

## Constituency Commission Submission

### Prepared and submitted by Senator Jerry Buttimer

I wish to make a submission related to Cork South Central constituency. Five years ago, entirely without any warning, the last commission included large portions of the south side of Cork city in the Cork North Central constituency. This move has divided quite a number of communities in particular Bishopstown. Residents in the Bishopstown, Model Farm Road and Glasheen areas have been divided. It has split neighbourhoods and local communities, leading to a sense of dislocation and non-affinity with constituency.

Bishopstown Community Association and Sports Clubs in the area have expressed their displeasure and are extremely unhappy about it to say the least. The removal of part of Bishopstown, Gillabbey, Glasheen and Mardyke areas of Cork city, 17,307 people from the Cork South-Central constituency has produced an irregular line through two of the city's six long established wards, causing major inconvenience to local *constituents* in those wards. The move also totally ignored the fact that the key boundary in the city is the River Lee. It would be wholly unacceptable to have constituencies in Dublin which cross the Liffey, yet that commission was happy to ignore exactly the same issue in Cork City running contrary to the 2007 Electoral Boundary Commission report. It is clear that the re-drafted boundary serviced the need of some mathematical logarithm and certainly did not take the needs of the communities it divided into consideration. The parochial divisions of the city have been rendered apart as in the case of Bishopstown where three parishes have been divided and many citizens currently in the re drawn constituency of Cork South Central feel wholly unrepresented,

The very essence of the work of an electoral boundary commission should be to consider how best to serve the needs of the community, not, as was the case here, to service the needs of drawing lines on maps or Mathematics. Where are the historical considerations in the decision to redraw Cork South Central? Indeed, where are the cultural considerations?

**Reference 2007 5.1 Cork Area** (“Cork North-Central can, in principle, accept population from 3 other contiguous constituencies— Cork East, Cork North-West and Cork South-Central. However, changes recommended by the 2003/4 Commission and enacted by the Oireachtas enabled the entire length of the boundary between the North-Central and South-Central constituencies within Cork City to be restored to the North Channel of the River Lee. **The Commission does not propose a transfer of population from South-Central to North-Central as it would breach this natural boundary**”)

Since 2011 there has been significant population growth in the artificially reduced constituency of Cork South Central from 117,952 to 122,013, over 4,000 people. However more importantly there has been an increase of close to 3,000 people in the Bishopstown (also Bishopstown rural), Centre, Gillabbey, Glasheen and Mardyke areas which were forcibly moved into the north city constituency.

These areas have in excess of 20,000 people. If these 20,000 people were re-instated to their natural constituency, South Central the constituency would be at the level appropriate for five seats, somewhere around a minus 5% deviation. For comparison Wicklow has 146,833 population before you start to consider submissions related to the east Carlow portion thereof. Further even a modest further population increase will bring the "proper" South Central constituency up towards the 150,000 mark.

As Community and parish identity is important and in keeping with the terms of the Electoral Act, 1997 (as amended) - Part II - Constituency Commission,

” (2) In preparing a report under subsection (1)(a) a Constituency Commission shall, in observing the relevant provisions of the Constitution in relation to Dáil constituencies, have regard to the following:

(d) each constituency shall be composed of contiguous areas;

(e) there shall be regard to geographic considerations including significant physical features.....”

I am therefore asking you:

- 1) Respect the river boundary in Cork, as I am sure you will do in Dublin
- 2) to respect local Communities, local authority electoral areas and geographical area and in so doing
- 3) To create a 5 seat Cork South Central constituency with all of the urban DEDs south of the River Lee included. This constituency is likely to have continuity in the future, as there will be room for perhaps a 15,000 population growth before it would need any attention.
- 4) The restoration and reunification of Bishopstown, Barrack Street, Model Farm road, Dennehy's Cross, Wilton Road, Gillabbey, Glasheen and Mardyke areas of Cork city as one.