

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

HOTEL MERCURE
EXETER, DEVON

ON

MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Ms Anita Bickerdike, Lead Assistant Commissioner

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THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Can I welcome you to this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South West region?

My name is Anita Bickerdike, and I am an Assistant Commissioner with the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the South West region.

I am also responsible for chairing the hearing today and tomorrow, and I am responsible with my fellow Assistant Commissioner, Catherine Elliott, for analysing all the representations received about the initial proposals 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 a Secretary to the Commission and who is sitting beside me. Sam will shortly explain the Commission's initial proposals for the new constituencies for this region. He will tell you how you can make written representations, and he will also deal with one or two administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10 am until 8 pm, and tomorrow it is scheduled from 9 am until 5 pm. I can vary that timetable, and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak in making that variation, if necessary. 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 the hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the South West region. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a time slot to speak, and I will invite them to do so at the appropriate time. If there is any free time during the day, or indeed at the end of the day, I will then invite anyone who has not registered but who would like to speak, to do so.

At this point, 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 presentations. People may seek to

put questions for clarification to the speakers, but I ask, please, that they do that through me, as Chair.

I will now hand over to Sam, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the South West region.

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

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

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for new constituency boundaries which were published on the 13 September 2016. We use the European electoral regions as a template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled, not including the two constituencies to be 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 adopted in formulating our initial proposals.

In considering the composition of each electoral region we noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties. Therefore we have grouped some 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.

The Commission's proposals for the South West are for 53 constituencies, a reduction of two. Our proposals leave nine of the existing constituencies unchanged. In North Somerset, both of the existing constituencies are unchanged. In Bristol, two of the four constituencies are unaltered, while the remaining two are changed only by the transfer of one ward. In Swindon, we have made changes to realign constituency boundaries

with the new ward boundaries. More substantial change is required, however, in other parts of the region.

Consequently, it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries. We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Cornwall and Devon. It crosses the boundary in the north of the counties, combining the towns of Bude, Bideford and Launceston. Another proposed constituency contains electors from both Dorset and Wiltshire, and combines the towns of Shaftesbury and Warminster.

Additionally, we propose that some electors from the north east of the County of Somerset are combined with electors from Bath and North East Somerset in one constituency. We also propose that some electors from the south of the County of Gloucestershire are combined with electors from the unitary authority of South Gloucestershire.

The Statutory Rules 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 will 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 in 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 proposals until Monday, 5 December, 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.

You can make written representations to us through our consultation website at bce.2018.org.uk. I urge everyone to submit written 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 make an oral representation.

The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see, from the back, we are taking a video record of this hearing from which we will create a verbatim transcript.

The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing, along with all written representations, for a four-week period during which members of the public will 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 includes certain personal data of those who have made representations. I therefore invite all those contributing to read the Commission's Data Protection and Privacy Policy, a copy of which we have with us, and which is also available on our website.

A few final matters of housekeeping: please turn your phones off, or put them on silent. The toilets are back through the double doors where you entered. After four weeks of saying that there is no fire alarm scheduled today, there is one scheduled today at 10.30, so apologies to whoever will be presenting at that time, but do not leave the building at 10.30. If, however, a fire alarm goes off during the rest of today, and indeed tomorrow, the exits are handily right there next to us and the muster point is just outside in the carpark.

At this stage I will now hand back to Anita to begin the public hearing, and I thank you for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Sam. If I can ask Mr Greg Cook, please, to come forward, I think, Mr Cook, you have the first slot. I understand that your slot is for 30 minutes. Would you like me to give you an indication when you have five minutes left?

MR COOK: Yes, please.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I will do that to assist timekeeping.

MR COOK: (Labour Party) Thank you very much. My name is Greg Cook, and I am an official of the national Labour Party, based at our head office at Southside House, 105 Victoria Street, SW1, and the submission this morning is being made on behalf of the national Labour Party and also the South West region of the Labour Party as an overall response to the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission. It follows a detailed consultation process within the Labour Party which has involved all Members of Parliament, constituency Labour Parties, and others within the region.

I am going to cover four areas, the first three relatively briefly, which is to talk about the review process itself; secondly, some comments on the statutory criteria; and, thirdly, on some issues of policy; and then, finally, to look at the initial proposals themselves and the Labour Party's view and some counter-proposals which we wish to make.

If I could start by just making some observations on the process. The Labour Party welcomes the initial proposals of the Commission and the clear and comprehensive way in which they have set those proposals out and, while we disagree with some of them and in the presentations to the regional hearings we are setting out alternatives which we believe better fit the statutory criteria, we accept that in all cases the Commission have fully considered the different options and explained the decisions which they have made.

We also welcome the Commission's efforts to stimulate and encourage public participation in the process and specifically from our point of view to consult with the political parties on their policies and procedures, and we are grateful in particular for the opportunity at this hearing to set out the views of the Party on the Commission's initial proposals.

We note that, under the terms of the acts, the Commission may, in choosing between different schemes, take into account four criteria: special geographical circumstances, local government boundaries, the boundaries of existing constituencies, and any local ties that will be broken by changes to constituencies, but it is self-evident 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 while 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; that local ties may be broken; and where we put forward alternative proposals to those of the Commission, we do so obviously on the basis we believe them

to be, on balance, more consistent with those statutory criteria. We note and accept the electoral quota for the review is 74,769; that all seats in the South West region must therefore have electorates between 71,031 and 78,507.

Some comments on some of the policy areas which are relevant to the review, firstly on the use of European electoral regions. We welcome the decision to use European electoral regions as the sub national review areas for the purposes of initial proposals, and were the Commission 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 South West region at 3,930,770 gives an entitlement under the allocation to 53 seats with an average electorate of 74,165 which is 604 below the electoral quota.

Secondly, on the uses of wards and divisions, we note the Commission's policy of using district and unitary wards as the smallest unit with which to build constituencies, and also their remarks on this issue in their guidance booklet which states that they recognise there may be exceptional and compelling circumstances that will make it appropriate to divide a ward, but we also note that no such proposal has been made in the South West region, although indeed one or two such proposals were made last time, or anywhere else.

The Labour Party supports the policy of the Commission in this area, and we believe that any such proposal should be treated on its merits, but within an assumption that whole wards and divisions should remain intact in the absence of compelling and exceptional circumstances such as are described.

Thirdly, on the issue of so-called "orphan wards", we note the concept of the orphan ward, which is where one ward of a local authority is added to a constituency which is wholly or partly in another local authority. This is regarded by definition as undesirable. We accept that such arrangements are often anomalous and clearly at odds with the respect for local authority boundaries.

However, we believe that a dogmatic policy which considered 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 that means that ties are broken and electors are moved in that ward, but in any case in this region we note that the low average electorates of the wards means there are very few examples of such an arrangement.

On the use of sub-regional review areas, we note there is no requirement on the Commission to avoid the crossing of County boundaries, as there used to be under the previous legislation, but in this region the Commission have allocated whole numbers of seats to Bristol, North Somerset, and Swindon, and the rest of the region is divided into four groupings.

We believe that the use of counties as units in this way is a sensible approach insofar as it is consistent with respect for local authority boundaries, and also, where counties have a strong identity and tradition, that is also a relevant factor in determining local ties.

Finally, 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 to become more complex and unwieldy and we 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 consider all proposals on their merits and taking account of local opinion.

To turn to the initial proposals of the Commission and our views on them, we are setting out in this statement our views on the initial proposals of the Commission, and we make counter-proposals to some of them. While we refer to the proposals in terms of the statutory criteria, we do not here include detail of the community ties and other relevant matters, which will be amplified in the statements of individuals in the areas affected.

We support 39 of the constituencies as proposed in the South West region, at least in terms of which wards are in them; otherwise some of them we believe to be imperfect and they may break ties and cause disruption, but we believe there may be in those cases no better alternative available. As in all areas, we will consider all proposals that are made. We make counter-proposals for 14 constituencies, and we also suggest some alternative names for constituencies to those proposed by the Commission.

We note that the City of Bristol, the District of North Somerset and the Borough of Swindon all have electorates that can sustain whole numbers of seats unchanged from their current allocations, and we also note that of the remaining counties, the average electorates of the whole numbers of seats in Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Dorset (including Bournemouth and Poole), and Wiltshire would be more than 5 per cent above or below the electoral quota, and, therefore, clearly will be impossible for them to sustain whole numbers of seats. The table sets out the allocations, theoretical entitlement, which is the electorate of that

council area divided by the electoral quota, and the average electorate under the rounded number of seats that would be allocated.

We support the arrangements which the Commission have proposed in which Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire are allocated nine seats; Bath and North East Somerset and Somerset, seven; Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly and Devon are allocated 17; and Dorset and Wiltshire are allocated 12 seats. This therefore implies that there is a net loss of one seat within Cornwall and Devon and one seat within Dorset and Wiltshire.

If we start with the arrangements in Cornwall and Devon. We support the initial proposals in Cornwall and Devon in full in respect to the boundaries, and we recognise and accept there is widespread support for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to be reviewed separately and to be allocated a whole number of constituencies, but we also accept that, under the terms of the legislation, the Commission is unable to make such a proposal, and the average electorate of five seats in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly at 78,775 would be more than 5 per cent above the electoral quota.

We note that some of the changes in Cornwall simply reverse those made in 2010 when the allocation of the county increased by one seat, and we therefore believe that they would be acceptable. The inclusion of the town of Hale in the St Ives constituency is the logical means of increasing the electorate of that seat, while the proposed Falmouth and Camborne is also similar to the previous 2010 seat. We support the other three seats wholly in the county, Bodmin and St Austell, Truro and Newquay, and South East Cornwall. We also support the proposed Bideford, Bude and Launceston constituency, although we are not convinced that a three-limbed constituency name is desirable, particularly as two of the names are Cornish towns when only a minority of the constituency is within Cornwall, and we would look at alternatives there.

In Devon, we support the proposed Plymouth North and Plymouth South which minimise change in the city, and they keep Plymstock intact in one seat while Plympton is in the Tavistock and Ivybridge constituency. In the case of this latter seat we are again not convinced that this is the most appropriate name for the seat as Plympton is the largest settlement within it, and it may be that the retention of the name South West Devon, even though its boundaries are different, may be preferable. We note that some of the remaining seats in Devon are either unchanged, as with Exeter, North Devon and Torbay, or are amended to reflect new ward boundaries, as with Tiverton and Honiton, and we support all of these and the changes to balance the electorates in Central Devon, East Devon, Newton Abbot and Totnes.

In Bath, North East Somerset and Somerset, we recognise that four of the five seats in Somerset could remain unchanged. The two seats in Bath and North East Somerset have electorates well below the electoral quota, and therefore some change is necessary. We support the Taunton Deane and Yeovil constituencies that are both unchanged, and also the proposed Bridgwater and West Somerset, and Somerton and Frome, which are simply both reduced in size. We support the proposal to enlarge the Bath constituency with the inclusion of the wards of Bath Avon North, Bath Avon South, and Peasedown, although we do believe that Peasedown has ties to Radstock and Midsomer Norton which are broken under these proposals.

We also support changes to add parts of the Wells and Somerton and Frome constituencies, including the town of Shepton Mallet, to the North East Somerset constituency and the consequential adjustments required to increase the electorate of Wells.

In North Somerset, we support the retention of the North Somerset and Weston-super-Mare constituencies unchanged, we trust that this will be uncontroversial. We note the City of Bristol has an electorate of 300,155 a theoretical entitlement to 4.01 constituencies; that two of the constituencies can remain unchanged, and are unchanged under the initial proposals, and we accept that the transfer of the ward of Easton from Bristol West to Bristol East, of which it used to be a part, is the only change which is necessary; and again we would trust that this would be uncontroversial.

In Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, we note there must be at least one constituency which includes parts of Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, and we also note that while the Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and the Cotswolds constituencies could remain unchanged, the amendments required to other seats may have consequential effects on them.

The Commission propose that the Thornbury and Yate constituency be amended to include seven wards of the district of Stroud, including the towns of Cam and Dursley, and that the Stroud constituency should include the Quedgeley area of Gloucester with the Longlevens ward of Gloucester included in the Gloucester constituency; that the Springbank ward of Cheltenham be in Tewkesbury, and the Coombe Hill ward in the Forest of Dean seat, which would be renamed West Gloucestershire, and the town of Nailsworth would be included in the Cotswolds constituency.

We believe that these proposals are unnecessarily disruptive and they break ties, particularly in Stroud, by removing Nailsworth, Cam and Dursley, which are local

centres within the constituency and have ties to Stroud; and we would also argue that Quedgeley is an integral part of Gloucester with no ties to Stroud.

We accept the proposal to include the Tewkesbury ward of Coombe Hill in the Forest of Dean constituency, which simply adds similar areas to those already in that seat in the Highnam and Haw Bridge wards. We do not though support the change of name of this seat, which has been retained intact, the existing one, and the Forest of Dean district continues to comprise over 90 per cent of its electorate, so we would propose that it retain its current name.

We would propose, however, that the wards of Berkeley, Cam East, Cam West and Dursley should remain in the Stroud constituency, along with Nailsworth; that Quedgeley Field Court and Quedgeley Severn Vale should remain in the Gloucester constituency, and that Longlevens ward should remain in the Tewkesbury constituency; and that the Gloucester constituency should instead be amended, in other words have its size reduced, by the inclusion of the Elmbridge ward, which adjoins Longlevens in the Tewkesbury constituency, a change which could be reflected by a change of name to Tewkesbury and North Gloucester constituency.

We would then propose that Thornbury and Yate, in addition to the wards of Kingswood Vale and Wotton-under-Edge which are proposed to go into it, shall also include four wards of the Cotswold district, including the town of Tetbury and should continue to include the Boyd Valley ward of South Gloucestershire, all of which are linked by the A433; and, rather than adding another town to the name Thornbury and Yate, the changes to this constituency could perhaps be acknowledged by naming the seat "South East Gloucestershire".

The Kingswood constituency would then include Staple Hill ward, which is part of Kingswood, and it is anomalous that it has not actually been part of that constituency since 2010, and also that the Severn ward would be included in the Filton and Bradley Stoke constituency.

We would then propose that the Bisley and Painswick wards of Stroud district, and the Isebourne and Winchcombe wards of Tewkesbury, all of which comprise rural Cotswold communities, should be included in the Cotswold constituency. We believe that all of these would be well shaped and robust, and fewer ties would be broken than under the initial proposals; and in total in this review area, 610,079 electors in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, which is 92 per cent, would remain in their main successor constituency, compared with 593,686 which is 89.5 per cent under the initial proposals.

Just briefly on Swindon, we accept the proposal to include the whole of the Covingham and Dorcan ward in North Swindon, and the whole of Mannington and Western ward in South Swindon, which is the minimum change able to bring those seats within the required electorate range. On Dorset and Wiltshire we note that 9 of the 13 seats in these counties have electorates more than 5 per cent below the electoral quota and that there must be at least one constituency which contains parts of both counties.

We support the initial proposals for Chippenham, Devizes, Salisbury, and Trowbridge constituencies, all of which are well shaped and comprise small towns and rural areas, and we also support the Warminster and Shaftesbury seat, in principle at least, which comprises parts of Dorset and Wiltshire, although we do make a minor counter-proposal to the composition of that seat, which is described below, and we support the West Dorset constituency which is amended only to adjust to new ward boundaries.

In the remaining seats in Dorset we believe the Commission's proposals are disruptive, in fact indeed that they maximise the level of disruption, and they break ties with changes, for example, to the borough of Bournemouth meaning the town is divided between three constituencies.

We propose instead that the Bournemouth East constituency should remain unchanged, and that Bournemouth West should include the whole of the divided Poole borough wards of Alderney, Branksome East and Branksome West, all of which are partly in the existing Bournemouth West constituency, and that the Christchurch constituency should, rather than include part of Bournemouth, continue to include the wards of Ameysford, Ferndown Central, Hampreston & Longham and Parley, and the whole of the wards of St Leonard's, Verwood East, Verwood West, and Westmoors & Holt.

The Poole constituency would continue to include the Creekmoor ward and also Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West, and the Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency would then be retained, including the whole of the rest of the East Dorset district, and that part of North Dorset which is proposed to be in the Blandford and Wimborne constituency plus the Hill Forts ward, which is proposed to be in Warminster and Shaftesbury, and the Broadstone and Merley and Bearwood wards of Poole and five wards of the district of Purbeck; and this arrangement is very similar indeed to the revised proposals in the abortive review five years ago which we believe were robust. We support the inclusion of the Wareham ward in South Dorset constituency which is required to bring its electorate above 5 per cent below the threshold.

Under this counter-proposal 470,677 electors, which is 84.4 per cent in the eight constituencies wholly or partly in Dorset, would remain in the main successor

constituency compared with 358,299 which is at 64.5 per cent under the initial proposals, which we regard as a huge differential, while the Borough of Bournemouth will be divided once again between just two constituencies.

In summary, the Labour Party alternative proposals are detailed in the appendices which contain all the ward lists of our counter-proposal, and we will be making a detailed written submission which sets out these arguments and expands upon them, including detailed statistics and mapping before 5 December and, as always, we will reserve our position on and will comment on all other proposals that are made by others during this consultation period, during the secondary consultation period. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Cook, thank you very much for those presentations. They were very clear, and I understood all of that. Thank you for the handout. It is very useful. Do we have any questions from the floor?

MR PRATT: (Conservative Party) Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. I have got two matters of clarification. The first one is a very straightforward one. In your Appendix B you have an electorate for Bournemouth West of 72,285. I just wonder if you can check that - you may have to check it at another stage - because my calculation is that it is 77,012. Still within the range, but I would like that at some stage to be clarified.

MR COOK: I will obviously check that, and clarify if this is what the correct figure should be, yes.

MR PRATT: Okay. My other question of clarification, Madam Chairman, is within the Gloucester and South Gloucestershire sub region, I wonder if you could tell me - there are nine constituencies within that sub region - how many constituencies under the Commission's proposals and under your proposals contain within them three local authorities?

MR COOK: I can tell you on ours, from a quick glance. There are three in ours, and I am sure you are about to tell me how many there are under the Commission's proposals, because I have not got that in front of me.

MR PRATT: I think I would be right in saying there are none under the Commission's proposals. There are either all two, or one.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any other questions? (No response) Thank you very much, Mr Cook.

MR COOK: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I can invite Mr Grant and Mr Jolly from the Liberal Democrat Party.

CLLR GRANT: (Liberal Democrat Party) Good morning, and thank you very much for the opportunity to present our proposals and to comment upon those made by the Boundary Commission for England.

My name is Cllr Gavin Grant. I have the privilege of chairing the Western Counties of the Liberal Democrat regional party, and those are, in essence, the counties of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, including the unitary authorities of Bournemouth and Poole, Somerset, the Unitary Authority of North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Authority, the City of Bristol, and of course the South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority.

My colleague, Ian Jolly, will present shortly on Devon and Cornwall. Our Party divides the South West region between those two units of Western Counties and Devon and Cornwall. If I may just comment on the broad principles.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Grant, could I just stop you there, please? Could you give your address, please?

CLLR GRANT: I do beg your pardon.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR GRANT: I just filled it in outside. It is 16 Gloucester Street, Malmesbury, Sierra November, SN16 0AA.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

CLLR GRANT: Ian, no doubt you will do the same. Living in rural Devon, Ian's is a rather more complex address than that of my own, and that of course is in the County of Wiltshire. (Fire alarm test) I am trying to look at where the clicker operates from, but there we are, we have it.

In essence, in the principles that form the basis of our presentation to you this morning we accept the reduction set out of course in statute of the number of United Kingdom

Members of Parliament down to the number of 600, and, of course, the corollary of that is the reduction in the number of MPs here in the South West to 53.

We also accept the principle, with the reflections of course that Parliament has made, of certain specific communities that in essence those Members of Parliament should broadly represent an equal number of constituents. We recognise, to achieve that, the Commission has had to link certain sub-regions, namely the four that you have chosen to do, and we believe you have chosen the right four to so link. We support, as you will see, the vast majority of the Commission's proposals, however with a notable and significant exception, which is the area of Bournemouth, Poole and Mid Dorset and Christchurch and, if I may, I will come back to that.

The reason why we are driven particularly in that direction is another principle, and that is to minimise the disruption to existing parliamentary constituencies. Finally, we will also reflect on a number of the proposed name changes, or otherwise, that the Commission has set out, for we believe it is very important indeed that those electors that are moving from one division to another should understand that something of consequence has occurred here, and that those names indeed should reflect the communities that now make up those new divisions.

Let me be clear about that that probably will detain us very little time in this presentation. We support in full the proposals that the Commission outlines for the City of Bristol; those that they outline for the County of Gloucestershire and the South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority, the North Somerset Unitary Authority, the County of Somerset and the Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Authority, and, indeed, the Swindon Unitary Authority. In a few moments time, I will come back to some very minor and specific things about those specific areas.

Where we will focus a lot of our time, such as we have with you this morning, is on some of the proposed constituency names, and in particular the connections that are being made and proposed for constituencies in the Counties of Dorset and Wiltshire. Before I come to those detailed elements, perhaps I can pass the microphone and the clicker to Ian Jolly.

MR JOLLY: (Liberal Democrat Party) My name is Ian Jolly. I am representing the Devon and Cornwall Liberal Democrats, and my address is Oakley House, Congdon's Shop, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 7PN.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR JOLLY: For those constituencies that are wholly within Devon we support the actual boundaries that you have set aside for those constituencies, particularly those where there have not been any change. We do, however, have some comments for two of the constituencies and their names. The first is the one that you have called Plymouth South.

Plymouth South is hardly changed at all from the constituency that is currently Plymouth Sutton and Devonport, and Sutton and Devonport have long held meanings for those in Plymouth and particularly for Devonport for anybody associated with the Royal Navy, and we would plead that you would keep them. I can see no possible reason to change the name.

The other one that we would like you to consider changing has already been mentioned. Plympton is by far the largest area of population in the new constituency and, although Tavistock and Ivybridge geographically explain the limits of that constituency, it is not really reflecting where the majority of the population live.

I take the point that has already been made that we have a tendency to complicate names, but in this particular case I think Plympton, Tavistock and Ivybridge would be better. There would be a problem with South West Devon in that it is a significantly different constituency to the existing South West Devon.

Although the slide there says we support the naming of Plymouth North, what is currently called Plymouth Moor View - perhaps Moor View has more of an estate agent's description, you would have to stand on one or two roofs to see them all - again, actually we would be happy with either. Plymouth North describes it, but so does Plymouth Moor View: no strong feeling on it, but Sutton and Devonport I think would be good to keep, which brings us to the area of contention.

Devon and Cornwall Liberal Democrats are passionately opposed to the idea that there should be a constituency across the boundary between Cornwall and Devon. We feel that the representation in Cornwall and Devon would be better if constituencies were wholly within the area, but we also accept this is not an issue for the Boundary Commission; this is a matter for Parliament.

This is a matter for the Parliament to change the law that you have been faced with, and we will continue to campaign in Parliament and outside Parliament until we can achieve a change in the legislation which will allow constituencies to properly represent the people of Cornwall and Devon. No doubt you will be hearing more, both today and

especially at the end of the week in Truro, where you will be given a very warm welcome.

With regard to the constituencies themselves, we recognise the Boundary Commission were faced with a significant problem. All the constituencies except for one were significantly below the lower limit, so to actually achieve what you have managed to achieve is in itself quite a good exercise. We have no problems with St Ives nor with South East Cornwall nor with Truro and Newquay.

I am sorry, but something has been missed off the slide there, which unfortunately is my own constituency which is Bodmin and St Austell. We have played around for nine months looking if you could reinstate the four towns in the centre, effectively the Truro, Newquay, Bodmin, St Austell thing, by going back towards the layout that we had previous to 2010. The plain fact of the matter is the best layout that we have at the moment is the one that you have proposed.

There is a serious issue though about breaking the local links within what is known as the clay country, the set of villages that lie to the north west of St Austell, and it may be that after the next local government review, and when we come back to review in five years' time that we will be rejigging all these again and be able to restore some of those local links.

There is, however, one name change we would propose. The constituency that is named Falmouth and Camborne we would like to reflect the name of the town of Redruth. Currently, it is Camborne and Redruth, and we would think that Falmouth, Camborne and Redruth would be a suitable name for that particular constituency. Back to the rest of the region.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you very much, Ian. So, in essence, in the areas of North Somerset and Bristol, we support both the names that the Boundary Commission proposes and indeed the alignment of the wards which they propose.

Similarly, we support the names and the alignment of wards in the County of Somerset, and indeed in Bath and North East Somerset. We recognise that Bath itself, while it would be perhaps preferential to retain the boundaries of the City of Bath, the number of electors in the City of Bath simply do not meet the statutory requirements, and therefore the Bath Avon areas, or at least most of them, need to be added to Bath, and of course, Peasedown is enveloped in one of those Bath Avon wards and therefore cannot be separated out.

We also recognise that there is some contention about the movement of Shepton Mallet out of the County of Somerset. We did examine whether there were alternative proposals that could meet the statutory requirements, or at least the minimum of those, for the North East Somerset. We could find none that were appropriate or suitable, and therefore, with a heavy heart, we recognise that the proposals that the Boundary Commission have set out of the movement of Shepton Mallet into North East Somerset and of the existing Wells constituency is the appropriate and correct solution.

We also note, historically, and it is very much historically, that this does represent some degree of unification of the old Somerset coal fields, though perhaps there is not a lot of coal mining that goes on in Shepton Mallet nowadays.

As far as Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire is concerned, we looked at whether there was a more appropriate solution as reflected by the Commission's proposals in resolving the conundrum of how the constituency of Tewkesbury as divided by Cheltenham between its northern and eastern parts, and the southern part that lies between Cheltenham and Gloucester, the City of Gloucester, might be unified. We looked at the proposal you set out in 2011, which was the division of the Coombe Hill ward with two small polling districts and parishes providing that corridor link as against the existing proposal which was made here, which is quite a significant proposal, of the removal of the entirely urban ward of Springbank in the town of Cheltenham into Tewkesbury.

However, on reflection and after much discussion, we believe that if you had reinstated the corridor through Coombe Hill, it still would have required the removal of a ward from Cheltenham in order to meet the statutory requirements of the numbers concerned for the constituency of Tewkesbury, and therefore it would have something, frankly, of a Hobson's choice between Springbank and one of the other wards that abut the Tewkesbury constituency. So again with a degree of heavy heart, and I am sure you will hear far more about this in Bristol from the representatives of the local authority of Cheltenham, we acknowledge that the solution that the Commission has come up with is perhaps the best in that area.

Similarly, we recognise that there is a need to link South Gloucestershire and Gloucester, and we applaud the Commission's recognition of that sub-region. We believe that the proposal that you have set out in linking certain rural wards and the small towns of Dursley and Cam with that of Thornbury and Yate, whilst moving across that local authority boundary, is a necessity to be achieved, and that is the right solution to have been achieved. The character of those small market towns is in keeping with that of the Thornbury and Yate parliamentary constituency.

We note that there have been certain minor changes elsewhere and the need for linkage between the Cotswolds local authority and Stroud and, once again, we believe that the Commission's solution, as set out in their proposals, is the correct one for that area.

Finally, I am aware that there is some concern from the communities in the Forest of Dean at the loss of their name, and perhaps there may be some representations in Bristol as to whether West Gloucestershire is an adequate description, or whether there is a need or a requirement to retain the name Forest of Dean adding West Gloucestershire to it in recognition that indeed it is not simply the Forest of Dean District Council area that the constituency represents.

Now, having said all of that and having applauded the Commission rigorously and thoroughly, I would like to turn my attention now to the areas of Dorset and Wiltshire, and again there is much that we support in the Commission's proposals. However, when we examine the area of eastern Dorset, we note that the Commission's commitment to the minimum disruption of existing parliamentary constituencies, which has broadly been the case elsewhere in the proposals for the South West, other than those required by statute, for some reason seems to have failed in that particular area.

If I may, I would like to spend the rest of the time that I have with you talking in some detail about an alternative proposal that we believe meets that requirement more vigorously and thoroughly than the Commission proposal currently. In particular, it relates to the unitary authority of Bournemouth, the unitary authority of Poole, the local authority of Christchurch, and then the number of local authorities of East Dorset, Purbeck and North Dorset in this particular corner of that county.

What we believe should occur here is that the constituency of East Dorset should in essence retain its current integrity. We also believe that to be true of West Dorset and Bourne Valley, the original proposal the Commission set out in 2011.

We recognise that you are, for reasons which we do not fully follow, in essence, exploding the constituency of Christchurch. We do not believe that that is necessary. We believe it is possible to create a Mid Dorset constituency which reflects much, although less in comparison to the previous three, of the Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency as it exists.

I will take you through that in some detail in a moment. That does have some inevitable knock-on effects, although they are relatively minor, to your proposals for South Dorset,

West Dorset and the crossover county border constituency of Warminster and Shaftesbury.

Before I do that, let me note in passing, because there are some implications also then for some of the Wiltshire seats, that as far as your proposals for Salisbury, Swindon North and Swindon South are concerned, we are fully in support of them both by name and indeed by detail, so, in essence, I am not going to read these out. They are present in the handout that we have given you. They will be present in the full written submission that we will make.

I hope they are visible to colleagues in the audience here, but this is the ward alignment that we would propose for Bournemouth East, and those who live in that particular constituency will, frankly, recognise it to be the alignment of wards that they already have and enjoy there.

Similarly, Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley, again people are going to recognise this list of wards, and this recognition and identification and lack of disruption we believe is as important as the statutory requirements laid upon the Commission by Parliamentary Act.

We reinstate the constituency of Christchurch with minor alterations to its existing boundaries, but again the vast majority, and I will come to a summary table at the end of this presentation, the vast majority of the residents will again recognise these wards and will recognise the constituency of Christchurch.

There is rather greater change in our proposed Mid Dorset, but nothing of the scale that the Commission proposes into two separate parliamentary divisions, as set out in your draft proposals. Again, it is a lengthy list and I will not read it.

The unitary authority area of Poole becomes much more coherent in the proposals that we set out for you. Finally, this does have some implications for South Dorset. There are certain areas of your proposal for South Dorset which have now gone into Mid Dorset, but the vast majority are the same. There are minor changes as a result of all of this in West Dorset, and there are some minor changes in the Dorset part, and indeed in our proposal, which I will come back to, for the Wiltshire component, the Warminster and Westbury component of the cross-border seat.

Our changes in the Wiltshire area as a result of the realignment in Dorset take two forms. If I may deal with the first of them, which is that we feel that it will be confusing to the electorate of Wiltshire to have a new parliamentary constituency, which you name

Chippenham when there already is a parliamentary constituency of Chippenham, the vast majority of which, or a clear majority of which, will no longer be in the new constituency of Chippenham; rather the new constituency of Chippenham, if you recognise it by its current boundaries, in fact the vast majority of it is the North Wiltshire parliamentary. There seems to be an illogicality here of moving one single town into the North Wiltshire parliamentary constituency, which is a requirement to meet the numbers and proposals, and we support its shift into North Wiltshire. When it was there previously, it sat within the parliamentary constituency of North Wiltshire. That was the proposal that you had in 2011, and we would respectfully ask you to go back to that proposal.

Similarly, the area of Trowbridge, the town of Trowbridge now unites with the residual majority of the current Chippenham parliamentary constituency, but the town of Trowbridge will be a minority within that new parliamentary constituency, so again it seems illogical to name the minority as the name of the new seat. Rather, we would respectfully suggest that you revert to the constituency as it was known prior to the last reorganisation of boundaries, namely to refer to it as West Wiltshire, and indeed it does broadly align, as does the proposed Chippenham seat, with the old district council boundaries, prior to Wiltshire becoming unitary, of North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire.

You have certain minor changes that we would suggest to you. In your 2011 proposals, the town of Corsham was united, Corsham Pickwick and Corsham Town, with the area of Corsham Without and Box Hill. In your current proposals, you split those three wards, leaving Corsham Without and Box Hill in the Trowbridge constituency, and moving the two Corsham other wards into the Chippenham constituency.

There is no need, mathematically to do that. Nor is there a need to move the existing North Wiltshire ward of Box and Colerne into the new proposed Trowbridge seat, and out of what you have referred to as Chippenham but, forgive me, I will refer to as North Wiltshire. We simply suggest that you revert back to your 2011 proposals. It would be ideal if all three of the wards that carry the name Corsham could be in the same parliamentary seat, but we recognise that that is not an achievable objective within the sub-region of Wiltshire and Dorset.

I was hoping some maps would appear at this point but they do not seem to be doing so. You have our map proposals before, if I may allude to them, the maps which are outlined before, the different colours, and forgive me, ladies and gentlemen, those who do not have these maps before you, the different colours on those maps reflect the new proposal set out by the Liberal Democrats. We have overlaid on the first map the red lines, and those lines reflect your proposals as set out in your consultation document.

If I may refer you to the second map, you will then see those proposed new constituencies that we have set out before you, the ward lists that you saw earlier, and the black lines represent the existing parliamentary boundaries. You will note that Bournemouth East is precisely the same alignment; that Bournemouth West similarly is remarkably similar in its alignment on our proposals; that Poole is remarkably aligned on our proposals, as with Christchurch. Mid Dorset is more drastically changed, but that is an inevitability given the electoral numbers.

We provide you with a third map, which compares again on these proposed new constituencies that we set out before you the alignment of the old parliamentary seats in black, and then the red lines where you see the significant differences, not least in the division of one of the Bournemouth seats, Bournemouth, into three new parliamentary constituencies.

Finally, we provide you then with a summary page which is this tabulation set out before you. Again, forgive me that I cannot seem to bring it up onto the screen. In essence, this notes the alignment that you propose on existing parliamentary boundaries with the alignment that we propose. Your proposal for the Bournemouth East seat, as we have known it, is 70.5 per cent of the current Bournemouth East seat. Our proposal for Bournemouth East is 100 per cent of the existing Bournemouth East.

For Bournemouth North and Christchurch, as you refer to it, or Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley as we do, it is simply a 32 per cent component of the existing Bournemouth West, and much else mixed in with it. Our alignment for Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley is 100 per cent.

For Christchurch, that splits into three separate constituencies, and the degree of disruption, or retention, is set at 61.7 per cent. Our proposal for Christchurch has a couple of bits tacked to it, but entails the entirety of the existing Christchurch seat.

For Mid Dorset and North Poole, the degree of retention within the constituency you propose is 45.3 per cent; for ours it is 84.1. For Poole, yours is 89.8 and ours is 92.5. For the other Dorset constituencies the degree of disruption in either of our set of proposals is broadly the same. We believe, therefore, that these proposals for this corner of Dorset not only meet the statutory requirements, and all of the numbers are set out there, as you can see, but they also provide for that other important principle of coherence and consistency in terms of the electorate of those areas remaining integral within those areas and where the constituencies are in essence the same that the name should remain the same.

Finally, this does have a knock-on effect into Wiltshire. By the time one has aligned all of those Dorset constituencies in the way that we suggest, the cross-border seat would be falling below the minimum threshold of requirement. In order for it to meet that minimum threshold, we examined which of three specific wards that border onto the Wiltshire side of the Warminster and Shaftesbury seat might be included, and the three we looked at specifically were the wards of Southwick, Summerham and Seend, and the Lavingtons and Erlestoke.

It may look simply on the map as though Southwick is the obvious choice to make. We would respectfully point out that the three polling districts of Southwick, the three principal villages that make up that unitary ward in Wiltshire, are all far closer to Trowbridge, indeed in one or two places a mile or so from Trowbridge, than the town of Westbury, and therefore to link them into a constituency which is Warminster and Shaftesbury makes very little sense. They belong with Trowbridge, and they should remain there, and we would prefer that constituency, as you know, to be referred to as West Wiltshire.

That then leaves us with a choice of two: Summerham and Seend and the Lavingtons and Erlestoke wards. Summerham and Seend is currently divided between three of the existing parliamentary seats, and we applaud your attempt to unify that single unitary ward of Wiltshire within one parliamentary division. You currently align it within that division that you have referred to as Trowbridge.

Summerham and Seend looks in two different directions. It looks, indeed towards Trowbridge; it also looks towards Devizes. When you look at the subsets of population within that particular ward, they are remarkably balanced. We believe, therefore, there is a case to be made for either Trowbridge or Devizes. However, the consideration we need to reflect on here is that is not our choice. Our choice is between the cross-border seat and Devizes, and therefore, logically, there is no case to be made for putting Summerham and Seend into the cross-border seat. There is a strong case for it to be made, on its own merits, for it to be included in Devizes.

The third ward is the Lavingtons and Erlestoke, and, when one looks at the road layout of that particular ward it is a grouping of villages, most of which carry the name Lavington, and the village of Erlestoke, and they lie upon a road that in essence goes to Westbury, and then in the middle of that ward you would find a crossroads of the north-south route, which similarly would align them to Devizes. But in their character they are considerably aligned with the sorts of wards that you have in the cross-border seat, i.e. significant, large geographical rural wards with villages, and indeed the balance of the

population looks more towards Westbury, which is included in that cross-border seat, than it does northward to Devizes. Therefore, in a choice between Southwick, Summerham and Seend, the Lavingtons and Erlestoke, it is a more logical alignment to keep Southwick with Trowbridge, to allow Summerham and Seend to look towards Devizes and to join it - a significant part of it is already within the Devizes parliamentary seat - and then to align the rural ward of the Lavingtons and Erlestoke with the Warminster Shaftesbury seat, which includes the town of Westbury and meets the Parliamentary requirements.

We will provide a full summary. I accept, and forgive me, that is a rather complex piece of analysis of that corner of Dorset and Wiltshire. We will provide you with a full written reference, the logic of the geography, of working patterns, of attendance at school, from primary schools to secondary schools in these areas which support the case that we have set out for you today.

Thank you very much for your time, and of course, if there are questions, I would be delighted, or Commander Jolly, to answer them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Grant and Commander Jolly. Are there any questions?

MR PRATT: Thank you very much indeed, Madam Chairman. Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. I have just one matter of clarification which relates to the Commission's proposed Chippenham and the Commission's proposed Trowbridge Constituencies, which I appreciate you would rename. I wonder if you could just let me know, if you swap, as I understand you are suggesting swapping, Corsham Without and Box Hill with Corsham Pickwick and Corsham Town wards ---

CLLR GRANT: No, that is not our proposal. Forgive me. The proposal is to swap Box and Colerne ward with Corsham Town in terms of the alignment that the Commission has set out. Box and Colerne is currently part of North Wiltshire parliamentary constituency. We believe it should stay there, and indeed carry that name.

Corsham and Pickwick are part of the Chippenham constituency and they sit currently alongside Corsham Without and Box Hill in the current Chippenham constituency, and that is the alignment that we would prefer.

MR PRATT: I beg your pardon. I had misunderstood. It is Box and Colerne?

CLLR GRANT: And Colerne, correct.

MR PRATT: Okay. I am grateful for that.

CLLR GRANT: Or, as the locals call it, "Culham".

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Thank you very much.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you very much. My apologies for failing to provide Commander Jolly's much slaved-over and delightfully coloured and illuminated maps for your delectation his morning. Only a privileged few have had the opportunity to enjoy them. Forgive me, Ian.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What you handed in was very useful. Thank you. Mr Roger Pratt, please, of the Conservative Party.

MR PRATT: (Conservative Party) Thank you very much indeed, Madam Chairman. I would like to pass on our thanks to the Commission for all the work they have done on these proposals for the South West.

My name is Roger Pratt. I am the director regarding the boundary review for the Conservative Party and this is a representation on behalf of the Conservative Party and the South West region of the Conservative Party. I will, during my presentation, quote from three documents: the aborted review revised proposals document, the initial proposals documents, and also the guide to the 2018 review.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Pratt, could I just ask you to give your address, please?

MR PRATT: Yes, indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR PRATT: I am from the Conservative Party headquarters, which is Matthew Parker Street, Westminster, in London.

We support the allocation of 53 seats to the South West, and we support the Commission's groupings as follows. We think that the groupings are the best groupings that are available. In considering the statutory factors we do note, with regard to Devon and Cornwall, what the Commission say in the initial proposals document on page 11, item 22:

“While we are sensitive to the strength of feeling about the Cornish border with its single land border, it is simply not possible to develop a proposal under which five whole constituencies, each with electorates within 5 per cent of the electoral quota, are contained within the county boundary” and we fully concur with that.

Obviously we appreciate there is considerable concern in Cornwall about that, but we support what the Commission have said with regard to that. We particularly support the historic counties, putting Bath and North East Somerset and Somerset together and Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire together, which we believe makes eminent sense.

The item that has guided us throughout our consideration of these proposals are the rules for redistribution of seats, and particularly the four factors that the boundary Commission say they may take into account, special geographical consideration and local government boundaries, and here there are two particular tests with regard to local government boundaries.

One is how many constituencies are included within a local authority and, secondly, how many local authorities are included within a constituency. Then there are boundaries of existing constituencies, which effectively means the degree of change from the existing pattern of constituencies, and then any local ties which would be broken. Those are the things that have guided us.

In the sub-region of Bath and North East Somerset, we support the Commission’s proposals in their entirety for the following seats. Bath, which is a sensible extension, and it is the existing constituency plus three, Bridgwater and West Somerset, which is again a sensible, logical way of reducing the high electorate in Bridgwater and West Somerset.

North East Somerset; we believe it is absolutely right that that constituency should be the one extended into Somerset with Shepton Mallet. Somerton and Frome is a very minor change. Taunton Deane is no change and is coterminous with the local authority, and therefore makes absolute sense. Wells again is minor change to take into account North East Somerset, and Yeovil is no change. If somebody suggested a more appropriate name for Yeovil to take in the whole area that it encompasses, we would certainly consider that.

In Bristol, we fully support the four constituencies which is very minor change, two of the constituencies remaining, no change, and just the Easton wards swapping between the other two, and that seems absolutely sensible.

We also fully support the proposals for Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. In Cheltenham, we accept that the one ward split, the one ward taken out of Cheltenham, ensures that there is a continuous development, a continuous constituency for Tewkesbury. We think that is the right way of addressing the low electorate in the Forest of Dean and ensuring that Tewkesbury is not a constituency of detached parts. We think this is the best way of doing it.

We fully support the Filton and Bradley Stoke constituency adding the ward of Frampton Cotterell. We support the Gloucester constituency adding the ward of Longlevens and taking the two wards of Quedgeley. We support the Kingswood constituency adding the ward of Boyd Valley.

Obviously Tewkesbury does have the Spring Bank ward added but it loses any Gloucester wards. One of the attractive features of the Commission's proposals, which we fully support, is the fact that the Tewkesbury constituency, which currently has three local authorities within it, under the proposals only has two authorities, and we do believe that is an improvement on the current position.

We support the minor change to the Cotswolds constituency, and we support the West Gloucestershire constituency, which is increased in size to include the Coombe Hill ward. We do in fact support the name of West Gloucestershire, we think it is the right name. I would refer here to the Assistant Commissioner's report last time on page 100, item 366, where it says:

"There was strong cross-party support for renaming this constituency West Gloucestershire. All three main political parties suggested this in their initial representations."

Then it goes on to talk about Mark Harper, and he said that:

"It would be a more accurate description of the seat, which would be embraced by all its electors, would return to the historical name of the seat from 1950 to 1997 and importantly will ensure the name of Forest of Dean, of which the Foresters are rightly proud, is reserved for use by those associated with the historic Forest of Dean itself and is not used as a general catch-all term for the wider parliamentary constituency."

We agree with that. We agree with the proposal for the Stroud constituency, although to ensure that it encompasses more of the constituency we would call it Stroud Valleys and Vale, which includes the Quedgeley ward. We do think the Quedgeleys are the sensible wards to include from Gloucestershire. There is continuous residential development between the Quedgeley wards and the Hardwicke ward within the Stroud local authority, and we believe that it is a perfectly logical seat think it is totally sensible; so we support those. We also support no change to North Somerset and Weston-super-Mare.

That is the map of Avon there. Really the existing constituencies with relatively minor change, and that I think is the point in this particular area. In Gloucestershire, again with very, very little and minor change, and the same in Somerset, so we support all that.

In terms of Cornwall and Devon, again we support the Commission's proposals in their entirety for the following seats: for Bodmin and St Austell, Central Devon which is still four local authorities. We agree with the Commission that it should certainly not be five but that it is right that it is four local authorities. For Falmouth and Camborne, for Newton Abbot, minor change, with no change to North Devon, South East Cornwall just adding two wards to the existing constituency, for Tiverton and Honiton, very minor change, just taking account of ward boundary changes, and Torbay no change.

At Truro and Newquay, again we support the north-south split which, after debate at the hearing last time, was the way in which Cornwall was divided. There are a number of constituencies where we support the composition but we suggest a different name change. If I can just look at the composition, we agree with Bideford, Bude and Launceston.

I will come to the names in a minute, but I would refer here to the report on page 38, at AC38 on pages 16 and 17:

“Given that a constituency with an electorate drawn from both Cornwall and Devon was unavoidable, the large majority of those who commented on the matter agreed with the Commission's initial proposals for a constituency crossing the border in the north. The Devon and Cornwall Liberal Democrats referred to the similar economic and demographic characteristics of the two northern parts of the proposed constituency, and noted the significant physical barrier posed in the south by the Tamar Estuary. We remain of the view that geographical considerations in particular point to a constituency crossing the county boundary in the north.”

And, on page 13 of the initial proposals:

“We considered that the most suitable point at which to cross-border is in the north of both counties rather than traversing the River Tamar between Plymouth and Saltash, at which point the river notwithstanding the bridge presents a far more significant boundary between the two counties, and the A39 provides a strong communication link that is along the north coast of the constituency, linking Bideford in Devon with Bude and Camelford in Cornwall.”

We think that is absolutely right. We also strongly support the Plymouth North and South constituencies for composition. Plymouth North constituency is Moor View, plus one ward. Plymouth South is minus that one ward plus the Plymstock wards, and we believe that is absolutely right. St Ives is extended really in the only way it can be into Hale. Tavistock and Ivybridge adds with just the three Plympton wards, so it does not include Moor View ward which there was all the contention of last time.

However, we do propose different names for these constituencies. For Bideford, Bude and Launceston, we are suggesting North Cornwall and Torridge. For Plymouth North, we do think it should be Plymouth Moor View. It is after all the existing constituency of Moor View, plus one ward, and therefore we think Moor View is appropriate. We agree entirely with the Liberal Democrats that Plymouth Sutton and Devonport is the correct name. Those names in Plymouth have existed for many years in parliamentary constituencies, and we think they should be those names.

We believe that St Ives is a small part of the St Ives constituency, particularly as it is extended into Hale. We are suggesting West Cornwall, and, to actually acknowledge that the Isles of Scilly are in that constituency, West Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

As far as the Tavistock and Ivybridge constituency is concerned, we would certainly consider the Plympton alternative because, as has been said already, Plympton is actually the largest settlement within that constituency. We are suggesting that South West Devon is an appropriate constituency name, but obviously we would look at alternatives to recognise that Plympton is there. South Devon we think is a far better description than Totnes for a constituency that obviously goes far wider than the Totnes area.

That is Cornwall, which is as the Commission proposed. I will come on to East Devon and Exeter in a second, but that is the rest of Devon. In East Devon we do not support the Commission's proposals for the following seats, East Devon and Exeter, and we suggest one very minor change between the two. We propose an East Devon and an

Exeter by putting the St Loyes ward, currently in the East Devon constituency, into the Exeter constituency. That is currently what it is, so all we would do is add the one ward there, St Loyes, into Exeter. It is part of the Exeter City Council area and we think that is right.

We have a number of advantages, we believe, in doing this. We reflect close ties between the St Loyes ward and the Priory and Whipton and Barton wards in the south of Exeter. While Topsham is a separate village to Exeter and the East Devon constituency it is predominantly rural; St Loyes ward is an integral residential part of Exeter.

The East Devon constituency is one of the fastest growing seats in the country. In fact, between December 2014 and December 2015 the electorate of East Devon grew faster than any other constituency in England, so it was the fastest growing constituency in England, and it is sensible for it to be at the lower end rather than, as the Commission have it, at the higher end. I would quote from the guidance at item 40 of the guide to the review, at page 10:

“However, the BCE does not take the view that it is obliged to shut its eyes entirely to growth or decline that has occurred since the review date which it may be aware of from the annual updates of electorate figures it receives or that it is satisfied is likely to occur. Such a factor may be taken into account in choosing between two or more competing options for the same area that satisfies the statutory rules.”

Of course, the two constituencies we have proposed do recognise the statutory rules but have East Devon at the lower end rather than at the higher end, as the Commission have it. We would point out that there is a new town of Cranbrook which will be in the Broadclyst ward, which already I think has 2,000 homes, and no doubt we will give more evidence on this, but there is a new town of Cranbrook within East Devon, and that is one of the reasons why it is a very fast growing constituency, and that is one of the reasons, only one of the reasons why we have suggested that St Loyes would be better in Exeter rather than in East Devon.

As far as Swindon is concerned, we support the proposals, which are because of the divided wards. They have allocated divided wards. We would point out that the new proposed wards are very awkwardly shaped and that particularly the Dorcan area of South Swindon, which would be in the North Swindon constituency, is particularly awkwardly shaped and if someone did come up with a proposal that moved that or retained that within its existing constituency we would certainly look at that seriously because the wards in Swindon are very awkwardly shaped.

In Dorset and Wiltshire we support the Commission's proposals for Salisbury. We do not support the Commission's proposals for any other seats. We do not support the Commission's proposals for 11 seats. We think there is far too much change from the existing constituencies.

We are going to have, as far as Dorset is concerned, an amazing degree of unanimity between the three main political parties because I think I am right in saying that our proposal for Bournemouth East, for Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley, which is admittedly a slightly different name, and of Christchurch and Poole, I think I am right in saying are all the same in all proposals, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party proposals, which is an amazing degree of unanimity.

I could say that in one place, in Warwickshire at the previous lead hearing, where all four parties concurred. I have not heard yet from the Greens; so they may concur as well with regard to these four, but there is unanimity between the three principal political parties.

I would refer to page 15 of the initial proposals booklet, where it says:

"We noted that no change needed to be made to the existing Bournemouth East constituency, and only minor changes were required to the existing Bournemouth West, Christchurch and Poole constituency to bring the electorates within 5 per cent of the electoral quota. However, to do so would mean that changes required to be made to the existing Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency would result in the constituency containing parts of four districts. We considered this was unnecessary, and decided to propose greater change."

In the Assistant Commissioners' report last time, at AC130 on page 41, when the Commission proposed more or less what we are proposing now - slightly different because of numbers and so on - there was a proposal to change it. On AC130:

"On this issue", regarding four local authorities, "we consider that, although undesirable, we would rather see a constituency split between four local authorities than see the borough of Bournemouth split between three constituencies."

We fully concur with that, so we have a Bournemouth East constituency which is the existing constituency, so 20,000 fewer electors move from their existing constituency. We have a Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley, and we fully agreed with the Liberal Democrats on the name of Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley, which is effectively

the existing Bournemouth West plus the three wards that are currently split between Bournemouth West, and Poole, the two Branksomes and Alderney.

We do note that Bournemouth East and West have been the configurations in Bournemouth since 1950, so since 1950 Bournemouth has had a Bournemouth East constituency and a Bournemouth West constituency. In terms of the name of Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley, again I would refer to the Assistant Commissioner's report AC349 on pages 96 and 97, which says:

"Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley. The name attracted significant support. It refers to the valley through which a small river flows connecting relevant Poole wards with Bournemouth."

We would support that. The Christchurch constituency, again we would add Burwood, and again I would refer to the Assistant Commissioner's report at item 138. On this occasion they did suggest Burwood was included, and item 138, on pages 43 to 44 said:

"We have noted that Burwood was included in a Christchurch constituency prior to the last Boundary Review and therefore at a general election up to and including 2005."

I think actually it should have been 2010, but that is the position with Christchurch.

Devizes, we believe, should include Melksham rather than Calne. Devizes has had in the past both Melksham and Calne, but we believe it should be Melksham rather than Calne.

In Mid Dorset, we propose a Mid Dorset that is slightly different but not dramatically different from those that the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have proposed, again much less changed, 25,000 fewer electors move.

Mid Wiltshire we have, and that would be basically Trowbridge and Chippenham, where we would have 10,000 fewer electors that would move from that constituency, and we have North Wiltshire with Calne, again much less change, 20,000 less electors move.

Poole plus Canford Heath, and ensuring that Creekmoor is brought back into, again exactly the same proposal. South Dorset, losing those three of the wards that are currently in Purbeck, so we would have a cross-border Warminster and Shaftesbury seat, as proposed, and a West Dorset set which would include some electors in from North Dorset to ensure that there are more Dorset electors within Dorset constituencies.

The Boundary Commission proposed effectively two new constituencies. This constituency [here](#) and this constituency [here](#) are almost new constituencies, and there is much too much change. (Indicating) What we have proposed is much more like the existing constituency pattern, a Bournemouth East and a Bournemouth West.

Again, in Wiltshire we propose much less change from the existing constituencies. The advantages of that are we reverse the Commission's highly disruptive changes to the constituencies in the Bournemouth-Christchurch-Poole conurbation, in each case creating a seat that contains more of its predecessor seat than under the Commission proposals.

We restore local ties between Christchurch and Ferndown, divided under the Commission proposals. We restore local ties between Moordown and Boscombe and Southbourne, which are divided under the Commission proposals, and in doing so we retain the existing constituency of Bournemouth East unchanged.

We restore local ties between Winton and Central Bournemouth, which are divided under the Commission proposals. We also reflect ties between the two Branksome wards. In doing so, we retain the existing constituency of Bournemouth West intact with the addition only of the currently split wards, Alderney and the two Branksomes, and we reduce from three to two the number of constituencies totally within the Bournemouth local authority.

We restore ties between Creekmoor and Central Poole, divided under the Commission proposals. We also reflect local ties between these two areas and Canford Heath. We more closely restore the Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency, restoring ties between Broadstone, Lytchett Minster, Wareham, Windmill Minster.

I apologise, there are two constituencies that we are talking about. One is the proposed Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson constituency, and one is the proposed Blandford and Wimborne constituency. Actually these facts relate to Broadstone Ferndown and Kinson constituency, which contains parts of four existing constituencies and no more than 26,355 electors from any one constituency.

But you can also make a similar case for Blandford and Wimborne, and Blandford and Wimborne is part of three existing constituencies, none of which have more than 50 per cent of the constituency in the constituency, and none have more than 35,630 constituents, so effectively those two constituencies, both of which contain three local authorities, we believe they are unnecessary and it is unnecessarily disruptive.

We also reflect ties between Sturminster Newton and Sherborne in West Dorset. We restore local ties between Chippenham and Bradford-upon-Avon, which are divided under the Commission proposals. We also reflect local ties between these towns and Trowbridge. In doing so we more closely restore the existing Chippenham constituency. We restore local ties between Calne and Royal Wootton Bassett, divided under the Commission proposals and, in doing so, we more closely restore the existing North Wiltshire constituency. Our proposals significantly restore a number of constituencies and constitute far less disruptive change than the Commission's proposals, and there are 142,345 fewer electors that move from their existing constituency, and that is really a very, very large number of electors.

Just a reminder that the items that guided us were the rules on geographical considerations, local government boundaries, existing constituencies, and local ties. We propose better local authority links in Bournemouth, thus being more compliant with Rule 5(b). We move 137,741 fewer electors than the Commission, restore many wards back to their existing constituency, thus being more compliant with Rule 5(c), and we break fewer local ties, restoring ties, for example, in Exeter, in Bournemouth, in Poole, in Mid Dorset and Chippenham, so we are more compliant with Rule 5(d).

We support the allocation of 53 constituencies in the South West but believe there is a much better scheme available, particularly in respect of Dorset and Wiltshire. We are going to submit to the Commission before 5 December a comprehensive document outlining our rationale, whether we support the Commission or propose alternatives. We will take account of representations made at the public hearing and may, in the light of these, amend our submission from that which we have outlined today. I am very grateful. Thank you very much indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Pratt, thank you very much for that presentation, and also for the very useful documentation that you have submitted today. Are there any questions for Mr Pratt?

CLLR GRANT: Thank you very much. Cllr Gavin Grant, from the Liberal Democrats. I do note that we are remarkably aligned in Dorset, but of course not so much in Wiltshire.

MR PRATT: Yes.

CLLR GRANT: Could I just clarify that the largest town in your seat that you have names Devizes, I believe is Melksham rather than Devizes? Secondly, am I right in

understanding - I am trying to skip between a couple of different pages here - that the four Melksham wards of Central, North, South, and Without South are in your proposed Devizes seat, and the ward of Melksham Without North, which I am struggling to spot, I think is ----

MR PRATT: It is in the Mid Wiltshire area.

CLLR GRANT: It is in the Mid Wiltshire. Thank you very much. And, similarly that the two Corsham Pickwick and Town wards are in the North Wiltshire seat, and the Corsham Without and Box Hill ward in the Mid Wiltshire seat, have I got that right?

MR PRATT: Yes. Yes, absolutely. That is absolutely the same as the Commission in terms of the Corsham position. They are split between, in the Commission's case, the Chippenham seat and the Trowbridge seat; in our position, between the North Wiltshire seat and the Mid Wiltshire seat.

CLLR GRANT: But the Melksham one is different, is it?

MR PRATT: In terms of Melksham, we put Melksham in Devizes. As I say, both Melksham and Calne have been in a Devizes constituency in the past when it was called Devizes. Melksham may well be the largest town. I do not know whether Calne is the largest town, if Calne is in it.

CLLR GRANT: No, it is not.

MR PRATT: It has traditionally been called Devizes, and I think that is a historic name for a constituency. As I say, Melksham has been in there before. You are right in terms of the Melksham wards, the one Melksham rural ward which you would have to have in that constituency in order to ensure that the constituency was not detached, in part.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you.

MR COOK: Thank you. Greg Cook from the Labour Party. You referred to paragraph A366 from the abortive report regarding the Forest of Dean name of the constituency, where you said there was strong cross-party support for renaming the constituency West Gloucestershire. I wonder if you could just confirm that the proposal last time in terms of the revised proposals included part of the City of Gloucester in that constituency as well as part of Tewkesbury; and also that where it talks about the Labour Party's initial representation, that was in respect of a constituency which

included the town of Tewkesbury which was why at that stage the change of name was regarded as relevant?

MR PRATT: I can certainly confirm that it included split wards on that occasion, a split ward within Gloucester and a split ward within Tewkesbury, so it did include parts of three local authorities, but now it is the whole of the Coombe Hill ward rather than part of the Coombe Hill ward, and I think it applies. I am aware that the Labour Party did propose last time that Tewkesbury was split and part of it went into the Forest of Dean.

I think one of the most difficult things that the Commission had to work out was how to ensure that the Gloucester Cathedral was not moved into the Forest of Dean, and I am sure the Commission will remember it forever.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We will all remember it forever.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Pratt. One more question, I think.

MR PRATT: Right. Mr Kingswood has it.

MR KINGSWOOD: Good morning, Mr Pratt. Peter Kingswood, an elector registered in the Royal County of Berkshire. We have met at an earlier hearing, and you quite rightly emphasised the character of orphan wards and minimum top-up, and that if you do not stay with minimum top-up you have a knock-on effect. That was when the subject of Maidenhead constituency came up in the Royal County.

Here, the Commission have a knock-on effect in Newton Abbot seat. Instead of just taking a single top-up of another Teignbridge, the Commission baffled me a bit by choosing to move two wards, Cranbrook and - pardon my pronunciation - Ipplepen that are immediate neighbours of Newton Abbot into the Totnes based seat and bringing Teign Valley, which is Estuary and Chudleigh, which is the ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Kingswood, can I just confirm, do you have a question for clarification?

MR KINGSWOOD: Yes. Yes, the question is why support the Commission on Newton Abbot when there is a far simpler solution just to move in one ward? In the case of Exeter, why choose to move and disrupt south eastern the trio of seats in South Eastern Devon by moving St Loyes, bearing in mind that there is considerable projected development, not just in the Cranbrook township but also actually in Exeter itself? Just

to wrap up, surely by moving St Loyes, you have converted Topsham into an orphan. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Kingswood, can I just clarify? It is the time for questions of clarification at the moment, rather than a challenge to the evidence given.

MR KINGSWOOD: Yes. I am just asking for clarification on why not just leave things alone.

MR PRATT: We accept that we have an orphan ward in Topsham, but St Loyes is an Exeter ward, and we think it fits rightly with Exeter. In terms of the growth, there may or may not be growth in Exeter, but I think I have given the reasons why there is exceptionally high growth in East Devon, including the new town of Cranbrook.

I am not sure I really follow your point in terms of Newton Abbot. Obviously we are supporting the Commission's proposals with regard to the proposed Newton Abbot constituency, and they take two Teignbridge wards into Newton Abbot, which we support. We think that makes sense and it is a logical, sensible constituency.

MR KINGSWOOD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Pratt. We will now adjourn. We will take a break of 20 minutes, and the hearing will recommence at midday.

Time noted: 11.40 am

After a short break

Time noted: 12.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you like to introduce yourself, please?

MR JONES: (Co-ordinator Green Party, South West region) Thank you. I am Ewan Jones. I am the Co-ordinator of the South West Green Party, so thank you for the opportunity to speak. You would like my address and postcode, it is Kingsdown House, Shepton Montague, and the postcode is BA9 for Bath, 8JL, Juliet Lima, if that is the correct spelling.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MR JONES: First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Commissioners for all the wonderful work that they are doing, a difficult job but generally, the South West proposals were mercifully undamaged. There is lots of stuff there that we do not have any issues with at all.

The bulk of what I am going to say today is I think predictably going to cover Devon and Cornwall, where the more controversial aspects are, but first of all, I wanted to just give the South West Green Party perspective on the overall approach. Obviously we appreciate that the Commissioners operate within a tight scope, but we would like to comment on the scope that you are operating within and we would appreciate if you could convey that back to Ministers.

First of all, there could not be a worse time to reduce the democratic representation from 650 to 600 MPs. You may or may not be aware but local layers of government are struggling across the South West. We have seen councils already move to unitary in Cornwall and Wiltshire.

In Cornwall, the number of councillors working for their communities on the ground was reduced from 331 to 123, so basically two-thirds. If we reduce, and I look at my own county of Somerset, the Somerset County Council two-tier authority is struggling financially. Some of the county councillors are seriously making statements that the only option is to go unitary in the near future. It is looking like Dorset are going to go unitary before 2019, and that we will not have county council elections next year in 2017, and we will not have borough and district council elections in the 2018, so the opportunities for South West people to have a democratic say are being reduced the whole time.

From my own perspective, as a town councillor, I see the casework coming down to us. If we reduce from 650 to 600 MPs, I can only imagine the increased constituency casework that those MPs, some of whom are already demonstrably struggling with that, would have to face.

In addition, or furthermore, we have just voted by a very narrow margin to remove ourselves from democratic representation at a European level, removing six - some hard working, some less hard working - MEPs who have all been elected proportionately. We live in extremely challenging constitutional times, and I would greatly appreciate if the Commissioners could take that back to Ministers to consider.

In fact, probably the best thing that Ministers could do for Britain right now is to say, "Okay, we are going to reduce from 650 to 600 but why don't we replace the missing 50 with 50 MPs who are elected under the alternative vote plus system, as recommended by the Jenkins Commission in 1998." I hope that is something even the Liberals might support.

The second point, which is very much in your scope - I was going to quote exactly the same clause that my Conservative colleague raised earlier - it is not out of bounds for the Boundary Commission to consider growth in the electoral roll since last December, which is December 2015, the one that you are using, and the growth in voter registration between then and now, following the European referendum.

The clause said, in paragraph 40 in the guide to the 2018 review:

"The BCE is not obliged to shut its eyes entirely to growth or decline in the electoral register that has occurred since the review date."

We would appreciate if you would consider that.

The 2015 December register was depleted unusually through individual voter registration. That has a negative impact, particularly on the young, who feel incredibly disenfranchised at the moment, and the less affluent, less educated parts of our population, who also feel incredibly disenfranchised. These are problems for British democracy going forward. It also impacts, in the South West in particular, our university towns. If we took towns outside of the South West, Brighton and Hove's register is down by 10 per cent as an impact on individual voter registration. In central Oxford, the impact is 40 per cent.

Now for our smaller university towns, Bath and Exeter, we see proposals in this review where it is proposed to add a doughnut of Bath Avon wards around Bath, which is basically making it too big because the population is under-reported by the 2015 electoral roll.

For Exeter the proposal is to keep the constituency exactly the same, and anyone who has been to Exeter over the past five years will see the huge numbers of houses that have been built in Exeter. The population has gone up; it has not stayed the same. We would encourage you to look at the newer electoral roll, because I think a smaller constituency in Bath and a smaller constituency in Exeter are exactly what is needed, and completely consistent with the points made by the Conservative speaker, Mr Pratt, that it is that whole region beyond Exeter, the East Devon area, that is growing in

population terms. We are seeing that in my own area, in some areas of Somerset nearer to Bath. We need to be using the best data available to us.

Now moving on to the proposals that are on the table, we have consulted heavily as the Green Party with our local Party members in Cornwall and Devon, and it is fair to say that they have differing perspectives on what the right outcome of the proposed Devon Moor constituency, whatever we choose to call it, the one that crosses between Torridge on the Devon side and the North Cornish coast.

The recommendation that we are going to support in what we submit to the formal submission by the start of December is the proposal that has come out of Cornwall County Council, which is for five constituencies entirely within the Cornish border and respecting the historic boundaries of Cornwall.

It can just about be done within the parameters that the Commission is operating within, if we consider that the Isles of Scilly are excluded because they are not part of the unitary authority of Cornwall. You would then achieve five constituencies with fewer modifications to the current constituencies that Cornwall has, and I believe, according to the numbers that I have in front of me, the only one that would push beyond your 78,000 barrier is what is currently called the St Ives constituency; and I would personally support renaming that more of a West Cornwall constituency, because it is what it is geographically.

For Devon, the perspective was a little bit different, so the current Torridge constituency is one of the ones that is going to be most greatly impacted by the recommendations that are on the table. The thing they are actually most concerned about is losing Great Torrington and the area around that to Central Devon because the Torridge-Great Torrington area associates itself northwards with Barnstaple. It has no historic ties with Central Devon.

What they are actually saying is if they were to prioritise and draw their own constituency from scratch, they would say, "We have to be with Great Torrington, and it would be better for us North Devon to be with the North Cornish coast, because we have historical ties there with the fishing industry and the roads, et cetera, than with the south, the southern parts of the constituency pushing towards Plymouth", so perhaps that is something that we could consider.

Having worked through various permutations for how you can lay things out, the barrier we end up with is the huge Central Devon constituency. There needs to be a solution which takes account of the population growth that has happened and continues to

happen in the South East Devon-Exeter area, so some of that population is taken into the Central Devon constituency on the rural borders of Exeter, and one of the more north western East Devon wards so that the Central Devon constituency can pick up enough population that it does not need to take it from the existing Torridge constituency.

We also have concerns that there is potential that the population of Plymouth is under-reported in the 2015 figures, and that both of the proposed Plymouth constituencies are pushing the higher limit allowed. I accept that the boundaries of the two proposed new Plymouth constituencies again whatever we choose to call them, because I too would prefer to take the historic names of the constituencies, wherever possible, are neat geographically and community-wise; it is just they have the potential that they are already too big beyond your 78,000 boundary, or barrier.

If they are not already too big, on any sensible housing projection they are going to get too big very quickly and need to be corrected again. I would suggest that we find ways to take the outer areas of Plymouth into whatever becomes the new South West Devon constituency and what is currently the Central Devon constituency. Those are the areas of greatest concern for us.

In terms of what is happening in other parts of the region, we have two concerns about Gloucestershire. The first of them is Stroud. It has been said by other speakers today that there are different options for the Stroud constituency. We believe that Nailsworth should be in the Stroud constituency because of historic community ties, but we also believe that Painswick and Bisley are both historically within the Stroud constituency, so any adaptation to the proposal on the table would need to see wards lost towards what is currently Gloucester, so not as has been proposed by the Labour Party speaker.

We would not accept Painswick and Bisley moving out of Stroud because they just are Stroud. I accept that that places a challenge on the Cotswolds constituency which is also, like the Central Devon rural constituency, struggling to find sufficient population to go into it.

Moving south towards Bath, as previously stated there is an issue with the under-reported population in Bath, which may warrant looking again at the doughnut of Bath Avon wards that are being proposed to move into Bath. We would recommend that Peasedown is historically part of North Somerset, not Bath, so is not included in Bath. It is a mining town. It has links with Midsomer Norton, Radstock, et cetera, not Bath.

If you need to adjust things on the current population, it would make far more sense that Bath Avon West is moved into the Bath constituency and Peasedown goes into North Somerset because Bath Avon West is far more closely associated with Bath. It also includes Bath Spa University, so it would make a lot of sense if it was in Bath.

Bristol, I think as all of the speakers have said so far, no issues at all. There was one ward change which makes a lot of sense, and it is a big enough city that concerns about under-reported population are not an issue in Bristol.

Moving south into Somerset, again, no issues with any of the constituencies in the historic county of Somerset, subject to the proposed change regarding Bath, they all make a lot of sense. I have listened with interest to the presentations on Dorset and Wiltshire and I am inclined to say the one that there is cross-party agreement on from the Conservatives, the Labour Party and the Liberal Party for Dorset and the Bournemouth area makes a lot of sense. I cannot see any reason not to go with that one.

I think Wiltshire requires a little bit more consideration, and we will take that on board and consider what we submit formally at the end of the process. I have to say the one that really stood out to me when I was going through the details was the proposed Warminster and Shaftesbury constituency.

There is a historic reason for it, but that historic reason more goes back to Alfred the Great's time than it does currently. Modern communities are basically two sides of Salisbury Plain, so that one would be a challenge to implement, but generally, on those, we will take on board what has been said and come back with some further thoughts on Dorset and Wiltshire. They were not ones that were raised by Green Party members, so they were not ones that I brought to you today.

To summarise, we will be submitting a formal report with all of the ward level details. We will take on board what has been presented today and what will be presented across the other hearings across the South West this week. Thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Jones. Are there any questions for Mr Jones? Thank you.

MR PRATT: Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Two points of clarification. First, into which constituency would the Isles of Scilly go if you were going to have Cornwall entirely within Cornwall?

MR JONES: I think we proposed it would have to go into the West Cornwall constituency, which would take it above the limit, but we would ask the Commissioners to consider the fact that it is part of a completely different council, whether that makes it an exception in the same way that the Isle of Wight has been treated as an exception. It is something that the Cornish people feel very strongly about, so we are inclined to agree with their perspective on that one.

MR PRATT: Okay. It is not possible, but that is fine. The other question is with regard to your proposal in terms of Bath and North East Somerset. If I could have clarification, you wanted Bath Avon West to come into Bath, and Peasedown to come out of Bath into North East Somerset. Could you clarify whether Peasedown would have any border with the proposed North East Somerset constituency, if Bath Avon West came into Bath?

MR JONES: It does have a border. It accept it is a fairly strange shape but there is a road heading out of it to the south which it crosses, from my recollection of the map.

MR PRATT: No doubt the Commission will have a look at it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Jones.

MR JONES: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We look forward to receiving your written proposals in due course. Thank you.

At this point, can I ask if there is anyone here from the UKIP party to speak? (No response)

Can I invite Mr Richard Williams to come forward, please? Mr Williams, just before you introduce yourself, can I confirm that it has been agreed that you can have two slots, so you will be speaking for 20 minutes. That is because we could not accommodate it in the demand for speaking slots today. Can I ask you to introduce yourself, please, and to give your address? Thank you.

MR WILLIAMS: (Cornwall County Council) I may not need the full 20 minutes, but thank you very much for that. My name is Richard Williams. I am the Service Director - Assurance for Cornwall Council and, in that capacity I am responsible for advising the Council in respect of electorate and boundary review issues, and am also the Council's Chief Legal Officer. My address is New County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY.

I appear today on behalf and with the authority of Cornwall Council. I also appear as nominee for Cllr John Pollard, the independent leader for Cornwall Council who would have been here in person had it not been for an unfortunate clash with the County Council Network meeting in Guildford. Rest assured, he will be in Truro to join with others to give you the warm welcome that Ian Jolly referred to earlier.

I should also apologise for my appearance. To quote from one of my favourite films, *Airplane*, "I sure picked the wrong day to change my razor blades".

Cornwall Council is grateful to the Boundary Commission for England, for which I refer to hereafter as 'the Commission', for allowing me to speak at the hearing today. The Council notes that paragraph 79 of the initial proposals states that all forms of representation will be given equal consideration by the Commission, and I would therefore like to advise the Commission that, in addition to the oral representations provided today, the Council may be making further written submissions before the end of the consultation period on 5 December.

At paragraph 81 of the report *Initial Proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the South West*, the Commission asks whether those responding to this consultation support the initial proposals. The answer to that question from Cornwall Council insofar as Cornwall is impacted is an emphatic "No". Cornwall Council overwhelmingly opposes the initial proposals set out in this report due to the inclusion of a cross-border constituency of Cornwall and Devon which has been named Bideford, Bude and Launceston.

Mindful of where this hearing is taking place, I should stress at the outset that the strength of our antipathy towards the proposed constituency is neither anti-Devon nor anti-Bideford. In focusing on the distinctiveness of Cornwall, we equally believe that a Devonwall constituency is clearly contrary to the interests of our county neighbour.

Cornwall Council has consistently opposed any attempt by the Commission to create a cross-border constituency, and has also opposed any legislative provision which could result in a cross-border parliamentary seat being formed.

On 17 May 2016, Cornwall Council passed the motion headed "Opposition to Devonwall constituency" which strongly objected to what appeared to be the inevitability of a Devonwall constituency being proposed in a 2018 boundary review. This was as a result of the introduction of the Parliamentary Voting System and the Constituencies Act 2011

and the way in which that legislation amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

At the extraordinary Council meeting convened on 1 November this year, specifically for the purpose of seeking Council's support and endorsement for this submission, the members voted by a substantial majority of 71 to 12 to authorise my attendance at the hearing today to emphatically reject the proposal to create the Bideford, Bude and Launceston parliamentary constituency.

The 1986 Act, as amended, is a very prescriptive piece of legislation which provides the Commission with only a very narrow band of 5 per cent either side of the electoral quota within which to take account of the special considerations of all the diverse and individually distinctive regions of the United Kingdom. It is solely because of this limited mathematical discretion that Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly cannot be allocated what their electorate overwhelmingly wish for: the allocation of whole parliamentary constituencies within their historic boundaries.

It is both telling, and sadly ironic, that in parallel with the parliamentary review, Cornwall Council is subject to review of its divisional boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission, who are entitled to depart up to 10 per cent from the average electorate for each division in making their recommendations; a discretion which, if applied to the parliamentary review, could easily achieve the objective of constituencies wholly within Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Cornwall Council believes that this legislation so excessively constrains the Commission's discretion so as not to be fit for purpose.

The electorate of the United Kingdom appreciate, whilst recognising the principal importance of electoral equality, that the safeguarding of distinct regions and communities is vital and should be given special consideration over and above an inflexible mathematical calculation. This is a view shared by many on the Devon side of the border, including Geoffrey Cox, MP for the Torridge and West Devon constituency, which would make up the Devon side of the proposed cross-border constituency.

Cornwall Council appreciates that the Commission is an independent body and must carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the legislation. However, the Council cannot stand idly by while Cornwall's thousand year old border is compromised by the stringent observation of unnecessarily strict rules.

Cornwall Council notes the specific reference at paragraph 22 of the initial proposals to the Commission being, and I quote, "sensitive to the strength of feeling about the Cornish border", but does not believe that understanding the Cornish position is a

satisfactory response from the Commission. It urges the Commission to strongly express its frustration to central government that it is unduly constrained by the 5 per cent rule, and, while the objective of electoral equality is clearly important, the Commission should be empowered to depart from that rule in cases where special geographical considerations, local authority boundaries, and maintenance of local ties are clearly of greater significance to the electorate than absolute parity of numbers.

At this juncture, Cornwall Council would like to highlight to the Commission that, when considered without the 1,651 electors resident on the Isles of Scilly, five constituencies wholly within the historical Duchy boundaries of Cornwall can be created and which would be wholly within statutory electoral range. The addition of the population of the Isles of Scilly tips Cornwall over the electoral tolerance for five constituencies. The Isles of Scilly is an archipelago of islands 28 miles off the west coast of Cornwall with its own unitary authority. Perhaps nothing demonstrates more graphically the inappropriate inflexibility of the legislation than the fact that the small number of electorate on the Isles of Scilly can have such a profound impact on the critically important issue of maintaining the integrity of Cornwall's historic boundaries. We believe it incumbent on the Commission to examine and address this anomaly in any way it can, including making representations to Government.

Because of this absurd situation, I would like to inform all those present that Cornwall Council will be lobbying central government for a change in the legislation. We will be demanding that the legislation be amended to provide Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly with a whole number of constituencies entirely contained within the historical Duchy boundaries, and that the special considerations are such that Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly should be exempted from the strict application of the 5 per cent rule, much in the same way that the current legislation establishes the Isle of Wight as a special case and a self-contained electoral region.

Cornwall is a place which demands special consideration. The Government has repeatedly recognised the distinctiveness of Cornwall, and has taken decisions and entered into agreements which reflect its unique status. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the Commission of the Government's approach to Cornwall, and why creating a cross-border constituency flies entirely in the face of that consideration. First and foremost, this is demonstrated by the recognition of the Cornish people in April 2014 as a national minority under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. This means that the rights of the Cornish people need to be considered when legislation and national and local policy is formulated.

The official governmental press release at the time stated that, quote: "The decision to recognise the unique identity of the Cornish now affords them the same status as the UK's other Celtic people, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish."

The Cornish were recognised under the Framework Convention after the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 was passed, and the Act therefore could not and did not consider their rights under the Convention.

The Commission's initial proposals threaten the identity of Cornwall and the Cornish in the area of North Cornwall; and it is a measure which creates a single political unit where the Cornish people are in a minority. These consequences are in conflict with the spirit of Articles 5(1), 5(2) and 16 of the Framework Convention. All of the UK's other Celtic people have their own Boundary Commissions, and their borders are protected for this and future parliamentary boundary reviews. It is only right that the Cornish have their borders protected in the same way. The Government has recognised the Cornish as a national minority, now is the time for them to stand by their word.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise and thank the MPs, Jonathan Edwards of Plaid Cymru and Martin Day of the SNP, who have tabled an Early Day Motion calling for Parliament to acknowledge that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act is in conflict with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National minorities, and that the Act should therefore be amended to make Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to be a protected region to be allocated a whole number of constituencies. Needless to say, this has our full support.

Additionally, the Cornish language was recognised by the Government when it signed the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages as being worthy of safeguarding and protection. Constituency boundaries which are coterminous with the historic Cornish boundary will ensure exclusive representation for the Cornish people and Cornish matters, including the language. Currently, where representation is regional, whether this be as part of South West England or Devon and Cornwall, it is difficult for Cornish language matters to be fully and appropriately represented.

The boundary changes would create a constituency with Devon residents who would have no interest in matters of Cornish distinctiveness and thus dilute the representation in respect of intrinsically Cornish issues. This creates additional barriers to the protection and promotion of the Cornish people and their language so soon after the Cornish achieved recognition under the Framework Convention.

The iniquity of merging two distinct cultures in the Devonwall constituency was effectively summarised by Cornwall councillor, Dominic Fairman, who represents the St Teath and St Breward division, who stated the following at the Cornwall Council meeting of 1 November:

"If you take a line from Bude to Launceston, over half the Cornish constituents will live in the western third of the area of the seat, and along the long and winding A39 it is over 46 miles from St Breward to Bideford. Whilst the legislation is attempting to make

democracy fairer, by ignoring geographical considerations and the boundary of our own devolved authority, and by sticking blindly to the arithmetic, it will have the effect of seriously disenfranchising the working Cornish villages I represent. It will alienate them from the parliamentary process and condemn them to the political wilderness.”

Cornwall’s distinctiveness was importantly recognised in the landmark devolution deal agreed with central government last July, the first rural devolution deal agreed with an English local authority, and the first that did not require the election of a mayor. In signing the deal, Government recognised Cornwall’s unique culture, including its historic revived language, and passionate communities, and that this cultural distinctiveness is an important factor in promoting Cornwall’s local economy. I quote from page 3 of the devolution deal: “This agreement is intended to build on Cornwall’s unique geography and rich heritage.”

Cornwall is the largest rural unitary authority in the country, and functions as a single economic entity. The majority of Cornwall’s key public sector partners are based in and focused exclusively on serving the people of Cornwall. Cornwall has one functional economic area, one principal council, one Clinical Commissioning Group, one Acute NHS Trust, one Local Enterprise Partnership, one Health and Wellbeing Board, one Local Nature Partnership, one voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Board, one distinct identity and sense of place.

The devolution deal was founded on the strength and coterminosity of these public sector bodies. The proposal for a cross-border constituency threatens the efficacy of this devolution deal and any next devolution deal which the council is actively campaigning for. The Devonwall seat will set a precedent for the merger of public services with Devon, which would denude Cornwall’s public sector coterminosity and erode Cornwall’s distinct and cherished identity, the very identity which is at the heart of Cornwall’s landmark devolution deal.

Cornwall’s financial and public service aspirations would be dented, and this issue is writ large in the current urgent need to combine health and social care within the Duchy. Put bluntly, Cornwall’s current and future coterminosity is threatened by what could be heralded as a move towards a Devonwall local authority, or similar forms of South West regionalised public sector governance.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Williams, can I just remind you, you have 5 minutes left.

MR WILLIAMS: Thank you. So much for my 20 minutes. Thank you. Cornwall’s geography is unique and provides the Duchy with unique challenges and opportunities; challenges and opportunities that are not faced by the rest of the United Kingdom. Cornwall’s peripheral nature and extensive area have contributed to it being a self-contained region: 92 per cent of Cornwall’s working population live and work in

Cornwall. It is the reason Cornwall was awarded NTUS2, Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics status in 1998. This meant Cornwall was not grouped with Devon and its more economically prosperous regions for statistical purposes, as doing so previously had denied Cornwall its fair share of EU funding.

Cornwall has a thriving culture, with strong local traditions. After many years of decline, Cornwall's Cornish culture is flourishing again. The distinctiveness of Cornish culture in comparison with others is stark, whether that be in art, literature, music, fashion, religion, sport, or food and drink. Because of this, Cornwall is a brand. In goods and services when you add the word "Cornwall", it becomes a quintessentially and entirely different product or service. Cornwall, the brand, is vital to the economic vibrancy of our Duchy.

The deliberate parliamentary merger of parts of Devon and Cornwall will affect the integrity of Cornwall's culture, and this in turn will adversely impact on Cornwall's economy.

The unique challenges that face Cornwall are substantial. The special considerations and status which apply to Cornwall will inevitably be at odds with the equally important and competing priorities on the Devon side of the constituency. Any future Member of Parliament trying to prioritise or to reconcile conflicting aspirations will find themselves repeatedly compromised. Devonwall is not fair on the people of Cornwall; Devonwall is not fair on the people of Devon; and Devonwall is not fair on the future MP representing this anomalous constituency.

Cornwall has been recognised as a unique, never mind special case in many other facets of public life. In an issue as important as parliamentary representation, how can the same considerations not apply?

The distinctiveness of Cornwall and the Cornish people are worth fighting for. This is why Cornwall Council will be pressing for the requirement for constituencies wholly within the Duchy boundaries to be enshrined in legislation. Cornwall deserves and demands special consideration alongside the other peripheral regions of the Isle of Wight, Orkney and Shetland, and the Western Isles.

I reiterate, the Council recognises the constraints imposed on the Commission but we strongly urge them to have equal recognition for the inequity of Cornwall's position and the overwhelming support of this council and the Cornish people in demanding this legislative change. It has been noted by Cornwall Council on page 14, paragraph 62 of the report "Guide to the 2018 boundary constituencies" that "an objection accompanied by a viable counter-proposal is likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of objection".

Clearly the council's objection cannot be accompanied by counter-proposals as it is recognised that any such proposals would fall outside of the rules set out under Schedule 2. The council's position is clear and unequivocal. All the MPs for Cornwall must represent constituencies wholly within the historic boundary of Cornwall. It is not the council's responsibility to dictate to the Government how that objective is achieved. The Government has created this anomaly; it is their responsibility to put it right.

However, I have already referred to the unfortunate impact of the Isles of Scilly electorate on reconciling the requirement of the Commission to apply numerical equality strictly in accordance with the Rules with the aim of maintaining Cornwall's territorial integrity. Five parliamentary constituencies could be created wholly within Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly each consisting of a 78,775 electorate, a mere 268 electors above the statutory range permitted under the 1986 Act. This in turn would enable Devon to have 12 parliamentary constituencies contained entirely within their historic county boundary, each with an electorate of 71,064, a figure within the permitted legislative range. This would have no knock-on consequences for the rest of the initial proposals for the South West.

I repeat, this is not a counter-proposal, it cannot be, but it demonstrates how easily a massively damaging and unpopular proposal can be easily remedied without a significant departure from the legislative principle of numerical equality. If the Government were to adopt a solution which resulted in Cornwall having six MPs, all representing constituencies located wholly within the Duchy, that would of course also achieve the required objective and with a high level of representation.

This submission has focused exclusively on the cross-border constituency and the council's vehement opposition to the concept and its application. At its meeting on 1 November, the council resolved not to make any counter-proposals in respect to the make-up of any of the proposed Cornwall constituencies.

At the same time it recognised the importance of the legislative rules requiring the Commission to consider the impact of special geographical considerations and any local ties that would be broken in devising its proposals, and urged the Commission to consider carefully the impact of those rules in respect of all the proposed constituencies.

In conclusion, Cornwall Council's representation to the Commission today can be summarised as follows.

Cornwall Council emphatically opposes the Bideford and Bude and Launceston constituency proposed by the Commission due to its crossing the Cornwall-Devon border. We oppose it for legal, cultural, geographical, historic and economic reasons, as outlined.

That the legislative rules under which the Commission work are too restrictive and fail to take into account the spirit and intent of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities under which the Cornish have been recognised.

We urge the Commission to express to central government its concern over the legislation not providing them with enough discretion to appropriately consider and properly address the unique case of Cornwall and the special considerations which apply.

That Cornwall Council will be strongly pressing central government for legislative change which enables Cornwall to be allocated constituencies wholly within its historical border, both now and into the future.

We ask that the Commission notes the strength of concern and feeling in Cornwall in relation to the legislative restrictions, and the absurd anomaly it has compelled the Commission to propose, and that the Commission endorse the council's proposal for legislative change to enable that anomaly to be corrected.

Finally, I would like to thank the Commission for listening to Cornwall Council's submission, and to remind the Commission that the council may choose to submit further representations on the consultation website prior to the end of the consultation period on 5 December. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Williams. Would you like to remain there for a moment? Are there any questions for Mr Williams? (No response) Okay. Thank you very much.

MR WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We look forward to receiving the written documentation about which you speak.

MR WILLIAMS: Indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

I understand the next scheduled speaker is not yet here. We have gained a little bit of time this morning. I also understand that Mrs Anne Jobson wishes to speak and has a slot booked for this afternoon, but would like to speak earlier. Are you happy to speak now, Mrs Jobson?

MRS JOBSON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Would you like to come forward, please? Mrs Jobson, can I ask you to introduce yourself by giving your name and also your address?

MRS JOBSON: (Chair, Exeter Conservative Association) I am Mrs Anne Jobson. I am Chairman of the Exeter Conservative Association. My address is 26 Old Tiverton Road, Exeter EX4 6LG. I am speaking in support of the proposal to bring St Loyes back to the Exeter parliamentary constituency.

In the summary to the initial proposals for the new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South West it is stated that constituencies should have an electorate no smaller than 71,031 and no larger than 78,507. That is on page 3. Page 28, Annex A shows the East Devon county constituency electorate as 77,959 and Exeter borough constituency electorate at 71,404.

Our proposal would, in our submission, provide a better balance for both constituencies, East Devon then becoming 73,355 and Exeter 76,008. Our proposal would also right what was widely perceived by the people of St Loyes as the wrong consequences of part of the last parliamentary boundary review, and requires one simple change to the initial proposals by returning the St Loyes ward to the Exeter parliamentary constituency.

The detailed arguments. The statutory criteria require constituencies to have an electorate as close to 74,769 as is possible with a margin of 5 per cent either way. Your initial proposals leave Exeter under quota, a variance of 4.51 per cent with East Devon at 4.1 per cent over quota. Were St Loyes to be transferred back into the Exeter constituency, the percentage variation would be significantly reduced in respect of both constituencies and both would be much nearer to the optimum at 74,769. The Exeter electorate would be 1.7 per cent above and East Devon 1.9 per cent below.

Your initial proposals at page 8 set out the rules in the legislation and other matters that are able to be taken into account. St Loyes is a local government ward within the Exeter City Council area, and it has substantial community, transport and administrative links to the city. In contrast, it has no such links to East Devon, and, with the greatest respect to the East Devon parliamentary constituency, and I know their Conservative Chairman will be speaking later today, St Loyes never wanted to be part of that constituency. It was deeply disappointed at the result of the last parliamentary boundary review, and the passing years have not brought two very diverse groups any closer together.

I would point out that the very titles of each area make that divergence apparent. Exeter is a borough constituency. East Devon is a county constituency. St Loyes is a suburb of the City of Exeter. It has an urban feel. The problems experienced on a daily basis by its residents have an urban feel. It is situated on the eastern fringe of the city

and consists of residential housing, administrative, retail and business premises, and it borders the Exeter communities of Heavitree, Whipton and Wonford.

The A5, the A379 and the railway line provide manmade barriers between significant parts of East Devon and St Loyes, and the communities are artificially split with one side of the Honiton Road placed within the Exeter borough constituency and the other side placed in the East Devon county constituency.

A stark example are the residents of Rifford Road, a clearly defined community within Exeter. They are split between two constituencies. The first row of houses on the eastern side up to the junction of Lethbridge Road are somewhat artificially placed in East Devon, whilst the remainder of the eastern side of the road are within Exeter.

Further evidence of the community ties can be seen through local schools. St Peter's is the main secondary school within the area and is situated on Quarry Lane, but it is currently within the East Devon county constituency. The majority of the feeder schools are based within the Exeter borough constituency and include St Nicholas Roman Catholic primary, on the Exeter side of the Honiton Road, St Michael's Church of England primary and Ladysmith School both located in the Heavitree ward.

Public transport links in St Loyes also tend to focus on Exeter and the city centre. The Digby station is a commuter station into the city, and a key part of Devon County Council's efforts to meet the travel needs of the city. The bus network provided by Stagecoach operates on a loop based on travel into and out of the city, the H and D buses.

As the regional and administrative centre, Exeter is a key location for employers. Many residents of St Loyes work in the city, and many city residents' work is located within St Loyes, not least the headquarters of Devon and Cornwall Police, located at Middlemoor, or at Tesco and the non-retailers at Clyst Heath.

Residents have never understood the artificiality of that position, and, on their behalf, I am asking the Boundary Commission to take this opportunity to put things right by enabling the local ties between Exeter and St Loyes to be restored.

In conclusion, I would say that the current arrangements make little sense and could be construed as being harmful to the communities involved. As an example, if there is a problem in Rifford Road, most residents can seek help from the Exeter MP, whereas a dozen or so have to seek the help of the East Devon MP, with the potential for significant delay and confusion if the elector writes to the wrong MP.

I would add just one further point, which may not technically fall within the scope of material considerations, but in the local government boundary review in 2015, significant changes were made to the local government, and the boundaries of St Loyes

ward were extended into parts of Whipton, and I would suggest that this is further evidence of the community links between the residents and communities of St Loyes and the rest of the city; and this small change will bring those communities under the same parliamentary constituency.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I urge you to make this minor alteration but a very important and significant one for the people of St Loyes to your initial considerations. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mrs Jobson. Would you like to remain there just for a moment? Are there any questions for Mrs Jobson? (No response) Thank you very much for coming to speak to us.

MRS JOBSON: My pleasure.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I call Mr Neil Carmichael, please?

MR CARMICHAEL: Good morning.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, Mr Carmichael. Can I ask you to give your full name and address, please?

MR CARMICHAEL: (Member of Parliament for Stroud) My full name is William Neil Carmichael, and my address is South View, Park End, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 4BB.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR CARMICHAEL: But I am known as Neil.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are known as Neil.

MR CARMICHAEL: Yes.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I will put a note on my notes that you are Neil.

MR CARMICHAEL: Yes. Excellent. Only the bank get it wrong! I am the Member of Parliament for Stroud. I have been so since 2010, and I was re-elected in 2015, but I moved to Stroud in 1999, so I know the area and the constituency extremely well. I have been involved in the community of Stroud and the surrounding areas for a long time very actively.

I recognise that the Boundary Commission's overriding remit is to deliver recommendations that ensure all constituencies are no fewer than 71,000 votes and no more than 78,500 votes, and I think that is absolutely the right direction of travel.

I do not think it is easy to do that without any significant changes to existing constituencies, and certainly not within Gloucestershire as a sub-region. After careful consideration, I believe this is achieved by the Commission's objectives for my constituency, and I therefore wish to support the proposals made by the Commission in connection with my constituency of Stroud.

The population size of the Stroud District Council has always been too large to be a parliamentary constituency, and that has always been the case, and indeed parts of the existing parliamentary constituency are a little bit remote from the centre of Stroud and, to some extent, the proposals effectively accept that point.

I am sad to say that Dursley, Cam and Bartley, and indeed Nailsworth, where my office is, are going to leave the constituency, but I recognise that is the only feasible way of getting the Stroud constituency to a figure of electors which is between the two that I have quoted.

What I would like to say are really three things. Firstly, Bisley and Painswick are integral parts of my constituency. They are very much connected to Stroud. Bisley is connected in terms of schools, social structures, business relationships, as is Painswick. Children come from Painswick to Stroud after they have been to Painswick Primary school, and there are a number of other key linkages that both of those communities have with Stroud and further south, so they are, I think, very important component parts of my constituency. Looking at a map that you have provided as the Commission, you can see that it effectively works as a set of communities related to Stroud; so I would like to make that point.

It has often been the case that Dursley and Cam have felt little affinity with Stroud. I certainly came across that when the swimming pool was named Stroud District Council Swimming Pool, as opposed to what it now is called, the Dursley Swimming Pool; so Dursley is a separate community, and therefore not as connected to the constituency as otherwise might be the case, and I think that is accepted by the Commission. Bartley and Vale are in a similar situation in that they are not directly connected to Stroud and more southward facing from the point of view of constituency connections

What I would also say is that Hardwicke is a part of my constituency that is well established, and now that you propose that Quedgeley should be part of my constituency, that actually first of all reconnects Quedgeley to Stroud, as it used to be in the olden days, and it also makes it much more sensible for Hardwicke and Quedgeley to work together as part of my constituency. The linkages between Hardwicke and

Stroud, and Quedgeley and Stroud are strong, and I think that that is the right thing to do.

The one change I would like to make is not about the actual boundary but about the name. I think that the constituency should be called "Stroud Valleys and Vale". I do so because Stroud is an important part of the constituency, but it is not the only part, and the character of my constituency is really about the five valleys that stem from Stroud itself. I think it would be much more reasonable to think of the constituency as Stroud, the valleys and the vale to the west; so I think, if I may, I would like to suggest it is called "Stroud Valleys and Vale".

In summary, I regret that Dursley, Cam, and Bartley and Nailsworth are leaving, but I understand the reasons why, because I do think it is important to have a constituency which is within the range of figures. I think it is also important to recognise Stroud is the centre of the constituency, therefore all component parts need to be linked to Stroud, as Bisley, Painswick, the Vale is remaining, Stonehouse, Eastington, Chalford all are.

That is the natural geographical sense, it is the natural social sense, and the natural economic sense. I think that the move basically to the north reflects the sort of centre of my constituency and its linkages with what you propose to be in it, including Quedgeley. I would like the name changed to "Stroud Valleys and Vale" to reflect the valleys and their importance to the communities that I have just described.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Carmichael. Would you like to just remain there for a moment? Are there any questions for Mr Carmichael? (No response) Thank you very much for attending.

MR CARMICHAEL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We were just looking at the timetabling for the hearing today. There is no one else listed to speak at the moment. There are speakers for later on this afternoon. Is there anyone in the room who would like to speak who has not yet booked a slot and who is not already booked this afternoon? (No response)

What we will do is we will adjourn now just for 20 minutes to see if there are any more attenders who arrive early for their afternoon slots and want to speak early and, if they do, then I will afford them that opportunity. If there is no one here in 20 minutes, then we will break for an hour and have some lunch at that point. We will adjourn for 20 minutes and reassess the situation at that point. Thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 1.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and Gentlemen, it is 1.20. We have no other speakers who have yet arrived, so I will now adjourn the hearing for one hour, and we will recommence. I will adjourn the hearing for one hour and 10 minutes. Our first speaker is due then at 2.30, so we will recommence then at 2.30.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We will reconvene the public hearing now. We have a gentleman who is booked in, a Mr Steve Double. Is Mr Double happy to speak a little earlier than his allocated slot?

MR SHEPHERD: He is waiting for his son, so he is not here yet.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: He wants to wait. All right. Mr Amerjit Kang? Hello, Mr Kang. I see that you have a slot booked for 3 o'clock. Are you happy to go earlier? Are you happy to speak now? Thank you.

MR SHEPHERD: I am David Shepherd, Plymouth City Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you would like to come forward and come up to the lectern.

MR SHEPHERD: Hello.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon.

MR SHEPHERD: Good afternoon. I do not have a presentation, but I have some papers for you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR SHEPHERD: Do you want me to hand them to you now?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please. Could I also ask you to give your full name and address, please, before your presentation?

MR SHEPHERD: (Head of Legal Services, Plymouth City Council) Yes, of course. Certainly. My name is David Shepherd. I am the head of Legal Services at Plymouth City Council, and one of my numerous responsibilities is also Deputy Registration Officer. I send apologies on behalf of the Chief Executive, who is the Registration Officer. I am here in her stead.

What I have here is our submission for you, so I will hand those to you now. (Same handed in) It is relatively short, and I will take you to the key issues from the Plymouth perspective, and I will send an electronic copy to you.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to come and make representations to you as the Boundary Commission. The issues we have are really two-fold. Firstly, in terms of Plymouth, in terms of the proposal to reconstitute the boundary from Plymouth North and Plymouth South, we approve that. We think that is a really good idea in Plymouth.

One of the reasons we think that is a good idea is because people can identify with geography in the city far easier than they can at the moment with parliamentary constituencies that have been there from a historical perspective, so we think that is a good idea. The North and South is pretty much north and south of the main arterial route from the city so you will know where you are in the city, either north or south of that line, so we think that is a good idea.

In terms of those, however, we just have not an objection but just a note of caution really for the Boundary Commission, and that is in relation to both of those constituencies. If you look at Plymouth growth figures, and in the written submissions I have given you there, there is some evidence, we have some concerns that electorate growth in both North and the South will exceed the electorate quota that the Boundary Commission itself has set by 2020. Our concern, therefore, is that there will be an under-representation from the outset, in 2020, so that will be our concern in relation to both of those.

If you want me to give you the figures, just for the purposes of the tape, in terms of North, the current electorate is 75,751 with a predicted growth of 3,121, so that would result in an electorate of 78,872. In terms of Plymouth South, the current electorate is 78,406. That is actually one of the highest constituencies in the entire country. At present, I think it is the fourth largest. The projected growth there is 5,862, so that would result by 2020 in an electorate of 84,268.

What I have given to you there is some information in terms of our growth figures. It is on the appendix to you. Plymouth has a good track record in terms of growth. The electorate growth in Plymouth was the sixth largest of all key cities. In 2014 to 2015 the electorate growth was greater than that of the South West and, indeed, the England average by quite some margin, and we are confident in those electorate projections. More than 1,200 new homes were built last year alone, and we are confident in terms of our growth ambitions, moving forward. Those are just concerns that we bring to your attention, and not objections, just concerns on your own criteria.

In terms of the other proposal in relation to the naming of the Tavistock and Ivybridge constituency, we are objecting to that one on the basis of the Boundary Commission's own naming convention. The proposal there on your proposal is to take some of what it is currently, in terms of Plymouth and South West Devon, namely Plympton constituencies - there are three ward constituencies, Plympton Chaddlewood, Plympton Erle and Plympton St Mary - and to put them into a constituency that would go up as far as Tavistock and Ivybridge.

Whilst we do not have any fundamental objections to them forming part of a constituency that is to the east of the city, not least given the growth that I have just spoken about, we think it would be difficult to lump them in with North and South, it would overheat already a pattern that is overheating growth-wise, we think that the name "Plymouth" should be reflected in the eventual Boundary Commission decision. Indeed, what I am referring to there is section 43 of your guidance, which says that the names should reflect the main population centres contained within the constituency.

Those constituencies represent over 30 per cent of electors living in Plymouth compared to only 13 per cent who live in Tavistock, and 12 per cent who live in Ivybridge. Plympton is a suburb of Plymouth. It is a large suburb and it does form part of Plymouth, so our counter-proposal for you there is that we recommend that the Tavistock and Ivybridge constituency be renamed either "Plymouth East and South West Devon" or "Plymouth East, Tavistock and Ivybridge"

Otherwise, there are no other comments that we have for you. I hope that you find the data that we have given to you there of use, and, as I said, I will send you an electronic copy as soon as I can. That is it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Shepherd. Yes, it is useful to have that there to look at whilst you are giving your presentation, and we look forward to the electronic copy.

MR SHEPHERD: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you just remain there for a moment? Are there any questions for Mr Shepherd? (No response) Thank you very much.

MR SHEPHERD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Double, good afternoon. Are you happy to speak a little earlier than you would otherwise have intended?

MR DOUBLE: Yes, I am.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Double, could I ask you to give your name, please, and your address?

MR STEVE DOUBLE: (MP for St Austell and Newquay) I am Steve Double. My address is 16 Bay View Park, St Austell, in Cornwall.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You have 10 minutes. Would you like me to remind you when you have a couple of minutes left?

MR DOUBLE: Can do. I probably will not take that long, but just, if you need to, then thank you.

I am Steve Double. I am the sitting MP for the constituency of St Austell and Newquay in Mid Cornwall. I want to start by saying that I understand the legal restrictions that the Commission has had to work within in drawing up these proposals. The legislation as it was passed is highly restrictive and leaves little room for manoeuvre in Cornwall.

However, I do have a number of concerns with regards to the current proposals and the way that they impact on the constituency that I represent. However, due to the way that the rules have been applied, I cannot see any other way of dividing up the boundaries that would produce a better outcome that local residents would prefer, but I still do wish to place on record both the concerns that I have, both for my own sake and on behalf of the people of St Austell and Newquay that I represent, and also the wider people of Cornwall.

Of particular concern to people locally is the splitting up of what are locally known as "clay villages". These are the villages of St Stephen, St Dennis, Foxhole, Nanpean, Whitemoor, Roche Bugle, Indian Queens and Fraddon. These villages form a tight-knit community, bound together by their shared history of being the centre of the china clay mining industry for over 150 years.

They have a great deal in common, both historically and also today. It is very disappointing that the current rules mean that there appears to be no way of making up the constituencies in Mid Cornwall that would enable these villages to remain in the same constituency, but I did want to place on record my concern of this, and also specifically the views of St Austell Town Council, who I know have written to the Commission directly on this point.

But of greater concern to the people of Cornwall is the matter of the proposed cross-border constituency between north east Cornwall and north west Devon, and I am sure the Commission is already aware that this issue has provoked strong feelings for many, myself included.

I admit that having looked at the case being put forward against the cross-border seat, many of the arguments are not valid legal reasons within the current legislative framework, but I do not believe that Cornwall's democratic representation will somehow be weakened by sharing an MP with part of Devon, as some have claimed. Cornwall has had a cross-border seat since MPs existed with the Isles of Scilly; and I am actually married to a Scillonian and no one has ever suggested to me that the islands lack political representation as a result of sharing an MP with West Cornwall, nor that somehow Cornwall's border is compromised by sharing an MP to the west.

Many MPs across the country represent areas that are diverse and have communities from very different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in a single constituency, and I have no doubt that an MP would be completely capable of representing people from east Cornwall and west Devon effectively. The Cornish border is not moving, and part of Cornwall is not joining Devon as some would say. This is about a line on a map that only shows the area an MP will represent and nothing more.

Like many, I had hoped that the protected minority status afforded to the Cornish people would provide a basis for a legal challenge to these proposals. Sadly, legal advice obtained by Cornwall Council has stated that our Cornish minority status is not something that can be used to argue against the cross-border seat; so, despite all of the rhetoric, in my view there are very weak reasoned legal arguments against this proposal.

I personally have grappled with this matter for the past few weeks, and I have had to ask myself the question, "If there are no reasonable arguments against this, why do I, like so many proud Cornishmen, feel so strongly about this matter?" I think I have to be honest and admit that it is a deep emotional response. The objection to this proposal for a cross-border seat with Devon is something we Cornish people feel. There may be no way of articulating it in words that have any weight with the Boundary Commission, but that does not mean we feel it any less.

The trouble is that when these maps are drawn up, that is done so following strict legal guidelines. They are drawn up using population statistics, percentages, and maps, and those guidelines do not capture the pride and the passion the people of Cornwall feel. So I am simply here today to try to express to you a clear message that I hope you will be able to take away and feed back to Government. I will certainly be doing the same thing in Parliament, but I wanted the Commission to hear it as well. In the strongest possible terms the people of Cornwall object to any proposals for a constituency that crosses the Cornwall-Devon border.

It is no real surprise to us that people who do not share the way we feel find it difficult to comprehend how strongly we feel about this issue. Cornwall is unique, so how can we expect others to understand? We accept others will not understand. We accept others will not agree with us, but what we cannot accept is our views not being respected. I

want to say that we should not underestimate how deeply many Cornish people feel about this issue. It somehow stabs at the very core of the way we feel about our county as Cornish men and women. We feel it is challenging our identity. That inbuilt Cornish sense of independence is provoked by the thought of our border being crossed. Even though it is only a line on a map, it symbolises something far deeper in the Cornish psyche.

Sadly, under the current restrictions contained in the legislation I reluctantly admit I cannot find any valid reasons to oppose the current proposals. If they are to go ahead, I cannot offer a better alternative under the current rules, but my message is simply please go not let this go ahead as proposed. Please find a way to change the rules in order to enable the boundaries to be drawn along the Cornish border. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Double. Are there any questions for Mr Double? (No response) Thank you very much for your representations.

Our next scheduled speaker is not listed to speak until 3.20. Are there any people in the room who would like to speak? We have some spare time. (No response) On that basis then I will adjourn the hearing until our next speaker arrives at 3.20.

After a short break

Time noted: 3.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen, if we can now resume the hearing. We have a speaker, Miss Jill Elson. Miss Elson, would you like to come round to the lectern, please? Miss Elson, can I ask you to give your name and address, please?

MISS ELSON: (East Devon District Conservative Association) I am Miss Jill Elson, 23 Hazeldene Gardens, Exmouth, and I represent the East Devon Conservative Association.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MISS ELSON: We support the proposal to have the EDDC ward of Exe Valley from Central Devon into the new constituency. I wish to object to having one of the Exeter City Council polling districts, namely St Loyes, into the new proposed constituency.

We believe that the St Loyes polling district of Exeter City Council should be transferred back into the Exeter constituency. The people of St Loyes do not recognise belonging to East Devon at all, as it has no relationship to a rural area. The people of St Loyes have been confused, and do tell us so on the doorsteps or at various meetings, since it

was part of East Devon constituency as they have always belonged to the Exeter constituency.

The size of the Broadclyst ward of East Devon District Council is increasing by a rapid amount due to the many developments taking place and yet more approved planning permissions in the pipeline. This has been recognised by the Boundary Commission in the change of boundaries for the new Devon county divisions. Broadclyst had 2,698 electors in December 2015 and 2,847 by June 2016.

The new town of Cranbrook, within the Broadclyst ward of East Devon, now has 1,325 homes; nearly one home completed per day over the last four years. In June this year, 29 homes were completed, and it has 420 children in the primary school and more in a nursery and 200 in the all-through school. I therefore support Exeter Conservative Association in requesting the movement of St Loyes polling district back into Exeter.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Miss Elson. Could you remain there just for a moment, just in case anybody wants to ask you any questions? Are there any questions from the floor? (No response) Thank you. Thank you very much, Miss Elson.

There are no more booked speakers today. Is there anyone in the room who would like to speak? (No response) What I propose to do then is to adjourn the hearing until 4.30 in case anyone else comes just without a booked slot to speak and, if they do, then I can hear them at 4.30 onwards, so I will adjourn the hearing until 4.30.

After a short break

Time noted: 4.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back. I think we have Mr Ed Onslow who would like to speak. Mr Onslow, would you like to step forward? Mr Onslow, do you want to just tell your name and address before you make your representations?

MR ONSLOW: I am reading off my phone; I am not checking Facebook, honest.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Onslow, do you want to tell me your name and address before you actually make your representations?

MR ONSLOW: Sure. My name is Ed Onslow. I am from 23 Calne Grove(?) in Exeter.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR ONSLOW: First of all, apologies. I had a train booked at 2.30 but my train was late, so I managed to rebook for a later time. Apologies for that. I would like to talk about the St Loyes ward in East Devon constituency. The St Loyes ward sits on the eastern boundary of Exeter extending from Wonford in the west to the M5 in the east between Countess Wear and Monkton north to south. It sits in Exeter geographically and is run by Exeter City Council.

In 2010 St Loyes, along with Topsham, were moved from the constituency of Exeter to East Devon. I do not know the reasoning for this. However, it seems likely that Exeter had become too big in terms of electorate and had to shed a couple of wards. I do not believe that St Loyes, an urban area in Exeter and governed by Exeter City Council, has much at all in common with other wards, including Topsham in the largely rural and coastal East Devon constituency, though I understand that shedding wards is necessary where a constituency gets too big.

However, in the initial 2018 proposal with reference to the document "Initial Proposals for the New Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the South West" from the Commission website, and printed outside, there is enough room in the Exeter constituency to accommodate St Loyes and remain well within the Commission's size guidelines and at the same time reduce East Devon's electorate from what would be close to the maximum. As stated in section 2.5 of the South West proposal: "A more even distribution is one of the goals of this exercise".

In the 2018 proposal, Exeter's electorate is given as 71,404, East Devon's as 77,959; a difference of 6,555. East Devon is just 548 away from the maximum size of electorate. With St Loyes moved back to Exeter, Exeter's electorate would be 76,008 and East Devon's 73,355, closing the gap to 2,653.

Given the above, I see little reason why St Loyes should remain in East Devon. It is an urban area with little in common with the current constituency in which it sits. It is in Exeter geographically. It is governed by Exeter City Council. Its 4,604 electorate would fit comfortably inside the Exeter constituency, bringing it further away from the minimum electorate and East Devon further away from the maximum electorate. I would like the Boundary Commission to consider moving it back to its 1997 location.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Remain there for a moment, please. Any questions for Mr Onslow? (No response) Thank you very much for attending. Mr Aric Gilinsky? Mr Gilinsky, if you would like to come to the lectern, please? Would you like to state your full name and address, please?

MR GILINSKY: (Exeter Riverside Conservatives) My full name is Aric Gilinsky. My address is 1 Baring Court within the Exeter constituency. The topic I will be discussing today is very similar to the previous speaker, the St Loyes ward, but also more widely on the area within the Exeter District Council area.

As has already been stated, the electorate of Exeter District Council, which I believe would be over 80,000, would be over the maximum allowable size under the Commission rules. However, with the fact there are two different wards that are being looked at here, St Loyes and Topsham, the St Loyes ward on its own would be still well within the guideline size. What I would like to speak about also is the natural boundary occurring at the M5. As we can see on the map, the M5 goes across Topsham ward. I know that it is unfavourable by the Commission's view to cut a ward in half, and I do not have the exact numbers, because it was difficult to find based on polling districts the exact number of electors based on the review that you have in that area west of the M5, it is very much similar to St Loyes ward in that it is an urban area within the Exeter District Council area and that it is definitely looking west, as they say, to the city centre. The natural boundary of the M5 would be much clearer in the minds of the electorate and it would be very easy to pinpoint on a map. The benefit of this, I am sure you would agree, is that the people who live there when you ask them sometimes, "Who is your MP?" you do hear Ben Bradshaw, despite the fact that they are in the East Devon constituency and not in Exeter at the moment. The fact is I have had that conversation on many occasions and I would like the Commission to investigate the exact numbers who live west of the M5, if that boundary would be within the allowable size limit.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Is that the end of your presentation?

MR GILINSKY: That is everything from me. I tried to keep it short.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any questions for Mr Gilinsky? (No response) Thank you very much, Mr Gilinsky. Melissa Maynard? Is there anyone else in the room who would like to speak? (No response) We will just adjourn for five minutes to await Melissa Maynard.

After a short break

Time noted: 4.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ms Maynard, are you ready to speak?

MS MAYNARD: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just take your time. There is plenty of time. If I could ask you to give your name and address, please?

MS MAYNARD: My name is Melissa Maynard, 13 Carpenter Road in Plymouth; Plymstock really. I just wanted to start by saying that I am really in favour of the

equalisation of boundaries and I think that the boundary review team have done a really excellent job of what is a very difficult task, so overall congratulations.

As I said, I live in Plymstock, which will be moving from South West Devon to the Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport constituency, which is, I think, 30. Right at the bottom there. (Indicating) Plymstock Radford, that is me in there. That is where I live. I just want to say we are very happy to be moving closer to the city into that city ward. We are currently in South West Devon but we are covered by Plymouth City Council and I think it makes much more sense for us to be part of that city. We are an urban area and most of the South West Devon constituency is quite rural. I think we have probably got more in common with the city area, so we are quite happy to move into that constituency.

I would, however, say we would prefer it to stay Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport rather than South Plymouth. I would prefer that name.

On names, just speaking on behalf of my current constituency, which is called South West Devon now, I know that my friends and colleagues who will remain in that constituency would much rather it still be called South West Devon. I think the proposal is Tavistock and Ivybridge. I and they feel, who will continue to live in that constituency, the ward is much bigger and broader than just Tavistock and Ivybridge, and South West Devon encompasses that whole maelstrom of different types of residential-type areas.

I am also very aware that there will be another review in five years' time and there are an awful lot of houses planned to be built. They have not been built yet, but upwards of 6,000 in that constituency, so the boundaries may well change again and then you might have to change the name again if Tavistock dropped out. We feel it would be much easier and much better if we just kept that constituency called South West Devon and then you would not have to change it again. I think that is probably all I had to say really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any questions for Ms Maynard?

MR KINGSWOOD: My name is Kingswood. I asked a question in the morning. You have suggested rather than the names of two market towns, Tavistock and Ivybridge, because Plympton has a bigger population, even though it is suburban, and suggested staying with South West Devon. There is a simplicity in compass point names, but Tavistock is West Devon. Can I just suggest West South West Devon?

MS MAYNARD: South and West Devon?

MR KINGSWOOD: One could say West and South West, but on a sundial it would just be WSW, West South West Devon.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you have a specific question for clarification?

MR KINGSWOOD: The question is any comment on the modification of the name to West South West Devon so as to take in awareness of Tavistock and awareness of Ivybridge? End of question.

MS MAYNARD: I can understand where you are coming from, but I just think since it is already South West Devon, for simplicity's sake to leave it as South West Devon everybody would know where they were.

MR KINGSWOOD: Except the people in Tavistock, but they could get used to it fairly quickly.

MS MAYNARD: I think so, and West Devon is in there.

MR KINGSWOOD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Ms Maynard, for your representations.

We have no more speakers booked. As you know, the hearing is set to close at 8 o'clock. I am conscious that people may want to come on their way home from work but have not actually booked a slot. However, I am also conscious that I do not want people just sitting here for hours and hours. I am going to adjourn the hearing now for one hour. If we come back for six o'clock, which is an hour and ten minutes. If anyone comes in in the interim period of time, I will be able to give them a speaking slot later than 6 o'clock. Thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 6.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It is 6 o'clock. We do not have any more speakers, so I plan to adjourn the hearing for another hour until 7 o'clock; so maybe I will see you later.

After a short break

Time noted: 7.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It is about 7 o'clock. We have had no more people booking in to speak. I intend to wait for

another 30 minutes until 7.30 and then, bearing in mind that our last speaker actually was at 4.50 and we have had no speaker since then and adjourned several times, my intention at this point is to close the hearing at 7.30, but I will leave it open for another half an hour just in case anybody wishes to speak.

Hearing adjourned at 7.30 pm until Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 10 am

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