

~~Mr. W. J. O'Connell~~,
Castlecomer Road,
Kilkenny
13th January 2016

Review of the boundary between the City and County of Waterford
and County Kilkenny

Dear Sirs,

I refer to the above and wish to make the following submission:

The test which you have been asked to apply in considering the above is *effective and convenient local government*.

At first glance, the simplistic geographical neatness of counterbalancing the urban footprint of Waterford City with an equal area of land across the river in County Kilkenny may seem to suggest improved governance and infrastructural delivery. However such an analysis fails to appreciate the enormity of the human dimension of what is proposed and fails to understand the chaos and undermining of effective local government that will be the inevitable consequence of any proposed boundary change. A boundary change is actually about people and not about land.

The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 established the County Councils and as part of that process amended 32 county boundaries throughout the Island of Ireland. It coincided with the growing influence of the GAA and the national revival of the early 1900's whereby the identity of one's county of origin became imprinted in the mind of every Irish person. The Local Government Board established under that Act determined the boundary between County Kilkenny and the Borough of Waterford as being the River Suir and all land north of the Suir was identified as County Kilkenny.

In the 118 years since the 1898 Act (leaving aside the transfer of the land around the train station in 1955) the identity of those living in South County Kilkenny has become a definite and increasingly important part of their cultural identity and animus. The men, women and children of South Kilkenny, regard themselves as part of County Kilkenny. It is an intrinsic part of their culture and self-image. To

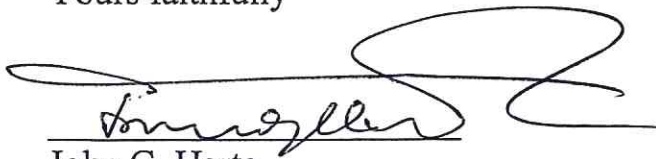
attempt to deprive 7000 Irish citizens of something as significant as this is an act that will be viewed as administrative arrogance and is a recipe for disaster. Making such a change in the absence of the support of a large majority of the 7000 people effected will undoubtedly lead to a campaign of resistance, which will find expression in civil disobedience, campaigns of disruption and administrative chaos.

Currently there is a degree of opposition to what is proposed. However this is not an accurate indicator of the level of opposition to a boundary change, because many Kilkenny people do not take the matter seriously. It is something that was floated 10 years ago and failed. There is a presumption that it will not happen. The general population in Kilkenny don't take it seriously because it is so ridiculous a suggestion that it doesn't merit concern. However, as is often the way, were it to become a reality and 7000 Kilkenny people were instructed by Dublin that they are now Waterford people, that they have been exiled from Leinster to Munster, to become the subjects of a County Council that they have not elected and with whom they are unacquainted, there will be a furious reaction.

In such circumstances I cannot see how this will be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

Given the gravity of what a boundary change will mean, I would respectfully submit that no boundary change should be contemplated unless a plebiscite is taken of those individuals who are effected and a clear majority is shown to be in favour of the proposal. Otherwise an imposed re-designation of county identities will fail without popular support and will end up in an unseemly mess, neither effective nor convenient.

Yours faithfully



John G. Harte

