



22nd January, 2016

To the Local Government Boundary Committee

Nearly every city in the world grows concentrically unless physically or politically impeded from doing so. Concentric development allows for maximum efficiency, competitiveness and branding and its absence is a major retarder to performance. It is our clear view that the constraint to Waterford's capacity to expand to the North has significantly constrained Waterford's natural growth and economic development. The work by the Local Government Boundary Committee represents an opportunity to address this in a fair and equitable manner, genuinely placing the needs and well being of the combined citizenship at the heart of the equation.

It is simply the case that:

- The construct of the City is inherently inefficient with development so lopsided and the costs of services and infrastructure provision greatly increased.
- The sustainability of the City Centre has been damaged through its effective movement to the edge by the non-development of the Northern side and very significant public investment is necessary and ongoing to address this issue.

There are a number of areas where we feel that the existing arrangements simply cannot and will not work and issues that demonstrate both current and future inevitable failings.

Democratic Representation

The existing administrative arrangements have meant that, despite the opportunity being available to Kilkenny for nearly a century, development of consequence hasn't happened on the Northern Side. Einstein's definition of insanity applies – it hasn't

happened and it won't happen under existing arrangements. The primary reason for this is that understandably Kilkenny City is a priority for Kilkenny and the democratic representation across the county is such that an area sustaining such little representation cannot hope to see the level of prioritisation in resources that is necessary for successful development and to achieve levels of service commensurate with those required in a large urban centre.

In practice a majority of services to the area of interest are being provided from Waterford City, whether in social housing, health, policing, community, arts and culture, leisure, retail or other. That the people are denied a say in the shape and construct of these services through normal democratic representation is unjust in the extreme.

Efficiency of Services and Inclusion

Efficiency in Services can be best delivered by an organisation headquartered on people's doorstep, if adherence to subsidiarity or proximity is to have any meaning as a principle for proper local government. In terms of efficiency the overheads implied by remoteness increase cost and reduce effectiveness and in this instance Waterford has the resources and the willingness to deliver services to the area without any substantial overhead increase. More importantly, at its core, inclusion is about accessibility for services for all. To deny access to services to people, particularly to the disadvantaged, that are available immediately on their doorstep is not alone a frustration of this principle but in truth is a denial of their human rights.

Planning

Any urban area to operate at maximum efficiency and effectiveness has to have co-ordinated planning, clear prioritisation of infrastructure provision, consistent implementation of policies and common levels of service to the population. None of these are possible in the current configuration. The political reality is that while high level policies can be agreed at a certain level there is no capacity to agree detailed policies or to have consistent implementation.

There is distinct evidence of this in:

- Existing developments in the area of interest that don't conform to National or local policy.
- Incapacity to agree a retail strategy.
- Absence of key infrastructure in the area of interest.

- An economic and zoning policy that effectively says that everywhere can have everything in the greater urban settlement rather than one of prioritisation.
- A lack of specialisation and critical mass in enterprise development is the natural consequence.

Finances

Waterford City and County Council and the people of Waterford effectively subsidises Kilkenny County Council through the provision of services to the area of interest to the extent perhaps of between €1 and €2 Million. The provision of services and the cost of same in the Housing, Community, Arts, Culture, Leisure, Retail and Social areas is simply not being borne by Kilkenny County Council.

Kilkenny County Council is effectively drawing resources from the area and disproportionately supporting overhead for the remainder of the county and, as a consequence, the investment in the area of interest is not commensurate with that in an urban area of any significance let alone in a major city in the Irish context.

This Council acknowledges that there will be a limited financial consequence to Kilkenny on foot of a boundary extension and is happy to pay fair and equitable compensation to mitigate or indeed eliminate these consequences. We are also happy to undertake and agree the further detailed analysis in this respect.

It is our view that there need be no national consequence from a an annual revenue perspective but would say that continuation of the existing arrangements will inevitably lead to further demands down the road for state investment to remediate a disadvantaged urban entity when co-ordinated development would see resource generation and private sector investment that would render this unnecessary.

Identity

There will be a lot of issues raised about identity and this issue will be used rather than informed opinion and professional analysis in many instances to motivate public opinion. We would acknowledge that there are some legitimate concerns in this respect but would argue that they can be mitigated and in any case that they are overwhelmingly outweighed by the positives for the citizen and the future by having a unified and integrate urban area.

The identity of Kilkenny is raised by many in this context and is legitimate for those who feel it. Much of it is motivated by GAA concerns, however, which in reality will

not change. The parishes won't change and the reality is that those who align themselves with Slieverue and Kilkenny will continue to do so and will continue to play in the Kilkenny Championship and support Kilkenny. Those who align themselves with Ferrybank and Waterford will do the same in Waterford.

Everybody that raises this issue also fail to address a couple of other fundamental issues:

1. This is not about the identity of the current population but about the identity of the future population which will ultimately be many multiples of that existing. The new urban area will provide residence to thousands and thousands, very few of whom will be from Kilkenny and who will have their economic and life attachment to Waterford.
2. There is already identity confusion, for individuals who are not of Kilkenny origin and whose address is now and always will be Waterford even though within the area of interest.
3. Waterford City as an economic entity needs a clear and concise identity that can only be delivered by a unified administration, single political and executive leadership and legitimate democratic representation and governance.

Economic Development

The requirements for impetus to be given to Economic Development in Waterford City and its environs are well documented. This Council has an extensive programme of capital investment in place and has committed personnel and budgetary resources to Economic Development that Kilkenny simply cannot. All of these resources will be available to drive the future economy of an extended Waterford.

Extent of Boundary Extension

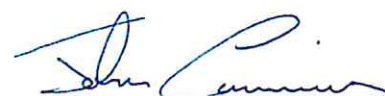
The extent of a boundary extension has been in effect defined by the Planning, Land Use and Transportation study and the Ferrybank-Belview Area Plan. It is vital for the future development of Waterford as the Gateway City that the Port of Waterford is included in an extended boundary. The exclusion of same would further reinforce subsidisation of services by the City and removal of resources from the area. Equally the alignment of a Port, of the same name and central to the heritage and origin of the City, as an economic entity with other than the City would be irrational.

We would appeal to the Local Government Boundary Committee to recommend unambiguously to the Minister that a boundary extension be given to incorporate the area of interest in Waterford.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Walsh,
Chief Executive,
Waterford City & County Council.



Cllr. John Cummins,
Mayor,
Waterford City & County Council.