

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**AT THE**

**2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND**

**HELD AT**

**THE MIDLAND HOTEL, MANCHESTER**

**ON**

**TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2016**  
**DAY ONE**

**Before:**

**Mr Neil Ward, The Lead Assistant Commissioner**

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At 10.00 am:

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

My name is Neil Ward and I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in the task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the region. I am responsible for chairing the hearing today and tomorrow and I am also responsible, with my fellow Assistant Commissioners, Nicholas Elliott and Graham Clark, who are both here today, for analysing all the representations received about the initial proposals for the region and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised. I should state at the outset that the Assistant Commissioners have had no hand in the drafting of the initial proposals.

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

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10.00 am until 8.00 pm and tomorrow it is scheduled to run from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. It is at my discretion to vary that timetable and I may do so, depending on the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak. I should point out, however, that under the legislation that governs the Commission's review, each public hearing can only be held over two days and cannot be extended into a third.

The specific purpose of this hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the North West. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a time slot, and I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time. If there is any time free during the day, or at the end of the day, then I will invite anyone who has not registered, but who would like to speak, to do so. I hope to give everyone who wishes to speak the opportunity to do so. I know from experience that it is not an easy task to get up and speak if you are not used to public speaking. I shall do all I can, as the Chair, to make it as positive an experience as I can for everyone. Indeed, I hope we will all be supportive of all the speakers, irrespective of whether or not you share their views.

I would like to stress again that the purpose of this hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals. It 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 the presentation. Some of you may wish to put

questions for clarification to the speakers and you may do so, but only, if I may ask, through me, as the Chair.

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

MR HARTLEY: Thank you, Neil. Good morning, everyone. As Neil mentioned, my name is Sam Hartley and I am a member of the Commission staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries and at this hearing I am leading the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As Neil has stated, he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support Neil in carrying out his role. Please ask any one of us outside the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

I would like to talk now about the Commission's proposals for the North West region, which were published on 13 September 2016. The proposals for this region are for 68 constituencies, a reduction of seven. Our proposals leave 14 of the existing constituencies unchanged.

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 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. Consequently, in some areas it has been necessary to propose constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries.

As I mentioned, the North West has been allocated 68 constituencies. Due to the significant change required throughout the region, our proposals leave 14 of the 75 existing constituencies unchanged.

We have proposed that the Metropolitan Boroughs of Greater Manchester be combined in a sub-region with the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral and the unitary authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and the Boroughs of Halton and Warrington.

We have proposed two constituencies that contain electors from both Cheshire and Greater Manchester, which combine Altrincham and Knutsford in the constituency and the towns of Bramhall and Poynton in the constituency.

Although we have treated Lancashire and Merseyside as separate sub-regions, we have proposed one constituency that crosses the county boundary, which combines three wards from the Borough of West Lancashire with the town of Southport. We have proposed five constituencies entirely contained in the county of Cumbria.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account the 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 are seeking to divide wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We consider that any division of these units between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisation 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 we split a ward between constituencies, and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will be needed and the extent of such ward-splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of change for this review is significant, and we look forward to hearing the views of the 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 [bce2018.org.uk](http://bce2018.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 at the back, we are taking a video recording 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 four week period to occur during the spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and written representations will include certain personal data of those who have made representations. I therefore invite all of those contributing to the Commission's consultation to read the Data Protection and Privacy Policy, a copy of which we have with us and is also available on

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

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Sam. Now, as this is the first hearing for the North West region as a whole, we intend to begin with a series of presentations by the spokespersons for the main political parties. These presentations will cover, I imagine, the region as a whole as well as any specific Greater Manchester points, and so I have allowed additional time for each of these, up to 30 minutes, although I hope the whole time may not be needed by each of the speakers. After these presentations, we will move on to individual representations, for which I shall typically allow no more than ten minutes, although again past experience has shown that many will not require that length of time to get their views across. To fit everyone in we shall all need to keep to this scheduling, please. For those of you who like to plan your days ahead, I shall build in a number of breaks during the day, roughly at 11.30 to 11.50, at 1.30 to 2.30 for lunch, and then a final break at around four o'clock to 4.30. Before we begin, can I just check if there are any points anyone needs clarification of anything that has been said by myself or Sam so far? (No response) If not, then we will start with the political parties. They have drawn lots to see which order they will speak, and the first up is going to be Lord Stunell for the Liberal Democrats. When each speaker comes to the podium, please state for the record your name and full address and then begin when you are ready. Thank you.

LORD STUNELL (Liberal Democrats): Thank you very much, Mr Ward. I represent the North West Liberal Democrats in making this presentation. My name is Lord Andrew Stunell and my address is 84 Lime Grove, Romiley, Stockport. I should also perhaps add that I served as MP from 1997 until I retired last year for the constituency of Hazel Grove. The Liberal Democrats in the North West will be submitting a formal written representation at a later stage and this is an oral presentation in preparation for that.

I want to start by commending the Boundary Commission's efforts to minimise change and to preserve existing seats, a principle which we strongly support, and we recognise that, within the rules, the Commission's proposals aim to do that. We are concerned that there has been no option to allow for additional registration since December 2015 and that, coupled with the electorate size rules, implies that more changes will follow at the next review as a consequence, and the lack of stability in electoral arrangements consequent upon that we do not believe is helpful.

We want to commend the Boundary Commission's attempts to retain the integrity of urban communities within the newly drawn seats, if necessary, as the Boundary Commission has explained, at the expense of crossing local authority boundaries. As I shall say in a few minutes, we believe that is the right approach. At the same time, it does produce some rather novel shotgun partnerships as a consequence that will be a representational challenge, and there may well be further points made on that.

We accept the Boundary Commission's proposal to divide the region into sub-regions as a way of determining the allocation and we further endorse the sub-regional boundaries that the Commission has, in fact, chosen. Given the constraints, we think that the Boundary Commission has made a reasonable set of proposals, so, in the spirit of the invitation set out in the report at paragraph 80, we do broadly support these draft proposals and, in particular, note that many of the lessons from the previous abortive review seem to have been taken on board.

Mr Ward, I would like to comment on each of the sub-regions, starting with Cumbria, if I may. We agree that Cumbria should be considered as a sub-region and we believe that the proposed boundaries make sense in relation to topography, transport links and demographics. We welcome the recognition that the proposal tabled by the Boundary Commission is the best practicable way to divide the county into five seats while keeping Carlisle whole, which we strongly welcome, and avoiding the creation of a seat crossing a mountain range, which was certainly a problem with the previous layout. We fully support the Boundary Commission's draft proposals for Cumbria and would resist changes to them.

If I can move on to the sub-region of Merseyside north of the Mersey, we accept the Boundary Commission's logic of treating Merseyside north of the River Mersey as a sub-region, not least because it readily allows the retention of a number of seats unchanged or, essentially, undisturbed. We also welcome the Boundary Commission's proposal to retain Formby wholly within one seat and accept that a consequence of that is the need to cross the Lancashire county boundary to achieve this within quota. We support the Boundary Commission's specific proposal to include three wards from Lancashire within an expanded Southport seat as the best way to do this and, indeed, setting the boundary of the seat, as proposed, on the banks of the River Douglas creates a very coherent entity which better reflects transport and community links than the present configuration. Therefore, we strongly support the Boundary Commission's draft proposals for the north Merseyside sub-region.

Moving to Lancashire, we note the Boundary Commission's reasoning for its draft proposals for Lancashire and approve of its treatment as a separate sub-region, with the exception of the three wards relating to Merseyside which I just commented on. Within that, we support the unchanged retention of Chorley, and we welcome the creation of a new Preston seat which includes the whole urban area. In the remainder of the county there appear to be several alternative configurations that would be possible. At this stage we are not offering a detailed critique of the Boundary Commission's proposals in those areas, but we note that the balance of relative advantages between different layouts will need to be weighed up carefully to take account of local consultation responses. Finally in relation to Lancashire, we would oppose any amendment to Lancashire seats which resulted in crossing the boundary with Greater Manchester, as we believe this would break the coherent scheme for

sub-regions which the Commission, in our view, quite rightly has established at this stage.

In relation to Greater Manchester, we accept the logic of treating Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Wirral as a comprehensive sub-region. We strongly welcome the retention of undisturbed seats around the west side of the Greater Manchester conurbation, as set out in paragraph 45 of the report, and we do note that a number of below-quota existing seats on the east side of the conurbation make a very significant reconfiguration exercise unavoidable. It is also necessary for the same quota reasons to combine some Cheshire wards with others in Greater Manchester in one or more seats. Given these constraints, we support the Boundary Commission's draft proposals in respect of their recommendations covering the boroughs of Bury, Rochdale and Oldham. We particularly welcome the restoration of the Littleborough and Saddleworth seat, as proposed.

With respect to the Stockport Borough, whilst we note that the borough's existing tally of three full seats with one shared with Tameside is to be reconfigured to only one full seat with three seats shared with other local authorities, two with Tameside and one with Cheshire East, we support the Boundary Commission's draft proposals as the best option available, given the constraints.

Turning to Cheshire and Wirral, it follows from our evidence on Greater Manchester, that we support the Boundary Commission's proposals for an Altrincham and Tatton seat, and for a Bramhall and Poynton seat. We also welcome the retention of unchanged Crewe and Nantwich and Congleton seats, and we support the minor changes proposed necessary to retain two seats wholly within Warrington Borough.

So far as the transfer of Halton Lea to satisfy the quota for Halton goes, we would simply comment that this does emphasise the restriction imposed by the rules, as it is highly likely that Halton is now within quota with the additional voter registration there since December 2015.

We support the Boundary Commission's proposals for Wirral but would suggest that Bebbington and Heswall can hardly be a good designation for a constituency that does not contain Bebbington. It could be that Bromborough and Heswall might be more accurate.

We support the Ellesmere Port and Neston and City of Chester seat proposals.

In mid-Cheshire the Boundary Commission proposes that those wards now in Tatton that are not absorbed by the reshaped Altrincham and Tatton seat should be distributed to Macclesfield, Weaver Vale and Eddisbury seats. Weaver Vale and Eddisbury in particular are proposed to be very different seats to their existing form. In this case too we are not offering a detailed critique of the Boundary Commission's proposals at this

point, but note that the balance of relative advantages of alternatives will need to be weighed up carefully to take account of local consultation responses. If those two seats proceeded on the current form it should be noted that neither Weaver Vale nor Eddisbury are well named. Weaver Vale now extends to the River Dee at Farndon, and so far as we can see Eddisbury will no longer contain the place of Eddisbury.

So in summary, Mr Ward, we support the choices made by the Boundary Commission on appropriate sub-regions, we strongly support the Commission's draft proposals for Cumbria, we strongly support the Commission's proposals for North Merseyside, including the inclusion of three wards from Lancashire, we support the Boundary Commission draft proposals, both for Wirral and for Greater Manchester, including those that cross into Cheshire. We say that Bebbington and Heswall should be renamed. We support the proposed retention unaltered of those seats set out by the Boundary Commission within Lancashire and the creation of a Preston seat, but would await detailed local consultation about the best configuration elsewhere in the County, bearing in mind in particular shapeliness of constituencies and transportation links. We support the retention unaltered of those seats set out by the Boundary Commission within Cheshire, and the creation of two seats crossing into Greater Manchester. We also support the minor changes proposed to bring Halton and Warrington North and South within quota, and we would wait detailed local consultation about the optimum configuration in mid-Cheshire. In any case, the two proposed seats of Weaver Vale and Eddisbury need to be named appropriately.

Mr Ward, that concludes the presentation from the North West Liberal Democrats.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Admirably short and very clear, thank you. I have no questions. Has anyone got any questions of clarification that they would wish to put? (No response) No, thank you. Next we are going to hear from Roger Pratt for the Conservative Party. Again, if you would state your name and address.

MR PRATT (Conservative Party): Thank you very much indeed, sir. I regret I probably will not be as admirably brief as Lord Stunell. My name is Roger Pratt, I work for the Conservative Party on boundaries, and this is a representation on behalf of the Conservative Party and the North West region of the Conservative Party.

We support the allocation of 68 seats to the North West. We support each of the Commission's groupings, and the proposed allocation to the sub-regions, as has been outlined, and, like Lord Stunell, we would oppose any measure which linked Greater Manchester with Lancashire in any way.

We have based our response on the factors in Rule 5, the key factors, the geographical considerations, the local government boundaries, the existing constituencies, and any local ties that would be broken, and that will form the basis of our representation, and I

will quote reasonably extensively from two documents. One is the Boundary Commission's initial proposals document, and the second document is the revised proposals report from the aborted review, where I think two of the three assistant Commissioners are actually the same on this particular occasion.

So if we look at Cumbria, in this sub-region, like the Liberal Democrats, we support in their entirety all the five seats. They are very sensible arrangements, they are much in line with the revised recommendations last time, and we particularly welcome the fact that Carlisle becomes a coterminous constituency with the local authority, which is an improvement on the current position. So that is the Cumbria map from the Commission, and we are not proposing any changes to Cumbria.

In Lancashire, however, we are proposing a number of changes. We support just three of the proposed constituencies. We support Blackburn, Chorley, which is no change, and Rossendale and Darwen, and we particularly support Blackburn and Rossendale and Darwen because they actually are an improvement on the current position, because you take the two boroughs and out of the two boroughs you make two seats, keeping Rossendale whole, which it is not currently. So we strongly support those three constituencies within Lancashire.

However, we do not support the Commission's proposals for the other seats, for Accrington, for Blackpool North and Fleetwood, for Blackpool South, which covers two local authorities, for Burnley, for Clitheroe and Colne, for the Fylde, which is not all of the Fylde Local Authority, for Lancaster and Morecambe, for North Lancashire, and perhaps I can just say that in terms of Clitheroe and Colne and North Lancashire we believe those are particularly poorly constructed constituencies and we very strongly oppose those two constituencies. We do not support Preston, which is consequential on other changes we have to make, and we are proposing minor change between South Ribble and West Lancashire.

So in their place we are proposing the following seats. Blackpool North and Fleetwood, which in order for Blackpool South to take just Blackpool wards, i.e. go down from two local authorities to one local authority, Blackpool North needs to extend further, as it does in our proposal. Burnley and Accrington would be all but three wards of Burnley plus the Accrington part of the Hyndburn Local Authority. Fylde would include the whole of the Fylde Borough. Lancaster and Wyre would be Lancaster, parts of Lancaster, parts of Wyre, parts of Preston North, very similar to the proposal, not exactly the same but very similar to the proposal in the aborted review. Morecambe and Lunesdale, which is the current constituency plus the lower Lune Valley and the Bulk ward, and I would refer, sir, to the Assistant Commissioner's report last time in respect of two paragraphs with regard to Morecambe and Lunesdale, paragraph 45, which it says there was broad support for the proposed Morecambe and Lunesdale constituency, and we are only changing that proposed one by adding one more ward of Bulk in order to get to the numbers, and in 355 it was clear to us that to combine them, and we are

talking about combining Lancaster and Morecambe here, would disrupt local ties and would fly in the face of the clearly expressed views of local people, whose argument is a simple one, they are entirely different places. The Lancaster constituency was described to us as urban and rural, whereas Morecambe is seaside and rural community. We note also the presence of the University of Lancaster in the Lancaster constituency, and of course the University of Lancaster under the proposals has been separated for Lancaster, and we will put it back together again.

We have a different solution for Pendle, which is basically three wards of Burnley plus the Pendle Local Authority. We have a proposed Ribble Valley and Hyndburn West, which is just two local authorities, the Ribble Valley Local Authority and part of Hyndburn, including the communities of Great Harwood, Oswaldtwistle and Rishton, and I note here, sir, that there was a lot of discussion of Great Harwood at the aborted review, in paragraph 325 it talks of a petition from hundreds of Great Harwood residents requesting inclusion in a Ribble Valley rather than a Burnley constituency, and in 338 that Great Harwood, and in the past they have both been part of a Ribble Valley constituency.

In terms of South Ribble and West Lancashire, we propose a minor change between South Ribble and West Lancashire, but it ensures that the West Lancashire constituency is just electors within the West Lancashire district, it does not include, in our proposal, the Eccleston and Mawdesley ward from Chorley, that is included within South Ribble, and that enables us to unite the whole of Bamber Bridge, which is split by the Commission.

So what I would ask you to do, sir, and everybody, is to look at the map of Lancashire. On the right hand side is our proposal for Lancashire and on the left is the Commission proposal for Lancashire, and I would ask you, sir, to look at this in particular in the light of the Boundary Commission report, quoting the proposals for Lancashire, and in particular point 31. "We decided that we could not maintain the separation of the towns", and this again is talking about Lancaster and Morecambe, "in different constituencies, as is the existing arrangement, because this would lead to a geographically huge constituency that would wrap round the City of Lancaster". I would ask you, sir, our proposal, which the Boundary Commission could have come up with, does wrap round the City of Lancaster. It is almost exactly the same as the revised proposals. The other one that wraps round the City of Lancaster is the very large constituency of North Lancashire, as proposed by the Commission, and I would ask you to judge which best meets the criteria the Commission had there of a massively geographically huge constituency. I would suggest to you, sir, that the geographically huge constituency is the one the Boundary Commission have come up with themselves. They also say with regard to this point although the ward of the university and Scotforth Rural on the south eastern periphery of Lancaster is not included in our proposed constituency, it is predominantly rural, with the only significant settlement being the university. We would have preferred a solution that retained the university site within

the constituency of Lancaster, but having carefully examined the alternatives concluded that any other solution would result in a greater division of the City of Lancaster. Well, we have included in our Preston North and Wyre seat, which is our red seat to the south of Morecambe and Lunesdale, we would obviously have included that.

I would also, sir, refer you to the last report of the aborted review, to point 363 of the aborted report. There was, on the table, not from the Commission but there was on the table an alternative solution for Lancashire which was examined by the Commission, and the Garstang and Carnforth constituency is suggested, that would spread east from the River Wyre as far as the Chipping ward, and would extend north from the northern edge of Preston to beyond Garstang. We are troubled by the size of this proposed constituency within the sub-region and do not feel it adequately meets the criteria for the geography of a constituency, or local government boundaries, not least as it would encompass four local authorities. The Boundary Commission have come up with a seat which does encompass four local authorities, and is actually worse than the proposed seat last time because the proposed seat that they were talking about last time actually did not go as far as the Yorkshire border, did not go as far as Gisburn, it only went as far as Chipping. So this I would maintain, sir, is even worse in terms of a geographically large constituency.

We also strongly oppose the Clitheroe and Colne constituency, which, I am not sure whether it is a revolver, or how you would actually describe it, I think a revolver might be the best description of the size of it, it is a very long, narrow constituency, I think it is 30 miles long, and again this was referred to in the report last time because there was a Clitheroe and Colne constituency proposed last time, not, I hasten to add, by the Commission, but the Assistant Commissioner's report said, in AC298, "A number of issues make this counter proposal unattractive to us. First it would put eleven Pendle wards into a Ribble Valley constituency called Clitheroe and Colne". So we believe that both of those constituencies are unattractive. We would also point out in the report, in 345, as far as the Pendle wards, the wards of Barnoldswick and Earby, Coates Craven and Earby, we note that these wards have not previously been in a Clitheroe based constituency, that the public transport links between them and the rest of the Ribble Valley are poor, and they are said to look towards Pendle for daily amenities. Removing these wards reflects the criteria of local ties, existing constituency boundaries and local government ties. So clearly these things came up last time.

In fact, if you look at East Lancashire, we believe we have come up with a very neat solution, because if you take the six boroughs of Ribble Valley, Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Blackburn, they naturally make five seats, the numbers make five seats, and that is exactly what we have done.

Now, the Boundary Commission splits three of those local authorities, it splits Pendle, it splits Ribble Valley, obviously it splits Burnley, it keeps Blackburn, Blackburn and Rossendale as they are, which is very sensible. You have to split one of those other

wards, you would have to split Burnley and you would have to split one other, but you do not need to split two other as the Commission have done, you can split only one, and this was another issue that was raised previously, and I refer you to 297 and 299 in the Assistant Commissioner's report from last time. "It is universally accepted, however, that it is not possible to keep both the Borough of Pendle and the Borough of Hyndburn intact. We believe the least worst option is Hyndburn, because it breaks fewest local ties and respects local government boundaries", but at 299, "So the least worst solution is to divide Hyndburn's communities, which have their own identities, between different constituencies. We have attempted to keep the towns of Accrington and Oswaldtwistle together, even in different constituencies, thus maintaining local ties". We do indeed keep Accrington and Oswaldtwistle in separate constituencies, and unlike the revised proposals, which split Hyndburn into three, we only do split Hyndburn into two. We keep Pendle together, we keep Ribble Valley together.

So if we look at our advantages, I have mentioned these, Pendle is united in one seat, Ribble Valley Local Authority is united in one seat. I understand the council have already met and unanimously, including all political parties, they have supported the inclusion of the whole of Ribble Valley in a constituency. The Fylde Local Authority is united in one seat. Our Lancaster and Wyre comprises three local authorities rather than four in the Commission's proposed North Lancashire, and removes the size and accessibility problems of this seat, and again I refer to item 332 in the Assistant Commissioner's report previously, and in 332, "This would mean that a number of local authorities that an MP would have to deal with in such a constituency would rise to four. While we accept this is not an insurmountable problem, having regard to the criterion of local government boundaries, we consider that such a number should be avoided if at all possible". Indeed, the Commission, in a report for another region, have made that very fact. There are in fact only two constituencies currently in the United Kingdom, none in the North West, two constituencies within England where there are four local authorities, and we do not believe that it is right, when you do not need to, to have a constituency comprising of four local authorities. So our Ribble Valley and Hyndburn West seat, you could equally call it Oswaldtwistle if you felt Ribble Valley and Oswaldtwistle was a better name, comprises two local authorities rather than the three in the Commission's proposed, Clitheroe and Colne, which, as I have said, is I think a very poorly constructed constituency.

Blackpool South and West Lancashire are entirely within one local authority, as opposed to two local authorities under the Commission's proposal, Chorley Local Authority contains two constituencies rather than three under the Commission's proposal. Local ties are restored in Pendle, in Ribble Valley, in St Annes and in the report of the Commission, on item 33, they refer to St Annes and they say Lytham St Annes remains largely undivided, but it is divided, and Bamber Bridge, and in 38 they talk about most of the town of Bamber Bridge. We restore all those ties, and 33,838 fewer electors move from their existing constituency in Lancashire. So we maintain that our Lancashire is a much more coherent set of proposals than the Commission

proposals, particularly in relation to the rules and we think under all four categories of Rule 5 our proposals are an improvement, and we ask you to adopt it.

So in terms of Merseyside, less the Wirral, in this sub-region we support, like the Liberal Democrats, we support all the Commission's proposals for all of the seats. It is a very sensible, very logical arrangement. All four constituencies that can be unchanged are unchanged, and we also support the fact that Southport includes three wards from the district of West Lancashire, which has the advantage that Formby, unlike last time, was not divided. So that is Merseyside, and I do not think we need to spend too much time on that.

So if we go to Greater Manchester, Cheshire and the Wirral, in this sub-region we support the Commission's proposals in their entirety for the following seats. We support Ashton-under-Lyne, which we believe is a logical combination of communities. We support Birkenhead, which is the existing constituency, plus one ward. We support the City of Chester, which is the City of Chester plus parts of the divided Chester Villages ward, which is entirely within Chester. We support the minimum changes, actually minimum change, it is not no change to Congleton but it is minimum change to Congleton. We support Halton, which is the existing constituency, plus we support a Leigh unchanged, a Makerfield unchanged, a Manchester Withington unchanged, and we would refer to Marple and Hyde. We do believe that the Marple and Hyde constituency is a very sensible arrangement, and we strongly support the Marple and Hyde constituency, and would refer to paragraph 54 in the report of the Commission. In paragraph 54 it says "We noted that the A560 Hyde Road provides a link across the constituency and between the two boroughs", and we think that is a very robust and very sensible seat.

We would also support the Wallasey constituency, which is the existing constituency, plus the Upton ward, and we note that in the report last time this was what happened as a result of the revised proposals, but there was alternative proposal in the initial proposals, and we note in paragraph 86 of the Assistant Commissioner's report that Upton ward be part of the Wallasey constituency, they were supporting Upton ward becoming part of the Wallasey constituency, its boundary with the Birkenhead constituency is the M53. We note that Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, endorses this course of action. So we strongly support Wallasey. We strongly support the two Warringtons, which very sensibly just move one ward from Warrington South to Warrington North. We support Wigan, Worsley and Eccles South, and Wythenshawe and Sale East, all of which are unchanged constituencies.

We also support the constituency of Bebbington and Heswall, and as the Commission say in paragraph 58 of their report, they ask for alternative names. "We welcome feedback on whether an alternative name would be more appropriate". We strongly support the composition of that constituency, we think it is very sensible, but we, like the Liberal Democrats, do not believe that that name is the most sensible. We propose The

Wirral. Now you may say, well, there are more than that constituencies on the Wirral, but previously, when there were three constituencies on the Wirral, they were The Wirral, Birkenhead and Wallasey. So we think The Wirral is an appropriate name, but we would be open to other suggestions as well. We particularly support the fact that Heswall is united in its constituency, and of course West Kirby is currently united within the Wirral West constituency, and we strongly support that as well, and note there was a proposal to break West Kirby last time. We do not know whether there will be this time, but we note in the Assistant Commissioner's report, at point 88, additionally the wards of West Kirby would be divided between two constituencies, because there was a proposal to divide them. The Commission sensibly have made sure they are included within the same constituency as they are, but very serious local ties would be broken if West Kirby were separated.

We do not support the following proposals. We do not support the Altrincham and Tatton Park seat, which takes three wards from Tatton into an Altrincham seat. We do not support Blackley and Broughton, we do not support the Bolton seats, we do not support Bramhall and Poynton, although we will come on to how we would cross the Cheshire/Greater Manchester border, we do not support Bury. We make a minor change to Crewe and Nantwich and some changes to Eddisbury and Northwich, minor change to Ellesmere Port and Neston, and we particularly do not support the Failsworth and Droylsden constituency. I note in point 53 from the Assistant Commissioner, sorry, from the initial proposals document, that the constituency of Failsworth and Droylsden, the Commission say "We recognise that the shape of this constituency is not ideal and that it is bisected by the M60 motorway". I think it is a particularly unfortunate constituency, at one end is Audenshaw, which is separated from Denton, and at the other end is a Saddleworth ward which is separated from the rest of the Saddleworth wards. So we do not support that. We do not support Farnworth, Littleborough and Saddleworth, Macclesfield, Manchester Central, Manchester Gorton, Oldham, Prestwich and Middleton, Rochdale, and I would again refer to the report at item 51, where it says most of the town of Rochdale, so that acknowledges, the Boundary Commissioner acknowledging that they have broken ties in Rochdale. We do not support Salford and Eccles, Stockport North and Denton, Stockport South and Cheadle, Stretford and Urmston or Weaver Vale.

So in the western part of Cheshire we propose Crewe and Nantwich takes is the Audlem ward, which it has had in the past. There is more of Eddisbury and Northwich in the Eddisbury and Northwich seat, Ellesmere Port and Neston as a consequence of these changes loses Elton ward, which goes to Weaver Vale, and Weaver Vale has more of its existing constituency, and those are just the ward changes on there, just to show where we are changing wards. That basically is our Western Cheshire map. We believe they are better shaped seats and they are based more on existing seats than the current position. We think the map on the right is an improvement on the Boundary Commission map on the left. So these are the advantages. Audlem has previously been in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency, and has very good communication links

with the constituency, both along the A530 and the A529. Farndon, Tarporley and Tattenhall are all retained in their existing constituency of Eddisbury, with ties restored with the Malpas, Wrenbury and Bunbury wards, and Hartford and Greenbank is retained within its existing constituency of Weaver Vale, and as a result of just that minor change over 10,000 pure electors move from their existing constituency.

So as far as Eastern Cheshire and Greater Manchester, we propose the following seats. So we propose the Altrincham and Sale seat, which just so happens to be the same seat that was proposed at the last review. So it is the existing seat plus the Bucklow St Martins ward, and this was referred to last time in the Assistant Commissioner's report. Obviously they did not combine it with Cheshire on this occasion, but there was a proposal that moved the Ashton-upon-Mersey seat from Altrincham and Sale. Our proposed Altrincham and Sale West constituency, this is 238, has an advantage over the constituency contained in the initial proposals. The ward of Ashton-upon-Mersey will be retained within our Altrincham and Sale West constituency, was very strong support for the retention of the ward within the constituency, this was based not only upon the maintenance of ties but because of the geographical features. The ward is separated from the Stretford and Urmston constituency by the M60 motorway and by the River Mersey. As a result the links that have developed have been between Ashton-upon-Mersey, the greater Sale area, the adjoining ward of St Mary's and onwards through to Altrincham, and we are uniting Ashton-upon-Mersey and St Mary's back into the Altrincham and Sale constituency with their northern boundary of the River Mersey. So that is a sensible proposal.

As far as a Bramhall and Poynton constituency is concerned, we agree that you have to link Cheshire with Poynton with a Bramhall constituency, however we do not agree that that should include one Wilmslow ward and a Handforth ward. If you look at the map they link far better to Cheadle than they do to Bramhall. There is separate land between Bramhall and Handforth, and they are just two wards that look as though they have been tacked on in order to get the numbers right. We do not believe that that is a coherent seat and our Bramhall and Poynton we believe is much more coherent, and we particularly support a Cheadle and Wilmslow seat, as opposed to the Altrincham and Sale seat, which we do not think has links with Cheshire. We do believe that Cheadle and Wilmslow go well together, unites the whole of Wilmslow in one constituency, it is a very, very coherent, compact constituency, linked by the A34, and therefore we strongly support a Cheadle and Wilmslow seat as opposed to the Bramhall seat, which has a bit of Wilmslow in, and the Altrincham seat which has three wards of Knutsford with Altrincham.

We then support a Gorton, Denton and Droylsden seat. We recreate a Haywood and Middleton seat, no change from the existing constituency, and I would refer you to 247 in the report last time, strong support was expressed for Haywood, which included the Hopwood Hall ward being kept together, and of course the Boundary Commission separate the Haywood wards from Hopwood Hall. So we support that. We support a

Macclesfield and Knutsford seat, so that takes the three wards that are proposed to be in the Altrincham and Tatton Park seat into a Macclesfield and Knutsford seat. They have, ties are broken between Chelford and Knutsford, those ties are restored by us, and then we propose two constituencies totally within Manchester, Ardwick and Central. We propose an Oldham East and Saddleworth seat, and an Oldham West and Royton seat, much more like the existing constituencies. We note this was an issue at the last review, and we refer to point 250 in the Assistant Commissioner's report, examining Oldham Borough, this has an electorate that can stay in two whole constituencies, that is still true today. Under the initial proposals the wards of Oldham were split between four different constituencies. The only difference is, it is only three under the Commission proposals, but not one is entirely within Oldham. Our two are entirely within Oldham, very close to their existing constituencies. Rochdale is a no change constituency, so we put Rochdale back together again. We have a Salford and Blackley seat.

We have a Stockport seat which unites the Heatons in one constituency. The two Heaton wards from Stockport are split under the Commission proposals, we unite them in one constituency. Stretford and Urmston takes in the Whalley Range ward, and we note what was said in item 234 last time, "Prior to its inclusion within Manchester Central, Whalley Range formed part of Stretford, as noted by John Leach at the Manchester public hearing". There is no distinct border between the northern part of Whalley Range and the ward at Clifford. Accordingly, we conclude that it would be appropriate to include the ward of Whalley Range in this constituency.

So this is our map and I think our map is neater. It shows those two unchanged constituencies of Haywood and Middleton and Rochdale, it shows Oldham being much more like the existing constituencies, and we believe it shows a much better combination with Greater Manchester and Cheshire than the proposals.

So the advantages of our proposals, they are Haywood, Middleton and Rochdale become unchanged constituencies. The local ties are restored by uniting Wilmslow in one seat. Local ties are restored by reuniting Royton in one seat, separated by the Commission. Local ties are restored by reuniting Haywood in one seat, as I have said the ward of Hopwood Hall. Local ties are restored by reuniting Saddleworth in one seat. Local ties are restored by reuniting Audenshaw and Denton, which I think have been in the same seat for very many years together. We also reunite the Heatons, as I have said.

So Knutsford, Mobberley and High Legh are linked to Cheshire, and they are separated by the River Bollin and the vast majority of the electorate by the M56. If you look at the M56, it goes right across the top there, it is not the boundary, the River Bollin is the boundary, but the M56 is a very strong boundary, and there are very few electors in those three wards north of the M56. The vast majority are south, and there is no continuous development within that area, whereas in the Handforth ward and Cheadle

there is strong continuous development, and I think our Cheadle and Wilmslow seat makes a much better fit than the Tatton Park and Altrincham seat.

Oldham Local Authority is divided into two constituencies with minimum change, unlike the Commission proposals where no constituency is entirely within Oldham. The Tameside Local Authority contains three constituencies, rather than four under the Commission's proposals, and nearly 10,000 fewer electors move constituency.

So in Bolton and Bury we propose a Bolton North East and Bury North seat, based on the Boundary Commission's Bolton North East, a Bolton South East, based on the Boundary Commission's Farnworth, a Bolton West, based on the Boundary Commission's Bolton West, and a Bury and Radcliffe based on the Bury seat. These are the various wards that we would change in this proposal, and Councillor John Walsh, at another hearing or later on, will explain in far more detail the rationale for this proposal, but I would refer you to 215, AC215 in the last, the aborted review report, it was pointed out that there were strong local ties between the Brightmet ward and the neighbouring Little Lever and Darcy Lever ward, and we put those two together. This is our plan for those particular constituencies, and we have advantages. We restore Radcliffe. Radcliffe is split by the Commission, we restore Radcliffe, the historic seat of Bury and Radcliffe is created, Bolton West is entirely within the Bolton Local Authority because we believe that Atherton has far stronger ties with Bolton South East and with Hulton, linked by the A579, than it does with Bolton West.

So, sir, what we would like to do is just to remind you of the factors which have governed how we have approached the review and how we have looked at the changes that we have proposed, remind you of these four factors which are the key considerations that the Boundary Commission have to take into account when it is deciding on seats within the quota limits, and of course ours are all within the quota.

So, in summary we propose an alternative configuration of constituencies in Lancashire which better reflects its geography and accessibility and the size of the constituencies. By the way, the Boundary Commission seat is 42% of the whole of Lancashire, there are 14 constituencies in Lancashire, and we believe the size of that constituency, 42%, I cannot think of any other county with probably more than five or six constituencies where one constituency is 42%. So it better reflects the geography and accessibility and the size of the constituencies, thus being more compliant with Rule 5. We propose very considerably better local authority links, and no constituency which contains more than three local authorities. If you look at our local authority links, they are a lot better than the Commission, so that is more compliant with Rule 5B. We move fewer electors than the Commission and restore many wards back to their existing constituencies, so we are more compliant with Rule 5C, and we break fewer local ties, restoring ties, just for example, in Ribble Valley, Pendle, in St Annes, in Bamber Bridge, in Radcliffe, in Saddleworth, in Haywood, in Audenshaw and Denton, Royton and Wilmslow, so that we are more compliant with Rule 5D.

So we support the allocation of 68 constituencies in the North West but believe there is a much better scheme available, particularly in respect of Lancashire and the Cheshire/Greater Manchester border. We will submit to the Commission before December 5th a comprehensive document outlining our rationale, whether we support the Commission or propose alternatives. We will take into account representations made at the five hearings in the North West, and although I cannot be here at all of them we have representatives at all of them, and we may, in the light of these, amend our submission from that which we have outlined today. So that is our submission, sir, we hope you will consider it, as I am sure you will, with your fellow Assistant Commissioners, very carefully and we look forward to reading your report when it comes out probably within in the autumn of next year. Thank you very much indeed, sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed, very comprehensive. Are there any questions anyone would like for clarification? I will take one at the back, the chap in the red tie. Could you please say who you are, and your address, please, because this is part of the evidence.

MR HINDER: Yes, David Hinder, Ribble Valley constituency Labour Party, based in Wilpshire in the Ribble Valley. Can you hear me all right with this?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR HINDER: I have just one question regarding your reference to Bamber Bridge moving into South Ribble. Currently there is about 32,000 electors from the South Ribble Borough who are in the Ribble Valley constituency. Are your proposals to move all the wards of South Ribble Borough currently in the Ribble Valley constituency into the South Ribble constituency?

MR PRATT: No. Clearly there are too many electors within South Ribble to have a South Ribble constituency. We do not move any further South Ribble constituents into South Ribble. We actually include Eccleston and Mawdesley because we believe that is currently in the South Ribble constituency and we believe it is right that it goes there rather than have an orphan ward in West Lancashire from Chorley.

MR HINDER: Could I just expand upon that. So what you are actually proposing is that the revised Ribble Valley and Hyndburn West constituency will in fact have wards from three local authorities in the proposal that you are submitting?

MR PRATT: No, sir, it would not. The proposed Ribble Valley constituency would just include electors from Ribble Valley and from Hyndburn, as I think I made clear. We believe that East Lancashire, including those six boroughs, can maintain five seats, so Ribble Valley would consist of the whole of the Ribble Valley plus a number of wards

from the Hyndburn constituency. There would then be a Preston constituency, which includes the other parts of the South Ribble wards.

MR HINDER: Forgive me for asking for clarification on that, but the Boundary Commission proposals currently do retain two, three, sorry---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This is beginning to sound like a debate rather than---

MR HINDER: Sorry, no, it is just a clarification really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does not sound like a clarification, it sounds like a statement now.

MR HINDER: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The first two were all right, the third one sounds like a question.

MR HINDER: Okay, may I just ask the question then, if I may, just to clarify. Are you proposing that no South Ribble borough wards remain within the Ribble Valley constituency?

MR PRATT: Absolutely. There are no South Ribble - in our proposal, which we have given to the Commission and the political party representatives have, will see that there are no South Ribble wards within the Ribble Valley constituency.

MR HINDER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Cook had a question at the front.

MR COOK: My name is Greg Cook, representing the Labour Party. I just wanted to make clarification of three points regarding your counter proposal in Lancashire. I wondered if you could confirm that your proposal for the Morecambe and Lunesdale constituency includes the Bulk ward of Lancaster City Council area, and that that ward includes part of the city centre of Lancaster?

MR PRATT: It does indeed include the Bulk ward, that is the one extra ward, but of course the Commission divide Lancaster by taking the university and the Scotforth ward out, so I think the least worst option is you take the Bulk ward into Lancaster and Lunesdale. That means the minimum change and that gets the best possible arrangement, we believe, in North Lancashire.

MR COOK: Secondly, I think it was Lord Stunell referred to the benefits of the Commission's proposals in Preston, which unite the whole of the urban area there. Can you confirm that your Lancaster seat, the seat you have called Lancaster and Wyre, contains a number of wards from the north of Preston. That seat would encompass parts of Lancaster and parts of Preston as well as part of Wyre, and that that benefit of uniting Preston will be lost under your proposal?

MR PRATT: I accept that Preston is less united under our proposal, I would accept that. I think that is a price you pay for a much better overall scheme in Lancashire, and of course a number of those wards that we put into the Preston North and Wyre constituency are currently within the Lancaster and Wyre constituency. So there are a number of forward wards within Preston that are currently - so we actually are returning them to their existing constituency.

MR COOK: On that point, not all of those North Preston wards are in your constituency, are they? Some of them will be in Preston, and some would be in the Lancaster and Wyre constituency?

MR PRATT: Yes, that is right, but some go back to their existing constituency of Lancaster and Wyre, or Lancaster and Preston. It is called currently Lancaster and Preston North, and - sorry, it is called Wyre and Preston North, I beg your pardon, at the present time, so there are a number of Preston North wards, and we include a number of those, not all of them, but we include a number of those, so there is less change from the existing pattern of Parliamentary constituencies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You will get a chance in a moment to make your own points.

MR COOK: Sure. Sorry, I just have one separate point, it is on the similar issue, it is to do with Accrington, and I just wondered if you could confirm that your proposed Ribble Valley and Hyndburn West seat would include some wards which include part of the town of Accrington, such as Church and St Andrews and Baxenden, and so the town would be divided under the proposal, would it not?

MR PRATT: Well, St Andrews is actually part of Oswaldtwistle, it is not part of Accrington. St Andrews, Immanuel, and one other ward make up the three wards of Oswaldtwistle, which is totally separate from Accrington. You mentioned Church, Church is a separate area and always has been a separate area from Accrington, it is not part of Accrington, Church is separate. As far as Baxenden is concerned, I accept that it is on the fringes of Accrington, you could move Baxenden, you could possibly move a different ward, there are other alternatives you could do, but certainly St Andrews is not an Accrington ward, it is an Oswaldtwistle ward. Sorry, I am trying to

just find you the three wards, Immanuel is one of them, I will try to remember the three, the three Hyndburn wards that make up---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am quite keen to move this on, so unless you can do it instantly. I quite admire the ability of people to cross-examine while asking clarification questions. It is not lost on me.

MR PRATT: So the three wards of Oswaldtwistle, just so we are absolutely clear, are St Andrews, St Oswalds and Immanuel. Those are three definite Oswaldtwistle wards which are totally separate from Accrington.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I will take one further point of clarification, but if it turns into cross-examination we will stop it. Lord Stunell.

LORD STUNELL: Thank you very much. Andrew Stunell. In relation to the Stockport proposals, your new proposals, can you just tell us again where the wards of Hazel Grove, Offerton and Stepping Hill finish up in your new proposals?

MR PRATT: The wards of Hazel Grove, Stepping Hill and?

LORD STUNELL: Offerton.

MR PRATT: Offerton. Right, let me just find exactly where they are. So Hazel Grove is within the Bramhall and Poynton seat, which I think I am right in saying is what the Commission proposed. Offerton and Stepping Hill are also within the Bramhall and Poynton seat, and I think the Commission's Bramhall and Poynton had I think those in the same one, but I will just check. Yes, they were all within Bramhall and Poynton under the Commission's proposals, and they are all within Bramhall and Poynton under our counter proposals.

LORD STUNELL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Pratt, thank you very much indeed. Next we are going to take evidence from the Green Party, and Brian Candeland.

MR CANDELAND: (Green Party) I am Brian Candeland, Chair of the North West Green Party. My address, 13 Devonshire Road, that is Manchester M21 8XB.

I would really like to start with a kind of context around this exercise. There is talk about fairness within the, as something we are trying to achieve by narrowing the range of size of constituencies, I would just like to make the point, and I will keep it brief, that really we are only going to get a certain amount of fairness unless we look at how the electoral system itself works. For instance, a Labour voter in much of Cheshire will not

get any extra fairness out of this, as will a Tory voter in central Manchester, or a Lib Dem, UKIP or Green voter in most of the North West.

Another point which again I appreciate is outside the remit of the Boundary Commission is the fact that we are having fewer MPs, which will mean less democratic accountability, whilst at the same time the House of Lords is being expanded.

A further point, and I will move on to the detail of the Boundary Commission shortly, the time at which this electorate has been decided, and on which these boundaries are being based, was taken before there was a significant surge in voter registrations in the lead up to the EU referendum, and I feel that we are not really using the right baseline here to get the maximum fairness from the system that we have got, and I think that this will probably disadvantage areas where there are significant student populations and also inner city areas. Now, we do not know how big a difference it will be, clearly that changes all the time, but I think it is something that should be borne in mind in deciding where sort of the size of the constituencies and where they lie.

Moving on to the proposals as we have, as constrained by those issues, I would first like to say that I kind of really appreciate how difficult it is, given the constraints that they have, to get all those different competing requirements balanced out. Having had a go at it doing it myself I can see how, once you start changing around with things you start to get a ripple effect and so on. So I do understand that, and I think that a lot of what has been proposed is probably about as good as it could be, although I think there are a number of very odd constituencies that have arisen, and a number of areas where certainly there is debate about whether we have got the best boundaries or not.

I will start with the Greater Manchester area, as we are sort of in that area. I am quite impressed by the fact that the Commission have managed to keep a whole swathe of seats from Wigan right through into most of Manchester as they are, clearly constant changing of boundaries does cause confusion for electors, it causes confusion for politicians, which maybe you feel is less of an issue but I am sure it is appreciated.

Moving on round, one thing to note is around the Bury/Bolton area, Radcliffe being split into different constituencies, which is definitely a significant place in itself, but having had a look at that area we found it difficult to see any better way of resolving the whole kind of Bolton/Bury area that did not involve splitting some sort of local community.

Moving on round to the Oldham/Tameside area, we felt that the changes in Oldham, although they were a move away from existing constituencies, probably were appropriate, i.e. the recreation of Littleborough and Saddleworth, which existed until quite recently.

Coming down into the sort of Tameside/Stockport area, this is an area where, and again moving into Cheshire, where, as has been noted, there are issues around the Greater

Manchester/Cheshire border in trying to accommodate the number of voters per constituency. We felt that at best there was a better split around the Stockport area, which was actually closer to what we have now, which was linking Hyde and Denton in one constituency, which is a predominantly Tameside constituency. That the existing Hazel Grove, which would be the sort of Marple/Hazel Grove area, could stay pretty much as it was, a Stockport constituency, and regarding the Bramhall/Poynton area, we felt that Wilmslow had been split into different constituencies and it could be held together as part of a Macclesfield and Wilmslow constituency, with the Chelford ward moving over to Eddisbury, although I think there are issues around the borders with Eddisbury and Weaver Vale that probably need looking at a little bit more closely. So that would be a kind of Cheadle and Poynton constituency, it would be Cheadle, Bramhall, Poynton, and we felt that Disley probably fitted better with Hazel Grove and Marple in that it is on the A6, and that kind of balanced out the need for the numbers. I can provide that in writing later.

Moving through Cheshire, as I say, I think there are difficulties around the Eddisbury and Weaver Vale, and I would be interested to look at different proposals. I noticed the Conservatives have made significant changes, as indeed they have proposed significant changes throughout the whole North West, and I would be very interested to look at those and see how they compare.

Moving onto Wirral, yes, it does seem a little bit odd that we have got down to three, but not quite three constituencies, and I think the name is an issue. I think everyone is sort of agreed with that, but beyond that I do not think there is really any sort of other way it can be done or any better way it can be done.

I think the same can probably be said of Merseyside, and that seems to be something that I think we have all agreed on so far, that that area has been split about as well as it can be.

Moving into Lancashire, again there are some fairly odd constituencies here. I would agree with the Conservative speaker, that the one containing most of rural Lancashire and going all the way around Lancaster up to Morecambe Bay is both very large and unwieldy. I think there are a number of issues that need resolving around Lancaster. I do not think the Boundary Commission's separating of the university out from the rest of the city is right. At the same time, the fact that we have at the moment a Lancaster and a Fleetwood constituency, two places with nothing in common and about 20 miles apart, shows that it was seen as being difficult then. So I think that is something that probably needs a little bit of further investigation, and we may have something to propose on that later on.

Moving on up to Cumbria, again we would concur with the previous two representatives, that, yes, if we are looking at fewer constituencies then we are looking at going down from six to five. There is another very large sprawling rural constituency, which extends

from Alston all the way to the Solway Firth, but looking at it there is not really, I do not think any better way that that can be divided, and as has also been said, it does mean that you have not got a constituency going over a mountain range.

I think that covers the main points, so I think I will give you a short presentation like the first, but not the second.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Candeland. Are there any points of clarification anyone wishes to ask? Mr Pratt?

MR PRATT: Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. Thank you very much for that. In respect particularly of the changes you were suggesting in the Stockport area and the Cheshire area, you were suggesting some changes there, have you got specific proposals of which wards they are and obviously do they add up? So have you got an alternative proposal, a counter proposal that we can look at?

MR CANDELAND: Yes. I mean, I could go through that now, or I could kind of do it, send it to you separately.

MR PRATT: I think it would be very helpful if we could see what that proposal is.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, better to do it now so it is on the record.

MR CANDELAND: Yes. A Stockport North, sorry, a Hyde and Denton constituency of the three Denton wards, Reddish North, the three Hyde wards and Longdendale. Well, it could be Marple and Stockport West, or Hazel Grove, as it is very close to the original Hazel Grove constituency of Bredbury, Romiley, the two Marple constituencies, Hazel Grove, Offerton, Stepping Hill and Disley. So that is a third one that is going across a boundary, across a county boundary, which may be felt to be an issue. A Stockport ward consisting of the two Heatons, sorry, Stockport constituency, the two Heatons, Reddish South, Edgeley, Davenport, Manor and the Brinnington and Central. A Cheadle and Poynton, with the two Cheadle Hulme wards, Cheadle and Gatley, Heald Green, the two Bramhall wards, Stepping Hill, and the two Poynton wards. Macclesfield, losing Chelford to Eddisbury, but gaining Handforth and Dean Row. Someone may top them up and find that I have kind of gone over, slipped over a boundary somewhere.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is obviously an answer to the question.

MR CANDELAND: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, if people want to make a comment I

think you need to put your hand up and we will bring a microphone towards you, but it is not a comment, it is a question of clarification. The lady there.

MRS WELLS-BRADSHAW: Thank you. My name is Hayley Wells-Bradshaw, and I am a councillor on Cheshire East Council. Can you clarify, please, where you just, in the explanation you just gave, where you have put the Stepping Hill ward, because I thought I heard it twice and obviously that cannot be right.

MR CANDELAND: Right. Sorry, Stepping Hill would be in with the Stockport.

MRS WELLS-BRADSHAW: Not in Marple and Hazel Grove?

MR CANDELAND: Yes.

MRS WELLS-BRADSHAW: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other questions of clarification? (No response) No. Thank you. In which case I think we might just take a break now, if the Labour Party will hang on, and why do we not return here again at 20 to if we may, and then we will carry on.

Time noted: 11.22 am

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 11.40 am

(The recording began after the hearing reconvened)

MR COOK: (Labour Party): This is roughly the order of what I will be talking about. So I will talk firstly a little bit about the review process, our view on the statutory criteria and policies of the Commission, and then look at the actual proposals of the Commission in the different counties as other parties have done.

The Labour Party welcomes the initial proposals of the Commission and the clear and comprehensive way in which the Commission have set those proposals out. While we disagree with some of them, and will be setting out some alternatives, which we believe better fit the statutory criteria, we accept that in all cases they 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 to consult with 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 Labour Party on the Commission's initial proposals.

We note that under the terms of the Act, the Commission may, in choosing between different schemes, take into account special geographical circumstances, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, local government boundaries, the boundaries of the existing constituencies, and any ties that will be broken by changes to constituencies, and it is self evident that the Commission may not be able to respect all of these criteria, or indeed in some places any of them, in every part of the region, while keeping the electorates of constituencies within the permissible range. We accept also that in some areas the disruption to existing constituencies is likely to be substantial, that it may be difficult to respect local authority boundaries, and that local ties may be broken. Where the Labour Party puts forward alternative proposals to those of the Commission, we do so on the basis that we believe them to be, on balance, more consistent with those of the statutory criteria.

Five areas of the policies of the Commission which I wanted to touch on before getting on to the detailed proposals. We welcome the Commission's decision to use the European electoral regions as sub-national review areas for the purposes of their initial proposals. We believe that were they 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 the electorate of the North West region, at 5,074,302, gives an entitlement under the Sainte-Laguë allocation to 68 seats, with an average electorate of 74,622, which is 147 below the electoral quota, and we note and accept obviously the electoral quota for the review is 74,769, and that all seats in the North West region must therefore have electorates of between 71,031 and 78,507.

We also note the Commission's policy of using district and unitary authority wards and divisions as the smallest unit with which to build constituencies, and also the Commission's stated policy on this issue, which is set out in paragraph 31 of their guide, which states that the Commission recognises there maybe exceptional and compelling circumstances that make it appropriate to divide a ward, but that no such proposal has been made in the North West region or anywhere else. We support the policy of the Commission on this matter, and we believe that any such proposal, and there may be some that are brought to these hearings or in written representations in this region, should be treated on its merits but within an assumption that whole wards and divisions should remain intact in the absence of those compelling and exceptional circumstances such as are described.

The third issue I just want to touch on is the so-called orphan wards. It is a concept, terminology which has developed over recent years, and it describes the situation where one ward of a local authority is added to a constituency wholly or partly in another local authority, and 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 it means that ties are broken and electors moved unnecessarily in that ward.

Fourthly, on the sub-regional review areas, the Labour Party notes there is no requirement on the Commission to avoid the crossing of county boundaries, as there was previously under the old rules under which they operated, and that their status is now no greater than that of any other local authority. We agree with the Commission, however, that the counties and unitary authorities provide convenient administrative units for dividing a large region such as the North West into smaller review areas, and that as local authorities it is legitimate under the Act that their boundaries are considered as relevant to the process. We note that the Commission has allocated a whole number of seats to Cumbria and has considered the remaining counties as effectively one review area, because while the Commission refers to Lancashire as having been allocated a whole number of seats, in fact, as we have heard, part of Lancashire is included in the Southport constituency. We accept the regional sub-units as set out by the Commission, and believe they are justified by the needs of electoral equality and the geography of the region. We note, however, that while these are convenient administrative units, within those units the counties concerned are of no greater status under the rules than are districts, and therefore it is not necessarily of any greater merit to have fewer constituencies crossing over their boundaries if the result of that may compromise the respect for other criteria.

Finally on this section on the names of constituencies, we note and support the Commission's policy on the names of constituencies. We are aware, however, of a tendency for the names of constituencies as they become revised to also become more complex and unwieldy, and we would, as a matter of principle, resist that because those names have to be used in every day usage. Also, where a constituency is largely unchanged, we would normally support the retention of the existing name but we will however consider all such proposals on their merits, and of course taking into account local opinion.

Before I look at the actual proposals of the Commission we note the breakdown of the electorate, and the theoretical entitlements of the different counties, and their current entitlements, which gives a picture as has been described of how the seats distribute across the region.

We now set out our views on the initial proposal of the Commission, and outline of some alternative proposals. While we refer to the proposals in terms of the statutory criteria in this presentation, I am not intending to include detail of community ties, and other relevant matters, which will be amplified in the statements of individuals in the areas affected at the different hearings, and in the written representations.

We will start with Cumbria, which has an electorate of 373,997, which gives it an entitlement to almost exactly five seats, and therefore we obviously support the allocation of five whole seats, as there is plainly no advantage in having a seat which also includes part of Lancashire. As all six of the existing constituencies have electorates below the minimum threshold, then changes will affect all of them. We broadly accept the pattern of constituencies proposed by the Commission, particularly the creation of a Workington and Whitehaven constituency, combining many of the industrial communities of West Cumbria. We also agree with the Commission's proposal to increase the electorate of the Barrow-in-Furness constituency through the inclusion of part of the Copeland Borough. We accept the need to include additional parts of the City of Carlisle in the Carlisle constituency, and the need, in order to balance constituency electorates, to divide the district of Eden between the Penrith and Solway and the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituencies.

We do wish, however, to propose some minor amendments. Firstly, in respect of the Bootle ward, we propose that the Copeland ward of Bootle should be included in the Workington and Whitehaven constituency rather than Barrow-in-Furness. We believe the ward has few ties to Millom, which is the main settlement in the section of Copeland which is being transferred to Barrow-in-Furness, and instead it looks to the north to Seascale, Sellafield, and indeed Whitehaven, and so belongs better in that constituency. Secondly, we believe the wards of Crosby Ravensworth and Long Marton, of Eden district, have ties to the town of Appleby, historically part of Westmorland, and should therefore be in the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency, and that instead the Carlisle city ward of Dalston, which is an entirely rural area, and which stretches towards Wigton and Penrith, should be included in the Penrith and Solway constituency, as indeed it was in the revised proposals of the Commission in the review, the aborted review, which Mr Pratt referred to, five years ago. I should say, there are some outline maps of the proposals there for Bootle and also for the area referred to there in Dalston, Crosby Ravensworth and Long Marton. As I say, we will provide hard copies of this presentation tomorrow, which will enable people to view them more.

Secondly, to deal with Lancashire, which obviously for these purposes includes Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool unitary authorities, and we note the electorate of Lancashire, including those unitary authorities, is 1,051,309, and it therefore has an entitlement to 14.06 seats. While the Commission regards Lancashire as a discrete review area, in fact obviously the initial proposals include three wards of the West Lancashire district in Southport constituency, a decision which we support, and that leaves the rest of the county without those three wards with entitlement to 13.92 constituencies. We believe there is therefore no advantage to be achieved by including part of Lancashire in a constituency with part of Greater Manchester, and we support the allocation of 14 whole seats, while recognising that this reduction by two will cause considerable disruption, and we support the initial proposals for all 14 constituencies in Lancashire. We accept that the low electorates of the existing Lancaster and Fleetwood

and Morecambe and Lunesdale constituencies requires major change to both, and that there is no serious alternative at least to the inclusion of the two main towns in one constituency. We believe that the Commission's proposed Lancaster and Morecambe is a logical seat, which retains both towns intact, while the inclusion of the university in Scotforth rural ward may have been desirable, this is in fact, as its name suggests, a semi-rural area which is detached from the main part of the City of Lancaster. We believe that the proposed North Lancashire constituency, while having obviously a large acreage, is also logical in that it comprises mainly rural areas with local centres such as Carnforth and Garstang, while the south of the constituency looks towards Preston. It has strong internal communications links in the M6 road and rail corridor, and indeed within the Fylde peninsula, and while obviously it does comprise a large percentage of the land area of Lancashire, in actual size significantly smaller than two of the constituencies in Cumbria, only a small distance to the north, and it recognises the fact that much of Lancashire is indeed very sparsely populated.

We recognise that the Commission have particularly difficult choices within East Lancashire, where the need to increase the electorates of all the existing constituencies is likely to break ties within those seats. We support the initial proposals, which we believe provide the best balance by including the whole of Hyndburn Borough in the Accrington seat, the whole of Rossendale Borough in a Rossendale and Darwen seat, and increasing the electorate of Blackburn constituency, with the addition of the Fernhurst division. We believe that while it would have been preferable to have been able to retain the Borough of Burnley in one constituency, the arrangement proposed by the Commission is acceptable, with the town of Padiham included in the Accrington constituency, and Burnley in a seat with the town of Nelson. I should say at that stage incidentally, on the issue of names, I am a little confused about why the Hyndburn constituency has been renamed Accrington. It still includes the whole of Hyndburn Borough, and it previously also included part of the Rossendale Borough and now part of Burnley instead, so I am not sure the justification for changing the name, although obviously it describes the largest settlement within the constituency.

We recognise the long standing ties between Nelson and Colne, and the history of they having been in the same Parliamentary constituency. However, were Colne and Nelson to be retained in the same constituency, we believe the knock-on consequences across South and East Lancashire would be more disruptive with towns in existing constituencies divided, and we believe that that is illustrated by the counter proposal we have just seen, and the effect which it has on Accrington and Hyndburn. We accept that the proposed Clitheroe and Colne constituency is an unusual shape, we do believe there are ties and similarities between the two towns, and also Barnoldswick, while the link between Clitheroe and the South Ribble Borough is established in the current Ribble Valley constituency, so we therefore support the proposed Clitheroe and Colne constituency.

We support the proposals for Blackpool and the Blackpool North and Fleetwood

constituency, which includes both Cleveleys and Thornton. We believe this is a robust arrangement resulting from the impossibility of retaining a Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency, and we also support the inclusion of the four Wyre Borough wards which effectively make up Poulton-le-Fylde in a Fylde constituency, which we also believe to be the logical result of the abolition of the Wyre and Preston North constituency. We note the initial proposals include the Fylde Borough wards of Kilnhouse and St Leonards in the Blackpool South constituency, which we accept may break some ties in St Annes. They are though accessed easily from the south of Blackpool, they include Blackpool Airport, and we believe there is no practical difficulty arising from their being in this seat. We also support the enlarged Preston constituency, which now includes the vast majority of the built up area of the city, as we do the proposals for Chorley, which remains unchanged, West Lancashire and South Ribble.

Turning now to Merseyside, we note the electorate of the Boroughs of Knowsley, St Helens, Sefton and the City of Liverpool, at 743,428, gives an entitlement to 9.94 constituencies, and we support the inclusion of three wards of West Lancashire Borough in the Southport constituency, which brings that combined entitlement up to 10.08, and therefore it is logical and we support the allocation of ten whole seats to this group of councils. We fully support the initial proposals, which retain four seats, Garston and Halewood, Knowsley, St Helens North, St Helens South and Whiston unchanged. The inclusion of the Victoria ward of Sefton in the Sefton Central constituency respects its ties to Blundellsands and Manor, while we believe the County and Warbreck wards of Liverpool are logical additions to the Bootle constituency. The three seats entirely within Liverpool are clear successors to existing seats, with the Liverpool Wavertree constituency, the current one, being retained intact, Liverpool Riverside continuing to include 88.1% of its current electorate, and Liverpool West Derby 84.8%.

Now, on Greater Manchester we note the electorate of Greater Manchester, at 1,897,229, gives a theoretical entitlement to 25.37 constituencies, and we therefore accept, and it is obvious, that there must be at least one constituency including parts of Greater Manchester and parts of Cheshire. We note the initial proposals are that nine constituencies should remain unchanged, and another two retained intact and enlarged. We also note, however, that the proposals cause significant disruption in some parts of the county, especially in Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Stockport. We fully support the proposals for the Leigh, Makerfield and Wigan constituencies to be unchanged, and the Bolton West constituency to be enlarged to include the Halliwell ward. We recognise then that there must be changes to the remaining seats in Bolton. We support the amended Bolton North East constituency, and also the proposed Farnworth constituency, although we note that the three Radcliffe wards are divided between constituencies. We believe there are ties between Radcliffe East and Redvales wards, which mean that this maybe the most appropriate means of enlarging the Bury North constituency, which we agree should be renamed Bury.

We support the proposed constituencies in Salford and Manchester, the only change to which is the inclusion of the Moston ward in the new Oldham constituency, and we believe that the continuity with the existing arrangements in these areas is welcome. We accept that the proposals in Rochdale, Oldham and Tameside represent a wholly new pattern of constituencies, and that ties are broken specifically by the separation of Haywood and Middleton, between Stalybridge and Hyde, and in Rochdale, and additionally the town of Royton is divided, as are the Saddleworth wards, while part of the centre of Oldham is included in the new Failsworth and Droylsden constituency. We regret the scale of disruption that is caused by these changes but we believe that any alternative would be likely simply to create a similar scale of disruption elsewhere in the county, and therefore we are not making any counter proposal in these areas.

We note that the Commission propose there be two seats including parts of Cheshire and Greater Manchester, Altrincham and Tatton Park, and Bramhall and Poynton. We support both of these constituencies, recognising that the large average ward electorate in Stockport limits the number of options available. We do note the proposals to divide the town of Wilmslow and require major change to constituencies in Stockport, we do not though wish to make any counter proposal again in this area.

On Cheshire and the Wirral we note that the electorate of Cheshire, including the Borough of Halton, is 620,361, and it therefore has a theoretical entitlement to 8.3 seats, the Borough of Wirral has an electorate of 234,989, and a theoretical entitlement to 3.14 seats. While it therefore could theoretically sustain three whole seats, it would almost certainly require wards to be divided, and would create significant under representation compared with the rest of the region. We therefore accept that one ward of Wirral must be in a seat with part of Cheshire, and that in addition to that seat, and the two constituencies shared with Greater Manchester, there must be seven seats in Cheshire and Halton. We support the proposed Macclesfield constituency, and also Congleton and Crewe and Nantwich, which are amended only to adjust to new division boundaries.

We wish, however, to put a counter proposal for the remaining seats in Cheshire. We believe the changes to the Eddisbury and Weaver Vale constituencies are unnecessary, and that while it makes some sense to unite the towns of Northwich and Winsford in one constituency, the proposal fails fully to achieve it in that the new seat does not include Weaver and Cuddington. More importantly, the proposed Weaver Vale constituency would comprise urban areas of Runcorn, combined with parts of rural Cheshire, stretching to the southern extremity of the county, and the result is that only 61.0% of electors of Eddisbury constituency and 58.3% of the electors of Weaver Vale remain in the same constituency.

We propose to retain the pattern of existing constituencies with minimal change, which we believe would be achieved by the following. The inclusion of the Eddisbury constituency, which would be continued to be called Eddisbury rather than Eddisbury

and Northwich, of the Cheshire West and Chester divisions of Dodleston and Huntington, Fardon, Gowy, Tarporley, Tarvin and Tattenhall. That the Weaver Vale constituency would include the Cheshire West and Cheshire divisions of Hartford and Greenbank, Winnington and Castle, and Witton and Rudheath, and also that the Elton division of Cheshire West and Chester should be included in the City of Chester. We also propose that the Weaver Vale constituency should retain the Halton Lea division of Halton, and that instead the Beechwood division of Halton should be included in the Halton constituency, which we believe would improve the shape of both constituencies concerned. So that is an outline map of the constituencies in Cheshire as proposed.

In the Wirral we support the proposal to create a seat combining the majority of the current Wirral South and Wirral West constituencies. We believe, however, that it is patently anomalous that the Bebbington and Heswall constituency does not include the Bebbington ward, and indeed that the wider community of Bebbington, which includes parts of the Bromborough and Clatterbridge wards, is divided by the proposal. We therefore propose that Bebbington and Heswall should include the Bebbington ward. Birkenhead should include the Upton ward, and that Wallasey should include the Hoylake and Meols ward. We accept the Upton ward is separated from Birkenhead by the M53 motorway but the boundaries of this ward are very well defined on all its sides by major roads, and indeed motorways, and we believe there are practical and community ties to Birkenhead as much as there are to Wallasey constituency, and we also accept that a small part of West Kirby lies within the Hoylake and Meols ward, which is one of many examples where ties are broken and divided by ward boundaries in the Wirral. However, we believe that this case is this is a relatively minor anomaly which is not comparable with the absence of the Bebbington ward from a seat including the name of Bebbington.

Finally, in Warrington we support the allocation of two whole seats to Warrington. We believe the transfer of any division from Warrington South to Warrington North is likely to break ties. At this stage we note the initial proposal of the Commission, we do not wish to make any alternative proposal, but will consider any others that are put forward on their merits.

So, in summary the detail of all the constituencies where the Labour Party makes an alternative proposal are set out in the appendices, appendix one, which is the counter proposals in Cumbria, relatively minor changes, appendix B, which sets out the changes in Cheshire and Halton, and appendix C, the counter proposal affecting the seats in the Wirral. We also will make a detailed written submission before the 5 December, bringing together our statements to all the public hearings to the different regions across the country. We recommend our alternative proposals, we will reserve our position on, and will comment on all other counter proposals that are made during this initial consultation period during the secondary consultation period, which will also contain our statistical comparison of the different options which have been put forward.

So, if I can conclude by thanking you once again, sir, for your time, and obviously happy to take any questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I should say from the outset that the handouts that were given to everyone was missing every other page unfortunately.

MR COOK: Oh, was it? I am so sorry.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So some of us have got the right ones. So those who did not have the right ones, I am afraid you will have to wait for the evidence to come forward to be published before you can do that, but it was easy to follow on the presentation.

MR COOK: Okay. Well, I do apologise for that, and I will ensure that we have the correct copies here tomorrow.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Any points for clarification? Mr Pratt?

MR PRATT: Thank you very much. Roger Pratt, from the Conservative Party. Kindly the Commission have just supplied me with the full copy, I could not quite understand where certain wards had gone and then I realised that all the even pages were missing out of the thing. Just one or two questions of clarification, if I might. In terms of the change in terms of your proposing in term of Carlisle and Penrith and the Solway, can you confirm, compared with the Commission proposals, how many local authorities Penrith and Solway includes?

MR COOK: Well, the addition of the Carlisle ward means it will contain parts of three rather than two.

MR PRATT: I am grateful to you for that. I wonder if you could tell me, the Dodleston and Huntington ward, which I think you propose moving from Chester to Eddisbury, which ward all the electors are currently, which constituency all the electors are currently in at the moment?

MR COOK: They are all within the City of Chester constituency at the moment.

MR PRATT: Are there any electors from Elton within the City of Chester?

MR COOK: No, there are not, no.

MR PRATT: Okay, that is fine, thank you very much, and finally, if I could just ask about, you separate Hoylake and Meols and West Kirby and Thurstaston, as opposed

to the Commission proposals, could you confirm that there are in Hoylake and Meols quite a number of West Kirby people who live in West Kirby, so that breaks ties in West Kirby?

MR COOK: Yes, I think I made that point in the statement. I am not sure precisely what the number of those electors is who would describe themselves as being part of West Kirby. As I said, it is the nature of ward boundaries that they will tend not to be perfect fits with community boundaries. The point we were making in the statement was that we think that is a different order to a constituency which purports to include the community of Bebbington but actually does not include the ward of that name.

MR PRATT: Okay, I am grateful, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any other points? (No response) No, thank you. Thank you, Mr Cook. Right, so that concludes the presentations from the political parties. We are slightly ahead of our time, I think, in terms of bookings, but we are going to move on and take some individual representations now. A number have booked this side of lunch, but I am going to start, if I may, with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, who is here. Before you begin, could you just state your full name and address, thank you.

MRS YASMIN QURESHI (Member of Parliament for Bolton South): Yasmin Qureshi, Member of Parliament for Bolton South East, living in the ward of Hulton, which is in my constituency, and the office address is 60 St George's Road, Bolton, BL1 2DD.

I have been a Member of Parliament for this constituency since 2010, and last year was my re-election to serve a second term in this constituency. I am very honoured to serve this constituency and I have to say I was very distressed and genuinely very unhappy at the proposal of the Boundary Commission, and I will go on to explain the details of where that unhappiness comes from, and make some helpful suggestion to the Boundary Commission when they re-look at all the proposals, but, Chair, I hope that you will indulge me for a few moments before I go into the details of the actual proposals, to make some general observations similar to those made by the gentleman from the Green Party.

This Boundary Commission, the Boundary Commission had to work obviously more or less with what the Government had told them, which is these arbitrary figures of the electorate of certain amounts that they had to have of a constituency, which inevitably meant, of course, that there will be some interesting results arising out of it. However, if I may say so, this was a clear piece of gerrymandering on the part of this Conservative Government. They brought in, firstly, the system of individual voter registration, which we said in Parliament constantly would lead to many, many people coming off the register, but that was not heeded, and subsequently we found out that millions of people, and this has been substantiated by numerous electoral calculus done, were in

fact left off the register. Then, because of the European referendum, two million people additionally joined the register. However, these boundary changes, because of the legal obligation placed on the Boundary Commission, they are unable to look at the two million additional people. We have again said to the Government that with the fact there is two million extra people added on the register they should, they should ask the Boundary Commission to look at a different set of figures, i.e. figures which are actually more accurate as of now, because otherwise the calculations have been done on figures, which is not the Boundary Commission's fault because they have to work within what has been told to them, but they are working on figures which are unrepresented and undemocratic.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I may, I will just make the point now, so that we do not get repeating it as the day goes on, I understand the political point you are making but it was Parliament, not the Government, that set the rules for this proposal, and it does not help I think in the context, it does not help us as Assistant Commissioners to try to reach conclusions if we are getting distracted by discussions which are out with the remit of this, of our hearings.

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: Chair, as I said, Parliament has voted, I understand what you say, Chair, it was Parliament, it was the Government who pushed that particular piece of legislation, which was done by the Government, but coming onto, and I hear, Chair, and that is why I said at the beginning, I hope if I may take the liberty and go slightly off tangent, but just before I do go, and just one further observation I wanted to make. Of course, these boundary changes and the proposals never took into account that many constituencies, they may not be of 71,000 voters but they in reality have thousands and thousands of more people living in those constituencies, and it tends to be in the inner cities, in the inner towns, the university towns. So constituencies like Bolton South East may have number of 70,000 but in real terms the actual numbers of voters are much, much higher, and I can demonstrate by the fact that in 2010 my predecessors dealt with something like 300/400 cases, but over the last six years, as of this year I have dealt with 1100 cases already, and whilst in some parts of the country there is hardly any asylum seekers, like in Mrs May's constituency, she hardly has a single asylum seeker, I have hundreds of them. I make that point because it means in real terms the real number of people in my constituency, and many constituencies like me, are much, much greater. So that is another way why this particular boundary proposals, the way they have been set out, are effectively depriving people of their electorate representation.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I encourage you now to focus on the proposals.

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: Yes, I will, I will. I do not have, unlike the official representatives of all the political parties, great big maps, and I have not been in a position to go through the whole electoral calculation for the whole North West region,

even for that matter for Manchester, but I can talk about my constituency and the surrounding areas, and how it impacts it. My constituency is currently called Bolton South East, but under the proposal it will be become Farnworth. What it will do is two of my wards, Rumworth and Great Lever, will go into what is now called Bolton North East and will remain under the proposal, the initial proposal, in Bolton North East.

I am going to be getting the constituency, the two wards of Radcliffe and Pilkington. These three wards have never been part of or have had any link or connection with Bolton historically. The first Bolton South East part of the constituency was in 1907, and although there has been some tinkering over the years, for example Walkden used to be part of my constituency and it went out, Little Hulton was a part of time in my constituency and it went out, Tonge was in my constituency and went out. All these constituencies, these wards are outwards connected to my constituency, and in the past and Deane, parts of Deane and Daubhill were in my constituency and have gone out. So they are coming back, yet Radcliffe and Pilkington, the people of Radcliffe and Pilkington do not consider themselves to be in any form or shape linked to Bolton. They are very much linked with Manchester and Prestwich, and therefore that is where the historical links lie. People from Radcliffe do not come into my constituency for schools or shopping, or bussing. There is not even real train links between them, there is no train links, there is very tenuous bus connections there as well. So, where it alluded to, in paragraph 5 I think, which talks about constituencies should look geographically okay, the community ties, the connections, the boundary, etcetera, on that criteria the proposals in relation to Bolton South East fail completely.

So what I would say is this, and I am afraid I will be submitting in a written application, at the moment this is what the new proposed constituency looks like. So it goes from here, goes right up here, comes right down---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, that is Farnworth you are talking about, yes?

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: This is the Farnworth constituency that is proposed. If you look at it, that is in any sense, even when you look at it as if there would be a constituency that would make and look, make some sense, it makes no sense at all. It is all over the place, and what is done is, in the current proposal, if you look from here, it is going, and the proposals go in here, make a cut, and go out. It actually ignores a natural A666 road which runs across here. My current constituency, this bit which has been left out, is actually in it. So at the moment it would be this line would be going across here. So, this bit would not happen and that makes geographical sense. It makes sense because it is within the A road, it makes sense because of the shopping centre, it makes sense because of all the shops, it make sense because of the area. So the current proposals going as they are---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are running the risk that your evidence

will not get picked up on the microphone, the further away you move from it, but we are grateful for showing the map. I do not want to interrupt your flow, but you will lose the evidence and everyone else will.

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: Yes, it is a very short map, but hopefully people may be able to see. This is what the proposal is going to be, which is the Farnworth constituency, and if you look at it, it is kind of all over the place. It is going up there, down there, out there, in there, out there, out there, up here, and it is cutting out a very natural boundary. So currently my constituency does not have these three, so if I kind of do a little puzzle, I suppose you could say a bit of jigsaw here, my current constituency is this, but they have taken out this part of it. That is the Great Lever and the Rumworth. That main road that runs is the A666, which divides it, so natural division is the way it is currently, which is this line going straight across here, and that would ensure that my constituency, that would be the right thing to do, because it geographically makes sense. The line, the actual map actually makes more sense, and coming on to the two wards of Rumworth and Great Lever, they are wards which it is fair to say have, not substantial but a reasonable BME communities, with all the challenges and issues that those communities face, but, and this is really important, many of them have relatives and families who have gone out into Harper Green, Farnworth, Carlton and even parts of Kearsley. So again those two wards have family links, friend links, and people go from schools from Rumworth into Farnworth, or even into Little Lever and vice versa. So there are not only natural geographical and A routes which keeps those two wards and should be in my constituency, there is also the classic about families and communities not being divided, and this is what it will do. Therefore, for that reason, and I feel so strongly about it that I am here to ask that my constituency be saved.

Now, I accept the fact that currently the numbers as they stack up do not match the 71,000 few hundred lower figure, so therefore some additional wards or ward has to be taken in. The logical ones that have historical ties with Bolton South East is either you are going to go into Tonge with Haulgh, because most parts of Tonge were in, in fact, Bolton South East at one point, or you can go into Walkden or Little Hulton, which at one time was part of this constituency, or I suppose you could go a bit towards even Atherton, which has never been part of my constituency, and that would mean just a small change, where people in Tonge have great connection with people in Little Lever and Kearsley, there is a connection there, and people in Little Hulton and Walkden have a big connection with Walkden, with Hulton, which is a south east part. So that is the direction in which the Boundary Commission, I respectfully ask, do look at and consider going in that direction. Therefore increase the numbers, but at the same time do not change the character of the constituency.

Bolton has always had two or three constituencies but the south part, which is mainly the one I represent, has always been more or less different kind of communities to the one in the north. The northern and the west part have always been very different to the

south, and therefore those areas, since 1907 the constituency has been more or less the same with bits or tweaks here, there and everywhere, and I am just asking those in the past where it was, so bits had gone out, could now come in, and that would take us electorally on to the numbers.

If you were to ask people of Kearsley and Little Lever and Farnworth, I mean, Kearsley and Farnworth historically strong ties. There was a time when Farnworth Borough Council used to exist, and at that time Harper Green and Great Lever and parts of Rumworth were part of that Farnworth Borough Council as well. So there is a lot of historical ties with this constituency.

Finally, Radcliffe, North Radcliffe, East Radcliffe, West Radcliffe or Pilkington really should never be part of this constituency. If you speak to the people of those areas, they will tell you that they have never considered themselves as us. There is no train links to us, there is hardly any bus links to us, there is hardly any schools from there coming to us, and therefore that connection, you really are fundamentally, with this change, flying against one of the criteria that the Boundary Commission is able to look at in law. Thank you for listening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I will open the floor in a moment for any questions of clarification. Can I ask one though, in shuffling around those three constituencies, as you were there, did you look at the electoral numbers to check whether they would be able to be contained within the overall constraints?

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: Within one borough?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, you were moving electorates around the constituencies, did you look at the overall numbers in doing your own research to see whether or not they were acceptable electoral role?

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: They would be. The areas, if any of them were added in, that would create definitely, because at the moment I am just under 70,000, and if any of the other areas, like Tonge, was added the numbers would be fine, Little Hulton or Atherton, any of those, yes, the numbers would be fine.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any other points from the floor? Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much. So just to clarify, I just want to clarify what you said about Rumworth and Great Lever, are you saying that there are very strong local ties between Rumworth and Great Lever and Harper Green and Farnworth?

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: Yes, and Hulton and parts of Kearsley as well, yes.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Another one in the second row.

MR WALSH: John Walsh, 52 New Hall Lane, Bolton, councillor on Bolton Council. Could you just clarify a point you made in relation to links between Tonge with Haulgh and Great Lever, and confirm you mentioned the A666, and in parallel with that Manchester Road, provide a link between those two wards?

MRS YASMIN QURESHI: Yes, Tonge and Great Lever, yes, there is a connection. Yes, absolutely.

MR WALSH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No other comments? (No response) Thank you very much indeed. Thank you.

MRS QURESHI: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right, again we are still slightly off the timetable, but I understand there is a Mike Cordingley in the room. You do not want to speak now? Okay, thank you. Well, let me see if others are here. Liam O'Rourke? Not due here at the moment but just checking in case he was here already. Charlotte Peters? Mrs Rock, sorry. Would you be happy to speak now? Thank you. As with others, if I might ask you to state your name and address before you begin your presentation, thank you.

MRS PETERS-ROCK: My name is Charlotte Peters-Rock, of Holly House, Middlewich Road, Allstock, near Knutsford in Cheshire. I am at present in the Tatton ward. Where I live, that area which is part of the Shakerley ward of Cheshire West Council, will be moving into what is currently Eddisbury so I am told. The thing that needs to be pointed out, and which I have brought maps for, I wondered if we could put a map up and actually fetch my area of Cheshire into it, so to have Altrincham at the top end and Market Drayton at the bottom.

To start with, can I mention the fact that my husband, who died in December, is still on the electoral role, and I believe that that needs bringing to your attention, because I do not think it is specific to him. Where people have died, can we ask that their death is taken full account of, because they will not be voting, and it would be really useful to all of us to know exactly what the electorate looks like. I understand there is a problem already because of two million that are floating, and so I believe that needs to be taken account of as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I can try some things but I cannot do everything.

MRS PETERS-ROCK: I have mentioned it two or three times, and he still comes out with all the information. So I wanted to raise three different wards, and the fact that the River Weaver runs through Cheshire. Is that the biggest we can get that, that map? Can we actually show? Can you make the map bigger? No? I wanted to show you where the river runs, and if it is like that, then perhaps I can pass that to you. It is difficult to pick out the river in amongst the railways and the roads, and all the other features in the landscape, but in fact the river runs largely from Nantwich, north through Winsford, to Northwich, and then it runs across towards the River Mersey. The majority of the River Weaver in fact is contained within the proposed new constituency, which has been so far referred to as Eddisbury.

While people take that in, perhaps I can also mention that since I am from a constituency which is about to be removed altogether, Tatton, I believe that a careful look needs to be made into the entire area in which the various parts of Tatton will be removed to. For instance, we have Altrincham, which is proposed to be Altrincham and Tatton. We do not live in Tatton, the people who are the electorate live in Knutsford and other villages, they do not live in a park which effectively was made to treat local people as serfs, and I believe it is a wrong proposal to actually propose that Altrincham should become Altrincham and Tatton. I believe Altrincham and Knutsford would be a far fairer thing to the entire electorate. Then if you are looking at the bit that goes towards Congleton, Congleton has the River Dane moving through it. It also has, for instance, Sandbach and Middlewich, but if it were referred to as Congleton and Dane that would be much fairer to the entire electorate. There is a limit to the length of title you want, but that would cover a great part of it.

Then at the moment we have Weaver Vale. Now, I believe that to change significantly both Weaver Vale and Eddisbury brings us to the point where we have to consider the river rather more than it has ever been considered before, and the majority of the River Weaver runs through the area that will be the follow on to Eddisbury, and I believe the title needs transferring, so that from Weaver Vale, which it currently is, and over to the left of us, but to become Weaver Valley instead of Eddisbury. Then to change the current Weaver Vale, if everybody is keeping up, from Weaver Vale to Tarporley and Navigation, because at the Mersey end of the River Weaver in fact there is a big navigation area again, and I believe that the very hard work that people put into that should be recognised, and Tarporley and Navigation takes in the biggest town, as far as I can see, in the that area, and also puts the navigation work on the map.

Now, to come back to my claim for the old Eddisbury constituency, which is changing significantly. The reasons why it is worth changing to become Weaver Valley instead of Eddisbury is because of the salt towns and the River Weaver. The salt towns in the area local to the current Eddisbury constituency, whose workers and landscape have provided vital work and salt for over two thousand years to this area of Cheshire. The salt is used right across this country and across the world. One of these salt towns,

Winsford, from its mine, still provides rock salt to the local authorities across the country for spreading on the icy roads. Close to Northwich, the local open pan salt working site at Marston, the Lion Salt Works, has recently been fully refurbished as an education and tourist attraction. That preservation work is, I believe, unique. I saw it before they started. It is quite significant that they managed to keep the building up and the pans in one piece considering the state that had been left in finally. That preservation work is, I believe, unique. It was recently, in August 2016, voted the UK's best heritage project, and links in, via the River Weaver and its canals, with the salt workings across the Weaver Valley. There is also of course, slightly outside our area, the Anderton boat lift, which again I understand is unique in the world, and even though that is outside the area it still points to the area and its significant salt heritage needing preservation in the public mind.

By a combination of local community voluntary work, the fascinating history of the Weaver Valley salt extraction, both by brine pumping, with open panning, and by mining, is being made known across the world, it is so easy to do now we have the internet to do it with. Ordinary people can act in this way, and ordinary people are acting in this way to preserve what is their own working heritage, which goes back over two thousand years. That work now needs to be recognised by a constituency name which fits the area.

When the constituency boundary changes are made in 2020 the local history and community and voluntary work done to promote this area's very special heritage needs to be reflected in the naming of the new constituency. The main source of transport used to carry on the salt trade was the River Weaver, which flows over most of its course through the new constituency. To that end its course was changed in various places to serve the industry, and canals were made to serve the local purpose. Also because of regular gross ground subsidence caused by brine extraction, there is a very special style of rafted building, which I believe to be unique to this area. It allowed buildings which had been sunk or tipped badly sideways to be restored whole to the perpendicular, in one piece, with nothing taken away. Examples of such buildings can be seen both in Northwich and Winsford. The two salt towns of Northwich and Winsford lie within the new constituency. The River Weaver connects them to each other, as the map which I have also presented shows. The proposed line of the new constituency, the line of the River Weaver, also connects the two further local salt towns of Middlewich and Nantwich, both lying immediately to the east of the proposed constituency boundary and the river itself.

For that reason I ask that the name of the former Eddisbury constituency should be changed to Weaver Valley, promoting pride of place and industry by keeping intact the historic vitality of this area of Cheshire, which is working so hard in all its spare time to promote itself, and I believe that must be recognised. That is about all I have to say. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mrs Peters-Rock. One of the great advantages of being a chairman of these hearings is you get to learn a lot of local history, and I for one did not know about the salt towns, so I am very grateful to you for that.

MRS PETERS-ROCK: Thank you. Can I make an addition?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Of course you can.

MRS PETERS-ROCK: Since you mention that, I was hoping, by calling in at the local tourist information centre here in this wonderful northern city, to find tourist information. I went to our lovely round library, they have nothing left of tourist information in a library which is recognised throughout the world. They have shifted it all out. I was marched up to Piccadilly Gardens where I would find the visitor centre. No, no, there is a great big set of hoardings all the way round the central area of Piccadilly Gardens, no sign anywhere, or otherwise I would have brought you more information about the Anderton boat lift and also about our prize Lion Salt Works. I am so sorry I could not, but I will send some on.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Before you go away, can I just confirm, you are not disagreeing with the structure of the constituency, the proposed constituency?

MRS PETERS-ROCK: I am delighted to be out of Tatton under the circumstances, thank you. So, no, I am not. No, I am not.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are asking for renaming them to reflect the historical nature of the area?

MRS PETERS-ROCK: Yes, and I must mention that in your own document, at number 63, you also state "We consider whether the name Weaver Vale remains appropriate to the current Weaver Vale", and I believe that consideration must be carried through, because Weaver Vale is the area that runs down from Northwich, through Winsford, taking in on the side Middlewich, and also taking in Nantwich on the side, and that area, it is a vital river to that area, and that naming really must be changed so that it reflects that, please.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Are there any other points of clarification from anyone on the floor? (No response) No, thank you very much. In terms of who to go next, I understand Sir Robert Atkins, do you wish to speak and are you ready to speak? Not at the present, okay. So let me work down my list and see who we might have. Is Liam O'Rourke here yet? No. Andrew Gwynne MP, I do not think so yet. I am moving on to the afternoon now, that is the reason I am

asking. Walter Brett? Sorry, let me ask a different question. Is there anyone here who has got their name down to speak today who is ready and able to speak now? (No response) I will ask another question, is there anyone here who has not got their name down, but would like to make a contribution and speak now? (No response) Well, that makes life easy for us. I suggest that, although it is a little early, we adjourn at least for the next 15 minutes, because of the names I quoted, some of them are due to speak at one o'clock, and we will reconvene at one o'clock to see whether Liam O'Rourke turns up at that time. Thank you.

Time noted: 11.45 am

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 12.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We are bang back on schedule, and I am pleased to say that Mr Liam O'Rourke is here and is ready to speak, thank you. When you come up, could you just give your name and full address, and then proceed with your presentation. Thank you.

CLLR O'ROURKE: Thank you, Chair. Councillor Liam O'Rourke, 101 Queens Park Road, Heywood, Lancashire, OL10 4JR, which, for the purposes of the audience, that is currently in the Haywood and Middleton seat, and will be placed in the Rochdale seat under current proposals.

I first came to speak to the Commission in 2011 when the proposals were to make a Rochdale South seat, a Rochdale North seat, and a Middleton seat, and I made the argument that as Heywood and Middleton and Rochdale were of the perfect size, coterminous and kept natural communities together, that position should be kept, and at the time the Boundary Commission agreed and recreated the Heywood and Middleton and Rochdale seats. Since then that was voted down and we are now having a new set of proposals, which reverts to the old position where my town of Heywood, which I have represented since 2012 as a councillor, will be split up.

If we pay attention to the, if you just go a little lower, you see the Hopwood Hall ward, just under North Heywood, which will go into the Middleton seat. That part, that council ward actually is two thirds Heywood and one third Middleton, taking in Hollin Estate from Middleton and the Hopwood part of Heywood obviously from Heywood. Obviously the current proposals would see that ward split, the split is more or less at Junction 19 of the M62, and so sort of the only way to keep the town of Heywood whole and the town of Middleton whole would be to keep Heywood and Middleton together. Of course, the other alternative would be to do divided wards which I appreciate you guys are trying to avoid as best as possible.

One thing I should say at this point is you guys obviously are going to hear a lot of local councillors banging the drum for their own local areas, and with the strict guidelines you guys have been given, it is going to be incredibly difficult to keep communities together, and I appreciate that.

I think when we consider Heywood and Middleton and the Rochdale seats as they are, and as they can still be under current proposals, one thing we should remember and look at is the effect, the knock-on effect. So in the current proposals Middleton and Prestwich is created. Now, my fiancé actually lives in sort of the Crumpsall area, which comes under Broughton, and one thing I can tell you is that, for example Broughton and Prestwich would be natural and more natural coupling when it comes to communities. Many kids in the Broughton area of Manchester, which obviously is currently in Blackley and Broughton, would go to college and school in Prestwich, for example, and if you look at tram routes, that is sort of the natural line of sort of communities. So I think any knock-on effect from keeping Heywood and Middleton and Rochdale coterminous together in the perfect size would be sort of to go through Manchester and Salford, therefore putting Prestwich and Middleton together, and sort of going round therefore in Bolton, sort of keeping communities better together there, and possibly moving - well, you guys work it out, because I am no full expert on it, on Bolton, myself, but you guys can obviously work out the knock-on effects of how that happens.

I think it is really the case that we have just got to focus on keeping communities together. I think the current proposals would split my town apart. To quote the journalist Jane Williams, during the Heywood and Middleton by-election a couple of years ago, she said folk in Heywood barely trust people in Rochdale, never mind those in Westminster. I think she actually said it about Middleton but the point still stands for people in Heywood. So the more natural communities and community ties, taking into account the Hopwood Hall seat, would be for Heywood and Middleton to be together, with sort of, again, there were swaps round with sort of Castleton, Bamford and Norden, and working out how to keep that coterminous in more of a shape, because that is sort of, if you like, Heywood and Middleton is Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale South East almost, it is quite a strange combination.

I think the other thing to mention is if you look at the Balderstone and Kirkholt ward, that is the vast majority Rochdale, and only a small percentage of it is actually within what would be described in Rochdale Council as the Pennines area, which would be what Littleborough and Saddleworth takes in. So the Balderstone and Kirkholt seat bears very little resemblance on the most part to those communities. Balderstone will certainly have to be in Rochdale, for example, and maybe Balderstone could go with Saddleworth at a stretch. Again, if you guys were working out, if you could not keep that, that would have to be taken into consideration, because Kirkholt certainly has no relation with Saddleworth, for example, or indeed Littleborough, because Littleborough in this sense would be made up of towns such as Milnrow, Newhay, and that would not work.

I think the final point to make, and I love a bit of history, is when we think of the town of Heywood, back in during the Gunpowder Plot, it was Captain Peter Heywood from Hopwood Manor in Heywood who was the guy who arrested Guy Fawkes. So I would not want to see Heywood blown off the map, the Parliamentary map, in that sense due to our strong connection in saving democracy in the UK. Thank you for your time, Chair.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Normally about this time we get the Domesday Book, but Guy Fawkes is good enough for the moment. Thank you.

CLLR O'ROURKE: I feel guilty as an Irish Catholic bringing up Guy Fawkes, but I guess that is the modern UK we live in.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you bear with us, there maybe one or two questions for clarification. Mr Pratt at the front.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much. Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. Councillor O'Rourke, just to clarify, if a scheme could be found whereby Heywood and Middleton and Rochdale were unchanged constituencies, if they are the right numbers, that would be your ideal solution, is that right?

CLLR O'ROURKE: I think partially. The other thing I would say is obviously being a North Manchester lad, and sort of North Greater Manchester, I would want to see communities across the north of Manchester kept together, such as Prestwich, such as Broughton, and working those threads through, that I would want to see that desperately, because I think if you look at it, there is more scope for mixing things up in Salford and Manchester, where they are such big seats that they have always been used to being chopped and changed and mixed with other places. Therefore any scheme that did come forward would have to focus more on that, and sort of that tip, if you like, of Manchester and Salford, your Broughton, your Prestwich, and also Middleton to an extent. Those would be my priorities, very much so.

MR PRATT: The Hopwood Hall ward, which you talked about, which I think you represent as a councillor?

CLLR O'ROURKE: No, I am North Heywood.

MR PRATT: Sorry, you are North Heywood, so can you explain the ties between Hopwood Hall, North Heywood and West Heywood?

MR O'ROURKE: Certainly. If you look, if you see the motorway going through the Hopwood Hall ward, which is sort of just there, that is the Hopwood Hall ward, so you

have got the M62 running through here. So above there is Heywood, and you are taking then the Hollin estate, which is very much I believe this---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I give you, why do I not give you this pointer? Glenn is getting you one. The trouble is, as you move away from the microphone so we lose your evidence.

CLLR O'ROURKE: We did not have these in 2011. So if we take in, so the Hopwood Hall ward, which is basically two thirds Heywood, the Hopwood part of Heywood, and as you can see where the boundaries are it cuts through a lot of streets. The example I gave back in 2011 was the Wilton Grove houses, well, the bungalows 2 to 8 would be in one constituency, and then the houses 1 to 79 would be in the other constituency. It would confuse people, I believe. We struggle enough to get potholes sorted across wards, never mind anything else. So I very much say the Hopwood Hall ward, certainly there is more connection between the bottom third under the M62 and Middleton than with Heywood, and the two thirds above the M62 more connected with Heywood than Middleton, but it is one ward and that is the current situation on Rochdale Council. Just to put it in context, we have what are called township committees in Rochdale Borough Council, where each ward sort of devolution of powers to lower levels, and the Hopwood Hall councillors have the right to sit on both Heywood township and Middleton township, which is the only case. Again, to put it in context with the Balderstone and Kirkholt ward I mentioned earlier, they sit fully on Rochdale township, they do not sit at all on the Pennines township, so they vastly more associate themselves with Rochdale than with the Pennines area and Littleborough and Milnrow, etcetera, etcetera, which will go into Littleborough and Saddleworth.

MR PRATT: So the ideal solution for Hopwood Hall is that you recreate a Heywood and Middleton constituency?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does not really sound like a question of clarification, that. So we will leave your statement to stand. You do not need to answer that.

CLLR O'ROURKE: That is okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: In fact I would prefer you not to answer it. Are there any other points of clarification anyone would wish to make, wish to ask, sorry? (No response) No, okay, thank you very much.

CLLR O'ROURKE: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very enjoyable. Now, rather than me read a big list out again, is there anyone here who either is scheduled to speak later or even if not scheduled to speak would be ready and wishes to speak now? (No response) In

which case we will break for lunch now and we will gather again at 2.30, where we should have a full afternoon of people who wish to give evidence, give representations this afternoon.

Time noted: 12.57 pm

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming back this afternoon. Now, we have got a list of about 14 people who have indicated they want to speak to us this afternoon, and a couple who have turned up who hope to speak and having registered who I will fit in as and when I can, but we will try and work down the timetable as we have got it, and see how we get on. So the first person to speak will be Andrew Gwynne MP. If you come up to the podium, and if you would give your name and address, and then begin your presentation. Thank you. Everything is being recorded and videoed for the publication of the transcript at a later date.

MR ANDREW GWYNNE (Labour Party): Okay, thank you very much. I am Andrew Gwynne, I am the Member of Parliament for the Denton and Reddish constituency, which is a long standing cross borough constituency between Tameside and Stockport.

I want to start by saying that whilst I do not support the Conservative Government cutting the size of the House of Commons, I appreciate that you have done your job as set out in legislation, and actually I think you have done a very good job within the tight constraints that Parliament has placed upon the Boundary Commission for England in terms of the quotas and the rules that were put in place. I think that in particular the job that you have done around Greater Manchester, you have sought, I recognise, to reflect communities and existing links where that has been possible, and whilst I appreciate that not everybody is going to be 100% happy, these proposals are as good a fit as the legislation will permit.

I think if I might start with my own constituency, this time the Boundary Commission have come up with a pattern of constituencies that will retain the Denton and Reddish constituency as far as is possible, albeit renamed as Stockport North and Denton. It comprises the following council wards from Tameside, Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West, and I am very pleased as a Dentonian that you have sought to keep Denton intact as a town, and from Stockport, Reddish North, Reddish South, Heaton North, Brinnington and Central and Manor. Now I support these proposals because, as I have already said, it retains the existing cross borough link between Denton and Reddish, which has existed since 1983, and which works well for Parliamentary representation. I know I am biased, I have been the Member of Parliament for eleven years, and my predecessor Andrew Bennett had served that

constituency for 22 years before me, but as a constituency it does work well. Denton is kept united as a single township, in a single constituency, which is important, but also in doing so you have managed to keep every other historic Tameside township together in a particular Parliamentary constituency. So, for example, it is an even better arrangement than the current constituency boundaries, because I represent the Dukinfield ward, my colleague Jonathan Reynolds, the Member of Parliament for Stalybridge and Hyde, represents the Dukinfield Stalybridge ward, and the splitting of Dukinfield between two Parliamentary constituencies does cause some degree of confusion. So the fact that you have managed to reunite Dukinfield, both Dukinfield and Dukinfield Stalybridge wards, within a single constituency, your proposed Ashton-under-Lyne constituency, I think works well, and every other Tameside town is kept wholly together in a single constituency.

Now, I would argue that Denton as a town has much more in common with Stockport, and I think most Dentonians would agree with me, than with the rest of Tameside. Not only does it share a very common long boundary, the longest boundary it has with any other neighbouring township is with Stockport, but also it operates as a common area. So quite a lot of children from North Reddish attend schools in Denton, whether it is Dane Bank Primary School or Denton Community College, there is a lot of flow across the borough boundary. In fact, were you to remove the Stockport Metropolitan Borough and Tameside Metropolitan Borough boundary signs, you would not be able to tell where the boundary between Denton and Reddish is, and it does operate as a single community, but we also have a common heritage, because pretty much the whole of Tameside was a cotton spinning area. Denton was a hatting town along with Stockport, so our identity, the way that we operate as a community and the way that we look at ourselves is much more in common with Stockport than it is with the rest of the Borough of Tameside.

Now, I would also say that I support your proposals, because Reddish as a community is also not split, and in the previous abandoned proposals, the revised proposals had sought to split Reddish between, Reddish South was proposed to go into a Stockport constituency and Reddish North was proposed to go into a Manchester Gorton and Reddish North constituency, and I know that at that moment that the revised proposals were published there was an outcry in Reddish about the splitting of Reddish between two Parliamentary constituencies. So I support your Stockport North and Denton proposal, not just because it keeps Denton together but it keeps Reddish together, but it also keeps Denton and Reddish together, and I think that that is really quite important.

Talking about the other areas that you bring into the constituency, the reason I think it will work well as a constituency is because, firstly, Brinnington and Central ward, the old Brinnington ward between 1983 and 1997 of course was in the Denton and Reddish constituency anyway, so it reunites the Brinnington ward with its old Parliamentary constituency. So in terms of that particular element, it makes a great deal of sense. Of course the new Brinnington and Central ward, because it is slightly different to the

boundaries of the old Brinnington ward, includes Lancashire Hill and parts of Heaton Norris, that until 2010 were also in the Denton and Reddish constituency because they formed part of the old South Reddish ward. So again people who still contact my office who live in Lancashire Hill, or live in Heaton Norris, south of Belmont Way, will be reunited with the constituency that they had belonged to until very recently. Likewise, Heaton North, there is a big chunk of Heaton North that on your map, that kind of bit that juts up, where it says Heaton Chapel, up until 2010 that also was in the Denton and Reddish constituency. So you would be reuniting not only Brinnington with its original constituency, Lancashire Hill and Heaton Norris with the constituency that it belonged to up until 2010, but also that part of Heaton Chapel would be reunited, and of course I think therefore that your Stockport North and Denton constituency proposal works well on many levels. It keeps Denton together, it keeps Reddish together, it keeps Denton and Reddish together, it reunites Brinnington with its old home, it reunites Lancashire Hill, Heaton Norris and Heaton Chapel with the constituency to which it belonged as recently as six years ago, and in terms of a constituency with a community of interest it works in terms of Parliamentary representation, and that is why I support it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, very clear. I should just say that the proposals that we talk about are not mine, are not the Assistant Commissioners', they are the Boundary Commission's proposals, I am sure they will all have taken heart from the good work that you spoke of, but the Assistant Commissioners are here to conduct the hearings, to take in views and then to offer any revisions that are required. So we come afresh along with everyone else in this room for these. Okay. After each speaker we have an opportunity for anyone to seek any clarification of anything that has been said, is there anyone in the room who wants to seek any clarification? (No response) No, thank you.

MR ANDREW GWYNNE: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for coming. Is Mr Walter Brett in the room? I saw someone just taking a photograph in the middle of that session, which I do not mind the occasional still photograph but, please, no filming in the room. We are filming already for the record. Yes. I will stop anyone who looks like they are filming. If you just give your name and address, and then please proceed.

MR BRETT: Thank you, good afternoon, my name is Walter Brett, I live at 17 Claremont Avenue, Heaton Chapel. I welcome the proposal for the formation of a Stockport North and Denton constituency. I am actually a councillor for Reddish South and have been since 2002, and I have to say there is a community of interest between Denton and Reddish. People from Reddish work in Denton, and vice versa. Reddish people shop at Crownpoint North in Denton. There is a seamless border between Reddish and Denton, as Andrew said, you would not know the difference if there were no boundary signs set up. The Reddish wards are kept together, which I welcome, unlike the previous proposal. In my own ward I particularly welcome Lancashire Hill,

that was in my old ward and that is now reunited, and that was in the constituency until 2010, and the same is, the same case of Marbury Road and large parts of Heaton Chapel, they were in my ward and in the Denton and Reddish constituency until 2010. So I believe the proposed constituency is a logical solution. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I will just check, as I have done with everyone, has anyone got any points of clarification? (No response) No, I thought not. Thank you very much indeed.

MR BRETT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Next on my list is Kate Vaughan, is there a Kate Vaughan in the room? Or Claire Francis? I will just check, Claire Francis?

MRS REED: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So if you introduce yourself, and your address and then please proceed.

CLLR REED: Okay. I may be listed as Claire Francis, but I am actually Councillor Claire Reed now, I have actually got married, but it might have just been an error on the form on my part.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Congratulations.

CLLR REED: Well, it was a year ago now. I live at 5 Dale View in Haughton Green. I would also like to thank the Boundary Commission for their hard work, it certainly is a thankless task, and like my previous speakers, I do not agree with the proposal to reduce the number of Members of Parliament, not least when we are also losing so many Members of the European Parliament, but I really appreciate the good work and the hard work that has gone into coming up with such a cohesive proposal, which, as my colleagues said, seeks to keep so many communities together but also reunite some communities.

Living in Denton I fully support this proposal. Denton and Reddish has been together as a Parliamentary constituency for many years, as we have said before. There is numerous links, social. Walking from Denton to Reddish you would not know you were walking into a different borough. There is many links. I also welcome the return of Brinnington to the constituency, there is lots of similarities between parts of Brinnington and parts of Reddish, and parts of Tameside. Again, it is a cohesive link. So I fully support the proposal for the Stockport North and Denton constituency.

I am actually originally from Hyde, so I would also like to say something on the proposal for Marple and Hyde. In 1974, when the metropolitan boundaries were formed, there

was actually a really big debate about whether to put Hyde in with Stockport, or to put it in Tameside. If you go from parts of Hyde, particularly Gee Cross where I live, and then you just wander over Werneth Low and you are in Greave and Romiley, which form part of the Marple constituency, the Marple and Hyde constituency, again you would not know the difference. There is very much that community link between Gee Cross and Marple, so I would also support the Marple and Hyde constituency as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. A good example really of people speaking in favour of proposals, not just countering the proposals, which previously I know has been a feature of a lot of these. So thank you very much. Anyone want to seek any clarification? (No response) No, thank you very much.

CLLR REED: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have got a couple of speakers, is there a Pam Byrne in the room? Are you ready to speak now? If you would be so kind as to state your name and your full address, and then feel free to begin.

MRS BYRNE: Yes, I am Pam Byrne, and I am the Chairman of Saddleworth Parish Council, and my address is 6 Oldham Road, Upper Mill, which is in Saddleworth.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MRS BYRNE: Thank you. The proposed boundary changes which incorporates Saddleworth, the proposals are that they will become Littleborough and Saddleworth, as we were some time ago, and losing the part of East Oldham, but unfortunately the Boundary Commission has chosen to leave out a great part of Saddleworth, which is Saddleworth West and Lees. Saddleworth is mainly rural, and over the past few years has had Oldham East in, which is quite urban industrial. The separation of Saddleworth West and Lees is seen as, we are not very happy about that, because the oldest parts of Saddleworth are in this part of Saddleworth West, which it is proposed will go over to somewhere about four and a half/five miles away, in Failsworth, which does not seem logical. There are a number of people who will have submitted documents which show how the numbers can balance, taking in Saddleworth West and Lees back into Saddleworth, and the Oldham townships, there were seven townships within Oldham, and some of these have been split up, like Royton, which, part of Royton which has been put in with Saddleworth, and I am sure they would love to be back with the other part of Royton. There will be cases which have been submitted which the figures balance if Saddleworth West comes back with the rest of Saddleworth North, South and the Littleborough end. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you can just hang on one second, in case anyone has any point of clarification that they wish to make. (No response) No, apologies for bringing you back. Thank you very much. I will just check whether Claire

Francis is in the room? Sorry, sorry, Kate Vaughan? Sorry, it was Claire Reid, was it not? If you give your name and address and then please proceed, thank you.

MRS VAUGHAN: Yes, my name is Kate Vaughan, I am from the City of Chester, my address is 257 Hoole Lane, Chester, and today I would like to speak in support of the Boundary Commission for England's proposal for the City of Chester constituency.

I think far too often it is the people who oppose something who are the most vocal, and I think it is very important that those of us who support what is being proposed ensure that our voices are heard too. Whilst I am not a native Chesterian, I have lived in Chester since 2013. I have worked in the city, I am a governor at a primary school in Hoole, and I represent the Moston ward on the Upton-by-Chester and District Parish Council. Unfortunately I am unable to attend the hearings later in Chester, so I am coming to speak here today in Manchester.

I should like to commend the Commission for the initial proposals which keep the City of Chester united. Chester is an historic city, with a distinct and homogenous community. It is made up of clearly recognised areas, such as Hoole, Handbridge, the Lache, Vicars Cross, Blacon, and the surrounding villages, such as Upton, Saughall, Mollington, Dodleston, Huntington, Christleton, Guilden Sutton and Littleton, all of which look to the city as a whole, and these initial proposals strongly recognises by maintaining each of these areas in a constituency which is focused around the city.

I should also like to express my support for maintaining the City of Chester as a constituency name. There has been a City of Chester constituency in some form more or less since 1545. Whatever the composition, there has historically been a constituency that is focused around the city itself, and those areas in the immediate vicinity which look to Chester rather than other towns or cities.

In order to meet the electoral quota the City of Chester constituency needs to increase in size. The Commission has approached this in a very logical manner, by bringing into the city those surrounding areas that naturally look to Chester. Indeed, a number of these villages that surround Chester are already part of the existing Chester constituency, namely Christleton, Guilden Sutton and Littleton, and they form part of the Chester Villages ward in Cheshire West and Chester Council. This ward name recognises the strong association that these villages have with Chester, which are historical and cultural. As current Parliamentary boundaries stand, the Chester Villages ward is split three ways, between the City of Chester constituency, Eddisbury constituency and Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency. It is a logical proposal to unite the Chester Villages, and bring the villages of Bridge Trafford, Mickle Trafford, Picton, Rowton and Waverton into the City of Chester constituency. By bringing the Chester Villages together within the City of Chester constituency they will not be stuck out on a limb, as they are already, and there are already villages that look towards Chester within the current seat such as those in the Saughall and Mollington ward and

the Dodleston and Huntington ward. These are areas with similar perspectives and strongly associated geographically to the outer city. This also enables the City of Chester Parliamentary constituency to meet the necessary electoral quota.

I note that in paragraph 60 of the initial proposals it states that “We consider that our proposals for the City of Chester Parliamentary constituency result in a reasonably compact constituency, which, apart from alterations required due to changes to local government wards, including the Chester Villages ward, which is divided between constituencies, is otherwise unchanged”. I think this is a positive outcome for Chester, principally because it recognises the importance of the existing constituency boundary, but also because the Commission is proposing a seat with constituent parts that have a similar outlook and communities who face similar issues and challenges. These initial proposals also maintain a constituency that is relatively small in geographic size, with long standing and convenient transport links, particularly between the city itself and its villages. Moreover, the proposed constituency results in minimal change for residents. In the 2013 review, which was subsequently not implemented, there was strong opposition to the proposal to split the Vicars Cross area away from the City of Chester constituency, and it would have gone into a seat that would have been linked to Winsford, which is halfway across the traditional County of Cheshire. Under this review we are looking at now, the Commission has been able to use the smaller and more manageable local government wards of Cheshire West and Chester Council as the building blocks for the constituencies, and as a result the existing City of Chester constituency can be successfully maintained with minimal disruption, and quite rightly avoids the breaking of long standing and distinct local communities.

In determining new Parliamentary constituency boundaries, the primary rule is the electoral quota, but of course the Boundary Commission can take other factors into account. They can consider things like geography, such as the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, they can consider existing local government boundaries, boundaries of existing constituencies, and any local ties that might be broken by changes to the constituencies. The City of Chester constituency, as currently proposed by the Boundary Commission, positively meets all of these additional factors and actually enhances the local ties by drawing into the constituency those villages that naturally regard Chester as their principal city and will unify the Chester Villages ward, which is currently split up between three constituencies. So I would commend the Boundary Commission for England’s proposals to the City of Chester Parliamentary constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any points anyone wishes to query? (No response) No. Thank you very much. Is Brenda Warrington in the room? Thank you. So if you introduce yourself and then please carry on.

MRS WARRINGTON: Thank you very much. Well, my name is Brenda Warrington, I

am a local councillor in Tameside and have been for 14 years. I live in Denton, I have lived in Denton all of my life actually, so that is a few years as well.

If I can really focus on that particular area, particularly the Denton and Reddish constituency, which of course has been in existence since 1983. Now, since then the three wards in Denton, and of course the two wards in Reddish, along with others, have actually formed a really good community cohesion between them, form very, very close links with Reddish, and although we do operate on a cross boundary basis with the Tameside Borough and the Stockport Borough, we do work extremely well together, and there are very, very close links. Just as an example of that, where the ward boundaries are drawn we have in particular two lanes, Thornley Lane North and Thornley Lane South, and each of those lanes have the situation where one half of the street is actually in the Stockport Borough and the other half of the street is in the Tameside Borough, and of course we have managed over the years to ensure that we work together very closely in relation to those kind of issues that come about because of ward boundaries. We have a situation where some of the Tameside Borough addresses have actually Stockport post codes, and vice versa, we have some of the Stockport addresses that have Manchester post codes, which is what Denton has, and so, as I say, very, very close community links, very close community cohesion there, and, like other speakers, I am not happy that we are having to look at reducing our Members of Parliament by 50 by the year 2020, but if it has to happen then I do say that the proposals put forward by the Boundary Commission are extremely fair, and do try to ensure that those community links and those townships of Denton and Reddish and others are actually kept together. It is very, very important to the population in those areas.

Now, we are already, in the Tameside Borough that I live in, we already have three constituencies within the borough, two of those constituencies working on the basis of cross boundaries, and we work well enough, we work very well in fact, and do not find any difficulties. We have really some very good relations with our counterparts, and so we do support the Boundary Commission proposals. It has been a difficult job I am sure, but I think the Boundary Commission have come up with very fair proposals as far as we are concerned and we would very much support the Stockport North and Denton as a constituency, as set out there, and feel that we could ensure that that works and that the links that we already have can be maintained and strengthened. Thank you.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any points of clarification from anyone? (No response) No, thank you very much. Now, is Michael Zwierzanski? Thank you, my apologies if I did not get the pronunciation right.

MR ZWIERZANSKI: It is Michael Zwierzanski, and I live at 81 Malton Avenue, Whitefield, Manchester. I am here to discuss the proposed changes for Bury. I hail from there, and it is my understanding that there shall be a new constituency formed with three wards from the Bury area linked with some from Bolton, to create Farnworth.

Now, overall I am in favour of this proposal. However, within Bury we have the historic town of Radcliffe. Two of the wards, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe West, along with Pilkington Park shall be taken away from Bury and moved to the Farnworth constituency. What I would like to see is a swap of Pilkington Park and Radcliffe East, so that the historic town of Radcliffe can stay together in the new Farnworth constituency and Pilkington Park stay as part of Bury.

Now, whilst I do not have the figures with me right now, my colleague has shown them to me, that the swap between Pilkington Park and Radcliffe East actually favours the Boundary Commission's percentages regarding population, which I will be able to provide at a later date. That is everything, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Sorry, your proposal was to leave Radcliffe, to put Radcliffe into the new Farnsworth?

MR ZWIERZANSKI: Sorry, Farnworth.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Farnsworth, yes.

MR ZWIERZANSKI: Yes, the three wards.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And swap it with?

MR ZWIERZANSKI: Pilkington Park. The three wards of Radcliffe are Radcliffe North, East and West, North and West shall be moving into Farnworth, along with Pilkington Park, but I would wish to swap East and Pilkington Park.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Thank you. Any points from anyone? (No response) Thank you very much. Is Mr Andy Verdeille in the room?

MR VERDEILLE: My name is Andy Verdeille, and I live at 129 Somerford Road, North Reddish, Stockport. I have lived in Reddish all my life, and I am here today to support the Boundary Commission proposals as outlined today, and oddly enough I come here to praise the Boundary Commission, which is something very rare I am told, because the area that I live in, North Reddish, was proposed to go into Gorton in the last proposals that the Boundary Commission came up with, and that did one thing, it unified almost everyone in North Reddish and South Reddish, the hostility to it. First of all in splitting the two Reddishes, which historically have been joined together from time immemorial, and secondly there is no community interest between Reddish of any sort and Gorton. So I congratulate the Boundary Commission on their revised proposals, if I may say that.

I also agree with comments that have been made about distinguishing the boundaries between Reddish and Stockport. If I look out of my front room window, and I live in

North Reddish, I can see Denton South, it is the other side of the street basically. It is also noticeable that people mix up Denton and Reddish. My dear friends in the Liberal Democrat Party, at a by-election, totally misunderstood the boundary and delivered thousands of their leaflets into Denton at a North Reddish by-election, so it is easily done, it is very easily done, and I do not make any excuse for that.

I, as a boy, went to school in Reddish but I went to church in Denton. I went to work in Reddish when I left school but my friends were in Haughton Green, that is in Denton South. It is also interesting to look at who else has got boundaries that are coterminous with the boundaries that the Boundary Commission have. Religious groups, for example, Holy Family in Denton is my parish church, as I have already alluded to, St Agnes' in Reddish is a parish church in the Anglican community that takes in a great part of Denton West. Community groups have some coterminous boundaries, I am thinking now of the Friends of Reddish South and the Friends of Reddish North, Reddish South and Denton Station, and I am also thinking of community groups like the Prescott Charity, which deals in a small way with some alms houses, which also encompasses the cross border boundary. I also have to say that education crosses the boundary. In my area of North Reddish children attend Dane Bank Primary School, in my area of Reddish and in South Reddish children attend St Thomas More Roman Catholic Secondary School and children in my area of North Reddish attend Denton Community College. In reverse, children from Denton attend Reddish Vale High School. So there is a community of interest that crosses over all boundaries, not just the political boundaries that we may want to talk about.

I also have to say there is a community interest between another area, it is Brinnington. Brinnington has a cross boundary with Reddish North and Reddish South, and Brinnington itself. Brinnington is one of the new wards that would come into this constituency and the community of interest there is Reddish Vale. It is a very strong, very highly motivated area of green space, which all of our groups have got an interest with. So there is a huge interest, and there always has been, between Reddish and Denton and Reddish, Brinnington and Denton in that respect. So I would urge the Boundary Commission to maintain its position insofar as Denton and Reddish are concerned. That is my proposals. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any comments at all, any point of query? (No response) No. Thank you very much indeed, Mr Verdeille. Is Mr George Newton in the room?

CLLR NEWTON: My name is George Newton, I am a councillor in Denton. If you have not been bored to death yet by Denton I am about to put the final nail in the coffin. I would like to start by saying thank you very much for taking the time to complete this work, it is particularly difficult, not everyone is going to be happy but the Boundary Commission have done a very good job. I come in peace and praise.

I have to say that I do believe this whole exercise to be completely politically motivated. I can only see one benefit---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Best not to spoil your presentation.

CLLR NEWTON: Sorry?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Best not to spoil your presentation by being out of order.

CLLR NEWTON: Yes, I do believe this whole exercise to be completely politically motivated. I can only see one benefit of this exercise and that is to ensure that the Conservatives have an easier path to a majority. I think it is a very regressive step to reduce Parliamentary representation. That said, I appreciate the hard work that has gone into this and that you are carrying out the work that has been ordered.

I wish to echo the words of my colleagues in support of the proposal for Stockport North and Denton. The current Denton and Reddish seat is very similar to the one that has been proposed and it works exceptionally well. As a Denton councillor I can say with some force that the people in Denton have a greater affinity with the north of Stockport than any other major town in Tameside such as Ashton-under-Lyne. There are significant historical links, cultural links, leisure links and commercial links that benefit from a single Member of Parliament. Furthermore, I strongly support maintaining Denton as a single political entity, compared to some proposals that have seen the town split three ways into different constituencies.

I would further like to add that by keeping the Denton and Reddish link, that works exceptionally well, and I would further welcome the fact that Brinnington has returned to the Denton and Reddish constituency. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Newton. Just to repeat a point I made this morning really about politics within this, which is that this is not a job commissioned by the Government, this is a job commissioned by Parliament, who have asked for this to be reviewed. The Boundary Commission do not report to the Government, they report to Parliament, and Government ministers or any other member of the Conservative Party have no more sway in this than anyone else. So just worth making that point, and it will save anyone else who wishes to make a political point in a few minutes, that it is really wasting your time. Thank you very much. Lee Evans?

MR EVANS: Thank you, my name is Lee Evans, and my address is 3 Blantyre Street, Manchester. Today I am commenting on several constituencies in West Cheshire and the Wirral. These seats are of interest to me because I was born on the Wirral, brought up in Ellesmere Port and Neston, educated on the Wirral, and I previously worked for the Member of Parliament for the City of Chester.

On the City of Chester I want to commend the Commission for keeping Chester a united city. The existing boundaries, which are very similar to the proposed boundaries, form a distinct community of interest. People in the wards identified, from Blacon to Saughall and Mollington, to Vicars Cross and Dodleston and Huntington, orient themselves around the city centre of Chester. I am aware that a proposal was put forward this morning to remove one of those wards, Dodleston and Huntington, from the proposed constituency for the City of Chester but this would be a grave mistake, it would tear the people of that ward away from the city centre around which they orient themselves.

Prior to the creation of Cheshire West and Chester Council in 2009, these wards were all represented on Chester City Council but their unity goes back even further than that. The area of the proposed boundaries have more or less been represented together since the 16th century. It would take an overwhelmingly convincing reason to split them up, and it is my view that no such reason exists. The principal objection of the Commission has been to equalise constituency numbers, this does require some more votes in Chester, but the best way to achieve that is to do as the Commission have proposed, and to bring the Chester Villages in their entirety into the City of Chester. These are small changes that bring together communities of common interest, without breaking up the communities that already exist, and I cannot imagine any defensible alternative to it.

For Ellesmere Port and Neston, whereas Chester can be judged as something of an organic community that has grown up around a single distinct city centre, this is not necessarily true for Ellesmere Port and Neston. However, I would agree with the Commission, that they are right fundamentally to keep Ellesmere Port and Neston together. Between 1974 and 2009 Ellesmere Port and Neston were commonly served by a single local authority, Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council. Throughout this time the entirety of the area was led by councillors and served by mayors who had come from both towns. Both towns sit on the south side of the Wirral, and have in common that they are the western most parts of Cheshire, bordering the Metropolitan Borough of the Wirral. Their location and their common representation over several generations gives them a long heritage as united communities. The Commission are right to maintain those links and to minimise disruption and confusion for local residents.

I am aware that a submission was made this morning to remove the Elton ward from Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency, and to place it into the new Weaver Vale constituency. This is a sensible proposal, which I would commend to the Commission for a number of reasons. Firstly, Elton was not covered by the old Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council, it does not have a long history of association with these towns but are instead formed of distinct villages, almost unlike anything else in the constituency. It has much more in common with the villages and towns of Weaver Vale. Secondly, the villages of the Elton ward have historically looked towards Frodsham and Helsby, currently in and proposed to continue to be in Weaver Vale, as their focus

points. These largely rural villages have very rarely looked to Ellesmere Port or to urban Chester as focus points for them. On issues such as the marshes and their use, Ince and Frodsham, one of which is currently proposed to be in Ellesmere Port and Neston, the other of which is currently proposed to be in Weaver Vale, they have a common interest and would best be served by common representation. Indeed, there are already two community forums, one concerning Ince Park and the other Frodsham wind farm, which work across the boundary. The issues at hand, and the best means of addressing them and serving local residents are served by being unified. Finally, the transport links between the villages of Elton ward, and Frodsham and Helsby, are easier than the transport links between those places and Ellesmere Port and Neston. I am referring specifically to the links for the M56 to the Handford roundabout, the A56 into Helsby and Frodsham, the M56 at Hapsford and Junction 12 near Sutton Weaver. In addition to those, there is a train line, albeit with infrequent service, between Ince and Elton Station and Helsby.

Turning to the Wirral, I would be much more brief, but I want to make three simple points. Firstly, I commend the Commission for keeping the distinct communities of common interest that are Wallasey and Birkenhead together as their own constituencies. Whether in terms of transport links, orientation of a town centre, or lineage of common representation, these are distinct areas which ought to be represented as such. The Commission's proposals are good. Secondly, I want to commend the Commission for not breaking local authority boundaries more than necessary. I know in the previous proposals the Boundary Commission took large parts of Neston from Ellesmere Port and Neston and put it into a Wirral constituency. On these boundaries that would mean breaking the Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority boundary twice. I think that would be a mistake and cause unnecessary confusion for local residents, so I commend the Commission for only breaking this boundary once at Eastham, which is necessary given the elector numbers and the wards on the Wirral.

This leaves the inevitability of Bebbington and Heswall. This is a sensible constituency. Importantly, it unites the Deeside parts of the Wirral. Deeside forms a homogenous community, including West Kirby, Meols, Hoylake, Thurstaston, right the way down to Heswall. The Commission is right to keep these communities of common interest together in a single constituency. My only proposed change to this would be the name. I am fairly certain that there is a better name out there than Bebbington and Heswall, not least as the two names that are referenced in the current constituency name are both on Wirral South, whilst only three of the seven wards in a proposed constituency are from Wirral South, and includes a ward, Bebbington, which is not currently in the constituency. Historically, part of this area has been called simply Wirral, or The Wirral, as a Parliamentary constituency, and that for me would be a perfectly satisfactory name to return to. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Let me just see if anyone has got any points of clarification.

LORD STUNELL: Andrew Stunell. I understood you were arguing for the removal of Elton ward from the Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency, was there any other change to that constituency or was that a simple net reduction?

MR EVANS: A simple net reduction of Elton ward. I would want to double check myself but I do not think that takes it outside of the tolerance for electors.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I do not think it changes Ellesmere Port and Neston, I do not know what it does to Weaver Vale, but it is 3,429 electorates. Okay, thank you very much. We do not actually have anyone else listed until 5.20 who wants to speak. Is there anyone in the room who either is due to speak later and would like to speak now, or would like to just give us the benefit of their views? (No response) If not, then, I am getting used to saying this phrase, but I think we are going to adjourn again now for 5.15. If anyone else has turned up who wishes to speak, and if not we might take another little breather after that. Thank you very much.

Time noted: 3.20 pm

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 5.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We adjourned in the hope that either some of our speakers might turn up early or others might turn up who wished to speak. Looking round the room we have got fewer rather than more, and the chap who is not due until 5.20 has not yet appeared, so I am afraid we are going to adjourn again to 5.20. It seems to be the sensible point. We are at the moment seeing whether we can contact some of the outriders for this evening to see if they can come a bit earlier, and if we are able to get them along here early then we will probably finish early, but we will have to take a rain check later on that, but otherwise sorry for your afternoon not being the most productive you have ever had, but we will meet again at 5.20, thank you.

Time noted: 5.16 pm

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 5.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. If you are ready, Mr Wharmby, perhaps you can come forward. The way it has been working is that if you come up

to the microphone, because we are recording this for the public record if you could state your name and address, full address, before you begin, and then please go into your discussion.

MR WHARMBY: I see two microphones here. Is it irrelevant?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You just talk however you want, the microphones will pick up. It does not really matter where you are.

MR WHARMBY: Philip Geoffrey Wharmby, 6 Beech Avenue, Whitefield, Manchester M45 7EW. I believe you are putting a constituency, the new constituency maps up.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Which constituency would you like to talk about?

MR WHARMBY: Bury. Right, could you actually bring it up slightly because the bits I am interested in talking about is there and there. Right. Okay. As far as possible you are charged with keeping communities together as part of the constituencies. Now, Bury Metropolitan Council devolves power to our local townships. You propose to split the Whitefield and Unsworth forum into over two constituencies, half of Whitefield would go into Farnworth, half of Whitefield would go with Unsworth ward, and be effectively in Prestwich and Middleton constituency. Right. What is a more logical split is for Radcliffe East ward, you can see on the bottom of the Bury map, that you take it into the, it is called the Farnworth constituency, but then you would be putting three Radcliffe wards in the Farnworth constituency. Effectively you would be making it Farnworth and Radcliffe, therefore people will not identify with the local place. Okay, you are voting Radcliffe, yes, but half of you vote one area, two thirds of you vote the other. The Pilkington Park ward, which, if you, it is the area. Now, that moves into the new Bury constituency. If you check the ward sizes, Bury loses I think 250 votes, 7,500 Radcliffe East and 7,250 Pilkington Park and 250 votes, 0.4% is pretty irrelevant for constituency size guidelines.

Now, I am interested in history, I had a look and Radcliffe has never been split between constituencies before, and I have gone right back to the 1832 Reform Act. It is relevant that Radcliffe has been a township, has it been in local government, has it been a county borough, or now part of Bury MBC. It is currently that the three Radcliffe wards are Bury South. If my suggestion of moving Radcliffe East into Farnworth, it has the Radcliffe township, Bury devolves power to Radcliffe, and it would be devolving power partly to one constituency partly to another, and in the south of the borough it would still be a partial split anyway, as you still have two wards in Middleton, in the new Middleton and Prestwich seat. So, it gets round, you do not completely get round it but you find out that as far as possible you are keeping communities together.

Now, if you go back into history, when I started voting I would be voting as part of Middleton and Prestwich, you are reconstituting that from I think 1950. When my father voted, still in the same place, Whitefield was part of Rossendale, Rossendale being to the north of Bury. So where I live has moved over various constituencies, so it is not particularly relevant, it keeps Radcliffe together, and hopefully the name, if you live in Radcliffe where are you, what constituency are you in? Farnworth. Where is Farnworth? If you are in Radcliffe, or at least you are in Farnworth and Radcliffe because most of the voting votes would be in the southern part of the Bolton MBC. More logical.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Just a couple of things. So effectively you are saying keep the Radcliffes together?

MR WHARMBY: Keep the Radcliffes together, they have always been together.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Your proposal therefore---

MR WHARMBY: In fact, looking, I do not think they ever even moved Radcliffe boundaries since we had the reorganisation when we all, all bits went into Bury, I am sure they are the same boundaries.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As you know, one of the issues we have to grapple with is the size of the electorate.

MR WHARMBY: True, and 250 either way.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Radcliffe East is 1,200 odd electors.

MR WHARMBY: I must admit when I looked on Bury Council's web site I got seven and a half thousand for Radcliffe East and 7,250 for Pilkington Park, I got a 250 difference therefore.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I wondered whether you had thought if the numbers did not balance, how one would overcome the problem of having too big a number.

MR WHARMBY: According to, okay, you said 8,500, I thought 7,500. Presumably the same area carries, error carries forward for the Pilkington Park ward. Obviously you will know the population size for Pilkington Park.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So Radcliffe East is 8,270.

MR WHARMBY: Right, what is Pilkington Park, please?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Where will we find that, in Farnworth? 7,328.

MR WHARMBY: So it is a thousand down, therefore it does affect it. I agree. The figures of Bury Council were not as accurate as I thought.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does not diminish your point, which is that Radcliffe is a community and one should keep them together.

MR WHARMBY: It is a community, where I live has been in three constituencies, Bury is as good as any.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Can I just check if anyone in the room has any points of clarification? Any points anyone?

LORD HAYWOOD: Lord Haywood for the Conservative Party. If you are swapping them, I am just trying to seek clarification, you would propose putting Pilkington Park into the Bury constituency instead?

MR WHARMBY: Into the Bury constituency, yes.

LORD HAYWOOD: Because on the map I am not sure there is a link.

MR WHARMBY: There is actually a link.

LORD HAYWOOD: Is there? Okay. Thank you very much.

MR WHARMBY: I assure you there is a link.

LORD HAYWOOD: Okay, that is fine, thank you.

MR WHARMBY: And there is a road, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. Thank you for coming along. Thank you, sir, very kind. Well, I am looking around the room and I do not see any additional faces, so I am going to adjourn slightly but I am not proposing to go away at all now, and if and when people arrive we just kick straight in, and try and hear their evidence as soon as they have settled, their representations. Okay, thank you.

Time noted: 5.30 pm

After a short adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for bearing with us. We have our final speaker this evening, who is Mr David Wilson, thank you for coming along. If you would like to come up to the podium, when you are there, because we are recording this for the record, could you give your name and address and then begin.

MR WILSON: Thank you. Councillor David Wilson for Reddish North, and I live at 28 Salisbury Street, Reddish, Stockport, SK5 6UL.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, please carry on.

MR WILSON: Am I asked questions or just make a submission?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just make whatever points you wish to make.

MR WILSON: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Then at the end I will ask anyone if they have got any points for clarification.

MR WILSON: Okay, I understand, thank you for that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please proceed.

MR WILSON: Well, as a local councillor for Reddish North ward personally, and I was happy with the existing arrangements with Denton and Reddish, but obviously the Government determined to have its boundary review, and we accept what Parliament are going to put forward. We do, I do think that the proposals for a new constituency which would be called, I believe, Stockport North and Denton, are quite reasonable in the circumstances. I think it makes the, I suppose the best of a bad job that we have to deal with. I think it is very good that my area of Reddish North would not go into any, unlike the last time several years ago when we last had a boundary review, it was then proposed that North Reddish would go into a Manchester Gorton ward, and so I am very pleased that this time round the two Reddishes, Reddish North and Reddish South, will stay united in one Stockport ward. We still remain linked to our friends in Denton, which is very close to us over in Crownpoint. Likewise, Reddish Vale Country Park would become part of the one constituency, would just be represented by the one MP, and the people who use the park in Brinnington, Reddish, and further afield, the park would be just within the one constituency. Likewise, Brinnington and parts of Heaton Chapel, which are close to Reddish, again would be part of the one constituency.

I think I just finish on that, regarding all that, I would welcome the proposal and hopefully the proposal will stay unchanged or unaltered if it is to go through to legislation. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you, Mr Wilson. I will just ask the room whether anyone has got any comments to make. That was very clear and to the point, and one of the points we would quite like to get, which we have not had previously, which you have done, is support for proposals as well as counter proposals. So thank you very much for coming this evening.

MR WILSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: With that, we have no more planned speakers this evening, and although we were due to sit until eight o'clock, I think given the sporadic nature of the afternoon, I think we will bring the hearing to a close now for this evening, and we will resume again at nine o'clock tomorrow morning for those of you who are coming, we look forward to seeing you. Thank you.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Wednesday 13 October 2016

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