

**CONSULTATION PAPER ON
A BILL ON THE NUMBERING OF
INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES
WITHIN TOWNLANDS**

**Issued by:
PHIL FLANAGAN MLA**

On Tuesday 11th September 2012

Deadline for responses:
Wednesday 31st October 2012 at 5.00pm

INTRODUCTION

Historically Ireland and its counties are sub-divided in a unique way: counties into baronies, baronies into parishes, and parishes into townlands.

The townland is a unique feature of the Irish landscape and is one of the most ancient divisions in the country; townlands existed long before the parishes and counties.

Townlands and their names have been considered as a shared resource and heritage.

Until recently the townland was the postal address, before the post office introduced its scheme of road names.

There are approximately 62,000 townlands in Ireland and great variations are evident in townland sizes due to the fact that their shapes and sizes are related to local topography and farming practices.

At present, local councils must number individual properties based on a street/road name and townlands can then be added later on in the address format. However, this has led to the removal of townlands from common usage and their addition is often only as a token gesture.

This proposal is to amend current legislation to enable local councils, if they so wish, to number properties based on the townlands system, with street/road names being included after the townland name.

PROPOSAL FOR A PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILL

The proposal is to introduce a Bill to amend the existing legislation, article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which deals with the powers of councils in relation to the numbering of properties, which currently only recognises street names, and is therefore contributing to the on-going decline in the importance and usage of townland names.

This amendment would make provision for each individual council, if they so wished, to number individual properties within townlands as opposed to numerical sequencing upon streets/roads. The amendment would also allow the townland name to be placed first in the address, alongside the number and form the principal part of the address, followed by a street/road name.

For example:

Current format

John Smith
33 Deerpark Road
Tattymore
Roslea
Co. Fermanagh
BT92 7QW

New Format

John Smith
33 Tattymore
Deerpark Road
Roslea
Co. Fermanagh
BT92 7QW

Currently, the legislation does not recognise townlands as forming the principal part of the address; instead the street name is given priority.

The Problem:

The current legislation does not recognise townlands and does not make provision for the numbering of individual houses within them, and further determines that the street name must be the principal part of the address. Unless the townland is used as the principal part of the address, over time, it will eventually be lost.

In 25 of the 26 current District Council areas, the address format is house name/number, street/road name and postal town. Government departments have been encouraged to include the townland name between street name and postal town although this is neither compulsory nor always complied with.

Fermanagh District Council has previously sought the numbering of individual properties in townlands. However, the current wording of article 11 does not facilitate this. Numerous groups, organisations and individuals within the Fermanagh district have written to current and previous Environment Ministers seeking this legislative change, but to date, no legislation has been forthcoming to initiate this change.

It is the responsibility of each District Council to allocate numbers to properties and to allocate road names. The proposal is to amend the Local Government legislation so that the address format will now be house name/number, townland, street/road name, postal town, post code as opposed to the current situation as outlined above.

Within the Fermanagh District Council area, where there has been significant opposition to the introduction of road naming at the expense of the townland name, the address format in rural areas is Townland, Postal Town, Post Code, as the Council have not named any roads in rural areas. Properties in rural areas do not currently have a house number.

However, the Land & Property Services have unofficially named roads and householders' rates bills in Fermanagh are sent out in the following format house name/number, street/road name, townland and postal town. However, these do not always include the townland.

The Electoral Office has also introduced a system, but with considerable differences to the LPS database. These differences have only exacerbated to the problem.

The current system in Fermanagh is not compatible with the address format used by most credit checking agencies, as properties have not been individually numbered. This leaves it difficult to link people to a property to do an automatic credit check. This has presented significant problems for those wishing to access mobile phone contracts, bank accounts, credit/store cards, broadband and mortgages. It also creates difficulty for delivery companies as the current system is not aligned with Satellite Navigation systems as properties are not officially numbered.

Unless the townland is the principal part of the address, then it will often not be used and will be ultimately lost.

If this legislation is introduced it will give councils, if they so wished, the opportunity to number individual properties in townlands, but there would of course remain the

flexibility for local councils to decide whether to use the current system, the proposed facilitated change or a combination of both.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this important matter.

I would encourage you to take this opportunity to respond to this consultation process using the document overleaf.

If you require additional consultation response forms or would prefer to respond to this process electronically, then the form can be accessed and downloaded at http://www.scribd.com/phil_flanagan or by sending an email to the address below.

Go raibh maith agat

Phil Flanagan MLA

Please respond to:

Phil Flanagan MLA

c/o Room 262

Parliament Buildings

Ballymiscaw

Stormont

Belfast

BT4 3XX

Email: phil.flanagan1@gmail.com

Contact details of person responding to consultation:

Name: _____

Organisation (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Tel. _____

Question 1

Do you support the retention and promotion of townlands?

Yes No Unsure

Comments: _____

Question 2

Do you agree that the current legislation has failed to adequately protect and promote townlands?

Yes No Unsure

Comments: _____

Question 3

Do you agree that amending the current legislation is the best way to address the issue?

Yes No Unsure

Comments: _____

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

It is proposed to amend article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which deals with the powers of councils in relation to street names and the numbering of buildings, to provide for the option that each individual property within a townland can be allocated a number and that the townland name may be placed first in the recognized address and may form the principal part of the address.

Question 4

Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes No Unsure

Comments: _____

Question 5

It is proposed to afford each individual council the choice in whether to implement a system with townlands forming the principal part of the address or whether to maintain the current system, which gives the street name precedence.

Do you agree?

Yes No Unsure

Comments: _____

Question 6

It is proposed that local councils should be given the choice as to whether to implement a system based on either street names or townlands and that any given council can apply either system as they see fit.

Do you agree?

Yes

No

Unsure

Comments: _____

Human Rights & Equality Implications

Question 7

How do you think the proposed legislation will impact on human rights?

Positively Negatively Not at all/not significantly Unsure

Comments: _____

Question 8

How do you think the proposed legislation will impact on equality?

Positively Negatively Not at all/not significantly Unsure

Comments: _____

Question 9

Do you have any other comments on the proposed legislation?

