

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES
COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROPOSED DISTRICT OF
MID-ULSTER**

Karen Smyth, Assistant Local Boundaries Commissioner

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Section One: **Background and Statutory Framework**

Background

- 1.1 The commencement of the current Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland was announced in a Public Notice on 03 February 2021 which explained the role and remit of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and advised that in due course the Commissioner would publish Provisional Recommendations and may cause a public hearing to be held in each of the current eleven Local Government Districts. The Notice and a subsequent information video placed on the Commissioner's website (<https://www.lgbc-ni.org.uk/>) explained the process and the opportunities for participation in the consultation on the Provisional Recommendations.
- 1.2 The terms of the Review are set out in Article 50 and Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 as amended. Copies of the legislative framework are available on the Commissioner's website.
- 1.3 The Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations with proposed boundaries and names of 11 Districts and their 462 constituent wards were published on the Commissioner's website on 27 July 2021 and announced by way of Public Notice, inviting comments on the proposals made. The consultation was launched on Citizen Space to enable ease of public inspection and maximum public participation. Accessibility points for online access to the Proposals and the consultation portal was facilitated at public facilities including Council premises and public libraries by the Commissioner's team in partnership with local councils and with Libraries Northern Ireland. Hard copies of any part of the Proposals or the associated maps as required by any person were made available on request. Other accessibility requirements were promoted on the Commissioners website including language translation, braille and sign language.
- 1.4 The consultation portal was open for 8 weeks and closed on 21 September. Details of the programme of public hearings was notified by press release, social media channels and on the Commissioner's website in September 2021.
- 1.5 The Commissioner did not receive any written representation specifically in respect of the proposals in the District of Mid Ulster.
- 1.6 All representations received were acknowledged and have been made available for inspection on the Commissioner's website.
- 1.7 I was appointed as an Assistant Commissioner by The Department of Communities on 01 August 2021. My task is to gather, assess and report on the representations made in relation to this proposed District of Mid Ulster and to submit a report to the Commissioner including my conclusions and recommendations, within 4 weeks of the end of the relevant public hearing. I

conducted a public hearing in this proposed District at Ranfurly house, Dungannon on 7th October 2021.

- 1.8 The Public Hearing was staged under the requirements of government guidance and observance of public health recommendations in respect of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Numbers in the room at any one time were limited to 20 persons with alternative participation facilitated by a simultaneous online interactive platform.

Written Representations

- 1.9 Written representations of relevance to this District are listed in Section Seven, part one of this report. All written representations were considered by me in advance of the public hearing and in anticipation of the preparation of this Report.

Public Hearing

- 1.10 The Public Hearing on the Provisional Proposals was attended by 3 people in person, with none attending via online platform. The hearing was facilitated in an informal and accessible manner where all participants were afforded the opportunity to give their views and to question the submissions and viewpoints expressed by others. Participants were asked to either identify as individuals or representatives of an organisation. The list of organisations represented is at Section Seven, part two.

My Report

- 1.11 This report presents and addresses the written and oral views of interested parties in respect of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the proposed District of Mid Ulster. In particular it addresses the relevant local information and opinion about the boundaries and names of the District and its wards. I have set out details of support of the Commissioner's proposals and objections and/or counter-proposals. I have also set out my conclusions on the issues raised which are permissible matters consideration under the legislative framework of this Review. Any matters submitted that are not relevant or permissible considerations under the legislative parameters of the Review have been outlined in this report as having been submitted, but those issues will not have formed part of my deliberations.
- 1.12 As part of my research for this report I have studied and tested any areas of the District where alternative boundaries have been proposed by use of GIS mapping systems of the Land and Property Services of Northern Ireland. This has been facilitated by the staff of Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland and I am indebted to their technical assistance.

Section Two: District Boundaries

- 2.1 The Commissioner's approach to the District boundary line is one of minimum intervention unless there is a compelling reason to do so. There have been no objections to this approach in this District and so I recommend that the Commissioner's proposal for the District line is affirmed.

Section Three: **Ward Boundaries**

Donaghmore - Appendix 1a refers

- 3.1 A number of participants at the hearing outlined concerns regarding the ward boundaries around the village of Donaghmore, and in particular due to the 'splitting' of the main street by the ward boundary. Although concerns were mostly articulated in terms of DEAs rather than ward boundaries, issues in relation to community identity were also raised, so the boundary of concern was identified at the public hearing with OSNI assistance, for later analysis.
- 3.2 On further examination using townland maps for comparison, it became apparent that the ward boundary was aligned to the townland boundary. The legislation governing this issue requires that a townland 'shall not, except where in the opinion of the Commissioner it is unavoidable, be included partly in one district or ward and partly in another.' In this instance it is not unavoidable to maintain parity between the townland and ward boundaries, and additionally, there is no suitable alternative nearby that seems 'readily identifiable'.
- 3.3 I therefore conclude that the Commissioner's proposed line is preferred and recommend that it should be affirmed.

Clonoe – Appendices 1b, 1c, 1d refers

- 3.4 One of the participants at the hearing outlined concerns regarding the Washing Bay ward and its boundary with Killyman ward, with a counterproposal put forward that this boundary should be moved south to run along the B45 Ballynakilly Road.
- 3.5 Although concerns were mostly articulated in terms of DEAs rather than ward boundaries, concerns in relation to community identity were also expressed. The boundary of concern was therefore identified at the public hearing with OSNI assistance, for later analysis.
- 3.6 On further examination using townland maps for comparison, several different options were tested as counterproposals; two as suggested by participants in the public hearing and one as suggested by me, as follows:

Option 1: boundary change to Ballynakilly Road – from junction with Loughview Road, to Tamnamore Roundabout (Appendix 1b)

Option 2: boundary change to Ballynakilly Road, via extension along Moor Road (Appendix 1c)

Option 3: boundary change to canal from where it meets the boundary with Coalisland South ward, to where it meets the District boundary. (Appendix 1d)

- 3.7 It quickly became apparent that the ward boundaries in this area are aligned to townland boundaries and although the counter-proposal to run the boundary along the canal was least disruptive, there was still a misalignment with existing townland boundaries.
- 3.8 The legislation governing this issue requires that a townland 'shall not, except where in the opinion of the Commissioner it is unavoidable, be included partly in one district or ward and partly in another.' In this instance it is not unavoidable to maintain parity between the townland and ward boundaries, and additionally, a strong case for change was not made by hearing participants in line with the scope of this Review.
- 3.9 I therefore conclude that the Commissioner's proposed line is preferred and recommend that it should be affirmed.

Mullaghconnor ward/Ballysaggart Ward/Castlecaulfield Ward boundary at 'Mullaghconnor Glebe' - Appendix 1e refers

- 3.10 A participant at the hearing outlined concerns regarding the ward boundary between Castlecaulfield Ward and Ballysaggart Ward at Glebe Crescent/Court/ Mews/Park/Court, proposing that the boundary be changed to bring this housing estate into Ballysaggart ward, to align with community identity and council zoning in the local development plan. Although concerns were mostly articulated in terms of DEAs rather than ward boundaries, concerns in relation to community identity were also expressed so the boundary of concern was identified at the public hearing with OSNI assistance, for later analysis.
- 3.11 On further examination using townland maps for comparison, it became apparent that the ward boundary was aligned to the townland boundaries. The legislation governing this issue requires that a townland 'shall not, except where in the opinion of the Commissioner it is unavoidable, be included partly in one district or ward and partly in another.' In this instance it is not unavoidable to maintain parity between the townland and ward boundaries.
- 3.12 I therefore conclude that the Commissioner's proposed line is preferred and recommend that it should be affirmed.

Section Four: **Names of District and/or wards**

- 4.1 Several participants at the hearing expressed support for the adoption of bilingual naming for the wards local to them (i.e. Washing Bay, Donaghmore, Coalisland South), noting that there was a growing number of schools in the area teaching in the Irish language, however no supporting evidence was provided beyond the view expressed at the hearing, and no proposals were made in relation to Irish names for the wards in question. I therefore have no recommendations to make in relation to naming of the District or Wards at this time, but I am aware that there has been a wider representation across the whole Review in terms of the adoption of a bilingual or trilingual naming policy for the whole map of the Local Government Districts and Wards in Northern Ireland. This is a matter for wider consideration by the Commissioner rather than a local or District-specific issue.

Section Five: **Other Issues**

- 5.1 It was noted that the submissions made at the public hearing were made in terms of DEAs rather than wards. DEAs are important to council strategy but they will be subject to their own Review process immediately following the settlement of new Ward Boundaries. This information was therefore not considered relevant. Points made by participants in relation to local geography and community identity were separated from references to DEAs in discussion at the hearing, for consideration.

Section Six: **Summary of Conclusions**

District Boundary

- 6.1 There have been no objections to the Commissioner's proposals in this District and so I recommend that the Commissioner's proposal for the District line is affirmed.

Ward Boundaries

- 6.2 Counterproposals were explored and tested for the ward boundaries for Donaghmore ward, around Clonoe (Washing Bay ward) and for the Mullaghmore Ward/Ballysaggart Ward/Castlecaulfield Ward boundary.
- 6.3 For all the above, it was clear that the ward boundaries were aligned to townland boundaries. The legislation governing this issue requires that a townland 'shall not, except where in the opinion of the Commissioner it is unavoidable, be included partly in one district or ward and partly in another.' In these instances was not unavoidable to maintain parity between the townland and ward boundaries.
- 6.4 I therefore conclude that the Commissioner's proposed lines for all wards are preferred and recommend that these should be affirmed.

Names of District and/or wards

- 6.5 Support for the adoption of bilingual naming for some wards was expressed at the hearing, but insufficient evidence was provided to support these proposals.
- 6.6 I therefore have no recommendations to make in relation to naming of the District or Wards at this time.

Section Seven: **References and List of Submissions**

Part One: **List of Written Submissions**

No correspondence was received specifically referring to Mid Ulster. Some general correspondence was received:

1. Individual
2. Place-names project
3. Committee for the Administration of Justice and Conradh na Gaeilge

Part Two: **Oral Submissions at Public Hearing**

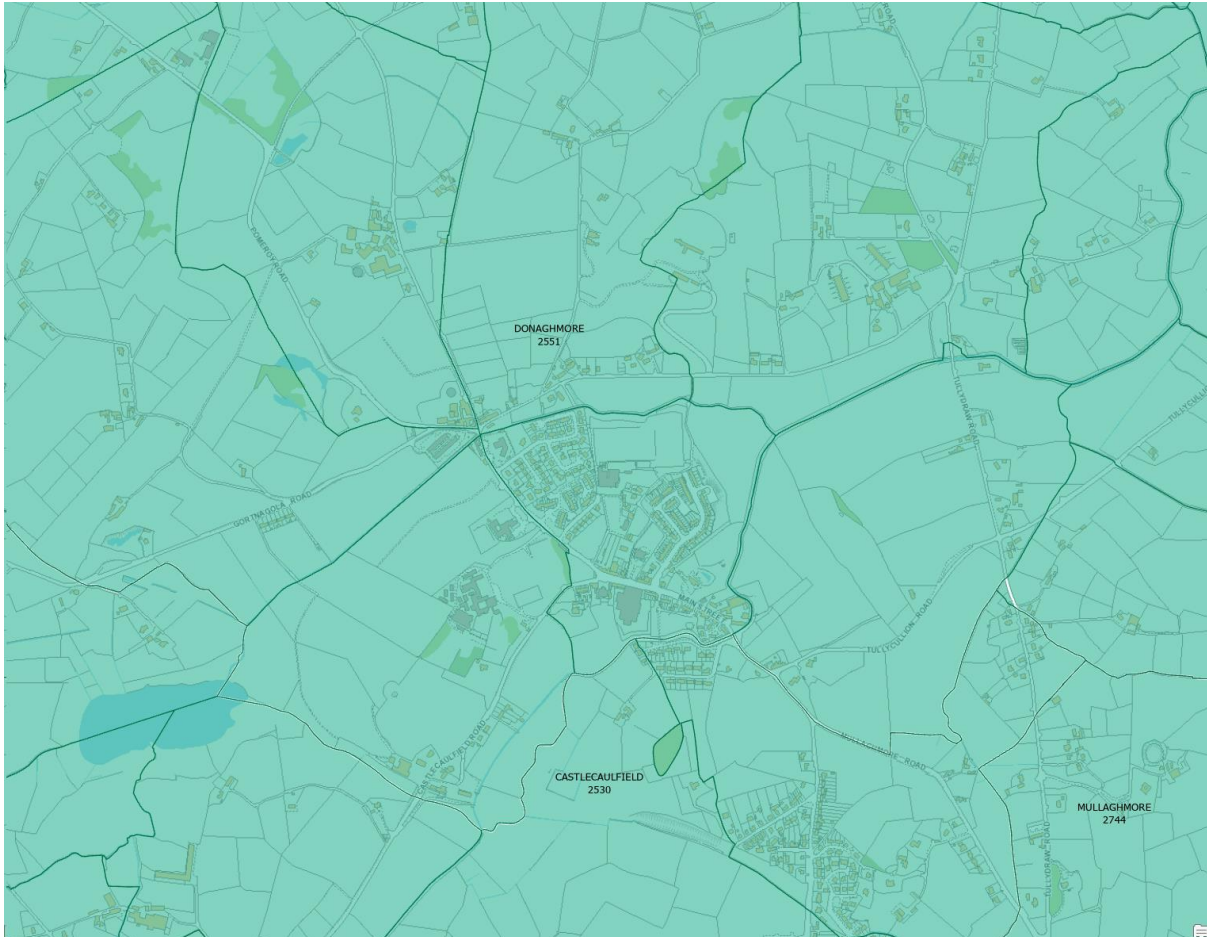
1. Member of Parliament (SF)
2. Mid Ulster Councillor (SF)
3. Mid Ulster Councillor (SF)

Section Eight: Appendices

Appendix 1

Maps of areas considered

Appendix 1a – Donaghmore townland boundaries

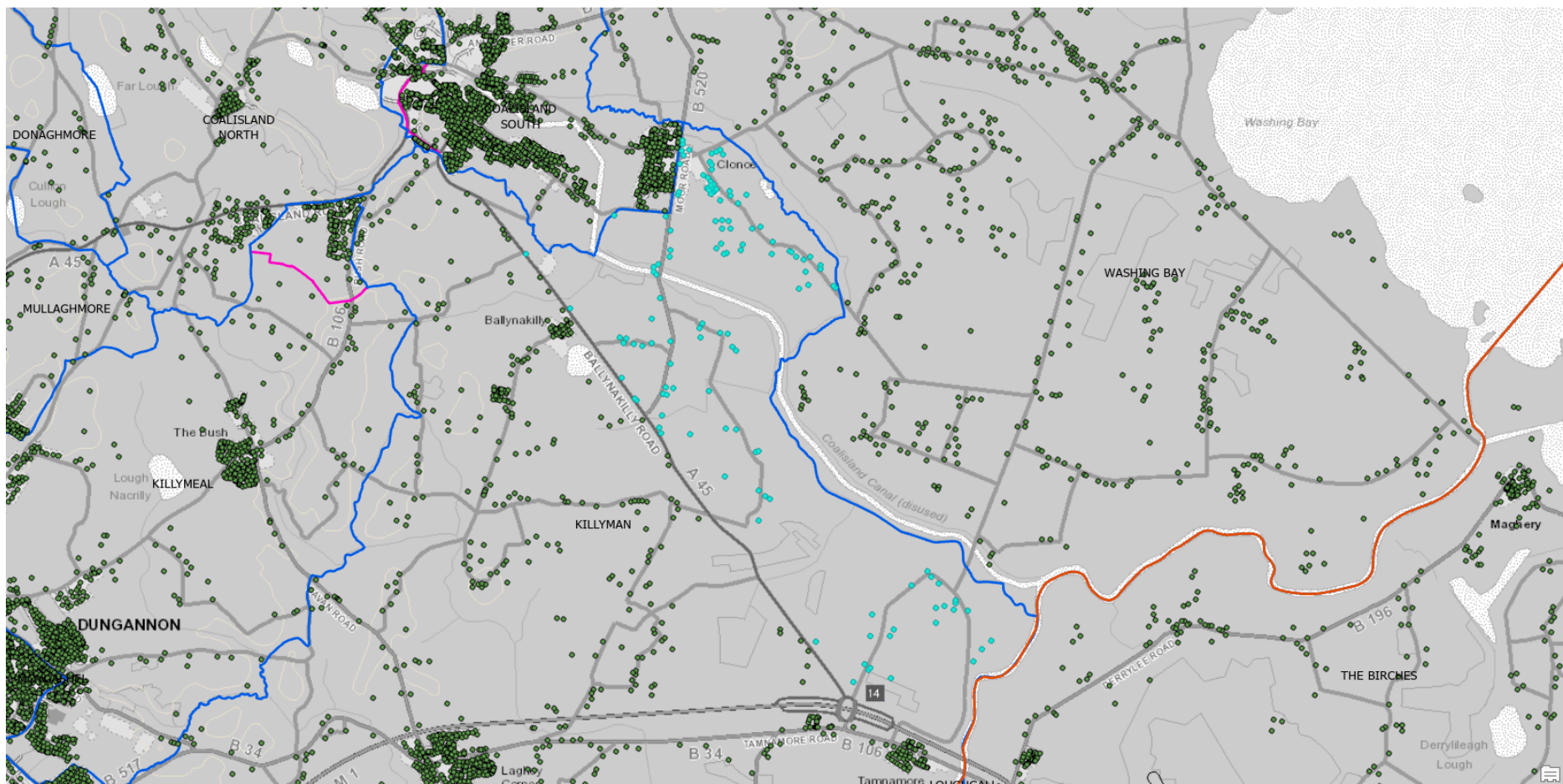


Appendix 1b Killyman/Washing Bay Boundary – Option 1 counterproposal

Option 1 – Green line = Consultee boundary | Light pink = Townlands | Dark pink top left = Proposed Wards | Blue = Wards 2012

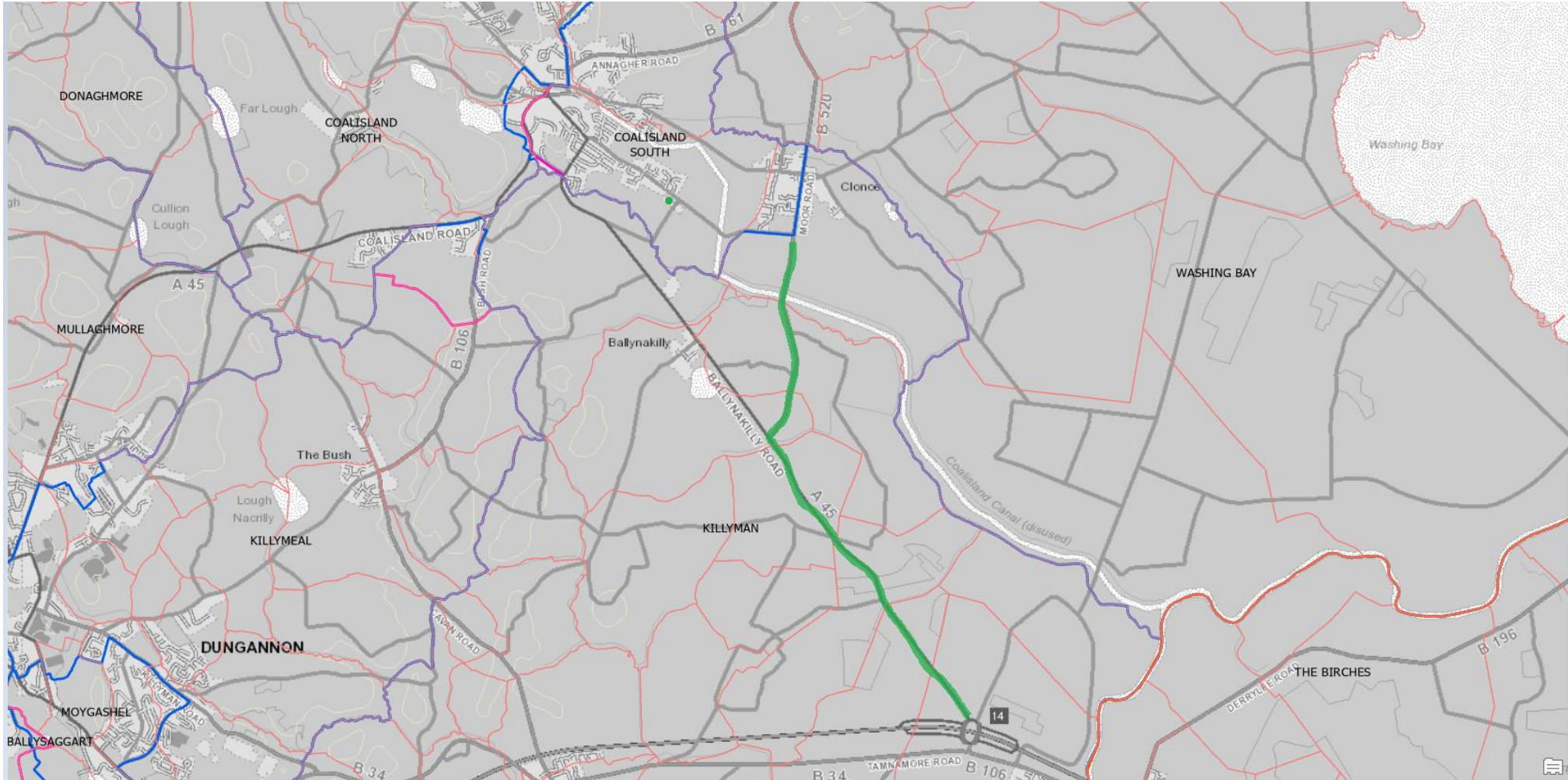


Elector count for Killyman Ward: Option 1; 324 selected in light blue | remaining electors: 2284

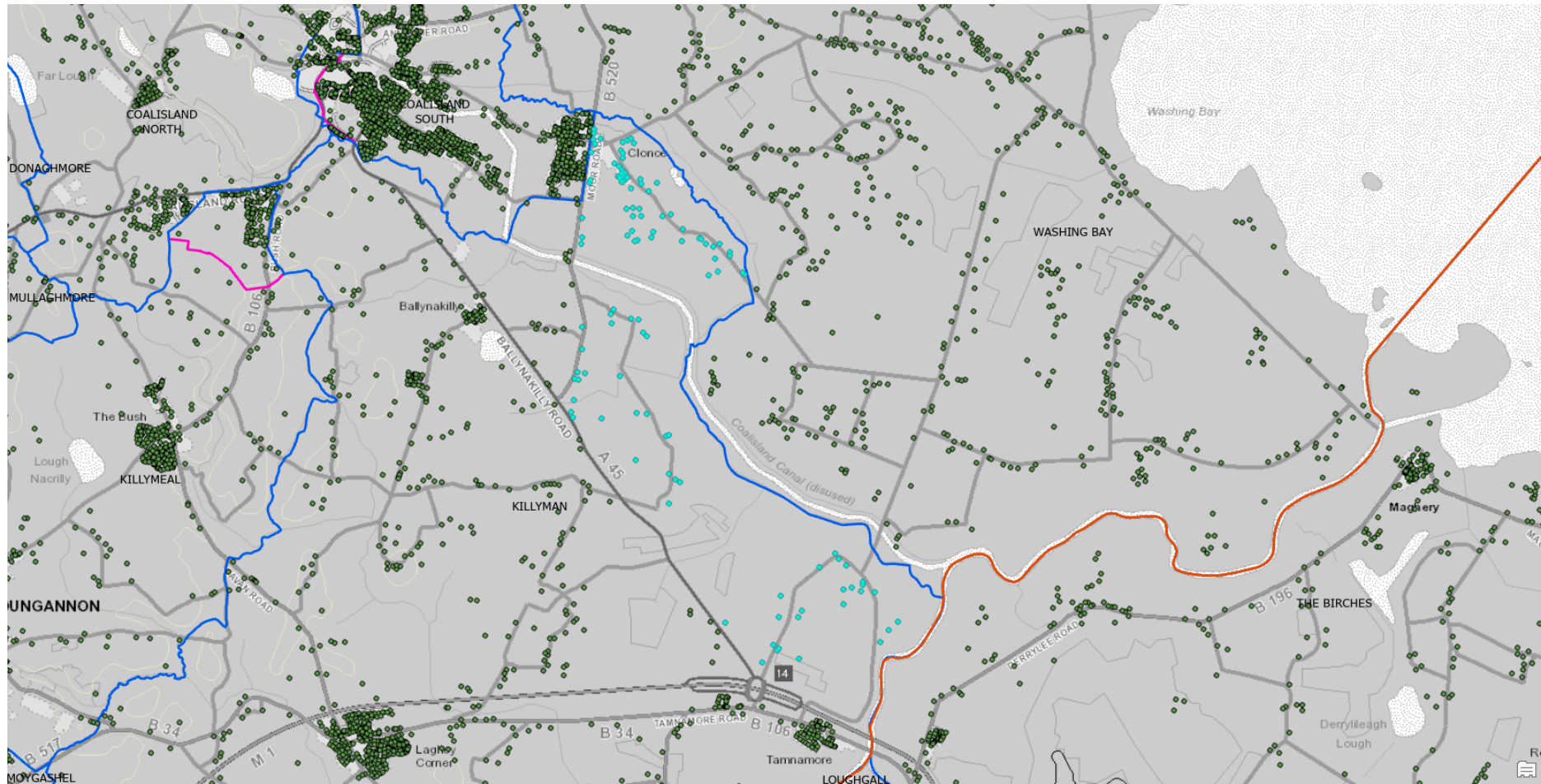


Appendix 1c Killyman/Washing Bay Boundary – Option 2 counterproposal

Option 2: Green line = Consultee boundary | Light pink = Townlands | Dark pink top left = Proposed Wards | Blue = Wards 2012

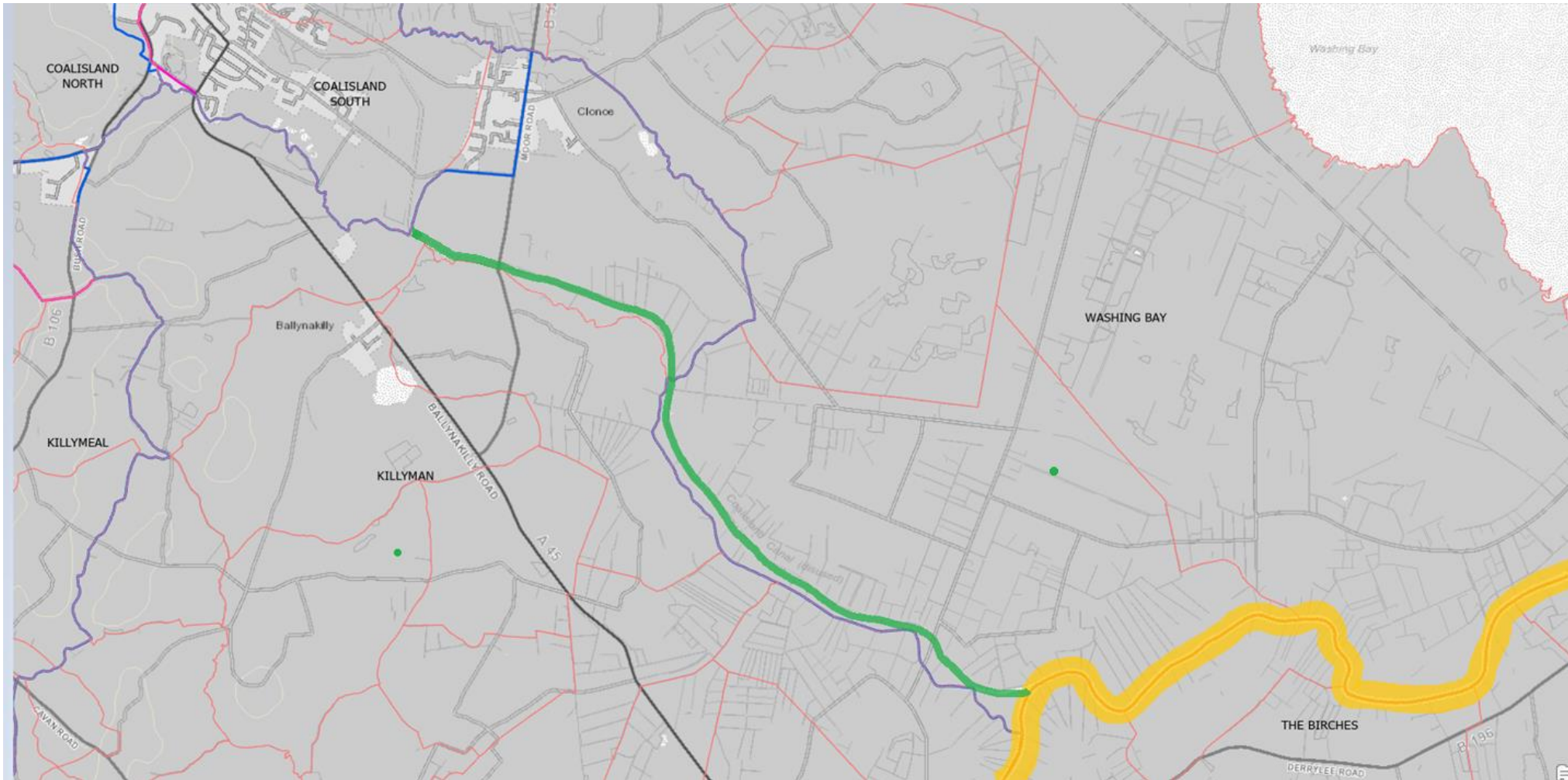


Elector count for Killyman Ward: Option 2; 269 selected in light blue | remaining electors: 2877

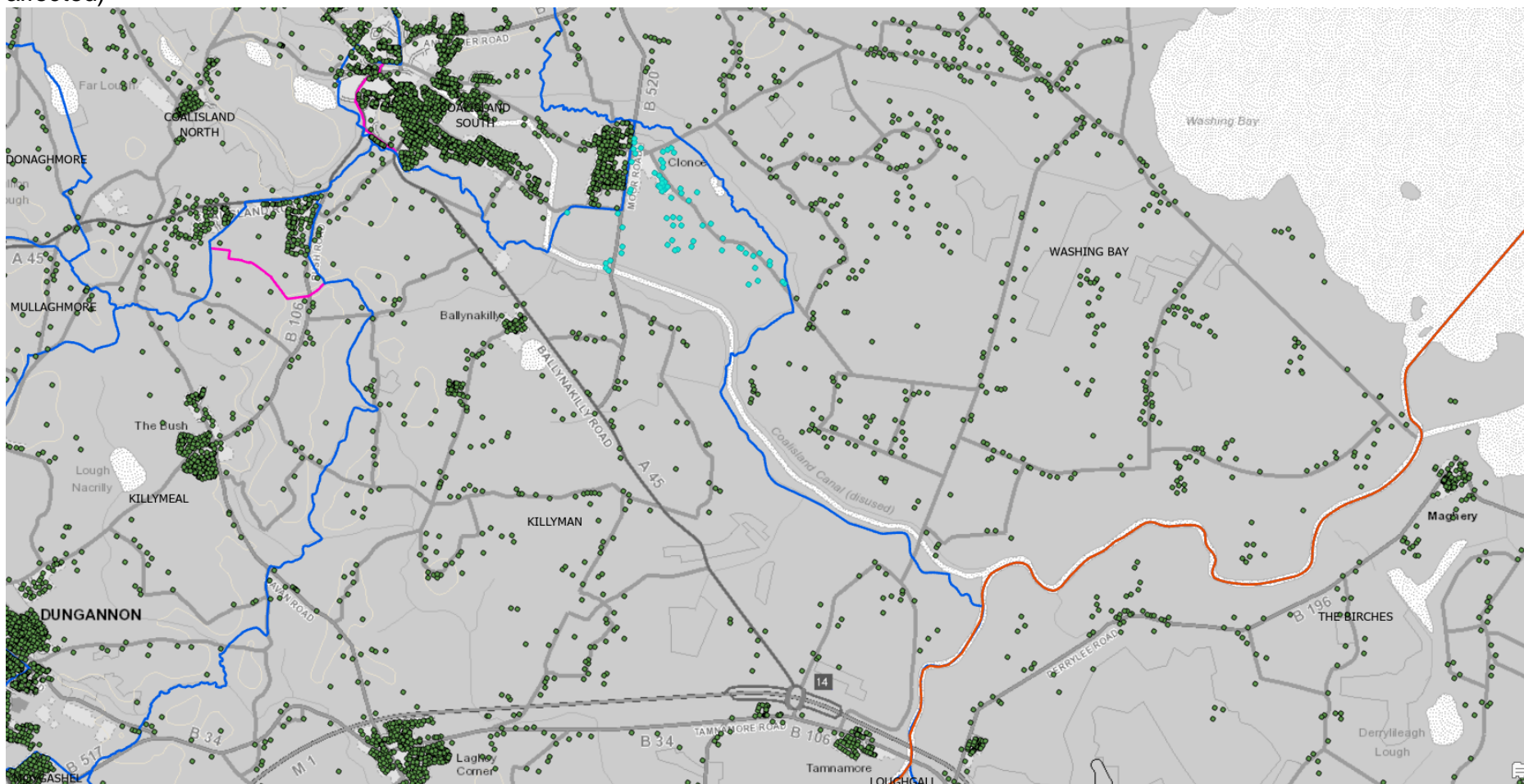


Appendix 1d Killyman/Washing Bay Boundary – Option 3 counterproposal

Option 3: Green = Canal | Orange bottom right = LGD | Light pink = Townlands | Dark pink top left = Proposed Wards | Blue = Wards 2012



Elector count for Killyman Ward: Option 3; 178 selected in light blue | remaining electors: 2430 (Washing Bay elector count not affected)



Appendix 1e Mullaghmore/Ballysaggart/Castlecaulfield boundary with townland boundaries identified

Light pink = Townlands | Blue = Wards 2012

