

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**AT THE**

**2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND**

**HELD AT**

**MERCURE DARLINGTON KINGS HOTEL**  
**DARLINGTON**

**ON**

**FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2016**  
**DAY TWO**

**Before:**

**Ms Eileen Brady, The Lead Assistant Commissioner**

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**Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP**  
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Time Noted: 9.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning and welcome to the final morning of the public hearings here in Darlington into the Boundary Commission proposals for the North East Region.

Briefly reintroducing ourselves, my name is Eileen Brady and I have been appointed as Assistant Commissioner with Adele Baumgardt to consider the public representations that have been received and we may make recommendations to the Commission. We are supported in this task by Commission staff and, the lead official seated to my left, Ms Donna Smith.

As we have no speakers scheduled for hearing, we will take a pause in proceedings and resume at 10.15 am. Thank you.

Time Noted: 9.01 am

After a short break

Time Noted: 10.15 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning. We are resuming the hearing in Darlington this morning. Just as a matter of brief reintroduction, we opened this morning but there was nobody here. I am Eileen Brady who is Assistant Commissioner appointed in the task of conducting these hearings with Adele Baumgardt, who has been also appointed by the Boundary Commission. I am also assisted in the task by the lead official here, Donna Smith.

If you would like to come forward. The nature of the hearing is that you outline for the purposes of the record, your name and address and then you can proceed to make a presentation.

CLLR STOREY: Hello, my name is Matthew Storey. I live at 21 Dresser Lane in Linthorpe in Middlesbrough. My job is working for Andy MacDonald, the Member of Parliament for Middlesbrough, I run his constituency office in the centre of Middlesbrough. I am also ward councillor for the central ward in Middlesbrough as well and I am a Labour Party member.

I have done a lot of consultation work with the Labour Party within the Party, I have been part of the consultation process within the Labour Party for the whole time we have been preparing for the hearings and preparing for this. I have had a look at the boundaries in some detail, although I would never say I was an expert, but I have looked at it in some detail. There are some concerns which came from our Corporate Affairs Committee at Middlesbrough Borough Council that I wanted to raise, which are

similar concerns to do with the initial proposals that were raised within the Party structure itself during our consultation internally.

I would like mainly, obviously, to speak about the Middlesbrough situation, about Teesside. I am only going to look at that area.

One of the concerns is that the Boundary Commission referenced that they would stick to geographical boundaries, things like rivers would be taken into account. Obviously the new Middlesbrough West and Stockton East seat does cross the river and does not take the river into account. It also means that the two largest conurbations on Teesside, Central Middlesbrough and Central Stockton are in the same parliamentary constituency, which does not seem to make a lot of sense to us in terms of the demographic situation, the levels of deprivation in those areas and the attendant parliamentary casework issues from my perspective, and there is a lot of inward migration refugee communities in both of those town centres. For a Member of Parliament to have to represent both of those conurbations would be particularly problematic and difficult. Also, it just does not make sense for Stockton's main economic centre and Middlesbrough's main economic centre to be in one parliamentary constituency. That to us did not really seem to make a lot of sense.

Equally, despite the fact that I understand that the quota numbers are set, the idea of taking East Middlesbrough in its entirety, all of the East Middlesbrough wards, what you would call the East Middlesbrough wards - North Ormesby, Park End and Beckfield, Pallister Park and Berwick Hills - and putting them into a Redcar seat totally divides what most people would, I think acknowledge, would call Middlesbrough as is. Middlesbrough writ large essentially is being divided into two. The vast majority of it is going into a parliamentary seat with Stockton and then the East Middlesbrough ward is going to Redcar. That in and of itself takes the community of Middlesbrough and divides it up. That being said, I do appreciate that the Boundary Commission have a very difficult job in terms of the quotas because it is very tight and, unfortunately there really is very little option for them other than to do that but, it is something that we would like to highlight as something that we are not particularly fond of in the initial proposals.

Equally, I wanted to raise the Labour Party's own proposals that we have put forward. Our suggested changes mean that the parliamentary seat in Stockton is extant with what you would call Stockton. The new parliamentary seat that we suggest south of the Tees takes in all of West Middlesbrough, including the Park ward, it also has Ingleby Barwick and Yarm in it. It means that at least that seat is completely south of the river, one South Tees parliamentary seat. It also means that the entire community of Linthorpe is within a new Middlesbrough seat. It makes a lot more sense in that regard because the vast majority of the community of Linthorpe within Middlesbrough is actually in the Park ward. Most of what we would call Linthorpe - the village itself, the shopping centre and most of the conservation areas, there is a national conservation area within the Linthorpe area - is all in the Park ward. It is also divided because a

section of it does go into the Linthorpe ward and you would be putting Park into Redcar and leaving Linthorpe in the new Middlesbrough West and Stockton East seat. The Labour Party's proposal joins Park and Linthorpe together in the Middlesbrough West and Stockton East seat, which means that the whole community of Linthorpe is retained as one. It also means that more of the existing Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland seat is retained in the new Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland seat, so Hemlington and Stainton and Thornton under the Labour Party's proposals, would remain within Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland. I know that the Boundary Commission does need to take account of existing parliamentary seats where possible, also retaining the Park ward within the new Middlesbrough West and Stockton East seat would also keep more of the existing Middlesbrough seat within the new Middlesbrough seat. That is beneficial too.

I think for the most part that is really all I wanted to say. I understand how difficult it is for the Boundary Commission to do this because their criteria and the restrictions placed on the Boundary Commission put it in a difficult position in terms of making the numbers add up. I do think that what the Labour Party has proposed in terms of a Middlesbrough and South Tees seat south of the river and a Stockton seat, which encompasses Norton and Stockton and what you would call the West Stockton area, does make a lot more sense at least. The Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland seat is also then retained almost in its entirety, which I think also makes a lot more sense too.

I hope you will take that into account. That is really all I wanted to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. We usually invite the public or anybody present if they wish to seek clarification on points you have made. I will open it to the floor. That is grand, there does not appear to be anybody seeking clarification so thank you for your presentation.

If there is anybody else would like to come forward and speak. For the purposes of the record would you state your name and address, please.

MR JOHNSON: My name is Charles Johnson. I live at 40 Caedmon Crescent, Darlington.

Good morning, Commissioner. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Boundary Commission proposals for Darlington. I have a permanent home in the town since 1940, excepting some business appointments overseas. I have been a local councillor on and off since 1976, a JP for ten years and I have managed numerous local and parliamentary elections in Darlington over these years. I was also elected Mayor of the town in 2013. These are my credentials to speak to you today. I am an involved advocate for the people living in and around Darlington.

When I received the Boundary Commission proposals I was delighted. For years there has been little logic in the separation of the parliamentary constituency and the borough council boundaries. People living in the villages on the periphery of the boundaries, many of whom travel daily into Darlington for work, medical attention, education, shopping and leisure, could not understand the absurdity of the present arrangements. They considered they were village people by nature but Darlington people by location, yet by residence they were prevented from fully participating in the town they supported. The Boundary Commission proposals are perfect.

Parliamentary and local government boundaries being co-terminus gives an opportunity for people to regularise their selection of a single Member of Parliament in a truly logical and defensible manner.

I was therefore dismayed when a counter-proposal was tabled, which expanded the association of Heighington Village in the west of Darlington to the constituency of Sedgefield, which lies mainly to the north.

The Darlington ward of Heighington is adjacent to the Hummersknott ward of Darlington, it is intrinsically part of the Borough of Darlington. Heighington elected members sit on the Borough of Darlington Council.

I look for any logic to the alternative proposal; chiefly, did the proposal make things look better for the residents of Heighington? It did not. The logic for this illogical proposal can only be for other reasons, perhaps simply to protect the interests of politically motivated individuals now residing in the Heighington area.

The Boundary Commission proposal is a perfect solution to an old problem and I can only recommend to the Commission to stand firm on its proposals.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that presentation. There is nobody present but normally we would ask people to seek clarification but you can see that we are very quiet this morning. We appreciate you attending, thank you very much and we take note of what you have said. You are submitting a document. Thank you very much.

We do not appear to have any further speakers listed at the moment so we will return to business at 11.45 am. Thank you.

Time Noted: 10.27 am

After a short break

Time Noted: 11.45 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning and welcome back to the hearings here in Darlington. I would like to call forward a person who has expressed a requirement to speak this morning. If you would like to come forward please and announce for the purposes of the record your name and address, and then you can commence with giving your presentation. Thank you.

MR HOWELL: My name is Paul Howell. My address is 77 Coniscliffe Road in Darlington, DL3 7EH if you need the postcode.

Really just a very brief comment about what is going on. I am conscious that most people come and complain about what is wrong with what is here and, I just wanted to put on record that I certainly support the Darlington change to make it co-terminus with the local council. I think there is historic confusion in the town, particularly in the outlying boroughs where they do not fully understand whether they are talking to the council or the MP and why they cannot talk to the same people. I would just like to support that that stays as it is.

As a slight aside in terms of what I was not going to talk about but I am now; I also spend quite a bit of time over at Barnard Castle and I would just like to talk about the boundary there. It does seem to have a number of local interests where, Barnard Castle being split into two, does not seem to be a particularly elegant solution. Just at a very superficial level I have looked at that and a thought that I would like to be considered in terms of solving that solution, is if you look slightly further up, you have got Crook, which is currently in West Durham and if Crook goes from West Durham and Barnard Castle East into West Durham you get a net move of 2,400 between the two. So Barnard Castle East across to join Barnard Castle West, with Crook to join Bishop. You get a net move of 2,400, it is two constituencies and the maths would still work on both. It is just a thought to be put there.

From living in the local area I would say that Crook fits more with Bishop in terms of its links and just the general community and the people that work in those areas and the two sides of Barnard Castle would fit elegantly together.

That is it. That really is my contribution for the day. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is very welcome. Thank you very much, we appreciate all views that are expressed and everybody is encouraged to attend, although we are closing today. That will be the end of the proceedings for the North East Region. We normally ask the audience if they would like to seek points of clarification but we are very quiet. Unfortunately there is nobody to test you. Thank you for coming along.

We are having a lull here in the amount of speakers that are present so we will take a break until 12.15 pm. Thank you.

Time Noted: 11.50 am

After a short break

Time Noted: 12.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. Welcome back to the resumed hearing here in Darlington concerning the Boundary Commission proposals. There is no one scheduled to speak at this particular moment and, as a result of that, we will resume hearings at 12.50 pm. Thank you.

Time Noted: 12.16 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 12.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. We have resumed the hearing in Darlington and at present there are no scheduled speakers. So we will take a pause and return after lunch at 2.00pm. Thank you.

Time Noted: 12.51 pm

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. Welcome back to the resumption of the hearings here in Darlington. It appears that our next scheduled speaker is starting at 2.10 pm and we will take a short pause until then. Thank you.

Time Noted: 2.01 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 2.10 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. We are resuming our hearings here in Darlington and the scheduled person has not arrived so we will move on to the next listed speaker. If you would like to come forward and announce your name and details please and your address.

MR LISHMAN: (Conservative Party) Good afternoon, my name is Neville Lishman. I am here on behalf of the Conservative Party. My address is 31 Chiswick Street, Carlisle, and that is postcode CA1 1HJ.

Thank you very much for offering me the time to speak this afternoon. Over the last three days I have been sat listening to the representations of various participants in the proceedings and they have all been fed back. I would like, on behalf of the Conservative Party, if I may, to offer some alternative representations to the Commission. This takes into account particularly the issues raised about split communities, particularly Barnard Castle, Hetton-le-Hole, Washington and Billingham.

Our supplementary scheme offers no alternatives to those that we have already outlined on Monday when we said that it was our view that the three Northumberland constituencies should be kept within the Northumberland envelope and allocated entirely within Northumberland. We are not offering any alternatives at this stage to the Commission's initial proposals to Darlington, North Tyneside, Sunderland Central and Tynemouth. Whilst we understand the concerns of the South Shields participants and the Durham representatives, we were unable at this stage to come up with an alternative plan but, the party would have no objection if the Commission saw fit to split that one ward to help them out, if that is what you require to do.

Our alternative plan: we think we can put together Hetton-le-Hole, Washington and other towns in their entirety, but to do this we used the City of Durham constituency as the key. As it currently is, it is running from Hetton-le-Hole in the east over the other side to Tow Law in the west. If you turn that key 90 degrees, so instead of going east to west it goes from north to south, which would be this bit here, this is the top edge of Newton Hall and Framwellgate Moor but, down to the Aycliffe area, Sedgefield and Aycliffe just here. (indicating) It is better for connections because you have got better road links, the A1 and the A19 and the A167 are better roads going north to south than the roads going east to west. That frees up and allows Hetton-le-Hole to be re-joined into a seat we have called Houghton and Seaham, taking in the wards of Dawdon, Deneside and Seaham from Durham, and the Sunderland wards of Copt Hill, Doxford, Hetton, Houghton, Shiney Row, Silksworth and St Chads. Putting these together would then allow for the whole of Washington to be placed into one constituency on the current Sunderland West and Washington boundaries as they are now with the additional ward of Sandhill.

The knock-on effect of that into the west of Durham, would be the creation of a North West seat containing the wards of Benfieldside, Brandon, Consett North and South, Deerness, Delves Lane, Esh and Witton Gilbert, Lanchester, Spennymoor, Tow Law, Tudhoe, Willington and Hunwick. That combination of North West of Durham on fairly similar lines to what it is now, would allow you to reunite Barnard Castle down at the bottom of the Durham constituency.



I will give you the maps. This big chunk here would become North West Durham, and that would free up and allow you to join Barnard Castle into the same constituency, which would be in the Durham West seat. (indicating)

To the south of the region it allows you the opportunity to reunite Billingham into one constituency, namely the Hartlepool and Billingham constituency. We propose this by moving Jesmond Ward out of the Hartlepool and Billingham constituency and put it with the other Hartlepool wards of De Bruce and Hart into the East Durham constituency. That would hopefully allow, by swapping the City of Durham from east to west to north to south, scope to put all those towns and villages back together.

In Newcastle, we are now proposing an alternative to our original submission that the Blaydon constituency remove Whickham South and Sunnyside and Elswick and replace them with Westerhope and Denton wards. Denton and Westerhope swapping with Elswick from Newcastle North. Also going into Newcastle North, Westgate and Wingrove. From Newcastle East this would allow for West Gosforth to join together with East Gosforth into Newcastle East.

In Middlesbrough, we would like now to propose swapping wards in South and East Cleveland and Middlesbrough West and Stockton East and also with Redcar. We propose moving out of Middlesbrough South and into Redcar, the following wards: Normanby, Ormesby, Park End and Beckfield East and moving from Redcar, Berwick Hills and Pallister, Longlands, Beechwood and Park. Moving into Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, Ladgate along with the wards of Acklam, Hemlington, Kader, Stainton and Thornton and Trimdon. This we believe would restore Eastern Normanby and Ormesby wards into the Redcar constituency. There are accessibility issues between these wards and the rest of the Commission's proposed Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland.

The entirety of the current Redcar constituency is contained in our proposed Redcar constituency, while all except a small part of the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency is contained in the proposed constituency.

The advantages of our proposed scheme is that we have three constituencies entirely within Northumberland with no wards from any other authority. We will restore the ties in the town of Ponteland, which is divided in the Commission's proposals. Newcastle-upon-Tyne local authority has one additional constituency entirely contained within its boundaries. Only three constituencies contain part of the Borough of Gateshead rather than six under the Commission's proposals. Only three constituencies contain part of the Borough of Sunderland, rather than the six under the Commission's proposals. Sunderland local authority has one additional constituency entirely contained within its boundaries. No constituency contains part of three boroughs, which is the case in the Commission's proposals for the Jarrow constituency. The five wards which make up the town of Washington are retained into one constituency. Washington and

Sunderland West constituency is the present seat plus the Sandhill ward. The town of Hetton-le-Hole is restored into one constituency. Only two constituencies cross the boundary between Tyne and Wear and County Durham, rather than the four under the Commission's proposals. We restore the ties in the town of Barnard Castle, which is divided under the Commission's proposals. Four constituencies are entirely now contained within County Durham local authority rather than one under the Commission's proposals. We restore the ties in the town of Billingham, which is divided by the Commission's proposals.

Thank you, that is our supplementary submission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for that. As you probably are aware, we then ask the audience if there is anybody who wishes to seek clarification on any of the points raised. It does not appear so. Thank you very much for that presentation.

The next scheduled person is Mr Swales. If you would like to come forward. Thank you. Outline your name and address details for the purposes of the record.

MR SWALES: Okay. I apologise for being late, my train was 45 minutes late in to Darlington.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do not worry.

MR SWALES: My name is Ian Swales and my address is 39 Coast Road, Redcar, TS10 3NN.

My name is Ian Swales, as I have just said, and I was the Member of Parliament for Redcar from 2010 until I retired in 2015. My comments relate to the area bounded by the Tees to the north, the sea to the east and the European boundary to the south. This is currently divided into three constituencies; Redcar, Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland. I fully accept that to meet the quotas that are now part of the Boundary Commission's remit parts of East Stockton need to be added to this area, particularly the town of Thornaby, in order to come up with the numbers.

The number of wards however that the Commission have added from East Stockton make the proposed Middlesbrough West, Stockton East constituency and the Middlesbrough North East Redcar constituency, the two largest in the north east by population. Actually these areas are probably in the areas of the greatest deprivation and need in the north east, with the South Tees Development Corporation currently being set up so they certainly need representation.

To understand this area it is not just a matter of overall ward boundaries, it is also a case of looking at the actual areas of settlement. The location of large industrial sites,

for example the 16 square mile steel sites, the steep escarpment of the Cleveland Hills, the boundaries of the Middlesbrough postal district and the presence of distinctive towns and villages and communities in what at first glance looks like continuous suburbia.

This latter point is relevant to the Commission's proposals for the Redcar constituency. The removal of Eston, Normanby and Ormesby wards make no sense from a community perspective. Both Eston town and Normanby village are intimately connected to the Teesville ward and are cut off from the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency by the Cleveland Hills. Eston would be divided right through the middle of its town square, in fact through the middle of the War Memorial in the middle of that town square. The community of Whale Hill would also be split in half. The Domesday Book village of Normanby would be divided along its High Street. The Normanby proposal was actually made by the Commission in 2012 and was changed after consultation; the Eston one is new this time.

I consider these matters important in relation to Section 7 of the Boundary Commission Report, which says that the Commission must take into account local ties that would be broken as a result of changes in constituencies. I think Eston and Normanby in particular are a clear case of that. In Section 9 it says, "We have also taken into account the boundaries of existing constituencies so far as we can. In a number of cases we have been able to limit the change to existing constituencies." In fact, the proposals for the Redcar area remove three wards and add six, which does not feel like minimum change.

I first want to propose less change, and would like to talk about a more radical plan, which although making more change would better reflect the area, be more coherent and make future reviews easier.

First, the minimum change option is, do not remove Eston, Normanby and Ormesby wards from the existing constituency and add Saltburn ward and Park End Beckfield ward to increase the electorate. Both these additions were proposed on a logical community basis as part of the 2012 Review and, in the end, were accepted by the Commission. We can obviously make all the same arguments again. Saltburn is intimately connected to Redcar and Marske along the beach, in fact an extension to Saltburn town is about to take place and will actually be in St Germain's ward, which borders the current built-up area. Saltburn town is about to be extended into St Germain's ward. They are very intimately connected. The Beckfield area is part of the Ormesby community for example, being home to Ormesby Secondary School while Ormesby Primary School is over the road in Ormesby ward. The Middlesbrough wards have changed slightly since the last time, but last time we proposed the Beckfield area should be added to Ormesby, and indeed that was accepted by the Commission.

This gives a Redcar constituency totalling 74,314 electors and, as I have mentioned, was the final Boundary Commission proposal in 2012, with only two wards changing instead of three leaving and six arriving. However, given the Boundary Commission's proposals for the total number of electors in the South Tees area, this would give a problem because the other two constituencies in total would be over quota.

If this constituency needs another ward, my proposal would be Nunthorpe, because Nunthorpe community is currently split between Nunthorpe ward of Middlesbrough Council and Ormesby ward of Redcar and Cleveland Council. You can see from that map, Nunthorpe Station is actually on the boundary between the two. That would give a total electorate of 78,205, which is well up there as far as the quota is concerned. In total that is an addition of three wards to the current constituency but represents minimum change.

However, this still leaves Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland as hopelessly incoherent and Middlesbrough the largest town in England with very divided representation. Incidentally, the Commission's proposals for Redcar and Middlesbrough North East have that constituency covering the civic heart of Redcar and Cleveland and then getting to within 400 metres of Middlesbrough town hall. Meanwhile, the proposals for Middlesbrough West and Stockton East have one MP covering both town centres of the two biggest towns in the Tees Valley, which are either side of the River Tees, which does not seem sensible.

There is a more radical option, which I think gives more coherence, albeit with more change. Independent observers looking at our area and, as I say, because it has got hard boundaries in the north and the east and the south, it is quite easy to come up with ideas. For example, Liverpool University before the last review, came up with the same thing that most of us came up with, which is if you take the Redcar and Cleveland Unitary Authority area, take off the six western wards of Eston, Teesville, Normanby, Ormesby, South Bank and Grange Town, which are distinctly separate from the rest because they are divided by a large chemical production site and also use Middlesbrough as their postal address, that leaves the remains of Redcar and Cleveland with an electorate of 72,951, which is within the quota that you are seeking to have. That would be a sort of coast and country kind of constituency, which has real coherence. For example, it is covered by a very popular community newspaper called *Coastal View* which covers that area.

Such a move would also allow Middlesbrough to be more logically divided east and west, giving two constituencies with a strong rationale and the town having much clearer representation. If a ward, as I think it would be, needed to be added to this coast and country area to make up the numbers, then I would recommend Ormesby as being the one most logical to do that.

I hope that the Commission will look seriously at these proposals as this part of England has major issues, for example, the effects of closing Redcar Steelworks, therefore needs strong, clear advocacy with logical links to the many sub-communities in the area.

Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would not mind remaining there to see if anybody wishes to seek clarification on any of the points raised.

MR WILLIAMS: Richard Williams, Labour Party, Kings Manor in Newcastle. Ian, it is not so much a point of clarification, but there were six wards, could you just run through them again?

MR SWALES: Yes, the six wards of Redcar and Cleveland, which are effectively part of East Middlesbrough are: Grange Town, South Bank, Teesville, Normanby, Ormesby and Eston. You can see the big space between Redcar, at the top right there and the wards I am talking about, that space is filled with large production facilities for chemicals, for steel and so on. (*indicating*) Those parts that I have just referred to regard themselves as living in Middlesbrough, they have Middlesbrough in their postal address, even though they are Redcar and Cleveland Council. I think the logic says Middlesbrough itself should have a more coherent representation. I think the Boundary Commission proposals leave Middlesbrough all over the place. As I say, ironically, the Central ward of Middlesbrough will have the same MP as Stockton town centre which, if you know the Tees Valley, is crazy. Those are the two biggest towns and to have one MP representing both centres does not make sense, as far as I am concerned.

MR WILLIAMS: The remaining two Middlesbrough seats then, what is your split of those?

MR SWALES: My intention is to do a written submission to the Commission with details of that. My main interest is to the east of that area but I will send in a proposal. Essentially, as I said, this area we have got on the map here has three hard boundaries, the sea, the river because you cannot cross the river below Stockton, and the North East European constituency boundary, it has three hard boundaries. My proposal is effectively to be splitting it with two north/south lines. Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland extends from places like Staithes on the coast, right into the heart of western Middlesbrough. It does not make any sense at all from a community point of view. My colleague Tom, who still represents it, how he does his job I do not know, because he has got a whole ragbag of communities, issues, quite a lot of miles to cover and no logical rationale to it.

MR WILLIAMS: Thanks for clarifying that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would that complete the questioning? Thank you very much for that, very useful, thank you.

MR SWALES: I am not giving anything now but my intention is to do a written documentation with some maps and so on, which I did last time because you need to do things like colour the escarpment and things like that. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Out next scheduled speaker is not listed until 3.20 pm so we will take a pause in proceedings until 3.10 pm.

Time Noted: 2.35 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 3.10 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back to the hearing here at Darlington. The next scheduled person due to speak is Richard Bell, if he would like to come forward. For the purposes of the record, will you announce your name and address for the recording. Thank you.

MR BELL: Good afternoon everybody. Thank you Assistant Commissioner. My name is Richard Bell, County Councillor, of The Firs, Folly Top, Eggleston, Barnard Castle, DL12 0DH. I am making this statement today primarily as a councillor and as a local resident but, I also lead the Conservative Group on the County Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. If you would like to proceed.

CLLR BELL: This statement is made by me but supported by the other three County Councillors for Barnard Castle and Teesdale. I would like to comment on the west of the county, namely the proposed West Durham and Teesdale seat. This is too large a seat to be managed conveniently in my view, there are poor communication links and few community ties within the proposed seat. It is a long, slow drive from Baldersdale in the south west to Blaydon in the north east. The road links are poor and there are no significant cultural, educational, commercial or transport links through the seat. At least a 1.75 hour drive from one end to the other and a day or two by bus.

That day or two is perhaps a slight exaggeration but, if you turn I think to page 3, which has a bus timetable and schedule, you will see the time that it takes to get from Middleton-in-Teesdale which is the heart of my ward of Barnard Castle West, but by no means the most remote part of it, to various places. To get to Consett, which arguably would be the heart of the new West Durham and Teesdale constituency, being the biggest town, it take you three hours and 17 minutes by bus and that bus actually goes

through Bishop Auckland, which takes a relatively modest one hour 38 minutes. To go from one end of the constituency to the other, or at least from Middleton-in-Teesdale towards Blaydon, would take you four hours 31 minutes. I do not think that journey is achievable there and back again in a day. Perhaps I am not that far out by saying a day or two.

Furthermore and worse, the seat causes an unnecessary splitting of the historic market town of Barnard Castle and the Teesdale District. The boundary will run through Galgate and the market place of the town, that is to say the High Street. Prior to the creation of the Unitary Durham County Council in 2009, Teesdale had its own District Council based in Barnard Castle. Teesdale District was and is very much focused on Barnard Castle for schooling, shopping, leisure and commerce. There are many Teesdale-wide voluntary groups from church, through lunch clubs, to sporting clubs that all operate in Teesdale. To split the town and dale in two will disrupt community ties and be a most fertile source of inconvenience for all in public life as well. Teesdale is an entity with its own identity. My main point therefore, is that Barnard Castle and Teesdale must not be split.

The most convenient way to achieve this is by returning the Barnard Castle West County Division to the old Bishop Auckland seat and returning the Willington and Hunwick County Division to the old North West Durham seat. Clearly you could no longer call it West Durham and Teesdale if you take Teesdale out of that. Sooner they were to do that straight swap of those two wards.

Other additions to the old Bishop Auckland seat, that is mainly the addition to the east to make up the numbers, I do not object to.

If you do not, as Commissioners, find this the most convenient solution then please find another way of keeping Barnard Castle and Teesdale together. I will go on to some more detail about this later. That is the statement supported by all four County Councillors for Barnard Castle East and West wards.

I will move on to look in a little more detail as to why Teesdale fits better with the Bishop Auckland seat. Barnard Castle and Teesdale have been in the Bishop Auckland constituency for almost 70 years. In 1950, the Barnard Castle urban and rural districts were included in the seat. Prior to that there was a seat of Barnard Castle. The ties are strong in that people in Barnard Castle and Teesdale look to Bishop Auckland or to Darlington at the Gainford end of Teesdale for shopping, leisure, hospitals and post-16 education. The traffic is two way with hundreds of people from Bishop Auckland commuting daily to the giant GSK factory at Barnard Castle.

This much was agreed by all political parties at the Review in 2011, and the quote in italics comes from Durham County Council minutes, which are on their website:

“Councillor Hennig, Labour Leader, Durham County Council, met with the Assistant Commissioner on 17 November 2011 where he endorsed the Labour regional submission advising of *inter alia* the following points:

That there was no support at all for the proposed Consett and Barnard Castle constituency and there was support for the retention of the North West Durham constituency with the inclusion of the Chopwell and Rowland’s Gill ward, because of the historical link with Durham.”

That position really is fairly similar to what I am advocating today.

The initial recommendations in 2011, like the initial recommendations in 2016, had proposed a seat that would combine Consett and Barnard Castle, which straddles at least two geographically distinct valleys. The final recommendations of the 2011 Review, agreed by all parties, proposed the current Bishop Auckland seat slightly enlarged to the east and that is what I am proposing now.

So essentially, just to reiterate, I am proposing returning the Barnard Castle West County Division to the proposed Bishop Auckland seat and taking the Wellington and Hunwick County Division out of the proposed Bishop Auckland seat and back to the old North West Durham seat. This has the added advantage of keeping links between Crook and Wellington intact in North West Durham, a seat which it has laid in for decades.

I am disappointed by the volte-face performed by Labour at this Review, which is everything to do with political opportunities and elsewhere in the region and nothing to do with what is best for the people. Their proposal would keep Barnard Castle together but would split Teesdale by removing the Evenwood Division from Barnard Castle East and West. Currently all three divisions comprise the Teesdale Area Action Partnership division of Durham County Council and were formally the area of the Teesdale District Council. Again, looking at church links, Evenwood and the neighbouring Gaunless Valley Parishes, that is to say places like Cockfield, Lynesack, Butterknowle, Copley et cetera, are part of the Barnard Castle Deanery, not the Auckland Deanery.

I conclude that, apart from Sedgefield, which is always changed at Boundary Reviews due to its location, the Durham seats, especially Bishop Auckland and North West Durham, have been stable for decades with strong established links. The initial proposals needlessly disrupt these links.

My proposals, which are backed by Barnard Castle town council and many others, achieve the numbers required but keep communities together at minimised disruption to existing links.



My appendix on the next page is the bus planner from Middleton-in-Teesdale to Consett and they are the times that I said earlier in terms of how long it takes you to get to from Middleton-in-Teesdale to Consett, which would be the centre of the new West Durham and Teesdale seat. I would just ask you to note in particular that to get to Consett you have to travel through Bishop Auckland. That is all I have to say on West Durham and Teesdale and the Bishop Auckland seat.

I just have some brief comments about Darlington and Yarm and I make the following comments as one who born in Darlington, attended college at Darlington and Middlesbrough in the early 1980s, and has lived in the area all my life.

The Darlington seat as proposed by the Boundary Commission is now co-terminus with the unitary authority of the same name. This is entirely logical and an excellent fit with the numbers. The Labour Party's proposal to put the Heighington ward of Darlington in with the Bishop Auckland seat has no merit whatsoever. Heighington is nearly a suburb of Darlington, its residents have no significant links with Bishop Auckland or the County of Durham - I can say that as a Durham County Councillor - their links are overwhelmingly with Darlington.

Again, if you look at church links, the Church of England, Heighington is in the Darlington Deanery and not Auckland. So I would fully support the initial recommendations of the Boundary Commission with regard to Darlington.

Looking at Yarm - and I am speaking here of the Labour counterproposal to link Yarm with Middlesbrough - if you look at the map it is quite clear that Yarm is over the road from and effectively is a suburb of Stockton. It is some distance from Middlesbrough and, as we all know, a few miles in an urban context makes a big difference. Its links are with Stockton, not Middlesbrough. Again, the Labour Party's proposal to put it in with the Middlesbrough seat has no merit whatsoever - that should read Middlesbrough seat in the last line of my written submission.

That is the end of my statement, Madam Chairman.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for providing that. I now have to ask if anybody wishes to ask for some clarification on any points you have raised.

MR WILLIAMS: (Labour Party) Richard Williams, I am representing the Labour Party, Kings Manor, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I do not know the area hugely well but you have got Harwood and Hawick and Eggleston there; what are their community links? Do they link anywhere?

CLLR BELL: I think the question is about Harwood, Hawick, Eggleston and these things, yes. Middleton-in-Teesdale, actually curiously is not marked on that map, which

is surprising given that outside of Barnard Castle it is the main settlement in the Barnard Castle West ward, but Middleton-in-Teesdale is basically there (indicating). The links are really very much down the dale in terms of jobs and schools. For instance, all the secondary school traffic is to Barnard Castle, that is either to the state school in Teesdale or to the public school in Barnard Castle. There is a road link north to Weardale but, as you can see, that is an unclassified road and it is not treated in the winter. It has the distinction of being the highest road, I think, in England or the highest two-lane road in England, that is the St John's Chapel in Middleton-in-Teesdale goes to 2,000 feet, and is really pretty impassable for much of the year. Yes, certainly there are links between Teesdale and Weardale but the vast majority of the linkage and the community links are down the dale towards Barnard Castle and up the river.

MR WILLIAMS: All of those communities you are proposing to keep together. Yes?

CLLR BELL: Yes, so I am proposing to basically take the Barnard Castle West ward, which runs really I think up the Fell Tops, the Moor Tops of that, all of that, and put back in the existing Bishop Auckland constituency.

MR WILLIAMS: Great. That has clarified that, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That appears to complete the questions. In light of that, thank you very much for taking the time to make the presentation. We have received the submissions that you have made here. Thank you.

We do not have any further speakers scheduled at the moment so, we shall return at 3.50 pm in order to see what the running is then. Thank you.

Time Noted: 3.25 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 3.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are bringing proceedings to a close now. There are no further speakers scheduled. I would like to take this opportunity both on behalf of myself and my Assistant Commissioner, Adele Baumgardt, to thank all who attended and provided their views on the Boundary Commission's proposals. I would also like to take the opportunity, along with my Assistant Commissioner, to express our thanks to the Commission staff for their very supportive help in the efficient running of the hearing, and particularly to Donna Smith, the lead official today and yesterday.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the venues who hosted the hearings, both in Newcastle and in Darlington, for their very generous hospitality in looking after us.

In terms of the hearings, they are now concluding and we will take the opportunity then to review the submissions that are made in due course.

Turning to the other staff, last but not least, to the audio visual staff, Alan and Martin, I would like to put on record our thanks to them for their very, very efficient running of the proceedings.

This will bring the proceedings in Darlington and for the North East Region to a close. Thank you.

Hearing adjourned

Time Noted: 3.55 pm

**B**

CLLR BELL, 14, 17, 18

**H**

MR HOWELL, 6

**J**

MR JOHNSON, 4

**L**

MR LISHMAN, 8

**S**

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MR SWALES, 10, 13, 14

**T**

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**W**

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