

31st March 2017

To: NPF Submissions, Forward Planning Section, Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

Minister for Housing, Planning & Community and Local Government, Simon Coveney,

I am clearly stating, in the strongest possible terms, my unequivocal opposition to the recent proposal to extend the boundary of Waterford into County Kilkenny. I do so as a Teachta Dála, former County Councillor, a member of the Aylward family and most importantly a man who was born and bred in South Kilkenny.

Minister Coveney has stated that he will examine the recommendation in the context both of ongoing work in relation to the future of local government in Ireland and also the development of Ireland 2040, the new National Planning Framework. I would ask the Minister to consider the enclosed very strongly and disregard the recommendation made by the boundary commission by declaring that there will be no change to the current border. This ludicrous proposal has forced the people of Kilkenny to live under a dark cloud of uncertainty for the past two years and it must be discontinued, dismantled and disembowelled with immediate effect.

County boundaries are sacrosanct and must remain so unequivocally going forward. Amending boundaries in such a casual manner would not only set a very dangerous precedent but completely disrespects the people, parishes and communities of Ireland by disregarding the ideals which go to the very heart of every person on this island.

Members of my family have represented the people of Kilkenny on the County Council since 1945 and on every single occasion that this proposal has been tabled in the past it has been vehemently opposed by each generation. As I am sure you are aware the last extension was granted in 1955 and Kilkenny County Council pledged, at the time, that this would never happen again. Having been elected to the Kilkenny County Council in 1992 where I remained until I took office in Dáil Éireann in 2007, I can personally vouch for the colossal levels of local authority investment in Belview Port and the surrounding industrial area which proved to be mutually beneficial to both counties.

It is within this spirit of economic development for the South East that both local authorities have collaborated on such vital regional projects as the M9 Motorway, the Waterford Bypass, the Municipal Waste Water Treatment Plant, continued development of Belview Port, the community secondary school in Ferrybank, provisions for a University for the South East and others.

From a practical viewpoint, the loss of approximately 8% of the population and 8000 acres of land would result in an estimated €2 million loss in rates to the local authority. This would severely damage the future prospects of an area which, arguably, has the greatest potential for further economic growth in the county apart from Kilkenny City. The loss of rates, planning and development contributions, LPT Tax and other fees and charges would unfairly incur a damaging financial loss to County Kilkenny.

From a community perspective, this proposal has the potential to divide, parishes, towns, business, farms and even families into two counties. GAA clubs and other local sporting organisations will also be significantly damaged by this proposal. The thousands upon thousands of signatures that were collected on petitions from the GAA and other sporting clubs, which have been submitted to this committee, are testament of the depth of absolute opposition that exists.

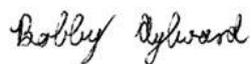
I understand and wholly accept that this area of the South East needs to grow and expand on both sides of the boundary lines. However, we can only strive to reach our common goals through co-operation as opposed to conflict. The near 30 years of unified purpose for this cause, which I have personally witnessed, proves that we in Kilkenny are more than happy to offer a hand of friendship to our good neighbours in Waterford to serve the common good of the region.

The Waterford Boundary Committee was established to examine the current boundary and to make consequential recommendations in respect of the metropolitan district of Waterford while giving strict consideration to the interests of effective and convenient local Government. This purpose cannot be served if the population of the Piltown Municipal District (approx. 23,600) is transferred to the municipal district of Tramore & Waterford City West which has a population of approximately 22,900. This unbalancing of the populations of the respective districts would directly contradict current local government policy and the benefits to local government that this committee was commissioned to investigate.

As a public representative of County Kilkenny in our national parliament, Dáil Éireann, I can state to the committee with the utmost belief and confidence that the people are totally and utterly against this proposal. This traverses constituency and provincial borders and the island of Ireland is built on identity of community and we in Kilkenny are hugely proud of the culture, history and heritage of our county and our loyalty to the black and amber colours.

I urge the three man committee to reject this proposal and ensure that the sanctity of the county boundary, which is sacrosanct to our people, remains completely untouched and unchanged.

Sincerely,



Bobby Aylward T.D

Knockmoylan,
Mullinavat,
Co.Kilkenny