

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

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ON

THURSDAY 13 OCTOBER 2016

DAY ONE

Before:

Mr John Feavour, the Lead Assistant Commissioner

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THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Welcome to this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the Yorkshire and the Humber region. My name is John Feavour and I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to assist it in its task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the Yorkshire and the Humber region. I am responsible for chairing the hearing today and tomorrow. I am also responsible, with my fellow Assistant Commissioner Collette Rawnsley, for analysing all the representations received about the initial proposals for this region and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff led by Sam Hartley, who is sitting beside me. Sam will shortly provide an explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for new constituencies in this region. He will tell you how you can make written representations and he will deal with one or two administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10.00 am this morning until 8.00 pm this evening. Tomorrow it is scheduled to run from 9.00 am in the morning until 5.00 pm in the afternoon. I can vary that timetable and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for the opportunity to speak. I should point out that under the legislation that governs the Commission's review each public hearing must be held over two days and cannot be extended into a third.

The purpose of this public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the Yorkshire and the Humber region. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a timeslot. I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time. If there is any free time during the day, or at the end of the day, then I will invite anyone who has not registered but who would like to speak to do so. I would like to stress that the purpose of this public hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals. The purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposals, nor is this hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine other speakers during their presentation. People may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers but they should do that through me as the Chair. I will now hand over to Sam, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for Yorkshire and the Humber region.

MR HARTLEY: Thank you, John. Good morning, everyone. As John has mentioned, my name is Sam Hartley and I am Secretary to the Boundary Commission for England. I am responsible today for supporting the Commissioners and the Assistant Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries, and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As John has already stated,

he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support John in carrying out his role. Please ask any one of us outside the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

We use the European electoral regions as a template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled but not including the two constituencies allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation. The approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counter-proposals that include one or more constituencies being split between the regions but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional-based approach we have adopted in formulating our initial proposals.

I would like to talk now about the Commission's proposals for the Yorkshire and Humber region. The region has been allocated 50 constituencies. That is a reduction of four from the current number. Our proposals leave three of the existing 54 constituencies unchanged. As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, we have grouped some county and local authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities. As a result it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross unitary or county authority boundaries. We have proposed four constituencies that contain electors from North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire. Two of these constituencies combine electors from North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, with both constituencies including wards from the district of Selby. The remaining two constituencies combine electors from the West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire areas, including the borough of Barnsley, the borough of Kirklees and the borough of Wakefield. In Humberside we have proposed a pattern of nine constituencies, which includes two constituencies that are completely unchanged.

The statutory rules that we work to allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries (known as "wards" or "electoral divisions"). We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We consider that any division of these units between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for electoral registration and returning officers who are responsible for running elections. It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances will splitting a ward between constituencies be justified and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided and the extent of such ward splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of change for this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our initial proposals until Monday 5 December and so there is still time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are also reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing and they are available on our website and in a number of places of deposit around the region. Anyone can make written representations to us through our consultation website at www.bce2018.org.uk. I do urge everyone to submit representations to us before the deadline of 5 December.

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you wish to make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see at the back, we are taking a video recording from which we will create a verbatim transcript. The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing along with all other written representations for a four-week period during which members of the public have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur in the spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and written representations will include certain personal data of those who have made the representations. I therefore invite all those contributing to the consultation to read the Commission's data protection and privacy policy, a copy of which we have with us today and which is also available on our website.

Finally, just a few points of housekeeping. There are no fire alarms due today so if the fire alarm goes off it is real. There is an exit where you came in and there is a fire exit over to the right of the front desk over [here](#). (Indicating). The muster point is across the road by Pret a Manger, I am told. The toilets are outside the door, turn right, and they are down the corridor. Can I remind everybody to switch off mobile phones or other devices or put them on silent, please. At this stage I will now hand back to John to begin the public hearing. I thank you all for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Sam. You will recall in my introduction that I said timeslots had been allocated. This morning is primarily taken up with slots allocated to four political parties, the Conservative Party, Green Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrats, in that order. I think you are aware of that order. Somewhere along the line we will probably slot a break in as well. On that basis, do we have Roger Pratt on behalf of the Conservative Party? Roger, when you are ready, we are ready to listen to you. Political party representatives will forgive me for repeating myself because I will say this again each time. You have been allocated about half an hour. The audience cannot see, but you can see from the lectern a clock on the floor. I will give you a little reminder at about 25 minutes that you should be thinking towards the end of what you have to say. Just before you start, Roger, just for the purposes of the video, if you could announce yourself and who you represent, please.

MR PRATT: (Conservative Party) Of course. Thank you very much indeed, Sir. My name is Roger Pratt. I am the boundary review director for the Conservative Party. This is a representation on behalf of the Conservative Party and the Yorkshire and Humber region of the Conservatives.

We support the allocation of 50 seats to Yorkshire and the Humber. We support the Commission's grouping in respect of Humberside and the proposed allocation to Humberside of nine seats. However, we do not support the allocation to North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire and instead we propose the following groupings. We separate North Yorkshire with an allocation of eight seats and South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire with an allocation of 33 seats.

I am going to refer on occasions, Sir, to the report of the Assistant Commissioners in the abortive review, because some of the issues are similar, and also to the initial proposals. I would like first to quote from the initial proposals on page 11, which is paragraph 25, where it said: "We noted that North Yorkshire (including the City of York) did not need to be grouped with a neighbouring county... Seven of the existing constituencies could remain unchanged..." But as we know, the Commission decided to group it. We feel that it is much better if it is separated.

I refer you to page 13 of the Assistant Commissioners' report from the abortive review where in item (b) of paragraph AC28 it says:

"North Yorkshire is quite distinct and different from the former metropolitan counties of South and West Yorkshire, being a largely agricultural and rural county. It retains the 'non-metropolitan' two-tier governance structure".

Then further on at point AC43 in the Assistant Commissioners' report, the Assistant Commissioners in their conclusions on sub-regions say:

"Following extensive examination of the possible options, we concluded as follows:

"...

"(d) The best possible configuration for the region as a whole could be achieved by treating North Yorkshire and Humberside as separate sub-regions and combining West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire together as a third sub-region."

We believe that that is exactly the right position today, as it was during the abortive review, and that is why we are treating North Yorkshire separately from South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

We have in mind in all the proposals that we have done the rules for redistribution of seats - Schedule 2 to the Act - so that a Boundary Commission may take into account as it sees fit four factors. We have looked at those four factors in bringing forward today our counter-proposal:

(1) Special geographical considerations.

(2) Local government boundaries. When we talk about local government boundaries, there are two particularly important aspects of local government boundaries. One is the number of local authorities that a constituency consists of, so how many constituencies are within a local authority, and then, in terms of the local authority, how many constituencies it has in that local authority. Those are two very important parts of that rule.

(3) Boundaries of existing constituencies - so the fewer electors that move the better.

(4) Any local ties that will be broken by changes in constituencies.

So that is the position.

I would like now just to come on to the position with regard to dividing wards between constituencies. As the Secretary of the Commission has made clear, no ward is divided in the proposals. On page 31 of their guide they talk about "exceptional and compelling circumstances but having regard to the specific factors in rule 5". My reading of that is that if you can get rule 5 a lot better then you can divide wards. They have cited where whole ward solutions significantly cut across local ties and where there is a significant domino effect of otherwise unnecessary change to a chain of constituencies. So they have said that obviously there has to be special, exceptional and compelling circumstances, but they have then defined how they would think that those could be implemented. We believe we do meet this criteria in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire because we do significantly improve local authority links, we do propose much less change - including a large increase in the number of unchanged constituencies - and by considerably improving local ties. If you go back to existing constituencies automatically you are improving local ties by their very nature.

Again, Sir, I would refer you to page 43 of the previous Assistant Commissioners' report on this matter when it talks about West Yorkshire. It is item AC160 on page 43. They talk about West Yorkshire:

"There, the particular size and configuration of wards made it very difficult to develop a model for constituencies that fully reflected the issues of community ties and identity, and local concern... [They did develop] a model without splitting wards... We were, however, clear that this model left us with a less than ideal solution in some proposed constituencies on the periphery of the urban centres where, quite simply, the mathematics forced us to make compromises to develop constituencies that lay within the legal limits."

There was obviously for the Assistant Commissioners, if you read through that report --- I will not quote everything, clearly, but there were very large numbers of references to split wards in the report last time and they had obviously considered it very carefully. They rejected it in the end, but they considered it very carefully.

I think there are two particular differences from last time in terms of ward splitting. The Commission has laid out the criteria where you could split wards, which it did not before, and it has also provided, which it did not last time, the electorate figures by polling district for every polling district in the country. On its website is the electorate of every polling district. That inevitably says to people that if there is a good argument for splitting wards then you can split wards. So it has given us that parliamentary electorate so that we can build the constituencies. That did not happen in the abortive review. We think there is a strong argument for dividing wards between constituencies.

Let us look at the various parts of Yorkshire. We will come perhaps to the simplest area initially because in Humberside we basically support what the Commission has done. We would make a couple of changes, but we support the Commission proposals in their entirety for Beverley and Holderness, which sensibly remains unchanged; East Yorkshire, which sensibly remains unchanged; Grimsby South and Cleethorpes; Kingston upon Hull East. In three cases we do actually propose a name change which we think would be more relevant. Goole, we think, should be called Goole, Howdenshire and the Isle of Axholme. I have heard other suggestions that it might be called Boothferry, which is an old constituency name, and cover the Isle of Axholme and various other areas, and that clearly is another possibility, and we would have no objection if you decided that Boothferry was the most appropriate name. Brigg has always been a name in a constituency and so we think it should be Brigg and Grimsby North rather than Barton. I do not know if they have chosen Barton rather than Brigg. We think Brigg should be in there. Scunthorpe, as it is widened, we think should be called Scunthorpe and the Trent Valley.

I would just like to make a couple of points about Humberside because we agree with all these constituencies. I will come to the two Hull constituencies that we have made minor changes on, but I think it is relevant to say that last time there was a big campaign to keep the Isle of Axholme together and I think it is right that we continue to do that. The Commission has kept the Isle of Axholme and I would like to make it clear that we very much support keeping the Isle of Axholme together. I would just remind you that on page 25 of the Assistant Commissioners' report last time it said: "The Scunthorpe Constituency Labour Party positively encouraged the grouping of the Axholme wards..." Then on page 28 there were further matters on that and on the whole idea of what you did. Obviously they do divide Grimsby. The proposals in this area are almost exactly the same as the abortive report:

"The division of Grimsby is balanced by the reuniting of Cleethorpes. All wards within Grimsby and Cleethorpes are part of the same local authority area and the two towns, despite different characteristics, are closely linked with each other and their surrounding hinterland. We propose two constituencies - Grimsby North and Barton [as I say, we prefer to call that Grimsby North and Brigg], and Grimsby South and Cleethorpes. This configuration takes account of local ties by allowing Cleethorpes not to be split..."

Then in paragraph AC88 it goes on to say:

“We have weighed the advantages and disadvantages across the region and consider that the structure we propose achieves the greatest degree of compliance with the statutory criteria across the sub-region as a whole.”

So as the proposal is very, very similar we think that it is the right proposal and we fully support that proposal.

There are two constituencies where we would make a minor change in Humberside: Kingston upon Hull Central and Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice. We propose two alternative seats and we move effectively four wards: the Bricknell and Newington wards one way and the Pickering and St Andrews wards the other. On the right is the Commission proposal, and that would be our alternative. The proposal restores strong local ties between the Newington and Boothferry wards. It restores strong local ties between the St Andrews and Pickering wards and the Myton ward and every part of West Hull's dockside area is contained in one constituency. In point AC68 of the former Assistant Commissioners' report I would point out that in subparagraph (f) it says: “Bricknell Estate is split between South Cottingham and Bricknell wards, which should therefore be kept together for Parliamentary purposes...” So we have that advantage, which is another reason that we have brought Bricknell into the proposal. So that is Humberside, which is relatively straightforward.

We do support some constituencies in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. We support the Dewsbury constituency because it is a very minor change. We support the three Doncasters. Last time they were unchanged. This time they are changed, but it is a relatively minor change which had to happen because of the electorate. Elmet and Rothwell is a no-change constituency which we support. Leeds East is a seat where it is the whole of Leeds East plus another ward. We support that. York Central and York Outer are only changed in order to address the wards that are currently split and we support those.

So those are the constituencies that we support. We also support the composition of the Keighley constituency, which we think is very sensible. It is the existing constituency plus the Wharfedale ward. That makes absolute sense, but we would ask that the name is Keighley and Ilkley.

We do not support 32 of the constituencies in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, so we are obviously suggesting a very large change. In some cases they are a minor change. I do not think I will go through all the constituencies that we do not support - they are there in the documentation - but basically there are 32 constituencies that we do not support.

If we take North Yorkshire first of all, we are proposing the following seats: Harrogate and Knaresborough, which is the current seat, and there is no change; Richmond, where there is a very minor change; Scarborough and Whitby,

where there is a very minor change; Selby and Ainsty, where there is no change; Skipton and Ripon, where there is no change; Thirsk and Malton, where there is a very minor change. The only changes that are needed are in order to bring Scarborough and Whitby up to quota and then to deal with split wards so you have the minimum amount of change possible within North Yorkshire.

This is the Commission map. You will see the strange yellow blob and the strange blue blob attached to Selby. Those are the two wards that the Commission has proposed in two separate constituencies in West Yorkshire which we do not think are necessary. It means that Selby district has three constituencies to deal with rather than the one under our proposal. So that is the Commission map. This is our alternative map, which is almost as it is now, as I say, just for the minor adjustments in order to bring Scarborough up to quota and to deal with any wards that are split between two constituencies currently. We think this is a much neater map. It is a much less changed map. We would urge that on the Commission.

In South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, as I have said, we are proposing to combine South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. We propose the following seats:

- Barnsley East and Hemsworth, Barnsley West and Stocksbridge, which I think are fairly self-explanatory.
- Batley and Spen, which is one of our no-change constituencies, so no change from the existing constituency.
- Bradford North and Bradford South, both with wards just entirely from Bradford and no wards outside of Bradford in terms of North and South.

We also propose a Colne Valley seat, and basically we have gone for the Lindley, Crosland Moor and Netherton swap which were the proposals last time. Last time the proposal was that Huddersfield was including Crosland Moor and Netherton and Colne Valley retained Lindley. We think the ties of Colne Valley with Lindley are better than Crosland Moor and Netherton, and Crosland Moor and Netherton have better ties with Huddersfield, so we are suggesting that change.

We are suggesting a Featherstone constituency totally within the City of Wakefield and a Leeds Central seat which is five Leeds wards - four from Leeds Central plus Ardsley and Robin Hood.

We then propose, and I would like to point out here, that we are proposing a Leeds North and Idle seat. It is down in some documentation as Otley. We have changed the slides since, but unfortunately because we produced all the documentation at the end of last week --- We have changed it from Otley. We think a better description of it is actually Leeds North and Idle, and that is basically three Leeds North wards, plus Idle and Thackley, plus all but one polling district of Adel and Wharfedale. That is the only one ward that we split in the whole of North Yorkshire - just one ward - for what we believe is a much less disruptive

solution. So that is our Leeds North and Idle seat, one of the two that are proposed to be changed.

Then we have a Leeds North East seat, which actually is the other seat, where it is just one small polling district which has very strong ties with the Weetwood ward, and that would be in the Leeds North East seat.

We would then have a Leeds West seat, which is basically the existing constituency plus one ward, which is Horsforth, which we think is a much better arrangement. Again, I apologise that the thing might say in certain places Calder North and Calder South and in other places it might say Halifax and Calder Valley. We actually think the best names are Lower Calder, which is effectively the constituency which is Calder Valley, or Calder South, which is Lower Calder, and that is the constituency there that we are suggesting.

We would then have Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, which is exactly the existing constituency, so another no-change constituency; Pudsey and Morley, which is basically four Leeds wards, plus one Bradford ward; Rother Valley where, again, it is a no-change constituency; and Rotherham, where it is the existing constituency plus a ward.

Then we have a number of Sheffield seats. Sheffield Attercliffe is effectively what is currently called Sheffield South East. We have much less change. We do divide three wards in Sheffield. It may well be at the end of the day that you find a solution with less split wards in Sheffield, but we do make much less change in Sheffield than there is in the proposals. I would refer you to item AC103 in the Assistant Commissioners' report last time where it says:

“We received some strong representations advocating the creation of five constituencies exclusive to the City of Sheffield by splitting wards. These included the response of Sheffield City Council... itself that put forward specific proposals based on splitting three wards...”

We have again done a proposal splitting three wards. Those are the five Sheffield seats. They are basically very similar to the current seats - as I say, Attercliffe is really the current Sheffield South East - and there is much, much less change in those seats.

We have changed the Shipley seat so that it is six Bradford wards wholly within the Bradford Metropolitan district, and that means, unlike the Commission, we have four constituencies totally within Bradford.

Our Upper Calder seat is really the Halifax seat, where we reunite Halifax - because Halifax is split by the Commission, we think unnecessarily. Upper Calder is really Halifax. You could call it Halifax and Upper Calder or whatever. Lower Calder is most of the Calder Valley, but Upper Calder has obviously some parts of the

Calder Valley as well. The best names we could come up with were Upper Calder and Lower Calder. As I say, some of the documentation may be different on that.

We have a Wakefield constituency, which is seven wards of Wakefield and Wentworth and Dearne, which is currently part of Barnsley and part of Rotherham.

This is the current South Yorkshire. I would again point to an item on page 14 of the previous report where it says at item AC28(g):

“There are at present five constituencies serving Sheffield contained within the local authority boundary, and part of one other. The Commission’s proposals breached that boundary three times. This was said to suggest that the policy of not splitting wards might not be right for Sheffield.”

There is only one difference this time and that is that the Boundary Commission, rather than breaching it three times, breaches it four times, so it is even worse. We think there is therefore a good case for splitting wards in Sheffield. As I say, you might find a solution which does not split as many as we do, but we do think that this is a very much more succinct proposal and a very much less disruptive proposal for South Yorkshire. That is effectively what our map would look like, which is much more like the current map, including an unchanged Rother Valley and a Rotherham which includes only one ward. So it is much more like the existing constituencies.

In West Yorkshire, that is the current pattern and this ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is just coming up to 25 minutes, Roger.

MR PRATT: All right. We are nearly through. There is just one split which I can indicate if I can get the light on it. It is just there. It is just one minor polling district which basically goes into the Leeds North East seat as opposed to the rest of Adel and Wharfedale, which goes into this Leeds North and Idle seat that we have proposed. That is the only split in West Yorkshire. It is the only split necessary to get West Yorkshire much better than the Commission.

So the advantages:

- We have North Yorkshire, as reviewed separately, with minimal change.
- We propose seven constituencies unchanged as opposed to just one under the Commission proposals. Our additional ones are: Batley and Spennings Dale; Harrogate and Knaresborough; Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford; Rother Valley; Selby and Ainsty; and Skipton and Ripon. Five extra constituencies remain intact with electors added: Leeds West, Rotherham, Sheffield Hallam, Sheffield Heeley, Sheffield South East.

- Six more constituencies than the Commission containing just one local authority. That is a massive change. There are 14 under the Commission proposals. We build that to 20. That is a massive difference. In Sheffield, five seats are entirely within the local authority as opposed to two under the Commission's proposals. Rotherham and Selby local authorities have two fewer constituencies within their boundaries. Barnsley, Kirklees and Leeds local authorities have one fewer constituency within their boundaries.

- We restore local ties in Halifax and a number of other places where obviously we retain constituencies and we manage to move 189,350 fewer electors in that part of Yorkshire. That is a massive difference. It is nearly three constituencies. It is not quite three constituencies, but it is a very, very significant difference.

These are the proposals that we have looked at to get to our proposals. We believe that we have much better met those rules by splitting a ward. We propose very considerably better local authority links and so we are more compliant with rule 5(b). We move overall in Yorkshire 177,000 fewer electors than the Commission and have an extra six constituencies unchanged and so we are more compliant with rule 5(c). We break far fewer local ties - for example, in Selby, Sheffield, Hull, Halifax, Harrogate and Rotherham - and so we are more compliant with rule 5(d).

So in conclusion, we have split one ward in Leeds and three in Sheffield. I think you can take them separately - I am sure there is a way of doing it - but we think just splitting one ward in Leeds is particularly helpful to both North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. What it does is prevents a domino effect of unnecessary change to a chain of constituencies - that is exactly the test that the Boundary Commission has in its documentation - and it far better reflects the factors in rule 5. So we support the allocation of 50 constituencies in Yorkshire and Humber but believe there is a much better scheme available which respects local authority links to a far greater extent and moves many fewer electors. We will submit to the Commission before 5 December a comprehensive document outlining our rationale, whether we support the Commission or propose alternatives. We will take into account any representations made at the hearings and may in the light of these amend our submission from that which we have outlined today. Thank you very much indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Roger, thank you very much, and also thank you for keeping to time as I asked you to do. We will move on and take the submission from the Green Party. Sam has just reminded me to take any questions of clarification from anybody. I was looking for any hands. Sir? I think we have a roving microphone somewhere which we will bring to you. Perhaps when it arrives you could let us have your name and your question of clarification.

MR FOX: My name is Alan Fox. My question to Mr Pratt: Mr Pratt, you said that Sheffield qualifies for five constituencies and that you have therefore done three ward splits. I think you have actually crossed the Sheffield City boundary, have you not? Could you clarify that?

MR PRATT: Yes, we have, in just one case. That is correct. We have included one Sheffield ward in the Barnsley West and Stocksbridge constituency, which is Stocksbridge and Upper Don. The others are all entirely in Barnsley. Everything else is totally within Sheffield.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Fox. Does that clarify your point?

MR FOX: Yes, it does.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any other points of clarification from anybody? Sir, the microphone is just coming to you. We need to do this with microphones, folks, just so that we can capture what people are saying.

MR ROCK: What do you need to know? My name?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just your name, please, yes.

MR ROCK: Peter Rock. The Huddersfield/Colne Valley suggestion: how does that help the boundary review suggestion of a number of seats? You didn't explain what it was, but it seems to me Colne Valley would retain Penistone West in your suggestion and that you are merely messing about with two wards: Crosland Moor and Netherton and Lindley.

MR PRATT: That is exactly our change, Sir. We believe that Crosland Moor and Netherton fits more naturally with Huddersfield and that Lindley fits more naturally with Colne Valley. That is our only change. It is a swap between those two wards. Because of the high numbers in Colne Valley, we think the Penistone solution is the best solution for that particular constituency.

MR ROCK: Have you been to Crosland Moor and Lindley?

MR PRATT: Sorry? Have I personally?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This is about clarification.

MR ROCK: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Roger expressed a view that they felt --- That may of course not be the case.

MR HARTLEY: Other witnesses will give evidence with regard to Lindley and Crosland Moor and Netherton at later stages during the public hearings.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think this just gives me the opportunity to reinforce something that Sam alluded to earlier on. When these representations are all published on our website, the purpose of that is to give everybody else the

opportunity to comment on those views. Thank you very much indeed. Any other points of clarification? (None). Roger, I think you are done.

MR PRATT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Do we have Martin Hemingway here for the Green Party? Just as with the other political parties, up to half an hour. In your own time, for the purpose of the video, please announce yourself and who you represent.

MR HEMINGWAY: (Green Party) It will be considerably less than the half an hour. It will be a very different type of presentation because, unlike other parties, we do not have any paid workers - we have one volunteer working on this, and I am here - so we have not been able to go into the details. Some detail will be presented in some of the other hearings where there are particular things to be said.

What we are mainly concerned with are some of the problems that have been highlighted by the Conservatives in terms of crossed boundaries, and a lot of the principles that we have sought to pursue are the same ones as them, as you would expect with that commitment to localism. We have one particular thing that we can agree on completely, which is the change of name of Keighley to Keighley and Ilkley. It reflects our local Green Party in that area and the name of that local Green Party. We are all in favour of that.

I want to begin really with a bit of the detail in the way that it is constructed. It is that that most of our comments and concerns are with. Obviously our major concern is that really we are just shifting the deckchairs on the Titanic of the first-past-the-post system. As you would expect, I would be arguing for a more proportional system to underpin any reform of the parliamentary system, but that is not our concern today. We have first past the post as our starting point. Two things that are referred to as strengths of the first-past-the-post system are that they link an elected representative directly to an electorate and they link them directly to a community. Perhaps those are strengths of that system. There are people who show an interest in that area. They know who will represent them and whom they should use. It is whether this set of reforms maintains that link to communities of those elected representatives.

The reduction in the number of MPs is obviously something that we are troubled by. It reduces the number of MPs able to hold the Government to account, and that is a democratic fault, and, again, it reduces that contact between elected representatives and the electorate. There are more people for each of those MPs to deal with.

This is an artificial exercise and that is the main concern that we have - with the artificiality of the exercise imposed on the Boundary Commission. That, we think, has served local communities and their electors badly. It has been forced on you by the legislation. From our point of view, it is important that Commissioners take back the message about the absurdities created by the tight restrictions on what they can

do and how minor changes to those guidelines could reverse some of those absurdities.

We know that following the registration rush before 23 June the 2,000,000 voters are not included in these figures. It is unlikely that they are evenly spread across existing council wards. They are more likely to be in those wards with deprived and transient populations, where we know voter registration is traditionally low. We know that that is something that is affecting university towns and university constituencies. Leeds, obviously with its quantity of universities, and Sheffield are both affected in that way. That is a difference exacerbated by the new voter registration system. These proposals are not based on a newer reality and they could have been.

We cannot depend on the constituencies having a very long life. In some areas there is a large youthful population - Bradford has a population of 23.4 per cent under 16 - and that will radically change those constituencies at each review. If the Government's housing targets are reached - and that is more than 70,000 in Leeds and more than 40,000 in Bradford - again, those are not evenly distributed within those unitary authorities and that will have an effect. Those are difficulties for future reviews and I hope you are being paid generously to deal with them.

The current absurdities are created by the straitjacket imposed by limiting the variance on size to within five per cent of the mean. As you know, the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee of MPs recommended that, as well as keeping the number of MPs at 650, the variance should be set at ten per cent. Changing that variance, even to 7.5 per cent, would in fact create a much more sensible distribution in terms of links to communities. That is why I want to talk about North Yorkshire first in more detail -- because there are local councils in those areas that currently fall within mostly existing constituencies.

Richmond constituency includes the whole of the Richmondshire District Council area and the north end of the rather odd Hambleton District Council. You propose moving one of the Hambleton wards into Thirsk and Malton, and that is a constituency that includes all of Ryedale District Council, the southern end of Hambleton and, oddly, at the moment it includes two wards from Scarborough and Whitby District Council, Filey and Hertford, in the south of the area. Your proposal is to move one of those wards, Filey, into Scarborough and Whitby, so we would have a position where a constituency represented almost all of a district council and was almost exactly coterminous with it apart from one ward: Hertford, down here in the south of Scarborough and Whitby. If someone living in Reighton, over here, has a concern with the council, they are going to have to go 70 miles across to Thirsk to ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Martin, if you use the little marker, we can still hear you from the microphone.

MR HEMINGWAY: Sorry. They are going to have to go 70 miles across to Thirsk to see their MP rather than just 10 or 15 miles up the coast to see an MP who deals all the time with Scarborough and Whitby District Council. To us, it makes sense that

there should be a coterminous constituency. The problem is that Scarborough and Whitby then becomes 79,000, Thirsk and Malton 69,000, within 7.5 per cent of the mean. It is a common sense solution rather than one that seems a little absurd to us at the moment.

The other one has already been mentioned, which is Selby. At the moment the Selby and Ainsty constituency contains all of Selby District Council and part of Harrogate. Harrogate is used to being split. It is huge. It has three constituencies. But you take two wards out of Selby District Council and move them into two separate constituencies in West Yorkshire just to make their numbers up. Those wards could go back into Selby and Ainsty and it would still be within the size limit. They are being moved for no other reason than to bring the two seats in West Yorkshire above 69,000, which is where they would be if they did not have that addition. Again, with that minor adjustment in variance, Selby stays whole and common sense is once again restored. So that small additional allowance allows sweetness and, above all, some light, and that is the message that needs taking back: that even a small one allows in the case of North Yorkshire a much more sensible set of outcomes in relation to the links between elected representatives and district councils.

We get the same concern elsewhere in the region. I probably differ most about Leeds North, North West and North East from the last submission. We regard Leeds North West as having an identity. It is an identity that runs along Otley Road. You have one road. You can go out of here, head towards Skipton and you are following Otley Road most of the way, heading through Adel and Wharfedale, Otley and Yeadon, pearls strung out along the Otley Road if you like, and that is almost a constituency. Headingley is undersized. That is partly the result of the way in which in a large student area the numbers sign on in that area, but also we know local boundaries are changing and other areas are going to Headingley, some into Weetwood, and that will bring their numbers up.

I know you do not take account of it, that it is not within your guidelines, but once again a constituency that does have an identity, Leeds North West - I have stood for it twice myself - has been broken up for what appear to us to be predominantly numerical reasons. There is nothing we can do to change it. It is the absurdity of the rules on choosing a baseline number that is highlighted again there.

The difficulty that we have in general is the difficulty in proposing any changes that are not sabotaged by the guidelines that you are working within. I discussed North Yorkshire in detail as illustrating that clearly, but there are examples elsewhere where communities are divided by the movement of wards between local authorities.

In the other local meetings some people will be raising points in more detail in relation to particular areas. That is not my main concern today, as you will have picked up by now. Amongst those that have been highlighted by our members and has been highlighted already today is the move of the Barnsley ward of Penistone West on the other side of the Moor into Colne Valley and Kirklees. There is a big bit

of countryside between those two bits and not much in the way of links, especially after dark. Moving the Royds ward in Bradford into Halifax, and Tong ward from Bradford into Pudsey, both wards with large estates in them that identify as being parts of Bradford, again, it is that numerical movement.

The South Yorkshire constituencies are those most affected by the review. A lot of constituencies are dismantled and put back together again but, again, without that attention to community that is claimed to be a benefit of first past the post. In Sheffield, the use of the old ward boundaries means that the current wards are divided between constituencies. There will be a detailed response from Sheffield in the South Yorkshire meeting. Their proposals fall within your parameters and affect the make-up of Sheffield Central and West, Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge and Sheffield South. We will be proposing detailed changes to those Sheffield constituencies.

Also in South Yorkshire it does make sense to move the two Dearne wards back out of Wentworth and Dearne, but it does not make any sense to split them and put them in separate constituencies, one in Barnsley and one in Doncaster. If we can go to the name change bit, Wentworth and Dearne became Wentworth and Dearne when Dearne was moved into Wentworth. If you are moving Dearne out again, I suspect Wentworth might be a better name for it. It can go back to its original name.

In Humberside, I see other parties have expressed their concerns about the effect of the changes on their electoral chances. The principal issue that has been flagged up by our members there relates to the lack of identity in the Grimsby North and Barton constituency between those two ends, between Barton and between Grimsby, where there is seen to be no common identity, and the problems potentially created by the different electoral cycles in the two district councils south of the Humber.

I want to close our comments on this oral part of the submission - we will be making more detailed written ones - by making some points about the process that would have made it easier for those of us who are volunteers, which is me, to engage with the process. It would have been helpful to have had the ward make-up of existing constituencies so we could see what was changing rather than having to research that ourselves. It would have been helpful if the maps of the new constituencies had included the adjacent wards so it was easier to see what was being proposed in the way of shifts rather than having to flick between pages of maps of different scales. I am used to working with maps, but it is still too complex an exercise. That is presentational.

I would like to emphasise certain points - besides, obviously, our support for proportional representation. We recognise that the Boundary Commission has been set strict guidelines and it has worked within the requirements of those. We feel the task would have been simpler if the numeric variance tolerated were the 10 per cent recommended by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee of MPs and that the outcome could then have contained fewer absurdities. We feel the choice of cut-off date for electoral numbers has disadvantaged inner city and student areas

and that population size would have been a more appropriate measure. We regret the use of ward boundaries where those are already changed. We feel that the current proposals, both in the reduction of MPs and the way that the process has been designed, do not serve to enhance democracy even within the first past the post model.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Martin, thank you very much indeed. Just before you leave, do we have any questions of clarification for Martin on anything that he has said today? (None). I think you are done. Thank you very much indeed. We are running to time, everybody, so I am going to press on and take one more presentation before we break briefly. Do we have Greg Cook here for Labour? Thank you, Greg. So for the video, if you could introduce yourself and then about half an hour. There is a clock at the front and I will remind you at about 25 minutes if you are still going.

MR COOK: (Labour Party) My name is Greg Cook and I am an official of the national Labour Party, based in our head office in London. I am making this submission on behalf of the national Labour Party and also the Yorkshire and the Humber region of the Party. It is being presented as an overall response to the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission. It follows a detailed consultation process within the Labour Party which involved all our members of parliament in the region, the Constituency Labour Parties and others. The content of the presentation today is going to cover the review process itself, the statutory criteria, policies of the Commission, which we will comment with our views on, and then looking in more detail at the initial proposals, and we have some alternative proposals to put which I will describe.

Just firstly to talk about the process. We welcome the initial proposals of the Commission and the clear and comprehensive way in which it has set those proposals out. Whilst we disagree with some of them and we will be setting out alternatives which we believe better fit the statutory criteria, we accept that in all cases it has fully considered the different options and explains the decisions which it has made. We also welcome the Commission's efforts to stimulate and encourage public participation in the process and also to consult with the political parties on their policies and procedures. We are grateful, in particular, for the opportunity at this hearing to set out our views and the views of the Labour Party on the Commission's initial proposals.

We note that under the terms of the Act the Commission may, in choosing between different schemes, take into account special geographical circumstances including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, local government boundaries, the boundaries of existing constituencies and any local ties that would be broken by changes to constituencies. It is self-evident that the Commission may not be able to respect all of these criteria, or indeed in some places any of them, in every part of the region whilst keeping the electorates of constituencies within the permissible range. We accept that in some areas the disruption to existing constituencies is likely to be substantial, that it may be difficult to respect local authority boundaries

and that local ties may be broken. Where the Labour Party puts forward alternative proposals to those of the Commission, it does so on the basis that it believes them to be on balance more consistent with those statutory criteria.

On the policies of the Commission, and first to deal with the issue of regions, we welcome the Commission's decision to use the European electoral regions as sub-national review areas for the purpose of its initial proposals. Were it not to do so, the review of constituencies in England would become much more complex, with almost limitless options, and the result would be that meaningful consultation and public participation would be much harder to achieve.

We note that the electorate of the Yorkshire and the Humber region at 3,722,035 gives an entitlement under the Sainte-Laguë allocation to 50 seats, which is four fewer than the region has currently, with an average electorate of 74,441, just 228 below the electoral quota. We note and accept the electoral quota of the review at 74,769 and that therefore all seats in the region must have electorates between 71,031 and 78,507.

On wards and divisions, we note the Commission's policy of using district and unitary authority wards as the smallest unit with which to build constituencies. We also note the Commission's stated policy on the issue which is set out in paragraph 31 of its guide which states: "[The Commission] recognises that... there may be exceptional and compelling circumstances... that... make it appropriate to divide a ward". No such proposal has been made in the Yorkshire and the Humber region or anywhere else. The Labour Party supports the policy of the Commission and believes that any such proposal should be treated on its merits and within an assumption that whole wards and divisions should remain intact in the absence of those compelling and exceptional circumstances such as are described. We do note, however, that this policy comes under particular strain in this region, where the Commission itself remarks in the context of the average ward electorates for Kirklees, Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield that: "These large electorates reduce the number of available combinations of wards with which we can build constituencies". We refer below in detail to particular problems that have been caused in different areas by the limited number of whole ward options available and the fact that in some parts of the region the Commission seems to have had literally no choice as to its proposals because only one combination of wards was available. The result of that is obviously that it is impossible for the Commission to take any account of existing constituencies, local authorities, or the breaking of ties, as the Act requires it to do. We therefore believe that in this region it would be right to give serious consideration to any proposal in which a ward or division was divided between more than one constituency and whether such a proposal met the specific criteria laid down by the Commission, which are where all the possible whole ward options in an area would significantly cut across local ties, or where splitting a single ward may prevent a significant domino effect of otherwise unnecessary change to a chain of constituencies in order to meet the electorate totals requirement. We believe that in some parts of this region these may apply.

On the issue of “orphan wards”, so-called, the Labour Party notes the concept of the orphan ward, where one ward of a local authority is added to a constituency wholly or partly in another local authority, and that this is regarded by definition as undesirable. We accept that such arrangements are often anomalous and clearly at odds with respect for local authority boundaries. However, we believe that a dogmatic policy which considers that such arrangements are always undesirable is not appropriate and that the addition of other wards just for the sake of not having a single ward in such a scenario is not by itself necessarily to be preferred if it means that ties are broken and electors are moved in that ward. In this region, where the average ward electorate is much higher than elsewhere, such arrangements are inevitable.

On sub-regional review areas, we note there is no requirement on the Commission to avoid the crossing of country boundaries as there used to be under the legislation prior to 2011 and that their status is no greater than that of any other local authority boundary. We agree with the Commission, however, that the counties and unitary authorities provide convenient administrative units for dividing a large region such as Yorkshire and the Humber into smaller review areas and that, as local authorities, it is legitimate under the Act that their boundaries are considered as relevant to the process.

We note that the Commission has allocated a whole number of seats to the four unitary authorities which make up the former county of Humberside and has considered the remaining counties as effectively one review area. The Labour Party accepts the regional sub units set out by the Commission and believes that they are justified by the needs of electoral equality and the geography of the region, although we do note that the county of North Yorkshire could sustain six whole constituencies and only does not do so because of the inflexibility of the large wards as building blocks of constituencies in South and West Yorkshire.

On the names of constituencies, we note and support the Commission’s policy on the names of constituencies. We are aware, however, of a tendency for the names of constituencies to become more complex and unwieldy and would as a matter of principle resist that. Also, where a constituency is largely unchanged we would normally support the retention of the existing name, but we will obviously consider all such proposals on their merits and take account of local opinion.

So we set out next our views on the initial proposals of the Commission and an outline of some of the alternative proposals which we would put forward. Whilst we refer to the proposals in terms of the strategy criteria, I do not intend in this presentation to go into the detail of community ties and other relevant matters which will be amplified in the statements of individuals in the areas affected.

We note first the electorates of the counties as set out in the table there and the average electorates of the different units, noting in particular the relatively low average electorate of the nine seats within the county of Humberside, which we will turn to in a moment, and also the clear indication that the grouping of

North Yorkshire and York, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire brings the average electorate of those constituencies closer to the electoral quota, which may in some areas assist in the numbers of options which are available. It is also clear from that that the reduction of four seats is therefore achieved with one fewer in Humberside and three fewer in South and West Yorkshire.

So we start with the former county of Humberside. We note that the unitary authorities which comprise that county have an electorate jointly of 661,995 and a theoretical entitlement therefore to 8.85 seats. We therefore support the allocation of nine whole seats as, despite the shortfall in its entitlement - short of nine whole seats - none of the other counties, in particular North Yorkshire, has an appropriate surplus of electors which would balance the electorates between the counties.

We note that the Commission has decided to retain the Beverley and Holderness constituency and East Yorkshire unchanged, which we support, not least because we can see no serious alternative to the configuration of either of these seats that would offer any benefit. We are aware, however, that this decision itself creates its own imbalance. The electorates of these seats are respectively 76,641 and 77,061, which are both well above the electoral quota, which therefore leaves the remaining electorate of Humberside at 518,293, which gives a theoretical entitlement of just 6.80 constituencies, and therefore the average electorate for seven seats is just 72,613. It is this constraint, along with the geography of this part of the region and the large average electorate of the divisions, which we believe is responsible for the Commission's need to divide the town of Grimsby. In addition to the low average electorate of the county, we believe it is also right that there should not be a seat which crosses the River Trent within the borough of North Lincolnshire, which means that the three constituencies of Grimsby North and Barton as proposed, Grimsby South and Cleethorpes and Scunthorpe have an average electorate of just 71,674 and there are clearly no ways in which the seats can be configured to preserve the town of Grimsby in one seat under that scenario.

Whilst recognising that the current Grimsby constituency has an electorate of just 58,997 and must therefore be enlarged, we believe it is self-evident that the initial proposals very seriously break ties within the town, which has had its own parliamentary constituency literally, I believe, for centuries, and we therefore propose an amendment which would place more of the town of Grimsby in one seat and make it a more recognisable successor to the current constituency. This would be to include the East Marsh and Yarborough divisions in the Grimsby South and Cleethorpes seat and Humberston and New Waltham and Waltham divisions in Grimsby North and Barton, which may therefore require to be renamed, which could perhaps be called North East Lincolnshire. We accept that under this proposal Grimsby remains divided and also that the village of Humberston would be divided, but we believe that ties are broken under any proposal and the advantage of the counter-proposal is that most of the built-up area of Grimsby and the town of Grimsby and Cleethorpes would be in one seat and there would be more electors - 80.2 per cent of the current Great Grimsby and 65.2 per cent of the current

Cleethorpes - who would remain in effectively the same seat under this counter-proposal. It is described in Appendix A.

We support the proposed Scunthorpe constituency and the Goole constituency which, as mentioned, use the River Trent as a boundary between Scunthorpe and the Isle of Axholme. We recognise therefore that three seats must be created from the remainder of the county, i.e. the rest of Haltemprice and Howden constituency, and the city of Kingston upon Hull. We do, though, in this area oppose the initial proposals, which create an unwieldy Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice constituency in which four divisions of the City of Hull are linked with five of the East Riding of Yorkshire and, within Hull itself, the two constituencies wholly within the city are radically altered into Central and East seats, both stretching from the Humber to the northern edge of the city. We believe instead that the two divisions in the village of Cottingham, which has no major road link with the rest of the Haltemprice wards, should be included in one seat with North Hull, with which it shares its main road links, and that the remainder - including the town of Hessle - should be in a Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle constituency. Under this counter-proposal the existing Hull East constituency would be retained intact and enlarged, compared with only keeping 77.9 per cent of its electors under the initial proposals, Hull North and Cottingham would keep 77.8 per cent compared with 65.9 per cent under the initial proposals, therefore reflecting much greater adherence to existing boundaries. The counter-proposal is set out in Appendix B.

We turn now to North Yorkshire and York. We note that, allowing for adjustment to the new ward boundaries in the City of York and the district of Hambleton, seven of the eight constituencies in North Yorkshire and York could remain unchanged. We do accept obviously that the Scarborough and Whitby constituency has to have additional electors and we support the inclusion of the Filey ward and also the consequent transfer of the Hambleton ward of Great Ayton to Thirsk and Malton constituency, which means that the Scarborough and Whitby constituency would continue to be entirely contained within the Scarborough borough.

We also support the proposed York Central and York Outer constituencies, which have been changed only to accommodate new boundaries. We note, however, that the remaining changes in the county are largely a consequence of the need to include two wards of the district of Selby in seats mainly in West Yorkshire.

Turning to South Yorkshire, we accept the conclusion of the Commission that South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire should be considered as one review area, obviously the Commission's proposals also including the two North Yorkshire wards, with an allocation of 33 seats. In Sheffield, however, we recognise there are very few mutually exclusive combinations of wards wholly within the city which have electorates within five per cent of the electoral quota. Indeed, the Commission has proposed only two. Three of the six seats which are proposed to be in the city include also one ward of either Barnsley or Rotherham, whilst two other Sheffield wards are included in the Rother Valley constituency. Whilst we accept that in a large urban area it is likely that community ties will be complex and there will be

some affinity with all contiguous areas, some of these proposals do appear to be contrived. In particular, the Sheffield Central and West constituency is obviously unsatisfactory, with its awkward connection between the Ecclesall ward and the rest of the seat, and the Commission itself concedes the large land area of the Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge constituency which stretches from the south of the city right up to the boundary with Wakefield. Most anomalously, the wards of Beighton and Mosborough are included in the Rother Valley constituency as it appears the only one where their electorates can be accommodated and despite the fact they have no major road access to the rest of it. The consequence of these changes is that both Rother Valley constituency, which could remain unchanged, and Rotherham are seriously disrupted.

In Doncaster, we recognise the borough can no longer sustain three whole seats and that the existing seats need to be adjusted to accommodate new ward boundaries. The initial proposals significantly, and we believe possibly unnecessarily, amend the Doncaster North and Don Valley constituencies, both of which are renamed. In Barnsley, the borough, which has an entitlement theoretically to just 2.19 constituencies, contains parts of six, only one of which is wholly within the borough.

In West Yorkshire, we note the Commission has encountered many of the same challenges due to the large size of the wards, but we believe that at least some of the proposals here are less disruptive. We do broadly welcome the proposals within the City of Leeds, which maintain the existing pattern of constituencies as far as is possible and retain the Elmet and Rothwell constituency unchanged. The city has a theoretical entitlement to 6.7 seats and there are just eight, of which five are wholly within the city and two in addition to Elmet and Rothwell, Leeds East and Leeds North East, are retained intact.

In Kirklees we also welcome the retention of the Dewsbury constituency with minimum change and the logical inclusion of the Lindley ward, which is part of Huddersfield and in the Huddersfield constituency, and we believe there will be support also for the creation of a Batley and Morley constituency, those two towns being part of the same constituency until 1983.

The Colne Valley constituency is also maintained and we actually agree that the Penistone West constituency does have some ties with it.

In Bradford and Calderdale, however, we believe the Commission's proposals have arguably maximised the disruption, with the Halifax constituency and Calder Valley constituency almost completely recast and the town of Halifax divided. The City of Bradford, with an entitlement to 4.26 constituencies, is divided between seven seats, of which three are wholly within the council area, whilst the actual seats proposed break ties around the centre of the city, with the Wibsey ward included in the Spen constituency, and Royds in Halifax, whilst Tong is included in the Pudsey constituency. All of these proposals are likely to break ties and patently take no account of existing constituencies or local authorities.

So we believe that whilst individual counter-proposals in different areas which are localised and may involve the movement and swapping of different wards may address some of the disruption, the breaking of ties and the disregard of local authority boundaries --- Overall, a significant improvement on these measures may only be achieved were the Commission to consider splitting wards. The Labour Party shares the Commission's concern about the difficulties of adopting this approach and that it should be done only in exceptional and compelling circumstances. We do believe, though, that, if such circumstances apply anywhere, they probably apply in South Yorkshire, and possibly also in West Yorkshire, where the initial proposals have almost had to set aside any concern for the statutory criteria in order to adhere to whole wards and the electoral thresholds.

Whilst the Labour Party itself is not at this stage making any definitive counter-proposals in these counties, we will carefully consider any that has been made by others, including obviously that that has already been made this morning by the Conservative Party, either based on whole wards or split wards. We believe in particular that the City of Sheffield, which has a theoretical entitlement to 5.1 constituencies, is one area where split wards could be considered, especially given that the wards being used by the Commission were actually abolished in May 2016 and that therefore the arguments about inconvenience to local electoral and organisational arrangements do not apply, and the initial proposals themselves are obviously going to cut across the wards which are actually in use for electoral and political organisational purposes. So were any such proposals to be made, and I think we anticipate that some may well be brought forward during this consultation period in different areas, then the Labour Party would consider them and comment on them based on the initial views and our overall context, as set out in this statement.

Details of all constituencies where the Labour Party makes an alternative proposal are set out in the appendices. We will make a more detailed, written, representation before 5 December. We reserve our position and will comment on all those proposals that may be made by others during the secondary consultation period.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Either we are due for a break or Greg has got his point across as he would want to. Thank you very much indeed. The time is about 11.20 am. We will just have a leg stretch, or what have you, and we will be back at 11.45 am everybody, please, and then we will ask the Lib Dems to do their presentation. Commission staff will be staying in this room during the break and so you are very welcome to stay or go. I will start again at 11.45 am.

Time noted: 11.20 am

After a short break

Time noted: 11.50 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much everybody. We are resuming the hearing in Leeds. We have had representations from three political parties: the Conservatives, the Greens and the Labour Party. Liberal Democrats? I think it is Jeanette Sunderland. As I mentioned earlier to previous presenters, half an hour or thereabouts. There is a clock at the front. I will give you a reminder at 25 minutes if you are still going. When you are ready, announce yourself.

MS SUNDERLAND (Liberal Democrats): Thank you very much. My name is Jeanette Sunderland. I am a volunteer member of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional executive for the Liberal Democrats and I am an elected representative in Idle and Thackley ward. First of all, I would like to just welcome you to Yorkshire and the Humber. I do not know if you are from around here and whether or not you are celebrating the announcement yesterday of the World Cycling Championships coming to Leeds. Some of us are still a little hung over from that announcement! Anyway, thank you very much for the opportunity to present the Yorkshire and Humber Liberal Democrats response to the initial proposals for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries in Yorkshire and the Humber. You will probably be pleased to hear that the Liberal Democrats broadly agree with the Commission's approach within the constraints of the review. Notwithstanding any political position that the Liberal Democrats individually or collectively might like to take on the legislation, we are commenting on the proposals that are before us today.

We are content with the reduction in the number of constituencies from 54 to 50. We are content with the proposal to allocate the county and local authority areas into the two sub regions of Humberside with nine constituencies and North West and South Yorkshire with 41 constituencies. We agree with the presumption of keeping wards whole and intact. However, we welcome the opportunity to explain for one ward in South Yorkshire why we feel there are exceptional circumstances to justify the splitting of a single ward. We welcome the opportunity to raise evidence where we believe the Commission's initial proposals can be improved upon. We are broadly content with the proposals, as I shall outline in this presentation, and have identified three areas which we will offer for amendment. These involve three constituencies in West Yorkshire and three in South Yorkshire and a further two in Calderdale. We will also make specific comment in support of proposals to give balance to our submission.

Starting in Humberside, the proposals for the sub region, which uses the historic county and a combination of the four unitary authorities, is a sensible solution which we are happy to support.

Can I just ask a question? Can you not do that unless people in the audience really want it? It is actually really quite distracting. Unless people in the audience desperately want to see the map being juggled about all over the place ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Some people like having that map to illustrate where they are and some do not. If you are happy to operate without it, we will turn it off unless you ask ---

MS SUNDERLAND: I am happy to operate without it because I can just see it out the corner of my eye jiggling away.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will stop the jiggling!

MS SUNDERLAND: Thank you very much indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If anybody needs clarification, we can always put the map up so you can see the boundaries at any point. We will just leave it like that for the time being.

MS SUNDERLAND: Thank you very much. So back to Humberside, we particularly welcome the inclusion of the wards from the East Riding of Yorkshire with Kingston upon Hull and Haltemprice constituency that look to the city for amenities, employment and other services. We are satisfied with the justification that we will see a North/South divide that splits Grimsby south of the area given the nature of the conurbation between Grimsby and Cleethorpes. We are satisfied that other constituencies in Humberside maintain good community links within the constraints of the review.

I turn now to North, South and West Yorkshire. Generally, we are happy that these proposals better reflect many of the existing community links. Although the other-constraints of the review have led to compromises, we are happy to support the Commission's choice to limit cross-authority seats. We also support the preservation of the local authority boundaries on the North and West Yorkshire boundaries at the Bradford and Leeds border, where larger wards led to much unnecessary change in the abortive 2013 review.

Turning now to North Yorkshire, we support the Commission's proposals for the seats that make up the historic county of North Yorkshire. We are happy to see that the constituencies around the Leeds and Bradford Metropolitan area have not been put together with parts of North Yorkshire. We accept that the Selby, Castleford and Pontefract area is best placed to cross the boundary as geographic and community links are better able to facilitate this approach. We similarly welcome the Commission's proposal to retain the urban and suburban wards between Harrogate and the Knaresborough constituency, placing the more rural wards to the east into a constituency of similar wards in the new constituency of Selby and Ainsty. We welcome the minor changes to the constituencies of Thirsk and Malton, Richmond and Scarborough and Whitby to bring these constituencies in line with legislation rather than an unnecessary redesign. We also support the retention of York Central and York Outer constituencies in their current form.

I turn now to West Yorkshire. As part of the 2013 boundary review we suggested major changes to the then proposals for West Yorkshire as we felt there was an unnecessary number of constituencies with broken historic community ties, particularly around Leeds and Bradford. The 2013 proposals gave the appearance of being constructed simply out of what was left over. The 2018 proposals offer the potential for improved representation for residents in many areas. We are happy to see that the Commission has this time proposed changes that better reflect these historic ties. We have, however, looked to amend the proposals in Bradford and Calderdale to enhance community ties in Calderdale and to better align the geographic, economic and community ties in Bradford.

In Bradford, we hope to persuade you to give the settlement of Bradford a single voice. Historically, Bradford has had three constituencies that met in the centre of the settlement of Bradford. This has presented the City of Bradford with a difficulty in promoting itself with a single coherent voice at Westminster. In our opinion, the removal of one constituency from the city presents the Commission with a unique opportunity to correct this problem and enable the City of Bradford to have more coherence, which is vital to its economic regeneration plans.

We have taken as the basis for our proposals the creation of a new Bradford Central constituency which takes as its starting point the centre of the main settlement of Bradford and, taking into account the criteria set by the review, builds out from the centre of the city as follows.

First, to amend the Bradford West constituency to bring together all the urban wards at the centre of the city. This constituency will be at the lower end of the quota which is useful in an area historically low in voter registration.

The new constituency of Bradford Central would comprise the Manningham, Bowling and Barkerend and Little Horton wards from the proposed Bradford East constituency, together with the Great Horton, City, Heaton and Toller wards from the proposed Bradford West constituency.

This would require the amendment of the Bradford East constituency proposal to create a new Bradford North and Shipley constituency, bringing back together much of the historic Bradford North constituency which existed up to the general election of 2010 whilst maintaining the historic links between Shipley, Baildon and Saltaire. This amendment brings the largely suburban areas of North and East Bradford within one constituency and builds on the existing transport, community and cultural links across the area. This constituency will also reflect the aspirations of the Bradford Local Development Plan which promotes growth down the Airedale corridor.

The revised constituency of Bradford North and Shipley comprises Bolton and Undercliffe, Eccleshill, Idle and Thackley and Bradford Moor wards from the Bradford East constituency, together with Baildon, Shipley and Windhill and Wrose wards from the Shipley constituency.

This would require the amendment of the proposed Shipley constituency to create an Airedale and Queensbury constituency which would bring together in one constituency many of the small towns and villages which are often overshadowed by their big city neighbours of Leeds and Bradford. We have argued previously that the Guiseley and Rawdon ward has good geographic links and similarities with the more rural Bingley and Bingley Rural wards that form a corridor between Bradford and Keighley. Thornton and Allerton, Clayton and Fairweather Green and Queensbury wards are similar in nature and exist outside the urban centre of Bradford in their own right. At the higher end of the quota, the wards within the new Airedale and Queensbury have traditionally higher rates of voter registration.

These proposals give the City of Bradford three constituencies that are at their hearts different. It gives the Westminster parliamentarians the opportunity to focus on the collective challenges faced by those living in urban Bradford Central, suburban Bradford North and Shipley or the small towns and villages to be found in the Airedale and Queensbury constituency. Most importantly, it gives the main settlement of Bradford the opportunity for a single coherent voice to support its regeneration effort. We are not proposing any amendments to the proposed Keighley, Pudsey and Spen seats, which include wards from within Bradford.

I now turn to Calderdale where we seek to recommend a small amendment to the two proposed constituencies within Calderdale. We are mainly content with the East/West split in Calderdale. However, we believe historic community and geographical links will be much better served by the following amendments:

- The inclusion of Elland ward in the Calder Valley constituency, restoring its links to Greetland and Stainland, which from 1937 to 1974 were part of the same district council and share many common interests, community connections and links which do not exist between Elland and Brighouse.
- The inclusion of Illingworth and Mixenden ward in the Halifax constituency will better reflect the existing community links between Illingworth, Mixenden, Wheatley, Ovenden and Holmefield. Transport, community and social links between these wards and the rest of the Calder Valley constituency are poor compared to those of the proposed Halifax seat as it has always looked south to Halifax.
- We would ask the Commission to consider an alternative name for these constituencies. The Calder Valley seat has lost over half of the Calder Valley and the Halifax seat now contains Brighouse, Rastrick, Hipperholme and Lightcliffe areas, all of which where many local residents are proud not to be Haligonians, which apparently is something to do with being part of Halifax. Conversely, many West Halifax residents would still like to see their constituency retain their Halifax name. We suggest that the Calder Valley constituency should be renamed Halifax West and Calder Valley and the Halifax constituency renamed Halifax East and Brighouse, although we would be happy to support other alternative names if consensus can be reached through the consultation process.

Turning now to Leeds, the last boundary review between Leeds, Bradford and North Yorkshire caused lots of debate between the parties and confusion for many residents. This time around we are happy to see that the review has taken a different approach. We welcome the proposed constituencies within Leeds. In particular, we welcome the Commission's work to reflect the historic community and geographic ties.

Turning first to Leeds North West, we are pleased to see the artificial divide between Horsforth, Cookridge and Tinshill has been removed by the inclusion of the Horsforth ward. Residents in these areas look to Horsforth for a variety of business, transport and various amenities including schooling, retail, and, prior to these proposals, a rail station with platforms in two different constituencies. We also welcome the addition of Kirkstall ward to the constituency, removing the artificial division in the strong community in the West Park area between Weetwood and Kirkstall. It also provides for a strong western boundary along the River Aire and Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

We support the Commission's view that the 125-year-old link between Otley and the village of Pool-in-Wharfedale should be maintained. By linking Adel and Wharfedale ward with Otley, Pool and the other villages remain linked to Otley, which provides many services and amenities to those communities.

The new Leeds North West constituency retains strong transport links across the constituency and, through the rail line and the A660, a strong link to the city centre is maintained. These changes have created a Leeds North West constituency that better reflects the north west of the city.

At this point I would like to make a comment on cross-boundary constituencies in Leeds. Given the constraints of the quotas, we welcome the Commission's decision to identify Guiseley and Rawdon as the best candidate to form a cross-boundary constituency with wards in Bradford. From a geographical perspective it makes much sense and the communities of Menston in Bradford and Guiseley in Leeds are contiguous.

The new Pudsey constituency better links constituencies to the west of Leeds and the revised geography provides a better shape and improved community links given the contiguous nature of Pudsey, Stanningley and Bramley. Given the quota constraints, the inclusion of Tong ward from Bradford is a good fit with Pudsey ward due to their shared boundary through the extensive Fulneck Valley and the previously divided community of Tyersal.

The proposed constituencies in Leeds Central, Leeds East and Leeds North East all achieve bringing together connected communities. We again welcome these proposals. We also welcome the retention of Elmet and Rothwell constituency in its current form.

Looking towards Kirkstall and Wakefield, we have found that, given the limited cross-boundary changes within Leeds, Bradford and Calderdale, this has necessitated more alterations within Kirklees and Wakefield. We broadly accept this outcome as the lesser nature of many of the wards south of Bradford and Leeds cities allow greater latitude to build seats to meet geographic and community links.

We are not proposing any more amendments at this point to these seats, although we would like to make the following comments:

- We welcome the preservation of the Dewsbury constituency.
- We welcome the new Colne Valley constituency as it retains a constituency that represents and gives voice to the Pennine areas of Colne and Holme Valleys alongside Penistone West. These communities have quite distinct geographic and agricultural factors that are best served by a single Westminster parliamentary voice.
- We support the Huddersfield constituency retaining focus on the town which it takes its name from.

Finally, looking towards South Yorkshire, the Commission has highlighted the constraints of the large wards in Sheffield. Combined with its location in the south-west corner of the region, the proposals for Sheffield, in our view, push the limits of the aim to retain whole wards beyond any reasonable reflection of community links, local ties and geographic constraints. We note that, following the cut-off point for this review, new ward boundaries were created for Sheffield. It is a shame that we are not building city constituencies on these new boundaries. Whilst we understand the desire not to split wards, this is effectively irrelevant in Sheffield as the ward boundaries have already been changed. The ward boundaries will not marry up with the constituency boundaries even if wards are not split. It is better to split one ward and get the community interest right at this time than to stick to ward boundaries that do not exist. As a result, we feel it is necessary to suggest the breaking of a ward within the city: Fulford. By making this alteration, we have been able to better reflect the geographic and local links within the city. An additional benefit of this amendment has prevented the ripple effect of further amendments across the region.

Our proposals are to amend three constituencies in Sheffield and are as follows. We amend the Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge seat to remove Beauchief and Greenhill and replace it with Ecclesall. Ecclesall, Dore and Totley and Fulwood have many cross-community economic and geographic links, for example the Abbeydale Sports Club serves all three communities. The two main roads through Ecclesall, Ecclesall Road South and Abbeydale Road South, link the communities of Dore and Totley and Fulwood. The exclusion of the Ecclesall ward also separates at least one place of worship from the community it serves, i.e. St William's Catholic Church on Ecclesall Road, which serves across parts of the Ecclesall and Fulwood wards. The three wards, Dore and Totley, Fulwood and Ecclesall, have been in the same constituency for many years and there is a

longstanding boundary created by the main railway line to London running along the Sheaf River Valley. Retaining a constituency link between these wards alongside Stannington allows for almost 70 per cent of the former Hallam seat to be retained.

In order for this seat to fall within the quota limits, at least one polling district in Fulwood ward needs to be placed into the Sheffield Central seat. We are proposing the movement of two polling districts, NB and NC, and these are the two eastern polling districts. These polling districts predominantly comprise large student villages owned by Sheffield University which house the majority of the university's first-year students, with the rest being housed in City and Broomhill wards. We believe that these students will be better served if they are within a seat that contains the vast majority of the city's student population, particularly with Crookes ward also moving from Hallam into the new Central constituency as this ward is also a popular residential area for second- and third-year University of Sheffield students. The BBEST Neighbourhood Development Plan area which covers Broomhill ward also includes the two polling districts we are suggesting moving into the Central constituency. We believe that the restored community links, geographic improvements and the large proportion of the existing seat retained outweigh the arguments to retain the compromised ward-based solution that you are proposing.

In the Sheffield Central and West seat we would replace the Ecclesall ward with Nether Edge ward from the proposed Sheffield South. In the recent ward boundary review carried out by LGBCE, Broomhill and Nether Edge ward have been renamed Broomhill and Sharrow Vale and Nether Edge and Sharrow, reflecting the Sharrow and Sharrow Vale area which is split between those two wards. There are strong community links between Broomhill and Nether Edge wards brought together in the Sharrow and Sharrow Vale areas, for example community events such as Sharrow Vale Market. It will also have the NB and NC polling districts to take the seat within the quota. This change will result in a seat that holds over 75 per cent of the former Sheffield Central seat.

These amendments also improve the geography of the Central and South seats, removing the narrow link through Endcliffe Park between the north and south of the proposed Central and West seat and bringing back Nether Edge into Central, which has been placed in Sheffield South, a seat made up of wards that are also in the south-east of the main rail line that runs from Sheffield to London.

This leaves Sheffield South, where we propose to amend it by replacing the Nether Edge ward we moved to Sheffield Central with Beauchief and Greenhill ward from the Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge seat. Like the two previous amendments, this change will restore almost 70 per cent of the former Sheffield Heeley seat, not to mention much improved community and geographic links.

Beauchief and Greenhill ward sits naturally with Graves Park ward. As Sheffield's largest park, Graves Park is utilised by both communities. There are many council and community services that operate across the S8 postcode, such as the

community publication Active8 and the popular local shopping centres of Woodseats and Meadowhall which are used by residents of both wards.

Finally, we would suggest that as a result of these changes the Commission could consider retaining the Sheffield Heeley and Sheffield Central constituency names.

We are not proposing any further changes at this point. We will clearly listen to the submissions of others and where we find suggestions to reduce the changes to seats or improve community and geographic links we will consider reflecting them in our final Party submission. Thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Jeanette. Are there any questions from anybody on points of clarification from that commentary? (None). Jeanette, thank you very much indeed.

MS SUNDERLAND: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the submissions from the political parties. If you were not aware, at the lead hearing here in Leeds we have the opportunity for each of the political parties to make a longer submission than that made by individuals and that is now concluded. I want to thank all of the political parties for taking the care and the time to put together a huge amount of information that Collette Rawnsley and I will have to consider now as part of our reflections on the extent and whether to change the initial proposals put together by the Boundary Commission. Thank you very much indeed for that. We have some other speakers booked at 1.00 pm, but I think there is a gentleman in the audience who wants to make a contribution this morning. Is it Naweed Choudhary?

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So in the next part of the hearings we will now begin to take comments and views from individual members of the public. Naweed Choudhary was booked a little bit later on, but he is in the audience this morning and so we have invited him to come up and make his comments now. Naweed, in your own time - you are on video, but that is okay, just ignore that - for the purposes of the video, if you could shout out what your name is and what your address is so that people know where you are from, and then I will give you up to about ten minutes, if that is okay, for you to make your point.

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: That's fine. Thank you. I really appreciate that you've given me time this morning. Obviously due to my work being this afternoon I could not attend, so for that reason I really appreciate that you've given me this time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are very welcome.

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: My name is Naweed. I'm from Bradford South - a local resident. My address is 4 Henna Close BD7 4AJ. To make a point, you don't have to move the map around, but I don't have no problem if you do want to move it around and stuff.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We can move the map around, Naweed, to help you if that helps. We can put a constituency up if you want us to.

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: By all means you can put the constituency on there. I have no problem with that.

I'm a proud resident of Bradford. I live in Great Horton, which is in the Royds ward. As a proud Bradfordian I'm shocked to find that I'm going to be living in the Halifax constituency. Royds ward is completely Bradford - from the Wibsey area of Royds to Buttershaw Estate and my area of Great Horton. I go to Bradford city centre. I go to Buttershaw. I go to Wibsey where I regularly use the swimming pool at the Richard Dunn, which is in the Wibsey ward, where I also go shopping and socialise. I go to pray in a mosque which is in Great Horton, where I live. The mosque is in the Great Horton ward and I live in the part of Great Horton that is in Royds ward. My niece went to the Short Circuit Nursery, Hollingwood School. That is also in Great Horton ward. It's clear that I have no link with the Halifax constituency.

I also feel the Wibsey link with Spen is non-existent. I know people who live in Wibsey ward. They can walk from their home to the city centre. I'm almost certain that they would not consider walking to Cleckheaton, Birstall or Heckmondwike. It is staggering that there is even a proposal to move Wibsey into the Spen constituency. There is seemingly no reason for linking Wibsey with Cleckheaton apart from the fact that Wibsey enables the proposed constituency to fall in the prescribed size of constituency, which is a number game. Wibsey as a settlement is spread across three wards: Royds, Wibsey and Great Horton. On the current proposal there will be three different MPs across those three wards: Wibsey into Spen constituency, Royds into Halifax, Great Horton into Bradford West.

I am here to speak about the proposals and how they are going to be affecting me. I thought to myself that I was going to be living in Bradford, but with the new proposals I'm going to be living in Halifax. This presents many people with transport issues as well as identity issues. It is almost impossible to untangle the communities of Royds, Wibsey and Great Horton, yet there will be three different MPs. To me, it seems obvious that you must keep these wards together, but I know that you may need to move a ward into Halifax.

None of these wards I have discussed has any link with Halifax, but there is a ward in Bradford South that does have a link with Halifax. I know that people living in the village of Queensbury have an affinity with Calderdale. I can say that, although I live very close to it, I can't remember the last time I actually visited it. I have no community links whatsoever with Queensbury. It is a very nice place, I am told, but

I feel that Queensbury village and what lies beyond has weaker links with Bradford, Royds and Calderdale ---

Bradford gets bad press often and a very poor deal. People don't seem to understand the dynamics and the feeling of the city. Bradford is a city on a turning point. It could either soar or it could fall apart. To do well, we need to be "feel good" about ourselves. We need to be properly representative. We don't want a key part of our city, like Royds, left isolated in an area where [inaudible] and does not understand Bradford. We want to work with a representative that is dedicated to Bradford, believes in Bradford and, importantly, believes in the potential that Bradford has as a growing city in the UK.

It is impossible to untangle the communities of Royds, Wibsey and Great Horton and so I am pleading that I have, or we have, one MP rather than having three different MPs representing us. As a resident of Bradford, I am pleading and urging you to find a way to keep all of Bradford together and not split the communities of Great Horton, Royds and Wibsey, where I live and socialise day in, day out. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Naweed, thank you very much. That was terrific.

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: You're welcome.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any questions from anybody for clarification on what Naweed has just said? (None). In which case can I just say, Naweed, a huge thank you for coming across from Bradford to Leeds today. I hope we have not got in the way of your work.

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: No, it's fine. Other people wanted to come today as well. The reason they could not come was because of their work and due to having short notice. What I can say on behalf of the residents of Bradford South is they are actually frustrated. It's very difficult for them in terms of boundary changes. It is. So all I can say now is it speaks for itself.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The message that you need to take back is that the proposals are initial proposals. The whole point of you coming over today is so that the Assistant Commissioners, Collette Rawnsley and myself, can listen to what local people have to say and take that into account when we recommend back to the Commission whether those proposals should stay or whether they should change. Thank you very much indeed.

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY: You are welcome.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have just been helped with some administration from Sam. Cllr Jordan, I believe you are here, but you are not due to

go on until 1.00 pm. If you are in a position to go now, I would invite you to come forward. I believe it is Cllr Mike Jordan?

CLLR JORDAN: It is. For Selby and Ainsty ward.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. You have introduced yourself perfectly for the video. I will give you about ten minutes, if that is okay.

CLLR JORDAN: That's great. Thank you. I won't need ten minutes, but thank you for allowing me to speak. Yes, Cllr Mike Jordan. I live in the Selby and Ainsty ward. My MP is a good friend, Nigel Adams, the Conservative MP there. It is a bit of déjà vu for me because I spoke the last time around when you were discussing putting Selby in with Castleford. Thankfully you haven't gone to those extremes this time, so I am kind of grateful for that.

My thought on all this is that actually you don't need to change the Selby and Ainsty ward. I believe it should remain unchanged as per the Conservative Party's revised proposal. The tweaking around the edges across the river and a major road does not help because the people in Fairburn, one of the villages affected, have little in common with Castleford and Outwood.

More importantly, I also believe, though it is not my patch, that the ward next door doesn't need to change. The five towns of Pontefract, Castleford, Featherstone, Knottingley and Normanton should remain as one. I believe splitting Pontefract and Castleford up won't work. It works as it is now. It is really only when you get further into the heart of West Yorkshire, where things are very much closer together - because you can see from the map that that is when it starts getting closer together - that major changes should be instigated, as it were. The simple fact of the matter is there are the local papers of Pont & Cas, everybody reads it, the local transport infrastructure is there around Pontefract and Castleford and the people work in that way around that area and work together and socialise together at Link. At the heart of that is Xscape at Castleford, at the Glasshoughton site, and everybody around goes there. That is a major outlet for a lot of people to go, both to socialise and to shop. If you want to shop until you drop, that is the place to go.

I believe as a consequence that you should leave the Selby and Ainsty ward and the Pontefract, Castleford and Normanton ward as they are, which is the Conservative proposal. That's all I wish to say. Thank you very much for that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Councillor. Any questions of clarification on that? (None). Cllr Jordan, thank you very much for taking the time to come across this morning.

CLLR JORDAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, it is about 12.20 pm. I have another speaker booked at 1.00 pm. There is an opportunity -- if there is anybody here who is not booked in who would like to make a point at all, we can take that now. If you are not all going to rush at once, we will adjourn for half an hour or so and I will be back here at 12.55 pm ready to take the next speaker. (After conferring with the Secretary) We have heard Mike Jordan at 1.00 pm and so I will be here at 1.05 pm, to start again at 1.10 pm.

Time noted: 12.20 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 1.05 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I said we would reconvene just after 1.00 pm. There are one or two new members in the room. Just by way of recap, we have heard from the political parties this morning and one or two individuals made some representations. You will recall that I said we had a few people booked in certain timeslots just before lunch. The next booking is at 1.10 pm and for Karen Evans. Karen? Karen, you were not here this morning. Do you want to come forward for us?

MRS EVANS: Do I have to come to the front?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you are comfortable doing that, that would be great. Are you happy standing at the lectern?

MRS EVANS: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Karen, we are videoing all of the proceedings. You are on camera now.

MRS EVANS: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you just talk normally, when you are ready to, in the microphone, we will pick up everything that is going on.

MRS EVANS: Is it okay to refer to my notes?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Absolutely. Yes, you can refer to whatever notes you like.

MRS EVANS: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have been booked for about ten minutes, so if that is enough for you, in your own time, when you are ready, could

you start by saying what your name is and what your address is and then carry on with what you want to tell us?

MRS EVANS: Okay. My name is Karen Evans and I'm a resident at 3 Garthwood Close, Bierley, Bradford.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MRS EVANS: Shall I start?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please do.

MRS EVANS: Sorry. I'm a little nervous.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is all right. Just take all the time you need.

MRS EVANS: So the reason I wanted to come today was because really I love South Bradford. I live in Bierley, I grew up in Woodside, I went to school in Buttershaw and I go to a church in Low Moor, so I have a number of emotional ties, memories and friendships from all over South Bradford. I identify myself as a Bradfordian and I'm proud to be from South Bradford. My mum still lives in the house I grew up in as a child in Woodside. My late dad, who was the vice chair of the Korean Veterans Association in South Bradford, used to sell poppies in the local Tesco's on Halifax Road - we lived next door to a lady who was the deputy manager - so they all knew him there. It's those sorts of links and connections that are important to communities.

I actually lived in Horsforth in Pudsey ward for some time but I chose to move back to Bradford because I felt homesick. However, I continued working there and it was a 20-minute drive or a two-bus-ride journey which would take at least an hour and a half. There wasn't a direct bus route that went from South Bradford to the part of Leeds where I lived. That makes me concerned that if there was a Pudsey MP who was based in that area it would be difficult for some constituents to access.

Bradford is a growing city. My understanding of the proposals is that they're based on non-current electoral data, which again could be disenfranchising for the newly-registered constituents and also young people who are aged 18 or who will have achieved their 18th birthday by the time the proposal could come into effect. Bradford is not perfect though. It does have some socioeconomic issues. I would say that we need more MPs, not fewer, in Bradford. We certainly need the local focus of a locally-based MP to improve our city and our communities. If you compare many of the socioeconomic markers with the areas that we're proposing to be linked to then, without wishing to denigrate Bradford, we are disadvantaged in comparison, and that again makes me concerned that we would need a locally-based MP. We do also have some key employers with HQs based in

South Bradford - Odsal Stadium, BASF, Yorkshire Water, et cetera - and there is the ROA development, which is the key business area of the city, and it is vital that that should be represented by a single and dedicated MP.

Finally, and I'll say it carefully, there is a feeling amongst Bradfordians sometimes that perhaps we are treated a little bit second class to Leeds in particular, again not wishing to denigrate Leeds at all, which is a great city, but it cannot be emphasised enough how terrible this message will appear. It will inevitably be perceived as "Oh, yet again Bradford loses out and we're being disadvantaged to the advantage of Leeds", effectively wiping out representation for the whole of Bradford South, and tacking us on to constituencies with which we have no geographical or cultural connection is only bound to be viewed in that way. That will do no good for Bradford South. That's it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Karen, thank you very much indeed. Once people have said what they want to say, I have been asking that lot out there if they have any clarification they want to make. Does anybody have any questions they would like to ask Karen about what she has said? (None). Okay. Karen, that is fine. Thank you very much for coming along. The whole point of today is to hear from local people about what you think about these proposals. The fact that you have taken the time to come along is very important, which means that my other Assistant Commissioner, Collette Rawnsley, and myself can think about what you have said and if we need to make some second proposals then we will do. Thank you very much.

MRS EVANS: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Folks, we do have another speaker booked in within the next five minutes or so. We will give them a few minutes to see if they arrive and carry on accordingly. I am not technically adjourning; I am just going to shut up for five minutes! (After a pause) Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your patience. We have the last presenter for the morning. Ms Nissen, is it?

MS NISSEN: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So when you are ready, if you would like to come forward to the lectern so we can hear what you have to say. Sorry for catching you straight as you have walked into the room. I know you have not had the opportunity to be with us during the morning, but we have heard from all the main political parties and we have now started going through individuals. We knew you were booked in for 1.20 pm and so we were --- Thank you very much for coming along on time.

MS NISSEN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: When you are ready, about ten minutes, no more, otherwise I will remind you.

MS NISSEN: Yes, sure.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are being videoed. So if you could give your name and address for the record and then let us know what you have to say.

MS NISSEN: Okay. Thank you very much. My name is Gudrun Nissen. I live on the Holme Wood Estate - in the Tong ward - at 25 Holmefield View. I'm just here to speak from a personal experience as far as the boundary changes are concerned. So basically I was quite shocked really to find out that Bradford South is to be torn apart into lots of different shreds, part of it to go with Halifax, part of it with Spen and part with Leeds. I just want to say that I can't really see any natural affinity of the Tong ward with Leeds. I'm lucky enough to be driving, but I can't see how residents from the Holme Wood Estate, who are usually quite underprivileged, would get to Leeds, to surgeries which are likely to take place in Pudsey or Armley for the Tong ward. I can see that as a major problem for the people living on my estate.

Also, I would say that there's not really an identity of the people on the Holme Wood Estate with Leeds. They wouldn't really identify with Leeds. Bradford is kind of quite underprivileged already, in my opinion, and is always less well off than Leeds, so to tear the south of Bradford into pieces really is only going to make that worse in my opinion. From what it looks like, the M606 will be divided into pieces really, so the Euroway Industrial Estate would be partly belonging to Leeds, partly to Spen, but wouldn't really be represented as a Bradford entity. If there's any hope of regenerating Bradford and turning it into a nicer and better place for people than it is currently --- I think that's going to make it even harder, even more difficult, to do anything positive for Bradford. At this time cities are really encouraged to pull together. More and more cities are getting their own mayors and are becoming whole unities/entities - Liverpool, Manchester, et cetera. It seems to be that Bradford is going the opposite way, that Bradford is being encouraged to file into bits and just become an afterthought to other constituencies.

So really if there is to be an MP for Pudsey I can only see the Tong ward as being an afterthought. I cannot see how an MP would develop the same strong bonds and liaisons and connections with the Bradford city and council as they would have with Leeds and Pudsey. Tong, particularly the Holme Wood Estate, has very specific issues around poverty, crime, littering, et cetera and it does need the full attention of an MP focused on the Tong ward. I believe life on the Holme Wood Estate is just going to go from bad to worse if that area is to be a tag-on to a Leeds MP rather than part of Bradford as an entity. I think that's everything I wanted to say really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ms Nissen, thank you very much for that. What we have done after everybody has had the chance to talk is just check with anybody out there to see if there is any clarification they need from you about

what you have said. Are there any questions at all? (None). In which case, thank you very much indeed for taking the time to come across from Bradford. It is good to hear from you.

MS NISSEN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the morning session. We were previously scheduled to break for lunch until 2.30 pm. We have somebody else booked in at 2.30 pm and so I will reconvene just before then. During the lunchtime session this room will be closed. You are very welcome to leave material in here, but it will be closed and we will not be opening it again until just before 2.30 pm. Thank you very much.

Time noted: 1.19 pm

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to day one of the hearing in Leeds to hear your views on the proposals for the Yorkshire and Humber region. For those of you who were here before lunch you will recall that we had another booking at 2.30pm. It is now 2.30pm and we have another gentleman who is in a position to go on straight after that. So, we will take those two and then we will see if there is anyone else who wants to go, after which we will have a think about how we will manage the rest of the afternoon. So without further ado can I invite John Grogan, I think yourself and a colleague want to come and say something. Gentleman, I think you were here this morning and heard the preamble so I don't need to rehearse that again. So really it is a question of if you can give your name and address for the purposes of the video and your ten minutes or so can start.

MR GROGAN: Good afternoon. My name is John Grogan. I'm a resident of Burley-in-Wharfedale. I've given the full address signed in --- Is that okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is. Could you give it for the ---?

MR GROGAN: My full address is Castlerea, Bradford Road, Burley-in-Wharfedale LS29 7QR.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR NEEDHAM: I'm Frank Needham. I'm the treasurer of Shipley Constituency Labour Party. My address is 45 Ferncliffe Road, Bingley BD16 4PN.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, gents.

MR GROGAN: I am also a member of Shipley Labour Party. The proposals we'll be laying before you follow a meeting of Shipley Labour Party last Friday evening. Incidentally, I was also the Member of Parliament for Selby for 13 years until I retired in 2010 and was the unsuccessful candidate for the Labour Party in Keighley in the parliamentary elections last year.

Just before I come on to the main proposals, just in a personal capacity, having heard some of the evidence this morning, just reflecting on the Selby situation and the Boundary Commission's proposals regarding Selby, I think there was some merit, given the very difficult choices that the Boundary Commission has to make given the numbers, in the two wards that were chosen to go in with West Yorkshire constituencies: Whitley and Byram and Brotherton. Both of these do have strong affinities with West Yorkshire. They have educational links. Many of the youngsters go to college in West Yorkshire rather than in North Yorkshire. People look to the West Yorkshire hospitals, particularly at Pontefract. Byram and Brotherton are very much Rugby League villages looking into West Yorkshire, rather than Selby, which is more of a Rugby Union team. So culturally there is, I think, a lot to be said, and transport as well, economically --- If you have to have some wards from North Yorkshire in West Yorkshire then those two would fit, I think, probably better than any other. I know from many years representing constituents in those two wards that people do feel on the fringe of the North Yorkshire "empire", so to speak.

Moving on then to our specific proposals, we do respect the Boundary Commission's wish not to divide wards. We think in terms of public understanding and comprehension of the proposals it is really best to try to stick to that if at all possible. We are laying before you one definitive proposal which involves Keighley and Shipley and involves a reconfiguration of the wards in those two constituencies that the Boundary Commission has proposed and then we are also - and this is when I'll hand over to Frank - tabling two possible alternatives looking at the wider Bradford area if the Commission was minded to deal with some of the issues that were raised about Wibsey this morning and indeed, looking at the Labour Party's national presentation, in point 9.5 when they talk about Wibsey and Tong. We are tabling two possible scenarios if the Commission was minded to try to deal with those sorts of issues that it could take up and others could comment upon.

Quickly moving on then to our proposals for Keighley and Shipley, we propose two new constituencies. Slightly changing the configuration of wards, we propose a constituency of Keighley and Shipley, which would be the three Keighley wards, Worth Valley, Bingley Rural, Shipley, Windhill and Wrose. We propose a new constituency of Airedale and Wharfedale, taking the name from the two railway lines that link many of the places in the constituency. That would be Baildon, Bingley, Wharfedale, Ilkley, Craven and Guiseley and Rawdon.

What are the reasons that we take from this? I think it was an interesting debate that was started this morning about the name of the constituency that the Boundary Commission is proposing itself. There were suggestions, I think from both

the Conservative Party and the Green Party, that it be called Keighley and Ilkley. I would not dispute that that would be a good thing if the constituency were left as it is, but it points to a problem really. Even though the constituency has existed for 20 years, there are very, very few community links between Keighley and Ilkley. There is obviously a big moor in between and it is not for nothing that there is a very famous song, Ilkla Moor Baht 'at ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I assume you are not going to sing it.

MR GROGAN: I could do - I could get to the third verse - but I will not under your instruction! Not very many organisations other than political parties organise across Keighley and Ilkley. I notice that both the current Shipley MP and Keighley MP have indeed spoken about creating a Keighley and Shipley Council as an alternative to Bradford, so clearly there is widespread recognition of the links there. The planning panel from Bradford Council links Keighley and Shipley.

Keighley and Shipley, our new proposed constituency, would be a mixture of urban and rural, as the current one is, but I think it would be a better fit for all sorts of economic, transport, environmental and cultural links, which we will fill out in subsequent correspondence. I think just to hone in on Bingley Rural ward, which would be a bridge between Keighley and Shipley, it is worth noting that the Boundary Commission in previous inquiries has, if I may say, flirted with the idea of putting Bingley Rural in with Keighley. Many of the villages that make up Bingley Rural - Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme, probably all the villages other than Cottingley - actually look in terms of transport and education and the economy as much to Keighley, if not more so, than they do to Bingley. Indeed, the Keighley News newspaper is full of news from those villages. So we think that Bingley Rural is a nice bridge between Keighley and Shipley. You would create a constituency there that could speak for those two proud Yorkshire towns somewhat outside the centre of Bradford and the villages around them which have a common identity.

Then moving rapidly on to the area where I live now, Shipley Labour Party supports the idea of putting Wharfedale and Oakley together, but why not go further than that? There are much stronger links between those two places and Guiseley and Rawdon than there are with Keighley. All six wards that we suggest go into this new constituency, I think, have a common identity in that they are more towards the edge of Bradford and Leeds, more rural areas, and many of the issues of planning and transport and the environment that they face are common.

As I say, we will follow it up further in correspondence, but just to conclude the case for these two new constituencies of Keighley and Shipley and Airedale and Wharfedale, it would create areas where they could have a common voice in both cases to advocate both the interests of those two towns and the surrounding villages of Keighley and Shipley and then the more rural Airedale and Wharfedale. I will now hand over to Frank just to comment on the other proposals, which are not definitive

but which we are putting on the table to try to promote the debate in the wider Bradford area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Grogan. Frank, I am sorry, I missed your surname.

MR NEEDHAM: Frank Needham.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MR NEEDHAM: As John has explained, these proposals for Bradford are not definitive proposals. They haven't been discussed with the Constituency Labour Parties, although we have had discussions with individuals.

The proposal for Keighley and Shipley stands in its own right and it does not actually affect the proposal for Bradford. The concern we have about Bradford South, in particular, is that the three wards which are focused on Wibsey - Wibsey, Royds and Great Horton - are divided between three constituencies: Wibsey into Spennings, Royds into Halifax and Great Horton into Bradford West. Our proposal is that those three wards should be kept together in the new Bradford West constituency. Royds itself has no community affinity with Halifax. It is divided from Halifax partially by green belt and by some villages such as Shelf, Northowram and Hipperholme. The public transport links with Halifax are relatively weak compared to those links with Bradford. Bradford Park, our new football club, is in Royds, not in Halifax. The current proposal really is to move Royds from being part of the City of Bradford into an outlier of the proposed Halifax constituency. We believe a more viable alternative would be to move Queensbury ward from Bradford West into Halifax. Queensbury has relatively good transport and community links with Halifax. The Halifax Evening Newspaper is sold in Queensbury. Indeed, the boundary review, when the proposals were revised last time in 2012, did add Queensbury to the Halifax constituency.

Wibsey itself has no community affinity with Cleckheaton and Birstall in Spennings Valley. They have good transport links with Bradford city centre. We recognise that there is a need to move some wards into Spennings. We don't question the move of Wyke into Spennings, but we do believe that the most sensible alternative would be to move Tong into Spennings rather than into Pudsey. The communities within Tong - Tong itself, Holme Wood and Bierley - have no community links with Leeds. The majority of the population tends to be in the west and the central part of Tong ward rather than in the east of Tong ward, which really is comprised mainly of green belt which divides Bradford and Leeds. The M606 would be the western boundary of the Tong ward and on the other side the western half of the Euroway Industrial Park and the other side of the motorway is Wyke. Those two wards we feel fit better within Spennings constituency. It not only creates a problem by dividing the Euroway Industrial Park but the people of Woodlands and Bierley, for example, have relatively strong links with Wyke. Holme Wood itself is an area where there have been a number of complex challenges. We believe it is important that the partnership working that

exists now between the MP, the council and other stakeholders continues. If Tong were part of Pudsey constituency, we don't believe that that MP for Pudsey -- their main focus would be on Leeds rather than on that part of Bradford as being the only ward within Pudsey. We are proposing that four wards from Bradford West and three from Bradford South form part of Bradford West. As far as Bradford East is concerned, five wards from the existing constituency, we believe, should remain within Bradford East and then two wards should be transferred across from Bradford West.

Following on from that proposal to move Tong ward into Spen, we are proposing that a better alternative would be to either move Idle and Thackley or Bradford Moor from Bradford East into the Pudsey constituency. Bradford Moor and Idle and Thackley have much closer transport and community links with Pudsey than Tong has. This requires two wards currently on the eastern side of Bradford West to be transferred into Bradford East which would cause minimal disruption. That is why we have set two options out for the Commission to consider. The first one involves moving Heaton and Toller from Bradford West into Bradford East and Idle and Thackley across into Pudsey from Bradford East. The second option involves moving Manningham and City wards. I think Manningham is already one that the Commission proposed would be moved from West to East, with Bradford Moor going into Pudsey. We think that either of those configurations would work. I must stress that these have not been agreed with either Bradford East or Bradford West constituencies at the current time, but they are viable options and we do think that would provide a better fit than trying to move Tong into Pudsey.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just clarify then, Mr Needham? You have very kindly let me have a copy of those options, and I am grateful for you not going through and simply listing all of them, but Mr Grogan talked about you would be writing to us again with your proposals.

MR GROGAN: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am assuming you will attach these details when you write to us as well?

MR GROGAN: Yes, we can do that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any questions of clarification to either Mr Needham or Mr Grogan about their observations with Shipley and Bradford? Collette?

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am Collette Rawnsley. I am the other Assistant Commissioner. I just wonder - and it might well be in the paper that you have handed up - where you are proposing two alternatives, do you have a preference, or are they just two alternatives?

MR GROGAN: They are just simply two alternatives. A number of options have been discussed and we felt that we couldn't really prioritise one over the other. One looks at the northern part of West and East and the other looks at the more central wards, moving Manningham and City and moving Bradford Moor across into East. Either of them works in terms of the numbers and in terms of the community links.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks Collette. Anybody else at all? (None). Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time this afternoon. Perhaps I can now ask Mr Peter Rock to come forward. Peter was scheduled a little bit later on in the hearing, I think maybe even tomorrow, but we have managed to persuade him to come and address us now. As before, Peter, if you could give your full name and address for the video and then tell us what you would like to talk about, please.

MR ROCK: I'm Peter Rock. I'm from Huddersfield. My address is 20 Cranwood Drive, Huddersfield HD5 9YH. If you could put up on there the Huddersfield and Colne Valley boundary, it would be very useful.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Huddersfield and Colne Valley then.

MR ROCK: Keep going. Bigger, bigger, bigger. Can you go bigger and come towards me? I want to show this ward and this ward. Okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR ROCK: Is that as big as you can go? If you lower it a little bit. The wrong way around. Can you keep going down? Again and again. That's fantastic.

There's been a suggestion that Crosland Moor and Netherton sits better in Huddersfield than Lindley does. Your suggestion was for Lindley to go to Huddersfield. Before I start, I'll say I've been coming to these for four rounds now - over 25 years. I've done the local rearrangement in Kirklees borough and it's not a very easy job. I recognise the inconsistencies are as minimal as you have tried to make them, so nothing is perfect by any means.

It's not quite a six and two threes. Elements of Crosland Moor sit better into Huddersfield than Lindley does. Most of Crosland Moor, which I've lived in, is equally suitable to drop into Huddersfield as Lindley is, but it's not Crosland Moor; it's Crosland Moor and Netherton. Netherton is all this bit and it contains many of the links between the Colne Valley and the Holme Valley which the new Colne Valley constituency, or the extended Colne Valley constituency, would become. It would stick Huddersfield out into that constituency. Up here, for those who know the geography, you've got junction 24. Down along the floor somewhere you've got Penistone West. It would make the constituency a bigger spread than it already is. In Lindley there are things like Huddersfield New College, Huddersfield YMCA and Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, so it is a Huddersfield area thing. The Huddersfield area committee for the local authority has Lindley and Crosland Moor in it. So it is a

bit of a six and two threes, but my point is Crosland Moor sits better in Colne Valley than Lindley sits in Colne Valley. It's as simple as that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is very clear to me. Are there any questions of clarity from anybody else in the audience? (None). Peter, thank you very much indeed.

MR ROCK: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is there anybody else who would like to take the opportunity of the gap that we now have in the running order? I do not propose to sit us all here twiddling our thumbs. We have another booking at 5.00 pm, but I think two hours is too long to adjourn for because we have publicised that we are open all day until 8.00 pm. What I do not want is for somebody to turn up unannounced and find that actually they have to hang around for a couple of hours before being given the opportunity to speak to us. I am going to adjourn until 4.00 pm - for an hour. That means that if anybody turns up they know that they can be on within the hour, so to speak. If we have nobody here at 4.00 pm then it may be a very quick reassembly to adjourn for another 45 minutes, but I have explained to you why I am going to do that. So we will knock it on the head now and we will come back at 4.00 pm. Thank you very much.

Time noted: 3.00 pm

After an adjournment

Time noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I will check that we are all switched on. We are. We do have one speaker at 4.00 pm. I am going to invite Mr Winfield to come and address us now. Come forward, please, Robert. I think you were here all morning and so you know the routine by now.

MR WINFIELD: My name is Robert Winfield and I am a lifelong resident of Beeston in Leeds, which is located in the present Leeds Central parliamentary constituency. My address is 7 Allerby Gardens. I am a member and also an officeholder of the Conservative Party. First of all, my representations will focus on the Leeds area, although I will be writing to the Commission to explain various ideas in greater depth than is possible in ten minutes.

First of all, as the Elmet and Rothwell constituency falls within the statutory limit for electorate size, and as retaining that constituency doesn't lead to problems drawing parliamentary constituencies elsewhere, I agree with the Boundary Commission that it is sensible to retain the Elmet and Rothwell parliamentary constituency.

The Leeds East parliamentary constituency is too small and needs to add voters to bring it within the limits on the electorate laid down by Parliament. I agree that it is

sensible to add the Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward to the present Leeds East constituency as large areas of that ward have been included in the Leeds East parliamentary constituency in the past.

In the presentations from the political parties this morning, much reference was made to the splitting of wards. I suppose the Conservative Party's view that in certain circumstances the splitting of wards is desirable would make it far easier to draw constituencies which respect local ties, for example. In addition, in Leeds local government boundaries are about to be redrawn, so even if there are no split wards we will have local government wards split between one, two or possibly more parliamentary constituencies. I feel that the splitting of wards is something which needs to be considered. That view is also supported by Mr Cook from the Labour Party and Cllr Sunderland from the Liberal Democrats.

I agree with the proposal put forward by the Conservative Party for a parliamentary constituency which covers the north of the City of Leeds, for example Alwoodley ward, Adel and Wharfedale ward, Otley and Yeadon ward, Guiseley and Rawdon ward, with Idle and Thackley from Bradford Metropolitan District. Unfortunately, a ward comprised of these constituencies would be marginally too large and so it would be sensible, as the Conservative Party proposes, to detach polling district AWC and include it in the same constituency as the adjacent Weetwood ward.

In addition, the Conservative Party's proposal would allow the four wards of Leeds West constituency to be kept intact. However, the present Leeds West constituency is too small to meet the rules laid down by Parliament and so I agree that it would be sensible to add the Horsforth ward to form a constituency which falls within the limits.

Similarly I agree with the proposals to form a Morley and Pudsey constituency, which would need to include the Tong ward from Bradford Metropolitan District Council in order to form a contiguous parliamentary constituency. If, as one speaker earlier today said, we need to avoid a Spennings constituency, that is one way of doing it.

Turning to the Leeds Central parliamentary constituency, which is my home, I agree with the Conservative Party's proposal to remove Burmantofts from Richmond Hill, which goes into Leeds East, and include instead the Ardsley and Robin Hood wards, although there is a strong case for an alternative name bearing in mind that the south end of that proposed constituency particularly has little identification with the centre of Leeds, but I have no difficulty whatsoever in supporting the boundaries.

The final constituency, Leeds, will be comprised of the three remaining wards from the Leeds North East constituency, that is to say Chapel Allerton, Roundhay and Moortown, and also Weetwood and Headingley ward from the present Leeds North West constituency. There are ties between the two areas. For example the Meanwood area, which is probably included in Moortown ward, has in the past been included in Weetwood ward and Headingley ward. I therefore commend the

Conservative Party's counter-proposal relating to Leeds. As I have mentioned, we will be writing to the Commission at greater length.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Robert, thank you very much. Just before you depart the lectern, can I just check with any colleagues in the room whether anybody has any points of clarification they would like to ask you? (None). I am not seeing any hands. Robert, thank you very much. Whilst you make your way back to your seat, I will just for the record say that you and I did check before you started speaking that you had been here all morning and so you heard my preamble in the past.

MR WINFIELD: That is correct.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Our next booked slot is at 5.00 pm and it is Mr Thornton, but I do believe that Mr Thornton is already in the room. It is a matter for you, Sir. You can come straight on now or we will adjourn until 5.00 pm and hear from you then.

MR THORNTON: I want to go now if that is okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: In which case let us hear from you straightaway. Whilst you are making your way up to the lectern, I will just mention for your information, because some colleagues have been here all day, that we are video-recording proceedings here. When you come up the lectern, I would be grateful if you could give your name and address before setting off on your ten-minute commentary so that we can hear from you. Thank you very much.

MR THORNTON: I am Andrew Thornton. My full address is 6 Beechwood Road, Wibsey, Bradford BD6 3AQ.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR THORNTON: I will say for transparency that I am a councillor in Bradford. I am not here representing an official position of the council, my group or my party in that sense, so in that way "All Tweets are my own", as you might say! The contribution I am bringing is about my knowledge of Bradford and its communities based on experience as a councillor but also as a community activist and someone who has lived in the area for 25 years.

The thing I need to say first in relation to Bradford is, yes, it is a historic place, but it is still a growing place. It has a young and expanding population. It is in a key urban and economic centre in West Yorkshire. It is turning a corner in terms of its performance. It has great potential but it also has some challenges. I think the thing that comes across is that its social and political needs for representation are increasing and not diminishing and that is why I have concerns about the initial proposals and the way in which they address Bradford, particularly the bit of Bradford that I would describe as the urban core/centre of Bradford, and that that

actually needs cogent parliamentary representation. But the initial proposals seem to do the opposite of that, in that they take away particularly from the south of Bradford but also up into the heart of what I would call the urban part of Bradford as a city. They take that away and divide it amongst a number of other constituencies surrounding the city.

At present, there are three constituencies that represent what I would say is the urban metropolis of Bradford. The proposal that was put forward initially would actually take that to five because it would have Bradford West, Bradford East, parts of Bradford would go into a new Halifax constituency, another part of Bradford would go into a Spen constituency and yet another part of South Bradford would join with a new Pudsey constituency. That would make five constituencies with a slice of Bradford. Three of those, I would say, would be non Bradford centric and not focused on Bradford, yet they would seek to represent communities which have a very strong identification with Bradford as a city and as a place.

I guess the other thing to say is that I believe Bradford needs a coherent political identity to represent that big urban part of the City of Bradford. Some of the communities that we are actually carving out are large-scale social housing communities like Buttershaw, which is in a ward I represent, but also Holme Wood. They are places which are synonymous with Bradford. They have strong Bradford identities. They look to Bradford. Their links are with Bradford in terms of transport and in terms of their identity -- they are predominantly of white British heritage, working class neighbourhoods. They have certain problems and certain issues around poverty, around education, around employment, all of which need a solution in a Bradford context, strong Bradford representation, with Bradford-focused members of parliament to represent that. The other thing, I think, is that in a lot of those communities participation at the ballot box is not strong. I fear that the proposals that are being put forward for Bradford and for that part of Bradford and those communities will actually make that worse rather than better because people need a sense of identity. They need to relate to the place where their Member of Parliament is and to the constituency that seeks to represent them. That geography has to mean something to them. In the current proposal I do not think that happens. It is as if they are being tagged on to the end of somewhere else. They therefore risk becoming, if you like, "orphaned outposts" of the new constituencies, which would be bad for them, bad for those communities and also bad news for Bradford as it tries to move forward.

I would like to turn now to something a bit more specific in the area in which I actually live, a community called Wibsey. Wibsey is an urban village. It is about two miles from the city centre. It has the usual things that you would imagine of an urban village: it has churches, schools, a library, pubs. It is a proper community. People relate to the centre of Bradford. I do not know if you have stuff on the map that you can bring up there. I have a couple of maps which I will leave with you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We can put Wibsey up there. We know where it is.

MR THORNTON: So we are in the middle there: Royds ward, Wibsey ward and a little bit of Great Horton ward, which is the bit I am coming to. In relation to the proposals as initially put forward, Wibsey as a place regards itself as a proper place, a proper community, and I think that is where part of the problem crystallises for me: in this area. I have lived there 25 years. If I live there another 25 years they will probably think of me as a local! My friend who I have brought with me has lived there a good deal longer. We both live in Wibsey. We relate to that community, to that centre. The thing is, I live in Wibsey-Wibsey and my friend lives in Royds-Wibsey. Under the proposals, Royds will be in the Halifax constituency, Wibsey will be in the Spen constituency, but there is a little bit right up at the top which is actually in Great Horton and will therefore remain as Bradford West. I cannot see how splitting a community, an urban village that has that sense of community, has that centre to it, into three different constituencies -- how people will feel that they are represented, how they will relate to that kind of picture.

It is also repeated a little bit further down. If we look further down towards the junction of Royds, Wibsey ward and Wyke ward, there is an area there called Low Moor. Low Moor thinks of itself as a community, again it thinks of itself as an urban village, and again it is split between those three wards. One part of it would end up in the proposed Spen constituency and another part would end up in the proposed Halifax constituency. Again, splitting communities in that way does not to me make any kind of sense for there to be a coherent political structure and parliamentary map for Bradford and for those communities.

One of the things I am very fond of when I do get the chance to do other things is I am fond of Rugby League and I go to Bradford Bulls and Odsal Stadium, again another name that is synonymous with Bradford. It is actually in the Wyke ward and so would be in Spen under your proposals. Again, we sit with friends and neighbours. Talking to the people sat around me just after the Boundary Commission proposals came out, I was explaining how it was all proposed to lay out. My friends live on Wibsey Park Avenue, opposite the park, but again they are in Royds-Wibsey and not Wibsey-Wibsey so they would be in a Halifax constituency. Their reaction, besides "What have we got to do with Halifax? It's not somewhere we recognise. We're Bradford born and bred", was: "Well, that's it. I won't vote". Clearly that is a problem. As I say, I think it comes back to how people identify with the place where they are and they do not identify with Halifax.

I do not have specific alternative proposals to put to you. I do not have a map. I do not have anything. Well, I have a couple of maps that explain the context of Wibsey and Low Moor. I do not have a proposal that says: "Put this ward here, this ward here and this ward here to make the numbers add up as you would like". What I do have is a plea to actually look again at that particular bit of Bradford, to look at the context of Wibsey and how that community would be split, but also to look at the overall picture of Bradford and how representation of a place like Bradford should map out and not to create, if you like, orphan neighbourhoods and orphan communities tagged on to other constituencies around Bradford when those

communities themselves regard themselves as being at the heart of Bradford. The only other specific example: if I look out of my bedroom window, I can see the centre of Bradford - I can walk there in 30 minutes - yet I would be pretty much the northern outlier of a Spennings constituency. It does not make sense to me and it does not make sense to my neighbours and the other people that I know and represent.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Thornton, thank you very much. That was a very clear message. Are there any matters of clarity from anybody in the audience? (None). A very clear message. Thank you very much indeed.

MR THORNTON: I will leave maps with you which identify the problem. (Same handed).

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anybody else want to take the opportunity of this gap in bookings? (No response). In which case our next booking is at 5.30 pm. If anybody turns up in the meantime I will slot them in at 5.20 pm. We will adjourn for an hour and we will be back at 5.20 pm. Thank you very much.

Time noted: 4.20 pm

After an adjournment

Time noted: 5.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon everybody. Welcome back to the next stage of day one of the hearings here in Leeds. We have one or two people in the room who were not here earlier on today. Just by way of a brief update, my name is John Feavoy and I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England, having been appointed by the Commission to assist it in its task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the Yorkshire and the Humber region. It is my responsibility to chair proceedings here in Leeds and elsewhere and, together with my fellow Assistant Commissioner Collette Rawnsley, to make representations to the Commission on any changes to the initial proposals. So far today we have heard from the political parties in relation to the whole of the region and we have also heard from a number of individuals who have come up to the lectern, where I will ask you to come in a moment, to make their statements and give their views. We are being recorded, as we are obliged to be, to make a full report of what goes on here. We are being video-recorded. When you come up to the lectern, if you could please tell us your name and your address before you go on to make your points. So the next slot is 5.30 pm and we have Ms Andrea Busby, I think it is. Andrea, when you are ready, please.

MS BUSBY: My name is Andrea Busby. I live at 5 Ashworth Place, Wibsey, Bradford. I'm just speaking as a person from Bradford, not on behalf of anybody else.

I've lived in Wibsey for 17 years. I love the place, the fresh air and the views all around, where you can see for miles, yet you're very close to the city centre. The areas are historic. There's lots of old housing there. It's very much a centred community within itself. There's a real sense of community there and we feel a part of the wider Bradford community too.

Wibsey is a strong, vibrant and diverse community, containing three schools, small estates of family housing and a well-established core of older folk in private and rented houses and housing association flats. There's also several small businesses in the district. We've got two major sporting associations in the area, although they are slightly outside, I think, the new border, Bradford Bulls and Bradford Park Avenue, which if the plans go ahead will both be outside the Bradford constituency district.

Some of the houses in Wibsey are more than 200 years old. The area has been settled for centuries. It's been part of Bradford since the area expanded towards the end of the Industrial Revolution and the boom in the woollen industry. This has transformed Bradford over time and it's now a group of these places. It's now one of the most populous in the country. I think it's coming up to the fourth most populous city in the country. Wibsey itself is a large area geographically, stretching from below Bankfoot to the rural borders between Bradford and Halifax and Bradford and Kirklees.

The local people know who our MP is, who is involved in the area quite regularly. We feel like this is a Bradford thing. It's a Bradford MP for a Bradford area. I know that the issue has come up before with the boundary changes, where our area has been considered for attaching to another area. I think in the past it was Cleckheaton. Cleckheaton is quite a long way away from Wibsey - certainly the population areas. The population area of Wibsey is enclosed in one area, then you go down past some industrial areas and there's actually a semi-rural area, and then some more industry and then the centre of Cleckheaton, which is actually quite separate from Wibsey. This is now part of Batley and Spen and this is part of the area where we're being considered to attach to again. So Cleckheaton complained last time --- Not complained. They rejected it last time and it was actually reconsidered and Bradford South was kept as Bradford South. So Cleckheaton rejected joining Wibsey as they have no connection with our area. This is still true and the same applies to us also.

Spen is Birstall, Batley and Dewsbury. Well, not quite Dewsbury, but the areas around it. I know this constituency well because I work in the area. I know it has had to be changed in order to accommodate Wibsey, with Batley going into Morley and Wibsey going into Spen, but Batley and Spen on its own at the moment is within the criteria allowed, so to change that and change Bradford seems strange to me. Bradford constituencies could be altered mostly within the boundaries of the city, keeping Bradford wards within Bradford, and I feel that this is important for Bradford's sense of community. It would keep the constituencies and council working with the same people and the same communities. I think that if we have our centre as a constituency in Spen then we will be very much an outlying area. Batley

and Spen has had a horrific year. Obviously they have had a lot of problems to deal with - and still have. They have a lot of healing to do. I don't think that our little village, stuck out there, is going to be able to contribute or get any real attention.

There's very little to connect this area of Wibsey with those of Spen. Industrial areas and semi-rural areas lie between them, as does the giant M606 roundabout, which you cannot get across on foot. So there is this massive barrier between the two areas. If you live at the top of Wibsey, if you go on public transport you have to get three buses into Batley, which might seem trivial, but if you're an older person - and there are a lot in the centre of Wibsey - or if you're a young family, getting three buses to go and see your MP would be very, very difficult, or going to visit your constituency party would be quite difficult. You can get a train - I think you can get a bus to Huddersfield and a train into Batley - but again that is more than an hour. It is more than an hour and a half to go by bus. It seems very odd that you'd have to get three buses to go and deal with local issues to me.

More than 90,000 people now live in Bradford South. It's a sizeable chunk of Bradford - which is about 500,000 - so it's a massive chunk of Bradford which will be taken away from Bradford control, if you like -- Bradford centre. The population of the city is growing. It's growing quite rapidly. To take away part of it like that seems odd. It seems that Bradford is big enough on its own to have its own MPs. It would take almost a fifth of the population outside Bradford and a quarter of the geographical area. It's going to make fighting for anything much more difficult because you then have to go to various different others which have their own problems and will not be concerned with the day-to-day concerns of people who have their own separate communities and more closely identify with another city, a city in which they no longer have a voice.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Andrea. What I have done at the end of each person's little speech is just check with the audience if there are any points of clarification that anybody wants to ask you. They knew this question was coming, and I cannot see any hands up, so thank you very much indeed for taking the time to come across and talk to us today. Thank you. Next on the list is Mr Iftikhar. Are you here, Sir?

MR IFTIKHAR: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you like to come forward? Thank you. I think you heard my introduction a few moments ago. When you are ready, if you could give your full name and address for the record and then we will be waiting and ready to hear from you.

MR IFTIKHAR: My name is Abdul Iftikhar and I live at 14 Redshank Close, Clayton Heights, Bradford. I would like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to share my views on the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are welcome.

MR IFTIKHAR: I appear before you today in my capacity as an interested and concerned citizen of South Bradford. I acknowledge it is difficult - you have a difficult task - to reduce the number of constituencies in the region by four and to ensure no electorate is smaller than 71,031 or larger than 78,507. However, after seeing the initial proposal I felt compelled to raise my concerns about the damage that it could do to the parliamentary identity of Bradford as a city if implemented.

Whilst the Boundary Commission has met its obligation to provide proposals to comply with the size of the electorate for Bradford and the surrounding area, it has, I would respectfully submit, from a Bradford point of view failed to meet rule 5, as set out in Schedule 2, which as you know provides for a number of other factors that the Boundary Commission should take into account in establishing a new map of constituencies for the 2018 review, specifically: (i) special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency; (ii) local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015; (iii) boundaries of existing constituencies; and (iv) finally, any local ties that would be broken by changes in those constituencies. The impact of failing to take any regard of rule 5 in Bradford is why I am worried about the damage done to Bradford's parliamentary identity, which I fear will have wider community cohesion and economic consequences. Some of those have already been set out by the speaker who spoke before me. There is provision in the Regulations to avoid this type of outcome, but there seems to have been no attempt to use this provision. I respectfully submit that, with a little sensitivity, the full extent of the damage of the proposals could be mitigated even without splitting wards.

I understand that for many reasons the building blocks for the initial proposals are local government ward boundaries and that, in the absence of exceptional and compelling circumstances, wards should not be split and should not be divided. The devastation of South Bradford, I think, is an exceptional circumstance where the Assistant Commissioner should recommend that there should be an intervention that finds a solution to problems created. A bricklayer, for example, when building a house will have to break bricks from time to time. I feel that the BCE should therefore look to split wards to prevent rule 5 being seriously breached. I understand that a constituency has to be removed from Bradford, but surely the way to do this is not to redistribute over 40,000 Bradford voters into surrounding local authority wards. The way to do this, I submit, is to redistribute wards where possible within Bradford.

The problem is compounded further by the proposed Shipley constituency, which transfers 17,779 voters from the City of Leeds ward of Guiseley and Rawdon. To remove a constituency from Bradford, I respectfully request that you don't compound the problem by bringing in voters from neighbouring authorities. Solve the arithmetical problems by splitting wards within authorities first. Also, as Batley and Spenningsdale already complies with the size requirements for constituencies, please don't move the Kirkstall ward of Batley to link with the Leeds ward of Morley.

To me it seems obvious that the initial proposals will do immense damage to the fifth largest local authority in Great Britain, with the youngest and fastest growing population in the country. A simple look at the demographics of those wards being removed from Bradford constituencies will show the diversity of Bradford's parliamentary identity is significantly changed and becomes significantly less balanced. I am a proud Bradfordian and don't want the removal of South Bradford to cause divisions within the city. We have worked too hard in Bradford to jeopardise progress we have made in community cohesion.

I will now focus on some of the local ties that will be broken if the initial proposals are enacted. There will be four members of parliament representing the constituencies of Bradford South which produces some perverse results:

(1) The ward of Wibsey moves into Spen. This is a ward where it is not uncommon for some people to walk into the Bradford city centre. It is a ward with no boundary with Kirklees.

(2) The urban village of Wibsey is spread across the wards of Royds, Great Horton and Wibsey. People in Bradford, walking from home to work or school, will regularly walk from the Spen constituency into the Halifax constituency and into Bradford West without leaving the village of Wibsey.

(3) Great Horton also links with Royds through the community of Great Horton straddling both wards. Connections are strong, with many people from Royds coming to pray in Great Horton-based mosques.

(4) Bradford Bulls will become represented by a predominantly Kirklees-based Member of Parliament.

(5) The motorway that links Bradford to the M62 will be in both a Leeds and Kirklees constituency. Also, the Euroway Industrial Complex, which you have no doubt heard about, which borders the M606 on its east and west side, will be split between a Leeds and a Kirklees MP. Bradford relies on areas like this and should have one MP championing it.

(6) There will be some strange journeys to access MPs, with public transport routes requiring many people to travel to Bradford city centre before travelling on to Leeds or Halifax. Those in Bierley or Woodlands will most likely drive around the M62 and onto the M621 to access their MP and therefore travel through several different constituencies before they can see their MP. I hope you can appreciate the logistical difficulties this point alone will cause the constituents of Bradford South.

(7) Finally, places that are quintessentially Bradford, like Holme Wood and Buttershaw, will be orphaned in areas that don't understand or value their communities and the agencies that serve them.

There are many more arguments that can be deployed to urge you to see how you ensure that Bradford, a city with great potential, is not held back by having a weak parliamentary identity that will hold back the creation of a Bradford powerhouse. I thank you for listening attentively.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Iftikhar. Are there any points of clarification from anybody? (None). Thank you very much, Sir, for coming.

MR IFTIKHAR: I am grateful. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room who would like to address us this afternoon? (No response). The next booking is at 6.20 pm and so we will come back in half an hour. Thank you very much.

Time noted: 5.50 pm

After an adjournment

Time not noted

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening everybody. We adjourned half an hour ago because we have a gap in our bookings and I said we would not start again until 6.20 pm. Mr Choudhary, I see that you are here. I could not start before 6.20 pm because I had told people that we were going to wait until 6.20 pm, but you are our next booking. When you are ready, would you like to come up to the lectern and give your views for us? Whilst you are just making your way up, I will remind everybody that we are being video-recorded and everybody who has come to speak to us today ---

MR SHAHBAZ CHOUDHARY: To introduce myself?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please. When you get there, and when I stop chatting on, if you could give your name and your home address before you make your comments. At the end of what you have to say, I will just check to see if anybody wants to clarify anything that you have asked. I am John Feavyour. I am one of two Assistant Commissioners who are listening to comments made by people from Yorkshire and the Humber region to the initial proposals to see whether we need to amend our recommendations back to the Commission and to see if any of those proposals need to be changed. When you are ready, if you could give your name and address and then tell us what you want to tell us.

MR SHAHBAZ CHOUDHARY: My name is Shahbaz Choudhary. I'm from the ward of Royds in Bradford South. My address is 4 Henna Close. It's the area of BD7. It's situated on Great Horton Road, which starts from the town centre of Bradford. Where it starts it is Bradford East -- and some area of Bradford West in it -- and then it leads up to Bradford South. It has quite a few wards in between as well.

In terms of the reforms that have been proposed, I and many people like myself have faced a lot of confusion and concerns to put the ward of Royds into the area of Halifax. One of the reasons for these concerns is that we are used to having local councillors, a local MP, and putting this area of Royds into Halifax is not a good choice and basically will mean that we --- To an extent I think about it as well and I feel the representation that we will get from Halifax will not be good enough. How we'll be able to get into Halifax is another concern and there will be other problems that people will face. With people who drive it might not be as much as a problem, but there will be some problems with those people as well where they haven't had any recognition or any representation from the area of Halifax before, whereas people from Royds are aware of their local councillors, the work that they've done, local MPs in Bradford - Bradford South, Bradford East, Bradford West - and all the MPs work alongside each other; the same with the councillors. Myself, I feel that if we're put into Halifax it will not give us good representation in Parliament and the problems that we face -- the people of Halifax and the MP from Halifax may not be able to understand the problems fully. So the reforms which have been proposed, I feel that it's not good and it's not reasonable for the people of Royds. There should be some significant thought put into this and reforms should be to put Royds in an area of Bradford rather than another area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. That was a clear statement. Any points of clarification that anybody would like to ask Mr Choudhary? (None). Shahbaz, thank you very much indeed for coming across from Bradford and sharing that with us. We will take all those points into consideration.

MR SHAHBAZ CHOUDHARY: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, the next booked slot is 7.00 pm, but that person has indicated they might be here for 6.45 pm. I will give it 15 minutes, until 6.40 pm, and if they are here at 6.40 pm we will take those comments then. Thank you very much.

Time noted: 6.25 pm

After an adjournment

Time noted: 7.10 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening everyone. It is about 7.10 pm. We were last running about 45 minutes ago. We have been adjourning when there have been gaps between slots during the day and then picking up again when speakers have come along. We have two further speakers booked for today. It says on my list that it is Sophie Dunn, but apparently Adam Royston has been "volunteered", if that is the right word. Adam, we will get to you in just a moment. There is also one other speaker whose name is Nigel Guy. Mr Guy is stuck in traffic.

If he arrives in the next few minutes, that would be great. If not, we will of course wait for him to arrive.

Just for your benefit, having just arrived during the day, my name is John Feavoyour. I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for England. It is my job to chair proceedings today and tomorrow and, together with my colleague Assistant Commissioner Collette Rawnsley, we listen to all the representations that are made before deciding on whether to propose back to the Boundary Commission any changes to its initial proposals.

We are asking everybody speaking today to come forward to the lectern, for which I will call you forward in a moment. We are recording everything, so when you come up, if you can give your full name and your address and then we will listen to what you have to say. So in your own time, Adam, please come up to the lectern now and we will listen to what you have to say. When you get to the end of your comments, Adam, I have been giving everybody the opportunity to see if they want to clarify anything that you have mentioned during your talk and I will do that at the end. So when you are ready, name and address and off you go.

MR ROYSTON: I'm Adam Royston, 11 Grove Terrace, Hemsworth WF9 4BQ. I come from the Hemsworth constituency, which is one of the ones that's been changed. I don't know if all of them have changed, but ours is one.

I guess the first thing is that I understand the need to equalise constituencies more. I seem to remember an example like the Isle of Wight is just one constituency and it has - I don't know if someone can correct me on this - like over 100,000 people in it, whereas obviously here in Leeds we'll have far fewer than that. So obviously I think it's a commendable objective to try to equalise them a bit more. I think some of my concerns really come from the ---

First, I understand that before it was based on population rather than who was on the electoral roll. One of the things that struck me is that because the electoral roll is --- You can withdraw your publicity on it, but as I understand it some people don't want to be on it for particular reasons, such as if they're in debt I believe it's a way that they could be found through a public database like that, and it concerns me slightly that there will be a higher proportion of people not on it in places like this - in like a city. As you've seen with the EU referendum, was it 2,000,000 more people registered to vote? You know, how would that affect the size of a constituency? Obviously it was, is it, over 2,000,000 spread across the entire country, but I think you would get regional variance. To me, it doesn't feel like it's recognising everyone's opportunity to be franchised and it's saying that at this moment in time --- I understand that the date the Commission suggested was later than what the Government has gone for and it has not included those that registered for the EU referendum. I think that's pretty much what concerns me the most. I'd like it equalised but based on population. People might be enthused to vote for whatever reason. Anything could happen between now and the next election, which could be four years away, and I'm just concerned that should people feel "Yes, I want to vote"

then you might have some differences in constituencies that perhaps weren't foreseen when they were drawn up.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you Adam. Sophie, you have listened to what Adam has just said. Has he captured the essence of what you wanted to get over or did you want to add anything yourself at all?

MS DUNN: No, that's fine.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any points of clarification from anybody on what Adam has said? (None). Can I say two things before you go? First of all, thank you for taking the time to drive over to talk to us this evening. We have been very, very keen to hear what local people have to say about the proposals, so thank you very much for doing that.

MR ROYSTON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Secondly, there remains an opportunity for you or for anybody else to comment, ideally through the Boundary Commission's website, on any of the proposals. If you do have any further thoughts around that, I would encourage you to look at what it is that we are able to change. The legislation is very prescriptive about the dates, for example, of when people were registered and not. I suppose what I am saying to you there is that, whilst I hear what you say, there are limits to what we can do.

MR ROYSTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If there are other things outside of that - and there is a guide online as well as to where we have some discretion - then I would encourage you to have a look at that. Any comments that you make in writing through the website will carry just as much weight as coming here to talk to us this evening.

MR ROYSTON: Yes, because it did actually just pop into my head again -- something I thought of earlier -- but as you've said that it's already legislated for --- I assume that part of that is the reduction in the number of MPs as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is.

MR ROYSTON: Because if I'm honest, that's something that did slightly concern me as well. I feel that there's quite a big disconnect between constituents and their MPs and I don't necessarily think that reducing the number of them for the same number of people in the country is necessarily a good idea. If I remember rightly, and I've not read this for a while, I believe 600 MPs would be the fewest we've had for almost 200 years at a time when our population is much greater than it ever has been.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The legislation is prescriptive. It will be 600. Not 599. Not 601. Those are the hard facts that we have to work with. What we are very keen to understand is where the proposals will have an impact on local communities which is why it is really important that you and everybody else came over this evening.

MR ROYSTON: Yes. I understand there was some trouble around the Devon and Cornwall area of where a new constituency would kind of include some people from two quite different communities and they were a bit concerned about "But we're in Cornwall, they're in Devon" and suddenly they would be in the same constituency. I guess that's one of the real difficulties with redrawing them - that you have all these people you have to put somewhere - and it's probably quite difficult to take into account all the local nuances of what the people are like before doing it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Fortunately it is other Assistant Commissioners that have to worry about Devon and Cornwall. Collette and I have to worry about Yorkshire and the Humber. Thank you very much for coming along this evening.

MR ROYSTON: Brilliant. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, as I have mentioned to you informally, but I will just place it on the record, there is one other person expected to come and speak to us this evening who has been in touch by mobile phone to say that they are stuck in traffic. I think we need to do the decent thing and wait for them to get here. We will adjourn until they arrive. Thank you very much.

Time not noted

After an adjournment

Time noted: 7.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening again, everybody. It is just coming up towards 7.30 pm on day one of the Leeds hearing. Our final pre-booked contributor this evening is Mr Nigel Guy and he has joined us now. Mr Guy, when are you ready, could you come forward to the lectern, please? For your information, my name is John Feavoyour. I am the Assistant Commissioner responsible for listening to representations in relation to Yorkshire and the Humber region and, together with my colleague Collette Rawnsley, we will consider all of the representations made to us about the initial proposals and then decide on what we should feed back to the Commission about any changes, if any, that need to be made. Before you start, if you would be kind enough to give us your name and address and then set off with your views that you would like us to listen to in your own time.

MR GUY: My name is Nigel Guy. I live at 2 Lexington Close, Bradford BD4 6FE. I'm here because I'm concerned about the Boundary Commission's proposals for changes to what I believe is a crucial district, and that is the district of Bradford. I live in the Tong ward. I've lived in the Tong ward for most of my life. The Tong ward is a struggling ward, a ward that requires dedicated people to try to overcome the social deprivation and also to enliven the aspiration of people of that ward and district. It became a shock to me to realise, even though I heard it before but having the opportunity now to relay my concerns, how ineffective this boundary change would be, not just for the Tong ward in terms of it being split into two separate areas and losing its entity but also it will lose its connection to Bradford.

A city the size of Bradford, over 500,000 people, and with a growing population, young and old, does need a strong parliament identity. For over 100 years Bradford South has had a dedicated MP serving its needs and speaking out for the community. We still require one dedicated MP serving the needs of South Bradford and remaining focused in supporting the communities without being stretched on other matters that are not relevant to the wards. I think the strategic need of Bradford for 44,000 homes that are required in the next 15 years should be a main factor to reinforce the point that Bradford, with its complex needs, requires a dedicated Bradford MP to work with Tong and the other Bradford wards. We are unfortunately limited by the electoral register from 2015 to just four MPs. However, Bradford is the fifth largest local authority in the country and, with the second fastest growing population, that will soon make it the fourth biggest, ahead of Sheffield. Surely it deserves forward planning, succession and not to be limited by small expenditure -- reducing politicians to the need to provide value for money and representation for the people. We should not be short-sighted in where Bradford is heading, the city and its constituencies, that requires strategic planning, dedication, drive and commitment. We cannot be spreading the jam of hope, prosperity and success too thinly. We are at a stretch as it presently stands. We need focused MPs to reach out to the people and for people not to have encumbered access to their rightful MPs.

Although I am against losing the strength of Bradford's voice and representation of MPs, if we cannot keep the five MPs then at least we should have all the wards remaining in this important metropolitan city. We should have them remain in this important city instead of being subservient to other local authority areas and being at the disposal of other constituencies just to make up the numbers elsewhere. This is not a fair or equitable approach and loses historic and social community cohesion that Bradford has with the Tong ward. This will not be true or real representation and will have a potential to fail on roles and responsibilities and accountability. We're now at risk of losing our voice and influence in the Pudsey constituency if the Tong ward, as the proposals put forward, go into that ward. It's not Pudsey's fault. So why create a risk which cannot be effectively controlled? Challenges that will arise will take much longer to deliver. The people in Woodlands and Tong are many miles from Armley and Bramley, the likely base for the Pudsey MP, I suspect. The people of Woodlands and Bierley, who have strong links with Wyke, are also going to be affected in proposals to move them into the Spen ward. It's inappropriate. The

sense of community and the sense of historical direction for Bradford is just being washed away by this proposal. We should reconsider an alternative measure.

There is a set of complex challenges in the Holme Wood area, a big estate in Bradford, that requires partnership working and understanding between the council, the Member of Parliament and the local stakeholders. An MP with just one ward in Bradford, coming from Leeds and who has their main focus in Leeds, will struggle to perform the same level of service. Sound judgment must surely steer us to retaining five Bradford MPs, or at least keeping Bradford within Bradford and having MPs focused within the Bradford ward (*sic*) irrespective of political persuasion.

I'm strongly against the proposed boundary changes for the reasons that I've just relayed but also for the following reasons:

- Bierley, Holme Wood and Tong have no real cultural link with the districts of Leeds. It is clear that people of Tong have no affinity with Leeds. We love the town, but we want to ensure that what happens in Bradford not necessarily stays in Bradford but we can say that the achievements of Bradford people can be delivered with an MP that represents Bradford. The majority of the population of Bradford South, especially of the Tong ward, live in the western boundary and also the central part of the ward. The east of the ward is comprised of a large green space. Consider the logistics of trying to get the electorate - the constituents - to actually go and see their MP. It's going to be a struggle.

- It is of paramount importance that the Euroway Trading Estate is represented by a single MP. The Euroway Trading Estate is a real factor for Bradford. It's been growing and developing and companies want to see things happen, but that's through persuasion, strategic thinking and lobbying, not just by MPs but local councillors as well. I'm in fear that that particular priority will be missed if the Tong ward is moved out and also areas of Wyke are moved into Spen Valley as well. The other half of the Euroway Trading Estate is Wyke and it is proposed to move it into the Spen constituency, slicing up these established zones and moving them into a new constituency in Leeds. Spen Valley will not be productive and will limit the advancement of business and employment opportunities with the conurbation of the M606 which greatly assists and helps Bradford. The division of Tong and the division of Wyke will generate problems with enhancing and developing the Euroway Trading Estate.

- It is extremely difficult for the people of Tong to access Leeds via public transport. It requires a journey first to Bradford city centre and then getting the train or the bus. It only takes ten minutes to catch a bus into Bradford city centre.

- Finally, people residing and working in Bierley and Tong wards and surrounding areas will no doubt use the M62 or M621 to avoid the traffic through the A and B roads if they have to go and see their new local MP. This is not saving the planet. It's causing more congestion and increased carbon dioxide and

CO2 emissions. It's better to keep the MPs local to the city they serve rather than asking the city and its ward to travel further to see their not-so-local MPs.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns. I trust you can take on board the matters highlighted.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Guy, thank you very much. Is there anybody from the audience who would like to ask Mr Guy to clarify anything that he has said this afternoon? (No response). In which case, thank you very much for taking the time and coming across to see us this evening.

MR GUY: Thank you for having the patience.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, that was the last of our scheduled speakers. It is just coming up towards 7.40 pm. We were scheduled to go on until 8.00 pm, but given the number of people that we have had booked in and the absence of anybody walking in as a walk-in during the day, unless anybody would like to make any representations to the contrary, I would propose to adjourn until tomorrow morning. Is everybody content with that? Thank you very much indeed. In which case we will adjourn now and start again at 9.00 am in the morning. Thank you very much.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Friday 14 October 2016

Time noted: 7.40 pm

B

MS BUSBY, 51

C

MR NAWEED CHOUDHARY, 32, 33, 34
MR SHAHBAZ CHOUDHARY, 56, 57
MR COOK, 18

D

MS DUNN, 59

E

MRS EVANS, 36, 37, 38

F

MR FOX, 12, 13

G

MR GROGAN, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45
MR GUY, 61, 63

H

MR HARTLEY, 2, 13
MR HEMINGWAY, 14, 15

I

MR IFTIKHAR, 53, 54, 56

J

CLLR JORDAN, 35

N

MR NEEDHAM, 40, 43
MS NISSEN, 38, 39, 40

P

MR PRATT, 5, 11, 13, 14

R

MR ROCK, 13, 45, 46
MR ROYSTON, 58, 59, 60

S

MS SUNDERLAND, 25, 26, 32

T

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 44

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER 2, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 24, 25, 26, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44, 45, 46,
48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63
MR THORNTON, 48, 50, 51

W

MR WINFIELD, 46, 48