

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

CITY HALL, COLLEGE GREEN, BRISTOL BS1 5TR

ON

FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Ms Anita Bickerdike, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW
Telephone Number: 0203 585 4721/22

Time Noted: 9.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning and welcome to day two of the public hearing into the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new constituency party boundaries. We have our first speaker booked for 10 o'clock, it is now 9 o'clock, so I will adjourn the hearing until 9.50 am - I understand there is a fire alarm test planned for 10 o'clock. We will recommence the hearing at 9.50 am.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 10.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back. It is 10 o'clock. We do have a speaker who is due to speak at 10 o'clock. We do, however, have a fire alarm test planned for 10 o'clock, so I intend to call that speaker to actually come and give her presentation after that fire alarm has been concluded, so I will adjourn until after the fire alarm.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ms Marjorie Caw?

MS CAW: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Hello. Good morning. Would you like to come round to the lectern, please? Thank you.

MS CAW: Hello.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning. Would you give your name and address, please?

MS CAW: I am Marjorie Caw, 16 Eve Road, Bristol BS5 0JX.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS CAW: I am here as a member of the public but also as a representative of Easton and Lawrence Hill Labour Party. I have come because we did put in a submission from our local councillor, one of the Easton councillors, Ruth Pickersgill, but we felt that it would be a good idea to come and talk to you about it really. I mean the main concern that we have is splitting Easton and Lawrence Hill and putting Easton into Bristol East and keeping Lawrence Hill in Bristol West. The reason why we are concerned about it is because for some time Easton and Lawrence Hill have worked together at various levels, but the neighbourhood community level, we have

amalgamated the two Labour Party branches and now work together. The people of Easton and Lawrence Hill are I think on the whole not entirely certain whether they are in Lawrence Hill or Easton. I, for one, did not know I was in Lawrence Hill for the best part of a year because I live in the bit that is Easton rather than the bit that is clearly Lawrence Hill, and I gather this is a common confusion. All the councillors from both wards find that they are working all the time with people who identify more with one or the other but actually regard the two as an integrated whole. I guess that is sort of the first issue.

The second issue is - you probably know - there is a big Somali community in Bristol and it almost entirely lives within the two wards, Easton and Lawrence Hill. Lawrence Hill has nearly 50 per cent or possibly even a bit more than 50 per cent BAME people and Easton has got about 30 to 40 per cent BAME of whom many or most are Somali. The issue as expressed by both those communities, by the community and by the councillors, is that splitting them across two constituencies would mean both that they were less represented within each of the two new constituencies, less therefore important within the two new constituencies so far as the MPs were concerned, but also operationally it is harder to work together when you are pointing in different directions from a constituency point of view, and putting the two wards together has actually given us the chance to begin to strengthen the political influence of the Somali community. I mean that is basically the point.

On a number of levels we also have a neighbourhood forum that works from Bristol, across Easton and Lawrence Hill and, indeed, Ashley I believe, but is becoming quite active. The last neighbourhood forum meeting we had for both wards more than 50 people turned up, which is actually quite unusual in the area. It is that sort of thing that we would like to present to you.

I can understand from your point of view it is very neat and easy to have the numbers cut, and I can see from the maps that is a perfectly beautiful division, but from our point of view life would not be simpler. I mean it would be a more complicated, more difficult way, to help the people working at the community level, and I know that the councillors all quite strongly wanted to represent that, although, unfortunately, they were not able to be here today, so I am.

That is it really. Is there anything else I should have said?

MS JONES: I suppose it is about democratic engagement really.

MS CAW: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you want to speak, then I will have to ask you to come to the lectern because we need to record your name and address, but if you want to actually just remind your colleague as to ---

MS CAW: Yes. It is the issue of democratic engagement indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MS CAW: It is about making it easier for people to be able to engage, to be able to know where they are going for meetings, to not have, for example, the people of Easton having to go - I do not know whether they would possibly be organised - potentially quite a long way geographically from Easton if they were going to constituency meetings for example. At the moment they are tending to be tilted towards Easton and Lawrence Hill rather than towards Clifton and Redcliffe simply because there is more of us who are engaged I guess at that level. That is the thing as an extra point.

MS JONES: May I speak? Is that all right?

MS CAW: Of course.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. What we will do --- Is there anything else you want to say first of all, Ms Caw?

MS CAW: No; I think that is about me done.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So perhaps before I call you to speak - I am happy to hear what you want to say - I am really interested in local people coming to tell me how the proposed initial changes might actually affect people on the ground, local ties, local projects, that sort of thing. Just before you finish, Ms Caw, can I just give an opportunity for anybody in the room to put questions to you for clarification on anything that you have said?

MS CAW: No, sure. Sure, of course.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any questions for clarification for Ms Caw? (None) Okay. Thank you very much, Ms Caw. Thank you for attending. Good morning.

MS JONES: Hello.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could I ask you to give your name and address, please?

MS JONES: Yes. Liz Jones, 8 Clare Road, Easton BS5 6NF.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. What do you want to tell me about the proposals?

MS JONES: I suppose I just wanted to emphasise the fact that, although politically there are two wards, Easton and Lawrence Hill, that people's understanding - and correctly so - of where they live is that a lot of people live in Easton but at least half of Lawrence Hill ward, it consists of people who think they live in Easton, in fact they do live in Easton in terms of historical, geographical and all the rest of it. But that aspect of where people live is not coterminous with the political boundaries, which is very confusing for people and it takes them a step away immediately from this political engagement really. If, at that level of life, people have reorganised your understanding of your existence, then that detachment is reinforced in so many other aspects of life. Does that make sense?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does, it makes a lot of sense. Thank you very much for deciding to speak. It has given me more of an insight into the concerns you have.

MS JONES: Yes. I used to be one of the local councillors for Easton ward in the 1980s and I have lived in the area a long time. It is almost impossible for people who are not particularly engaged with stuff for them to understand why they are supposed to go to that councillor instead of that councillor, so the councillors will have to work together anyway. It is a natural working together, it is not something that is set necessarily by yourselves or anybody else. It is an area, it is one area. It has its inner city, its diversity as we like to say politely, do you know? A lot of the issues are the same, the leftover bits of central Bristol. Thus, for people's strength and understanding of what is going on in their lives it should be kept together. Whether Easton or not, it should go to Bristol East or Bristol West, probably matters little except there is a motorway which is a big divide between east and west obviously, but their togetherness is what is solely important.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any questions for Ms Jones? No? Thank you. Ms Jones, thank you very much for attending and for speaking.

MS JONES: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am grateful for those local views. Unless you want to stay and listen, we do not have another speaker booked now until 11 o'clock.

MS JONES: No, thank you, in that case. It might have been interesting if you had got other speakers.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker, as I have indicated, is not actually booked until 11 o'clock so I will adjourn the hearing now until 10.50 am. The hearing will recommence at 10.50 am.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 10.50 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back to the public hearing. Our 11 o'clock appointment has not yet booked in but I understand we have two people who would like to come and speak, and I understand you want to speak together jointly.

MR COALES: One after the other.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, that is fine. It is Mr Coales, is it?

MR COALES: That is right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: All right. Would you like to come to the lectern, please?

MR COALES: Yes. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mrs Potts, do you want to just take a seat for a moment? Thank you. Mr Coales, would you give your name and address, please?

MR COALES: Yes. It is Roger Coales. I live at 5 The Croft, Oldland Common, Bristol.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You want to come and tell me something with regard to your views about the initial proposals for the area, for the South West area?

MR COALES: For Kingswood. For the Kingswood area, Kingswood constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: For Kingswood area, okay.

MR COALES: Is that okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. What do you want to tell me? Yes.

MR COALES: I will just go through this and I am sure you might want to ask anything.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR COALES: If I can just say by way of introduction I have lived in Oldland Common for over 42 years. Where I lived has been part of Kingswood constituency and at other

times it has been part of Wansdyke constituency, but since the 2010 general election it has been part of Kingswood. I served as a local councillor for 28 years from 1983, first as a Kingswood borough councillor, and from 1995 as a member of South Gloucestershire Council. For nine of those years I was leader or joint leader of the council. I have also been a parish councillor for ten years, a school governor for over 30 years, I am a trustee of three local charities, so I believe I have got a good knowledge and understanding of the wider Kingswood area, so the points I would like to make are these.

I welcome the initial proposal that the whole of the current Kingswood constituency will be kept as part of the new constituency but I do not believe that adding Boyd Valley ward is the most appropriate way of bringing the new Kingswood constituency up to the required number of electors. I would argue strongly that adding Staple Hill ward to the current constituency instead of Boyd Valley is more logical for a whole number of reasons.

Kingswood constituency was first formed with that name in the early 1970s, and from then until the changes in boundaries prior to the 2010 general election, Staple Hill was always part of Kingswood constituency. At that time the Boundary Commission had to create three constituencies within South Gloucestershire, so inevitably parts of Kingswood constituency had to be hived off. It is interesting, almost as a sideline, Roger Berry, who was MP for Kingswood from 1992 to 2010, had his Kingswood constituency office in Staple Hill throughout his 18 years as MP. Staple Hill was part of Kingswood District Council for the 22 years of that authority's existence, and for the first ten years of that period the council chamber for the authority was in fact in Staple Hill. The Boyd Valley ward or the area it covers has never been part of the Kingswood constituency nor part of Kingswood District Council during its 24 years of existence, so I would argue that from a local government and parliamentary election standpoint Staple Hill was always part of Kingswood.

This parliamentary relationship ended before the 2010 election when it was necessary to form three constituencies within South Gloucestershire, and a part of what had been Kingswood constituency had to be hived off and Staple Hill became part of Filton & Bradley Stoke constituency. I would argue this was done really as a number exercise, not because of any community factors.

The current Kingswood constituency as is now is essentially a densely populated urban area. It has a rural fringe along much of its eastern and southern boundary where the green belt limits further development, but this rural fringe, as I have called it, is quite small and very lightly populated. Adding Staple Hill ward to the current constituency will not change the urban nature of the constituency.

The current Kingswood constituency plus Staple Hill ward would measure approximately 10 kilometres from north to south and 8 kilometres from west to east

(6 miles by 5 miles in old money if you like), and in this area there will be 73,252 electors. In contrast, Boyd Valley ward extends 8 kilometres from north to south and 12 kilometres from west to east at its widest (5 miles by 7), so Boyd Valley ward is at least a similar size to the whole Kingswood constituency that I am arguing for and yet contains just 5,815 voters, a little under 8 per cent of the Kingswood electorate. Just from these figures it is clear that Boyd Valley has a much more thinly dispersed population and that is because it is a much more rural ward with very different characteristics from Kingswood constituency. Hence the arguments, my argument, that Staple Hill is a more natural addition to Kingswood rather than Boyd Valley.

Staple Hill ward adjoins Kings Chase ward to the south in the current Kingswood constituency and Rodway ward to the east in the current Kingswood constituency. The boundaries between these wards are not defined by any clear geographic features but rather by the need to balance ward electorates. For instance, 164 Soundwell Road, the main road between Kingswood town centre and Staple Hill, is in Kings Chase ward; next door, 162 Soundwell Road is in Staple Hill ward. The other main thoroughfare, Station Road, is split between Rodway and Staple Hill wards: 255 Station Road is in Staple Hill ward, 257 in Rodway ward. In other places, such as Pembroke Road and Jubilee Road, the boundary between Staple Hill ward and the wards currently in Kingswood run down the centre of the road. So often these ward boundaries reflect an administrative necessity, not community differences, so the current boundary between Kingswood and Staple Hill is just that, it is an administrative convenience.

I am not arguing that there are no connections between Kingswood, or at least parts of Kingswood, and Boyd Valley ward, my point is that Boyd Valley is a large rural ward completely different in nature to any of the current constituency. Because of its size and spread, it has postcodes across it which are Bristol postcodes, Bath postcodes and Swindon postcodes all within one ward; it has telephone numbers relating to the Bristol, Bath and North Avon telephone areas. So although parts of Boyd Valley may have social, commercial and travel links to the current Kingswood constituency, there are also strong links from parts of Boyd Valley towards Bath to the south, Chippenham to the east, and Chipping Sodbury and Yate to the north.

In conclusion my argument is that it would be much more logical to add Staple Hill ward to the current Kingswood constituency rather than your initial proposal of adding Boyd Valley ward. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Coales. Would you remain there in case there are any questions for clarification from the floor, please?

MR COALES: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any questions for clarification? Thank you. If you would wait for the microphone, please, and then state your name. Thank you.

MR HUGHES: David Hughes, Western Counties Liberal Democrats. Under your proposal, obviously, at the moment, the Boyd Valley ward does not have a land link to the Filton & Bradley Stoke proposed constituency, so presumably you would envisage that being attached to the prospective Dursley, Thornbury and Yate constituency, in which case what part of Dursley, Thornbury and Yate would you want to transfer to Filton & Bradley Stoke to make up the numbers?

MR COALES: I understand that numbers have to be balanced and it is all a number exercise, and I think one of the counterproposals does make that point and it does propose an alternative. I am only here, in honesty, to speak from a Kingswood perspective, I am not here to argue a great big case. I just feel quite strongly that, if you were starting from scratch and starting to look at building a new Kingswood constituency, which is what really has to happen, that the logical addition to the current constituency is Staple Hill ward and not Boyd Valley ward for the number of reasons that I have expressed already.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Coales. Are there any more questions for clarification? (None) Thank you for attending, Mr Coales, and for your presentation.

MR COALES: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mrs Shirley Potts.

MRS POTTS: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Good morning, Mrs Potts.

MRS POTTS: Good morning.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you give your name and address, please?

MRS POTTS: Yes. My name is Shirley Potts and I live at 1 Albert Road, Staple Hill, BS16 5LA. Okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MRS POTTS: I am here to support the view that Staple Hill should be added to the Kingswood constituency. Some points of introduction: I have lived in Staple Hill for 48 years and I have served as a councillor for 33 years both on the Kingswood District Council and on the South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority. I have held the positions of Chair of services and scrutiny committees and as a member of the Cabinet. I have

been a governor of a local school for 30 years, Vice Chair of the Staple Hill Regeneration Partnership, a trustee of two local charities, and also a member of the management committee of others. I believe that the experience I have gained has given me a clear understanding of the nature and needs of the area.

Strong links exist between Staple Hill and Kingswood. They are both urban areas with no defined boundaries. Both Kingswood and Staple Hill have been designated as priority neighbourhoods having the highest degree of multi-deprivation in South Gloucestershire. In some cases the council has set up the same arrangements in an attempt to deal with similar problems which address the two wards which need to be addressed; for example, the economic income and skills group are concerned with the high levels of unemployment and lack of skills to be found in Staple Hill and Kingswood. There are many other links between the two areas. The Staple Hill Children's Centre is used by the Kingswood families, and a large percentage of the pupils of the Tynings Primary School in Staple Hill come from Kingswood. The Community Engagement Forum considers issues experienced by residents of Staple Hill and Rodway which is part of the Kingswood constituency. The One Stop shop in Kingswood also serves Staple Hill, and the Staple Hill CAB also deals with concerns from residents of Kingswood. In matters of leisure the Kingswood Leisure Centre is situated in Staple Hill, and Page Park is supported and used by residents of Kingswood. There are many other areas where residents of both Kingswood and Staple Hill are involved; for example, Kingswood Community Transport, the Kingswood Civic Centre, the Staple Hill British Legion, to name but a few. These links underline the strong relationship between the two districts.

In my regular contact with residents during ward visits, surgeries and meetings over the 33 years I have been councillor, it has recently become clear to me that our communities feel strongly that to have excluded Staple Hill from the Kingswood constituency was extremely misguided. They are aware of the strong links which exist and how little there is in common with the Filton & Bradley Stoke constituency. I feel that to continue to try to demonstrate that FABS is a reflection of the local identity of Staple Hill would be a mistake. Constituents need to feel an affinity with the constituency, thus I agree that it would be far better to add Staple Hill ward to the current Kingswood constituency. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mrs Potts. If you would like to remain there for a moment, please. Are there any questions for clarification for Mrs Potts? (None) Thank you. Thank you very much for attending.

Mr Matthew Riddle. If you would like to come to the lectern, please, Mr Riddle. Thank you.

CLLR RIDDLE: Good morning.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning. Would you give your name and address, please, Mr Riddle?

CLLR RIDDLE: Yes. Good morning. It is Cllr Matthew Riddle and I live at Oak Farm, Oldbury Lane, Near Thornbury BS35 1RD.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Would you like to make your presentation?

CLLR RIDDLE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR RIDDLE: As I said, I am Cllr Matthew Riddle. I am the leader of South Gloucestershire Council. I have been a member of the Severn ward since 2003 and a life-long resident. I have been a member of two school governors' bodies. I am a member of two churches in the ward, and a trustee of various organisations within the ward.

The Severn ward is made up of five parishes, Olveston, Aust, Oldbury-on-Severn, Hill and Rockhampton, and Olveston parish includes Tockington and Old Down, and Aust parish includes Elberton and Littleton.

I am 100 per cent in favour of your proposals and support them wholeheartedly because I believe it is the best way to create and extend the constituencies as the number of constituencies is reduced across the country.

Obviously, you, as the Commission, the Liberal Democrat Party and my party, the Conservative Party, all support your proposals. The only outlier is Labour, who have come up with their own proposals, with a proposal to move a finger-shaped extension of Filton & Bradley Stoke up the Severn Vale and taking in the Severn ward, in effect cutting off Thornbury from the River Severn. Thornbury is very close to the river and in fact from many points in the town you can actually see the River Severn from Thornbury. Actually, the motto of Thornbury Town Council is "the jewel in the vale", and what these counter-proposals are trying to do is remove part of the vale from the same constituency that Thornbury sits in.

As far as the Severn ward is concerned, all the secondary school children in my ward go to the two large secondary schools, both of which are in Thornbury parish, in Thornbury town, although actually Marlwood, one of those two schools, does have an Alveston postcode - just a bit of confusion there. A lot of my residents use Thornbury High Street for a number of different shops and services, and the big supermarket in Thornbury as well used by residents in the Severn ward.

In South Gloucestershire we have a number of community engagement groups and these are for local residents to pitch up at and express concerns, which we then, as the council, take away and find solutions. The local community engagement group is called Thornbury, Alveston and Severn. You can see already that the Severn ward is a very important part of Thornbury, and Thornbury is a very important part of the Severn ward.

In terms of the river landscape, the Severn ward has a better fit with Berkeley, with the Severn landscape going up Berkeley, rather than going south towards Pilning and Severn Beach. The Severn ward landscape is very rural and so is the Berkeley landscape very rural, but as you go down south towards Pilning and Severn Beach and below there, but still within South Gloucestershire, you suddenly see a lot of warehousing, a lot of commercial activity, which you do not get up in my area nor in Berkeley. So I think it is a better fit to have the river joined with Berkeley than Pilning and Severn Beach.

Also one thing that Berkeley and Oldbury have in common is we have both got nuclear power stations which are in the midst of being decommissioned and there is another nuclear power station promised for Oldbury. So there is a lot of close contact and close connection with Berkeley and Oldbury in terms of nuclear.

In terms of churches, the vicar of Thornbury is also the vicar of Oldbury and Shepperdine, so we have got a benefice there that covers Thornbury and part of the Severn ward. The vicar of Berkeley is also the vicar of Hill and Stone, they are in the same benefice, and the Thornbury Methodist minister is a minister for Tockington and Olveston chapels. The Roman Catholic parish of Thornbury covers a wide area going up the river as far as Purton, which is just north of the Berkeley area, and goes south as far as Aust. In fact until fairly recently the Thornbury parish, the Thornbury Catholic parish, used to have masses held in the chapel of Berkeley Castle.

So the villages of the Severn ward look towards Thornbury and look towards Berkeley for many services and cultural activities. They certainly do not look towards Bradley Stoke and Filton, which are much more urban, a lot further away, and have very poor connections to in terms of road and public transport.

Thornbury town is actually landlocked as you will see on your maps, yet actually there is a sailing club in Thornbury, where does it operate from? It operates from Oldbury-on-Severn with its HQ down on the riverbanks at Oldbury-on-Severn. The Berkeley Hunt, which hunts within the law and hunts an artificial scent, has its kennels at Berkeley. One day a week they hunt north of Berkeley and the other day of the week they hunt south of their kennels at Berkeley in the Thornbury and Severn area. It is also interesting that the Thornbury sewage treatment works, which takes all the sewage from the town of Thornbury, is actually based in Oldbury within the Severn ward. So I am very surprised that Labour are trying to split the Severn ward away from Thornbury. The Labour Party themselves realise the very strong ties between

Thornbury and the Severn ward as they organise themselves locally as the Thornbury and Severn branch.

I would like to now move on for just a few minutes now to talk about Staple Hill - I believe that does look towards Downend not Kingswood. The local community magazine there is called the Voice and that covers Staple Hill and Downend, and they share a main road. I believe that having Staple Hill in the Filton & Bradley Stoke constituency has actually worked very well over the last six years.

Moving on to Frampton Cotterell, I believe that Frampton Cotterell is strongly connected to Winterbourne. If you drive along Bristol Road, you do not know, unless you see the signs, that you are leaving Frampton and going into Wotton and vice versa.

Lastly, I just say a few words about the Boyd Valley. It is strongly connected to places like Siston, it shares the same green belt; there is a strong green area around the east of Kingswood all in the green belt; and both Siston and the Siston ward and Boyd Valley are both in the South Gloucestershire's community engagement group which I have referred to before. So if you look down that east area of Kingswood, you will see places like Siston, Oldland Common, Bitton, Longwell Green, all have a lot of rural green belt within those wards.

In summing-up I am very happy to come here this morning and support your proposals 100 per cent, and I hope I have given you a flavour of the reasons why I believe that the counter-proposals do not work. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Riddle, thank you very much for your presentation. Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions? Are there any questions for clarification from the floor? (None) Thank you very much for attending.

Mr Ian Adams. Good morning, Mr Adams. Do state your name and address, please.

CLLR ADAMS: Yes. My name is Ian Adams. I am the ward councillor, the district councillor, for Siston ward. I have been a councillor since 2011 and I have lived in the area for 27 years, initially in Oldland Common from 1989, moved into Siston in 2008. I am the Chair of the Warmley & Siston Community Gardening Group which looks after various gardens and also the fantastic asset which is the Signal Box. I am also a trustee of Warmley Community Centre and a parish councillor as well.

Thank you for inviting me to talk this morning. As the district councillor for Siston ward, South Gloucestershire Council, I have seen various submissions relating to my ward made by various parties. I would like to express my support for the proposals made by the Boundary Commission supported by both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, and that is namely that Boyd Valley joins the new Kingswood constituency.

Siston shares much in common with Boyd Valley, particularly of course the fact that we are semi-rural and have villages in Bridgegate, Siston and Warmley, and they are all very similar to the villages also in Boyd Valley who are our neighbours. We share with them local road networks, including particularly the A420.

One of the main issues in recent years locally has been green belt. Siston ward is very much part of this debate and a large part of the ward are green belt. Particularly, Shortwood Golf Course crosses both Siston and Boyd Valley wards and has seen both sets of ward councillors and Members of Parliament for the current Kingswood constituency campaign to save this valued green belt land. Like colleagues in Boyd Valley and other parts of the local area, we have been campaigning to defend the green belt, and I note that the Labour Party do not support having Boyd Valley in the new Kingswood constituency. However, we are very much an area under threat from development and fight these plans collectively with the Member of Parliament for Kingswood. In addition, if a new development was built in Boyd Valley, you would need to go through Siston to access it. The development would rely heavily on shops, schools and services within the current Kingswood constituency, such as in Oldland parish or Sainsbury's in Emersons Green.

We also have other strong links with Boyd Valley ward which belong to the green belt; for example, neither of us have a secondary school within the ward, both send children to secondary schools like Mangotsfield, which is in Emersons Green ward, and King's Oak Academy which is in Kings Chase ward. Both lack a supermarket, so we both use Emersons Green and Kings Chase as our main centres where there is a large Sainsbury's and other facilities. We are also both heavily affected by the levels of traffic on the A420, and both areas want to see a new link road built between the A4174, which is the ring road, and the M4 in Shortwood/Emersons Green area. We work closely with Boyd Valley on many issues, and also belong to the same area forum on the council as Boyd Valley.

The boundary between Siston and Boyd Valley is very vague, indeed basically running through fields. Indeed, there have been joint campaigns run by councillors for both wards to have travellers removed for some of these fields, not at least because the boundaries are so vague. Boyd Valley shares many services within the Kingswood constituency and is naturally linked because of the very vague boundaries in my ward. From shops to schools to development plans, Boyd Valley is much closer to Kingswood than it is to the constituency Labour propose. The Labour proposal leaves Boyd Valley very isolated, with Tetbury for example being 30 miles' drive via the M4 motorway. Boyd Valley has no local ties to much of Labour's proposal. It also ignores the exceptionally strong boundary the M4 motorway creates, which I am sure you would have already considered as part of your proposal.

With any boundary review the people involved in making the decisions around where the segregation line is is going to be tough. I do not want to sort of belittle it or make it more complicated than what it is but the analogy I have thought about is being a surgeon separating conjoined twins: some surgery is made easier when there is a natural distinction between the two bodies, in more complicated cases the patients are so intrinsically linked it is safer not to perform any surgery at all. I think the links and commonality between Siston and Boyd Valley makes separation too difficult. We share common land which is enjoyed by both Siston and Boyd Valley residents. We have volunteer groups which members are from both Siston and Boyd Valley areas. The once ward-based Safer & Stronger Community Group has devolved into a larger entity; these new groups are called the Community Engagement Groups. Our Community Engagement Group now covers both Siston and Boyd Valley wards. At these meetings residents share issues and it provides a forum for updates relating to common concerns. I believe segregating the coverage at this forum will have a detrimental impact on what these meetings are trying to achieve.

Please implement your proposals as they stand for Boyd Valley to join the new Kingswood constituency. Both the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats support your proposal. Please ignore Labour's political lobbying which should have no place in this proposal and would leave residents of Boyd Valley very isolated when they already look towards Kingswood. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Adams. If you would like to remain there for a moment, please, in case there are any questions for clarification from the floor. (After a pause) No questions. Thank you very much for attending and for your representations.

CLLR ADAMS: Thanks.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Mike Farmer.

MR FARMER: Good morning.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, Mr Farmer. Thank you very much for attending.

MR FARMER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand that you have a presentation which has been loaded onto the IT equipment.

MR FARMER: It has, and I hope Gerald has managed to get it to work again now. Ah, here we are.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR FARMER: My name is Michael Farmer, I live in 8 Church Road, St Mark's, Cheltenham, and I am here to present about the Springbank ward in Cheltenham which I have some connections which I will explain in a moment. I am a member of the public. I have connections with community groups in the area but I am not formally representing them, I understand they will be making their own representations to you in writing. I am here to oppose the proposed transfer of Springbank ward from Cheltenham to the Tewkesbury constituency.

I want first of all just to acknowledge that the proposals for Gloucestershire that you are making are an integrated package and are designed to address a number of problems in Gloucestershire which I have set out there. (Indicating) I am hesitating to say anything more about Kingswood in view of what I have just heard this morning but I just acknowledge that that is one of the problems that you are having to address. I recognise that you are constrained by the law and by your own policies as to what you can do, and I also recognise I am only addressing part of the package and I have got really no time, with what I have here, to address all the knock-on effects, so I understand that, but I do think that nevertheless the proposal you are making for Springbank is wrong.

Solving one problem, creating another, is a classic description of what is called a wicked problem, and I think that what you are faced with and what we are looking at is a wicked problem for which there are no right answers, there are just better or worse answers, and I do think that the Springbank answer is a worse answer.

Your first problem is the Forest of Dean constituency is too small and there are a number of quite significant constraints as to what you can do about it, some are man-made, the political boundaries with Wales and the West Midlands region, and some are of nature, the River Wye and the River Severn. You do acknowledge that in your report and I do acknowledge that that therefore creates a significant problem since it is too small in electoral terms. Your answer is to cross the Severn at Haw Bridge and transfer the Coombe Hill ward, which has got the right number of electors, from Tewkesbury county constituency to the Forest of Dean, which you are proposing therefore to rename West Gloucestershire. That may solve one problem but it creates another one, which is that it splits the Tewkesbury constituency in two which you say, and your answer to that is to transfer Springbank, which has the right number of electors so it solves the electoral arithmetic problem, from Cheltenham borough constituency to Tewkesbury county constituency. My contention is that that creates a further problem, which I hope to explain this morning, firstly that it breaks some very strong community ties that Springbank has with the rest of Cheltenham and the community in the west of Cheltenham, and, secondly, that it does not really solve the problem that you are trying to solve, and I will deal with that one first.

There is the Cheltenham constituency on the map - this is the current electoral map - and you can see it coloured in orange, and here is the Tewkesbury constituency which you can see surrounds Cheltenham on three sides. Before I go any further, I should say that the main north/south links between the Tewkesbury constituency parts are the M5, which runs here, the A38 which runs here, and the A46 and A435 which runs straight through the middle of Cheltenham. So many of the links that currently link this part of the constituency, Shurdington, Brockworth and the southern parts of Badgeworth, already go through Cheltenham, already go through another constituency, without, as far as I am aware, any major problems. There is the Coombe Hill ward that you are proposing to change and, as you will observe, it straddles the M5 and it straddles the A38.

So whatever you do, there will still need to be travel across another constituency to get from the southern part of Tewkesbury to the northern part, and your solution, which is to transfer the Springbank ward, does connect the two on the map but it does not do anything else. There is no road through Springbank that leads from one part of the constituency, Tewkesbury constituency, to another. There is a road here that is called the Old Gloucester Road and the clue of its usefulness is in its name the Old Gloucester Road. It was replaced in 1810 by a new Gloucester Road which runs along here, and furthermore, at this end it is in Badgeworth ward, the other end it is in Coombe Hill ward, so even if you transfer Coombe Hill, you will end up in the Forest of Dean constituency whichever way you go. There are no other roads through Springbank as I will show you in a moment. So the usefulness of that, of Springbank, is in doubt.

But much more important are the community ties that Springbank has with the area of Cheltenham. It is an area of high deprivation. It may come as a surprise to people who think they know Cheltenham that there are areas of high deprivation but there are and I will show you on a map in a moment what they are. As a consequence, it is part of a regeneration area currently called the Hesters Way regeneration area but in the process of being renamed the Cheltenham West regeneration area, and I have provided you with a map which you can have which shows that. There are three wards in that regeneration area, Hesters Way, Springbank and St Mark's, which is where I live, and parts of a fourth, St Peter's, and I will show you on a map in a moment. So there are very strong community ties between Springbank and those other parts of Cheltenham.

There are integrated community services provided in two community centres, one in Springbank and one in Hesters Way, and they are integrated, so what is in one is not in the other, and consequently they are not easy to separate. There are also three charitable companies operating in the area: the Hesters Way Partnership, the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project, both of which I have links with, and Cheltenham Borough Homes which is the arms-length charity that runs Cheltenham housing but also has strong community objectives as well.

Finally, the public transport links. Public transport, the nature of Springbank is that people rely very much on transport and, as you will see, there are no links between Springbank and the Tewkesbury constituency.

There - just to demonstrate - are the areas of deprivation in Cheltenham, and as you can see, here is Springbank, here is Hesters Way, here is St Mark's and here is St Peter's. So you can see the areas coloured red and orange are the areas of high deprivation and the areas of green the areas of low deprivation, probably people are more familiar with those parts than they are of the west of Cheltenham. Unusually, for England, it is the western side of the town that is areas of high deprivation rather than the east for reasons of natural geography.

I apologise for the quality of the map but here is the Hesters Way area of benefit. As you can see, here is Springbank, here is Hesters Way, and for those of you who know Cheltenham, here is GCHQ. Here is St Mark's, here is St Peter's, and here is the main road running through the area, none of which goes through Springbank ward which is up here. Here is the Old Gloucester Road running along the top, here is Badgeworth ward here, here is Coombe Hill ward here, and here is Swindon Village ward here, all of which are currently in Tewkesbury. The Hesters Way Community Centre is here, the Springbank Community Centre is here.

So it is a highly integrated community, a deprived community, and one which relies very much on the integrated local services.

Finally on the transport issue, here is Springbank here, here is the bus route that serves Hesters Way and Springbank into the centre of Cheltenham, and it is the only public transport running through the ward. Here is the 41 and 42 bus that will take people to Tewkesbury should they want to go, but it immediately goes into the Coombe Hill ward. So if you wanted to get from there into Tewkesbury, you are immediately into what you are proposing to be the Forest of Dean constituency immediately. So as a genuine transport link it does not work. Furthermore, if you wanted to get from here to the other parts of the Tewkesbury constituency, which are down here, it is another bus ride into the centre of Cheltenham, then out again on the number 10 or the number 61 or whichever bus you want to take.

The practical effects of what you are proposing do not work and the community ties that are there would be broken by the proposal.

My kind of scorecard for the proposal is this: that it solves the electoral arithmetic, which I do realise is one of the things that you have to solve, and it solves, on a map, the split constituency, but does little else in terms of the split. It does not obviate cross-constituency border travel, which I do understand from your guide is an important element of that. It does not solve that issue, it therefore does not provide a useful link

between the two parts of the constituency, but much more important it does not avoid breaking some very strong local ties. My conclusion is it is not a good solution.

As a member of the public it is very difficult for me to come up with alternatives and I do realise that you would like them if that is at all possible. Going back to my wicked problem contention, there is no good answer, there are the least worst answers. One possibility is that you retain parts of the Coombe Hill constituency that contain the important transport links between the north and the south of the Tewkesbury constituency along the M5 and even across the A38, though I have later discovered that most of the polling districts in that ward straddle the A38 on both sides so that is not easy. But the M5 certainly could be retained if Uckington and Elmstone Hardwicke polling districts were retained in the Tewkesbury constituency, the M5 passes through those, but who am I to say that? I do not live in Tewkesbury and no doubt local people would have some comments to make about that, and I do therefore realise that that is not necessarily an answer that would find a lot of favour. The second is to transfer another ward from Cheltenham to Tewkesbury to make the numbers. There is no ideal solution, all the wards in Cheltenham on the periphery have parts of the centre or parts near the centre of Cheltenham. I do observe that the most rural constituency with a significant amount of the Cotswolds in it is Battledown ward. It has the right number of electors, it would solve the electoral arithmetic, but I suspect it would bring other problems.

So for me the key thing is not to break the local ties with the Springbank constituency and I do urge you not to do that, but I do recognise that whatever alternative you come up with is not going to please everyone. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Farmer, for your presentation and also for the written documents, which will be very useful as I go through all of the evidence that I have received.

MR FARMER: That is fine.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions for clarification?

MR FARMER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to wait for the microphone, please, and then state your name.

MR BURT: Hayward Burt, South West Conservatives. Just for clarification, does the Springbank ward abut to the Swindon Village ward in Cheltenham borough?

MR FARMER: No.

MR BURT: No, it does not. Okay, thank you.

MR FARMER: Hesters Way does. St Peter's does. I am not entirely sure, somebody here is looking a bit puzzled by that. It does, but only on a map. There is no road that links the two wards, you have to go through Coombe Hill ward to get there, onto the Tewkesbury Road and then on to Gallagher Retail Park which is in Swindon Village ward, but you briefly have to go into Coombe Hill ward to get there. It is a quirk of the local map. Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just to clarify it, we can actually show it on the map to show that it does actually about it on the map as you said, Mr Farmer. So the map is actually up there if --- It will be up there shortly we hope.

MR FARMER: Right. (After a pause) Yes, I am wrong and you are - well, I do not know whether you were --- It is there and it is the River Chelt, but there is no road over there. There is the road and that is the Hesters Way ward. Here is the Coombe Hill ward here, and here is the Old Gloucester Road which runs from Badgeworth through Springbank, then into Coombe Hill ward to the junction here, then into Swindon Village, but you have to go through this bit of Coombe Hill to get there. So on a map, yes, and I do acknowledge that there is a link on the map but not a useful link in terms of travel. To be honest, why would anybody want to do that? There is no logical journey. They would go this way up to Boddington and onto the M5 or they would go through Cheltenham. Would that be a problem to local electors to go into one constituency and out again? It is not a problem now.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Farmer. Are there any other questions? (None) Thank you very much for attending and giving your representations.

MR FARMER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is not booked until 12 o'clock and that speaker has not booked in yet, so I will adjourn the hearing until 12 o'clock.

After an adjournment

At 12 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Ben Howlett, you are our next speaker. Would you like to come to the lectern, please?

MR BEN HOWLETT: (MP for Bath) Thank you. Thank you very much for agreeing to see me today. I just want to first of all say I strongly support the recommendations of the Boundary Commission. Historically, the Bath constituency has been an awful lot smaller than most constituencies around the country and currently it is around 60,000, so I am pleased that obviously the recommendations were that the electorate size is going to increase up to 71,000 to 78,000, to a total of 73,586 electors, in order to make that fair in line with the recommendations across the country, too.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Howlett. Would you perhaps first of all give your name and address? An official address will suffice.

MR BEN HOWLETT: Of course. Ben Howlett, the Member of Parliament for Bath, and it is the House of Commons.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR BEN HOWLETT: Thank you. As I said earlier on, I support the composition of the new constituency, which I think is incredibly sensible geographically. It combines the wards surrounding Bath, as well as the current wards of Bath, in a very cohesive nature, including Bathavon North, Bathavon South and also Peasedown, too. The constituency of Bath has been around since - and I think this is right - 1295, so to keep the constituency together and also to expand it out to some of the villages I think is a very important situation. It encourages the unique character of Bath to remain a part of our heritage.

In terms of the specific considerations which have been outlined in the Boundary Commission report, obviously we are talking about Bathavon North, Bathavon South and Peasedown. I thought it might be a good idea just to explain why Bathavon North and Bathavon South together are a good addition to the constituency, but then also, particularly in relation to Peasedown, to look at the benefits to having Peasedown a part of the overall new Bath constituency, too.

The residents of Bathavon North and Bathavon South have incredibly close transport links, first and primary, to Bath. All the bus routes come out of Bath into the villages, and also that includes Bath Easton, Bathford, Bathampton, Wellow and other small hamlets as well just around those larger villages. Also at the very northern part of the constituency you have got the A46 which links up the M4 to the villages out in Bathavon North as well as the overall City of Bath. On top of that as well, to the south you have also got most of the B roads that all link into the southern part of the constituency, the current constituency, in the City of Bath. On top of that you have also got the shopping and leisure facilities, the closest shopping and leisure facilities being based in Bath, and all of the residents in the villages come into the city centre in order to use those facilities as well. Not just that - I will give a plug to my shops in Bath as well - they all come in and shop in the City of Bath, too.

We also have a large number of pupils and students who live out in Bathavon North and Bathavon South who come in and use the primary schools and also the secondary schools as well, one of which I was visiting earlier on this morning. Included on top, Bath is a university city as well: you have got Bath Spa and also Bath University. Quite a large number of the students also live out in some of the villages, largely because it is slightly cheaper to do so, rather than paying the extortionate house prices in the city centre.

In relation to Bathavon as an area, I mean Bathavon quite obviously has the name Bath in it as well. Just on the nature of the phraseology and also the terminology, having Bathavon villages in and surrounding Bath into the Bath constituency is incredibly important.

Moving on to Peasedown, I mean the residents of Peasedown have huge amounts of transport links into Bath. They have very strong bus services that all lead into the Bath bus station, and residents who commute further field all come into Bath train station, too.

The numbers of pupils who come from that particular larger village than some of the others are quite prevalent in terms of going to schools like Ralph Allen, which is in my own constituency at the moment, and also Bath Community Academy and others around in the south of Bath, too.

So there is quite a lot of links there and it is the shortest distance really in order to go to the nearest main shopping area, leisure facilities, and also socialising facilities as well.

There are also very large community links as well between Peasedown and Bath, too. One local charity I can think of off the top of my head who visited parliament this week is a charity called Inner Flame - they have recently moved from Bath out to Peasedown - and there is an awful lot of connectivity in relation to community links between the village and also the city in itself. On top of that as well, as I said earlier on, in terms of work spaces, in terms of jobs, there is a large amount of links between those people who live in Peasedown coming in and working in Bath and then commuting back out again.

So overall I am very supportive of what the Boundary Commission has suggested in relation to my own constituency, I think it is very sensible, I think it is very logical. Also, in terms of the community links - I think which ultimately is sometimes forgotten about in these processes - the community links are incredibly strong there as well, they have been thought of very, very well indeed.

Lastly, I would just say in relation to an unrelated point, overall I just want to thank the Boundary Commission really for the work you are doing in terms of actually thinking

about Somerset and Avon. I think overall across Somerset and Avon the proposals have been very well thought out, very logically considered. I am a bit of a political geek when it comes to these things and I have to say, if I was doing these myself, I would have been thinking about exactly the same type of breakdown as you have, too. Across the rest of the country, I generally think that these proposals are fair, and just want to thank again the Boundary Commission for their work in putting these together. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Howlett, thank you very much for coming to speak today and for your presentation. Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions for clarification from the floor? Any questions for Mr Howlett? (None) Thank you.

MR BEN HOWLETT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next booked speaker actually is not booked into a slot until this afternoon at 2.20 pm. Are there any people in the chamber who would like to speak who have not booked a slot? (None) Okay. I propose then to adjourn the hearing until 12.45 pm and to review the situation at that point. Thank you.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 12.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I would just like to reopen the hearing now to say that we have no new speakers. Our next speaker is booked for 2.20 pm so I will now close the hearing and adjourn until 2.15 pm.

After the luncheon adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to call our first speaker, Mrs Brenda Massey. Mrs Massey, would you come to the lectern, please? Good afternoon.

CLLR MASSEY: Good afternoon.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you give your name and address, please?

CLLR MASSEY: Yes. My name is Cllr Brenda Massey and my address is 7 Seagry Close, Bristol BS10 5NJ.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Would you like to make your presentation, please?

CLLR MASSEY: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR MASSEY: Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

With reference to the proposals for Bristol North West constituency, I would like to support paragraphs 63 and 64 in your consultation document. I appreciate that the current boundaries for Bristol North West and Bristol South are within the permitted 5 per cent of electoral numbers and that no change is proposed to these two constituencies.

The communities within North West that share constituency boundaries with Bristol West, for example, such as Lockleaze and Horfield wards, have their own individual identities, and given the 5 per cent tolerance it would not be appropriate to make changes to these.

There is a strong sense of community cohesion amongst all the wards that currently comprise Bristol North West constituency, and the physical boundaries such as the M32 corridor support this further. It would be very detrimental to the sense of community in the area if there were changes to the boundaries that currently exist, so I fully support the proposals contained in the consultation document and hope that these will be agreed in the final version. Thank you for listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for attending, Mrs Massey, and thank you for your representations and your thoughts. Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions for clarification?

CLLR MASSEY: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It appears that there are none. Thank you very much for attending.

CLLR MASSEY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is not booked until 3 pm so I will adjourn the hearing until 2.45 pm.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is due at 3 o'clock. That speaker has not yet booked in, so we will just wait and see whether that person arrives.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, Mr Renhard.

MR RENHARD: (Labour Party) Good afternoon.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Would you just give your name and address, please?

MR RENHARD: Yes. Thomas Renhard, Flat 4, 10 Dorian Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0XW.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your representations, please.

MR RENHARD: Thank you. I come here today speaking as a member of the public and also as a member of the Executive Committee of the North West Labour Party. We are very happy with the proposals that have been put forward by the Boundary Commission for Bristol and for Bristol North West. We have a really strong sense of community in Bristol North West and we feel it is really important that the wards remain in the area as they are now. That is all I have got to say. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, but just wait there a second. I suspect there might not be any questions for you, but are there any questions? (None) Yes, thank you. I have no questions. Thank you very much for attending and telling me your views.

MR RENHARD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our last booked speaker for today is booked for 4 o'clock. That gentleman did come in earlier and I suspect he may come back a little earlier than 4 o'clock, but no time was actually agreed, he did not indicate when he would be back. So I am going now to adjourn the hearing until quarter to four and come back at that time and hopefully our speaker might be early. We are adjourned until 3.45 pm.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, Mr Bex.

MR BEX: (Wessex Regionalist Party) Good afternoon. Are you Frances, a lawyer or teacher?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No. I am Anita Bickerdike the Lead Assistant Commissioner for the South West region.

MR BEX: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am detailed to hear the public representations on the initial proposals for this region.

MR BEX: Okay, right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome to the hearing.

MR BEX: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I ask you to give your name and address, please?

MR BEX: Yes, I have put it on the form. It is Colin Bex, 106 Clive Court, which is London W9 1SF.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR BEX: It is obviously my London address. Right, so are you ready for me to start?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please do continue with your representations.

MR BEX: Hello, everybody. I am Colin Bex, a co-founder and currently President of the Wessex Regionalist, the party for Wessex. I am a member of Mebyon Kernow, the party for Cornwall, and a co-founder and active member of the Mercia Acting Witan. I am also co-founder and Chairman-elect of COR, which is a campaign for regional England, and I am an active member of Make Votes Matter, which is the campaign for proportionally representative democracy in Britain.

I endorse the formal objections lodged against the Commission's proposals both by the Wessex Regionalists and by Mebyon Kernow, and I object against all these proceedings, which must be adjourned unless and until adequate factual criteria are provided by the Commission as a credible basis for determining a remit to propose responsible changes to any boundary in Wessex, Cornwall or Mercia, and elsewhere in England. Moreover, before any change is enacted or implemented, all future proposals shall be subject to ratification by a minimum two-thirds majority of the people whose constituencies would be affected by them. An expensive job creation opportunity, for at least three members of the Commission are lawyers, whose remuneration is obtained by payment, amongst others, from the disproportionately rich to secure private control

over substantial areas of land by way of continuing the legacy stemming from the Middle Ages and exacerbated during the three centuries 1604 to 1914, including the Enclosure Acts 1773 to 1854, *et seq*, during which over 5,200 Acts were implemented sequestering public land for exclusive private use and control, thus enclosing some 6.8 million acres of England which is more than a fifth of its total area.

For the purpose of these proceedings therefore I speak principally for myself, but in the process of course also I speak with and for all those above and elsewhere who concur that the overriding need in parallel with appropriate boundary change is for urgent and fundamental recasting of Government in Britain by way of dismantling top-down diktat by the London parties in allegiance with the Crown at Westminster for replacement with proportionally-elected regional parliaments with powers similar to those aspired to by Scotland but with one key difference, namely the direction of power will be revised from top-down diktat to bottom-up via sovereign power devolved to the parishes, and this of course would be by way of proportional representation. It is absolutely nonsense to say - as I am coming to - that changing the boundaries will do anything towards improving or obtaining democracy in this country, which does not exist as I will come to.

Also there must be legislation passed to dismantle the debt-based finance system with a form of positive money to bind governments to ensure redistribution of adequate money in the form of a living income for every man, woman and child without strings. That is money they must be provided, governments must provide them by statute, so they do not face the sort of things that even I have been, and am being subjected to now, by being thrown out of my home by a private landlord who is an insurgent, does not live in this country, supporting a private lawyer who comes also from Italy and has been behaving in the courts as though he was supporting a member of the mafia. That is the experience I am living now, so I am telling you, unless anyone in this room has ever experienced this, you cannot know what it is like. You can only, if you have it, imagine what it is like. The fact that my Government is doing this to me with 60 per cent of the country opposing it is a total outrage and I shall fight to the death to have it changed. This is not in my text as you will realise but I believe it is being filmed. I would ask for a copy of the film so that I can add in the pieces I have not included, and I will be adding to this anyway in future.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The films will actually be published in due course. Everything that is said will be published in due course so you will be able to look at that.

MR BEX: When you say in due course, Madam, do you mean in two years, three years, or will it be done in a time when it will be useful for me? Because this is the other trick, you just sideline people you do not want to hear - not you but the Chairman of the Commission does not want to hear or does not want to include. So I need to know when this will be available to me and I would ask that it is made available as soon as possible, please.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: My understanding is that it is going to be made available with all of the representations that everybody has made early next year, so the films will be available plus copies of the representations made. Transcripts of the hearings will be available for anyone to have a look at them and to read them.

MR BEX: So would that be before the spring or would it be even earlier than that do you think?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: All I can say is it will be early next year, I cannot be any more specific than that.

MR BEX: No. Well, obviously, you have not been informed so I sympathise with you, but you can see my point. Obviously, the consultation, I am informed, finishes on 5 December I believe.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR BEX: So anything after that would not be included in any decision-making process. So anyway, all right. Well, thank you for informing me of that.

Okay. So I got to the point where every man, woman and child must have a living income and that means an income without strings, not an income dependent on work they do. People are not to be held to ransom for their livelihood and their homes and their food and water because perhaps they refuse to damage the environment, to take money for damaging the environment, refuse to take money for doing something less than human for money. That is key. The link between money and what we do, all of us, must be broken if we are ever to achieve a civilised society which is respondent to the majority of human needs and wishes, so we have a healthy society, no longer terrorised by the fear of being thrown out of their homes, false debt, etcetera. So the psycho-terrorism of centralised diktat has to be eradicated entirely, that is my issue, that is my submission.

So in parallel with any proposed boundary change, the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act also must include legislation to ensure an effective form of voting to guarantee proportional representation is implemented in time for the 2020 general election, together with enlargement of the franchise to provide votes for 16-year-olds and older. This, as you will recall, was provided for Scotland and in the Scottish referendum, and the only tragedy there was the Yes campaign was undermined by an unholy alliance from Westminster coupled with the most extraordinary unconstitutional intervention by the Queen. She only has to ask a question for some subservience to cringe and crawl and do what she is implying, which was to think carefully before you vote. Speaking for the establishment as part of it, she should not have done that, but that tipped and deprived the Scots of their

legitimate independence. This I hope will be changed, and the Scottish people, as you know, will, if they have that, will be able to join Europe whatever happens to Brexit. That is their choice, they should have that choice.

Failure to implement any of these provisions will confirm as dissembling rhetoric the semi-literate Orwellian undertaking so dishonestly included in the initial response by the minister for the constitution, that purportedly the Government is committed to fair and equal representation for voters, and updating the historical constituency boundaries will make sure that everyone's vote carries more equal - my emphasis - value. Well, we all know what Orwell said about everyone being equal but some more equal than others. It is a literary statement in the canon of literacy but, as you can see, "more equal" is a nonsense: things are equal or not equal and they are not more or less equal. Any redrafting of boundaries is but one part of an equation essential to introduce a democracy for England to include voting is proportionally representative for all the candidates and parties standing for their own parliaments throughout the traditional regions of England.

To ensure the function and aim of this Commission is not to underpin or entrench the archaic anachronistic and conspicuously undemocratic Government establishment status quo at Westminster, which remains responsible for the serial disasters from man-made aberration via the system over decades, centuries and continuing, those boundaries must be redrawn to concur with those of the traditional shires created in Wessex during the mid-Saxon period and later in the remainder of England in which all parties each are to receive - hang on, sorry, this does not look right. Well, I will rephrase this a little - in which all parties are each to receive the provision of responsible redrafting of boundaries to reinforce a key anchor for any civilised society worthy of the name by way of securing and maintaining a strong presence in the form of a tangible connection with the history of our heritage. Obviously, I am referring there to the fact that the boundaries which over, I think it is five, maybe more than five, fiddles by the Commission have well lost the areas of our historical heritage.

From the results of the British general elections in 2010 and 2015 in which on both occasions the Conservative Party was elected with minority support from the electorate, in the case of the latter with support of less than half those who opposed them, the Scots referendum on independence in September 2014 - I have already said this - in which the ayes were cheated of their victory by skulduggery by an unholy alliance of the London parties with the government administration of the day, sealed by a whole unconstitutional invention by the Crown, and of course the extraordinary and unprecedented decision of a majority of the electorate in North America to remove power from a shameful dynasty, demonstrates that finally now it has become clear beyond doubt that traditional establishment, nation state diktat, has unravelled once and for all. The genie is out of the bottle, it is not going back in. Now is the time to get democracy properly organised and genuinely proportionally to represent the views of majorities of members of our population.

Finally now for context, before doing anything more at this period in the evolution of the planet, abiogenesis and the affairs of our species to date, anyone presuming to take executive action to effect unknown consequences, including further gerrymandering of artificial boundaries, should familiarise themselves with the prescience of the challenges we face which are identified in two new publications: the first Bang, subtitled Genesis, by Stefano Longo, for which you can obtain copies by going to www.lulu.com, and the other title Technology vs Humanity, which can be found by contacting techvshuman.com. I think it is up there, is it?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is, yes.

MR BEX: Yes, that is right. If anyone wants the time to take a note of those, please do. And by fastfuturepublishing.com published this year.

So that is my statement for now. I will be doing some more work and I do not know if I will get any more in before the 5th, I will have a go. But what I have to say or what I have had to say is possibly some of the most critical information that should be available to you. For any influence any one here may have, this should be drawn to the attention of any genuinely democratic Member of Parliament to be joining these campaigns for proportional representation and parliamentary democracy for the regions of this country, and indeed this extends for Europe. There is no united kingdom these elections have shown, the country is divided pretty much down the middle, but it is much more than that, and Europe is divided. The extreme right is coming in on this vacuum on this realisation and it is up to all of us responsible citizens to make sure that we beat the right, extreme right, from its plans, which are only going to make things worse.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Bex, for attending and for your representations. Are there any questions from the floor for clarification? (None) Thank you very much, Mr Bex, and thank you for providing the written document. Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have no other booked speakers, therefore I intend to close the second day of the public hearing in Bristol, which brings the public hearings on the proposals for the South West region to an end. Anyone who wishes to make any further comments can do so via the website, the Boundary Commission website, or in writing to the Boundary Commission. Once all the representations have been received at the end of the consultation period, I, along with my colleague Assistant Commissioner, Catherine Elliott, will review all written and oral representations, and we will at a later point make a report and our recommendations to the Commissioners in terms of how the boundary review process should proceed. Can I thank everyone for attending and for giving their representation, can I also thank City Hall for accommodating us over the last two days, and I will formally close the hearings in the South West region.

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