the re-establishment of the Implementation Committee and co-operation on a joint retail strategy was sent in August 2011 during the preparation of the Waterford City Development Plan. No response was received."* The Waterford Boundary Review Committee's recommendation to extend the boundary into County Kilkenny is a reward to WCCC for its policy of non co-operation over the years. I believe to allow a boundary extension now will cause much ill will in the region and will cause untold damage to the spirit of co-operation that is required to advance the regions cause. Recent Boundary review recommendations for Westmeath/Roscommon and Louth/Meath have proposed that joint task groups be set up with clear milestones and timelines for progress which will be strictly monitored by Central Government. This is the only approach that will work for the people of Kilkenny and Waterford.

Existing Development in Ferrybank Area:

On reading the Waterford Boundary Review Committee's report and listening to Waterford politicians one would get the impression that WCCC does not have responsibility for any of the area North of the River Suir. Since 1955 a boundary extension expanded Waterford City into Ferrybank and surrounding areas, an area containing over 400 homes. Having lived in the area all my life I struggle to see any positive impact WCCC have had. I would expect an area that size to have a children's playground and other basic facilities. Nothing of this nature has been provided by WCCC. Indeed it required a local campaign over many years just to get a set of pedestrian traffic lights for the church and school at the busy R711 road (previously the N25). Local residents will tell you that it is impossible to get WCCC to take responsibility for maintaining roads, trees and grass areas in housing estates within the extended City area. I would argue that the Ferrybank area within WCCC's city boundary is not faring too well at present, would it be any different for the residents of an extended area. I think not. In recent times KCC has set up a state of the art library in Ferrybank which has proven to be a very valuable addition for the community. In addition KCC will shortly construct a children's playground in the area and also have their area office conveniently located for use by the community, a facility which WCCC have stated they will not retain. On leaving Waterford City and turning at Plunkett Railway station towards New Ross, for the first 0.5km you will see derelict buildings and empty docks site on the right hand side of the road and on the left hand side you will see an overgrown area and derelict building, formerly the Ard Ri hotel. This is hardly a ringing endorsement of WCCC's planning and development in the area.

Balanced Development of Waterford City:

The main reason put forward, as I see it, for a boundary extension is to allow for the future balanced development of Waterford City. On the evidence I see locally there has already been significant residential and commercial development in the area under the governance of KCC. Numerous residential developments, such as Ard Daire, Aylesbury, The Crescent, Clover Ave., Abbeylands, Ard Glas, Fiodh Mor, Leaca Ard, Castle Oaks, The Fairways, Silverwood, Arbourmount, Ashbrook, Brockton, Arlington, Berkeley and Christendom have been constructed in recent years on lands in County Kilkenny adjacent to Waterford City. Indeed over 200 of these homes are actually owned by WCCC. But for the economic downturn in 2008, more residential developments would have taken place in the area. The Port of Waterford at Belview in County Kilkenny is the prime commercial development in the area which has seen many new business units set up including Glanbia, IT Mima, SmartPly, StoreAll to name but a few. KCC have created the access and the planning conditions that have seen this development thrive in recent years, with considerable room for expansion in future. There is a point of view that the Ferrybank Shopping Centre should not have been granted planning permission by KCC and that such a development was not required so close to Waterford City. When this development was granted planning, there was an anchor tenant agreed and other potential tenants interested. It is very easy with the benefit of hindsight to say that this development should not have been allowed, however, how many other local authorities granted planning in the pre-2008 period for large developments, only to see these flounder. I would suggest almost every authority had some of these in their areas. I would also predict that this shopping centre will be a success in the future due to the growing

catchment area and the large volumes of passing traffic who are finding it ever more difficult to gain easy access to Waterford City, and reasonably priced parking. All of the above prove that there is no restriction to the future development of the Waterford City environs into Kilkenny and that KCC has actually facilitated a structured and balanced growth in its area of governance.

Financial:

Waterford Boundary Review Committee's report states that *"It is the Committee's view that there is very limited, if any, scope for delivery of further efficiencies in day-to-day service delivery costs through a range of reconfiguration of boundaries that it has examined"*. To a large extent many local government services are now provided by 3rd party contractors, e.g. water repairs, refuse collection etc. In reality the same or similar contractors are currently carrying out these services on both sides of the existing boundary, so no likely savings there. The major financial impact would be the compensation that WCCC would have to pay to KCC, which could increase the financial burden on WCCC ratepayers while in Kilkenny the gradual loss of income from the area in question will ultimately increase the financial burden on KCC ratepayers.

Right to Self-Determination:

The following is an extract from the Good Friday Agreement for Northern Ireland, signed by the Irish and British Governments and endorsed by the EU;

"the Agreement recognises that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish, accepting that this right must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".

I believe it is morally wrong to enshrine the above in Irish law and at the same time allow the Government of Ireland, or its representatives, to transfer 4,500 people, and a large tract of land, from Kilkenny to Waterford, from Leinster to Munster without the prior consent of the people of Kilkenny.

Identity:

The Waterford Boundary Review Committee's report states that *"19,096 submissions opposed any change in the existing boundary. The overwhelmingly singular basis upon which such opposition was based related to the potential loss of identity with Kilkenny County"*. It is almost as if the committee is dismissing the value and volume of these submissions as they are mainly concerned with identity. I attended numerous public meetings on the issue and was actively involved in returning the prescribed submissions mentioned by the committee. I can assure you that identity was only one reason why people opposed the boundary change but by no means was it the only reason. In any case, identity for any Irish person is extremely important and should not be ignored or downgraded. As a Kilkenny man and a Leinster man, I am extremely proud of the sporting and cultural organisation's that represent me. I am acutely aware of where my forefather's hail from and the history that has brought my family to its current place. I am a Kilkenny man, as were my people

before me, and I know it is the fervent wish of my children that they will also be from, and live in County Kilkenny. Minister Coveney himself is quoted in his message on Ireland 2040 as follows;

“whilst we can predict that much will change, the values we share as a society will largely remain intact. Our sense of belonging to community and place, our unique artistic and cultural inheritance and the key value we place on social justice and fair play are key place making assets that set us apart”.

I find it impossible to believe that a Minister who recognises the importance of “cultural inheritance” and “social justice” could in any way countenance a boundary change such as that being proposed for the people of South Kilkenny.

I urge the Minister to reject this unwarranted boundary extension into Kilkenny and put in place a new programme of structured cooperation immediately, initiated by both local authorities to develop an innovative governance system for the Ferrybank/Slieverue area.

Is Mise, le meas,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gerard Buggy", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and includes a small flourish at the end.

Gerard Buggy.