

To whom it may concern,

As Fine Gael Councillors for Meath County Council, we wish to make a submission to the Constituency Commission in relation to the boundaries of the current Louth and Meath East Constituencies. As elected members of Meath County Council, we find the fact that splitting one of our districts, namely the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District, and including half in the constituency of Meath East whilst the other half, the area of Julianstown, Laytown, Bettystown, Donacorney, Mornington and South Drogheda, in the Louth Constituency, is quite simply not acceptable to us as elected representatives or to the people we represent. We feel that the entire Municipal District of Laytown-Bettystown should be restored to the Meath East Constituency.

The reasons we feel that this change should be made are as follows. As stated in the Constituency Commission's own Public Notice "the breaching of county boundaries shall be avoided as far as practicable." This "breaching" of county boundaries leaves constituents alienated from the TD's they are expected to vote for. Projects, issues and needs in relation to the communities resident in the County of Meath should be addressed in a collaborative approach by Oireachtas members, Council members and Council officials. Working relationships between elected members (both Oireachtas and Council) take time and effort, and it is difficult for an Oireachtas member to build relationships with two different sets of council officials ie Louth and Meath. With a busy and heavy workload, how are Oireachtas members expected to meet two sets of Housing officials, two sets of Economic Development teams, two sets of Planning officials, two sets of Environment teams, in order to address the projects and issues they need to deal with that cross the border of two counties, and at the same time address the workload of national issues? This inevitably results in one set of relationships not meeting it's potential and thus not addressing the needs of all constituents equally and fairly.

As public representatives, we have received many complaints from residents in the Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District, in relation to being represented by Louth TDs. Constituents in this area are very much disconnected from the Louth representatives, and have voiced on many occasions their wish to be returned to the Constituency of Meath East.

In relation to the significant population increases in both constituencies. There are currently 158 TDs, with a population of 4,757,976 according to the Census 2016. Meath East has a population of 91,151, an increase of 5.3% in population, with 3 Dail members serving the growing population. This means the population per Dáil member is 30,384. This is well above the ideal of 20,000 and 30,000 per Dáil member.

Louth has a population of 150,481, an increase of 5% with 5 Dail members serving the constituency. This means the population per Dáil member is 30,096. Again, above the recommended 20,000-30,000.

Given the two Electoral Divisions that are in the County of Meath, but part of the Louth Constituency, Julianstown and St Mary's had a combined population of 20,375 in the Census 2011 Small Area Population Statistics (2016 SAP figures will not be available until July 2017), and counting for a 5.3% increase in population (which would be very

conservative given all housing construction in the county continued steadily in these areas), this would give an approximate conservative figure of 21,455 for the area in question.

If this population were to be returned to Meath East, an approximate conservative population of the Constituency would be 112,606. This would suggest that an additional Dáil member would be needed in the Constituency of Meath East, and would bring the numbers in the Louth Constituency back to the acceptable level for 5 Dáil members ie 130,106 (26,021 per TD) as opposed to the unmanageable number of 30,384 per TD.

We believe, in the best interests of the people we serve, and in the best interests of the people of the Louth Constituency, that in order for all of our combined constituents to have the representation they deserve and need, that both Constituencies should be restored, and the ED's of St Mary's and Julianstown be returned to the Meath East Constituency.

Yours in public service,

Cllr. Sharon Tolan

Cllr. Paddy Meade

Cllr. Gerry O'Connor

Cllr. Maria Murphy

Cllr. Gillian Toole

Cllr. Alan Tobin

Cllr. Suzanne Jamal

Cllr. Eugene Cassidy

Cllr. Sarah Reilly

Cllr. Joe Fox

Cllr. Noel French

Cllr. Enda Flynn

Cllr. Jim Holloway

Cllr. Sharon Tolan

Meath County Council