

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

**VICTORIA HALL, ROYAL STATION HOTEL, NEVILLE STREET,
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 5DH**

ON

**TUESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY TWO**

Before:

Ms Eileen Brady, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

**Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
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Time Noted: 9 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning. Welcome to day two of the Newcastle hearings into the Boundary Commission's proposals for the North Eastern region. Just a brief reintroduction, I am Eileen Brady and I have been appointed lead commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, along with my colleague fellow Assistant Commissioner Adele Bomgard, who is present in the room at the front. I am also ably assisted in the task by the lead official, Sam Hartley, to my right.

We have been independently appointed, both myself and Ms Bomgard, to deal with these presentations and assess the views that are being made before us today and yesterday.

In terms of housekeeping, there will be a fire drill conducted at some stage this morning. We anticipate it to be between 11 and 11.30 and for the purposes of your information, the proceedings are being recorded. Please that people speak clearly when they reach the lectern and announce their name and address clearly.

In line with the schedule, we will see if our first scheduled presenter is here and willing to come forward. Karen Quinn, if it is convenient, would you mind coming forward? Thank you. Good morning. You are very welcome. For the purposes of the record, outline your name and address, please.

MRS QUINN: Yes, it is Karen Quinn, 31 Killiebrigs, Heddon-on-the-wall, Newcastle upon Tyne.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. If you would like to proceed.

MRS QUINN: Yes, I wanted really to object to the proposals as they stand, the removal of Ponteland East and Stannington into a Newcastle ward.

I live just over the border from Newcastle into Northumberland, I am in the Hexham constituency in Heddon-on-the-wall, which is actually Ponteland South, but I regard myself very, very much as a Northumbrian, as a member of the Hexham constituency, and I think the same could definitely be said for the residents of Ponteland East. They are not far from Newcastle, but they see themselves as being a rural village township and I think splitting Ponteland makes no sense whatsoever. I appreciate that you have to have a boundary somewhere and nobody will ever be completely happy, but to have a residential street with one side with a Newcastle MP, the other side with a Hexham MP, makes no sense whatsoever, especially in a constituency as big as Hexham with plenty of rural areas where a boundary could be put through.

I understand also there is a separate proposal that possibly Ponteland South might move into Newcastle which would be me. There is a slice of green belt between

Heddon-on-the-wall and Newcastle, it is only narrow, but it might as well be 1,000 miles wide. I do not go to Newcastle, I do not shop in Newcastle, I shop in Ponteland, I shop in Corbridge, I shop in Hexham and I just think there is absolutely no sense whatsoever in moving rural villages into urban Newcastle.

That is basically my thoughts.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That was very helpful. Are you sure that your presentation is complete now? Are you happy enough?

MRS QUINN: Yes. Another thing I would say is the Hexham constituency, as I am sure you know, is massive as it is. Putting areas such as Rothbury into it, the communications between Rothbury and Hexham are terrible. I mean, as it is already, it takes a tremendously long time to move from one end of that constituency to another, and bus transport, public transport is basically nonexistent between Rothbury and Longhorsley and Hexham.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you want to make any use of the map? There is a pen there which is a highlighter. It is down beside the mic as well.

MRS QUINN: I am blind as a bat so I cannot see half of it. Yes, that Ponteland South with Heddon-on-the-wall is where I live. Ponteland East obviously is there bordering right onto Newcastle. Yes, talking about the suggestions that the Boundary Commission have made about adding Rothbury into the Hexham constituency, the bus service in Northumberland is absolutely appalling, the distances are very huge. I just think it would make a very large and unwieldy constituency. It is already massive, but to add those rural areas as well I think would make it very difficult for constituents up there getting to Hexham to meet their MP. That is another aspect, apart from the splitting of Ponteland. Basically I do not see the sense in taking Ponteland East out of the town and having a situation where basically the schools and the golf club, are in Newcastle, the residents are all living in the Hexham constituency. It seems to me to make no sense whatsoever and basically I object strongly.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very well. That is noted before us this morning.

MRS QUINN: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could you wait a moment and we will see if anybody wishes to take some issues seeking clarifications? Is there anybody present who would like to raise any points for clarification?

Our next scheduled speaker is listed for 9.30, so we will resume then. Thank you.

After a short break

Time Noted: 9.26 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will deal with the next scheduled speaker who is Oskar Avery. I know we are a bit ahead of schedule for five minutes, but that is very welcome. Thank you very much. You will have to go to the lectern and use the microphone provided. At the outset, will you indicate for the purposes of the record, because this is being recorded, your name and address, please, and then you can proceed to express your views?

MR AVERY: Okay. Could I possibly get a straightforward map of the area, if you go to Google maps?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. You also have a pen there which you can use to highlight, which is very helpful.

MR AVERY: Yes. My name is Oskar Avery from Jesmond in Newcastle upon Tyne. Can you zoom me in on the riverside? If you go essentially to the centre of the proposed Blaydon ward, if you can zoom me in on the river in the centre of the proposed Blaydon ward, that would be helpful and can you turn off the constituency boundaries?

What I essentially would draw your attention to is if you look at the course of the river here.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just stay and use the mic. It is tricky, but you have to stick beside the mic.

MR AVERY: Sorry. If you look at the course of the river here, this is one of the widest points, I think it actually does not show this on this map because it is not a satellite map, this is one of the widest parts of the river. This is the Dunstan Staiths, which is an enormous wooden construction just here, and this lies in the middle of the proposed Blaydon wards. The river is at one of its widest points and indeed the Dunstan part is not included within the proposed ward.

What we do have is you have Benwell and Scotswood and Elswick wards, they are not only separated by the river at one of its widest points from the Gateshead side, but separated again by, I believe, a six-lane highway which is the A1. That is the western by-pass. They are effectively separated in a very meaningful sense both with a part of Newcastle to the west of the A1 and through a very large natural boundary from the Gateshead side.

If you see also there are a very limited number of crossings, so the A1 is one of the crossings, but that is really not a local access road, that is traffic going through the area, principally through the north, and a lot of freight traffic. You are relying on the Scotswood Bridge here, there is a defunct rail bridge, it is not marked on your map, there that you can see the very end of the rail alignment, but that is not open for public use. You are relying on the Scotswood Bridge and Newburn Bridge. The

Newburn bridge is a very small bridge and there are, therefore, two crossing points within the centre of the constituency. The river is still wide for a large part that it goes through the constituency and it is not navigable. If you try and swim it you will die.

This represents a very real geographic boundary. I am very surprised that the Commission has decided to cross this boundary. I would note your previous 2013 proposals in which you decided at the beginning that you would not cross that boundary. I believe that was a more sensible decision, I think the decision to cross it is unwise.

You have very minimal links within the constituency and disconnected areas, both this part of Newcastle, which is the former Newburn urban district, and then Benwell and Scotswood in the historic City of Newcastle. You then have the former Blaydon Ryton urban districts and disconnected areas separated by a major road and a major river. I submit that this does not make sense.

If you could then take me west along the river and zoom out slightly. In comparison, if you then look west of the urban area, so this is the boundary roughly of Newcastle, so you have Heddon, Heddon-on-the-wall there, and Newburn and Throckley is the edge of the Newcastle area. You then have Ryton and Crawcrook and that is the edge of Gateshead and this then becomes county Northumberland. If you compare that and you then look at Northumberland, Northumberland county crosses the river, it is an administrative unit and if you look at Wylam, Wylam crosses the river, the river is quite narrow here. If you compare the width here and the width there, that is Wylam station which is on the other side of the river, Wylam is a cross-river settlement.

You then have Ovingham, which is across the river from Prudhoe, and again it is using a railway station on the other side of the river and you have a cross river settlement. You then look at Bywell, you again have a cross-river settlement and that continues along the river towards Hexham and Corbridge.

I submit that within county Northumberland it is much more reasonable to cross the Tyne, both as matter of historic precedent as local administrative of boundaries and as a geographic and navigational question. Therefore, I believe that instead of seeking to maintain three seats within Northumberland, the three seats wholly within Northumberland and one partly within Northumberland, it would be more sensible, as in the prior 2013 proposal, to have a seat that goes between Northumberland and Gateshead and then to allow Newcastle to spread into neighbouring areas of Northumberland.

If you could move me across to Newcastle and zoom out slightly. Then looking at Newcastle, what it is important to bear in mind, if you can go up slightly north, is that virtually all of this area was formerly in the historic county of Northumberland. This is the former Gosforth urban district which was in Northumberland until 1972, this was the Newburn urban district, this was the Castle rural district. There is not

a significant cultural difference between Newcastle and indeed north Tyneside, which is also part of Northumberland, aside from Whitley bay and Tynemouth and Newcastle, which were historic borough cities, there is not a substantial cultural difference and beyond that and in terms of heritage and the way that people see their identity. There also is not a meaningful difference in terms of there being a unclear boundary between the county and the city, so this is Ponteland and that is Newcastle airport. That is the municipal boundary. We see Ponteland is right outside the municipal boundary.

Ponteland is linked by the A696 and the Ponteland Road which run into the city. It is not linked to the surrounding areas, it is currently in the Hexham constituency, but you see its links are actually to Newcastle and it is a commuter suburb past the airport. Similarly, if you look up here you then have Seghill, you have Burradon and Cramlington, if you go slightly north for me, please. That is Cramlington. Cramlington again is linked to the south and it has some links for the north, but is again a commuter suburb of this large conurbation. So choosing to give great importance to the county boundary leads to perverse outcomes in that there is not a substantial cultural difference in that there is not a substantial disconnect between those two areas. Indeed, there are strong local ties connecting Cramlington to its south and to the areas around it.

What I am proposing and will submit is a full written submission later is that there should be, as was proposed last time, a constituency roughly including these areas between Cramlington and the other new town of Killingworth and the surrounding villages and that Newcastle - and you can see that is the municipal boundary - there is no difference. That is Newcastle and Wallsend. They were separated merely for administrative purposes in order to ensure that north Tyneside had a sufficient population. There is no difference and I would strongly encourage you to go and walk that boundary. There is no noticeable boundary between Wallsend and Walker. There are very, very strong local ties between Wallsend and Walker with the riverside full of riverside industries and the riverside wards of Newcastle.

As Nick Brown, who is the representative of Newcastle upon Tyne, used to say, "If you get the number 13 bus that went along there, it is impossible to tell when you are in which urban area and when you have crossed from one to the other". Seeking again to respect that unitary authority line leads to perverse outcomes because you have strong local ties that cross the unitary authority boundary and that boundary is largely arbitrary.

I think it is then sensible to have a seat based around Tynemouth. You can see you have a clear area here and that nicely forms a seat, but it is more sensible to form a Newcastle East and Wallsend and then another seat of some form - and I will give you a detailed one in a second - encompassing this area and then to link Ponteland to the west of Newcastle. That then gives you all the seats within quota and means that you do not have to cross the Tyne where it is wide and where there are few crossing points.

How long have I got left?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Carry on, you have a couple of minutes.

MR AVERY: Okay. If you go south and if you could switch the wards back on and I will then describe to you in more detail what I am proposing specifically. What it is possible to do is you create what essentially remains as a Newcastle Central including, if you can go north-west please, so it keeps everything that is within Newcastle Central now except for west Gosforth, which is here. Sorry, it keeps West Gosforth, it takes in East Gosforth, which is one area as the name suggests and removes that split, and then takes in Jesmond and there is a large river, or a small river, but a large valley here and you can create a constituency there. You can then create a constituency between the remainder of Newcastle East and Wallsend. You then have a Tynemouth constituency here and then a Newcastle, technically Newcastle North but in reality Newcastle West, and Ponteland, which keeps all of Newcastle North, except for East Gosforth, which is currently a salient in Newcastle North, so all of the rest of it is retained. Sorry, the other side of the other one. That is Newcastle North, Parklands and Fawden and you add in the four Ponteland wards, rather than splitting them as your proposal does at the moment, and that then forms a constituency.

If you move over to Hexham, which is west, so then having detached the Ponteland area, you can then form a nice constituency within quota by going east from Hexham through Prudhoe and you will note that Prudhoe already adjoins to the semi-rural western edge of Gateshead. You attach Hexham, these wards and the two Prudhoe wards, to Crawcrook to Ryton, to Blaydon, Winlaton, High Spen, which currently that is Winlaton. You are currently detaching Winlaton from Blaydon and it is one continuous area of settlement. Winlaton, High Spen, Blaydon, Ryton, Crawcrook, Chopwell and Rowland's Gill, the two Prudhoe wards and then Northumberland and that then makes another constituency fully within quota, which has strong local ties along the south of the river and which only crosses the river where there are recognised clear cross-river communities. It avoids any significant geographic boundaries and links communities of similar interests because this is all, if you look at this on an actual satellite map, you will see the vast majority of this is fields because this is semi-rural, this is the semi-rural part of Gateshead.

I may as well talk you through. The knock-on effect of doing this means you are better able to deal with some issues south of the river, so if you take me round to here. By doing that, you can then create seven constituencies taking the remaining part of Whickham here and then the rest of Gateshead, including Lamesley and Birtley that are currently orphan wards, and then you have all but three of the wards within Gateshead. Those three then go with Jarrow and that means that Jarrow does not have to cross into Washington, this is the Sunderland municipal area. You take Felling and these two wards, which have strong links Jarrow, you link them to Jarrow and you create a constituency here. You then keep your proposed South Shields constituency and that stays the same, but Jarrow, because it is taking in the three Gateshead wards, no longer needs to cross into Washington.

Having created a Gateshead ward here and a Jarrow and Felling ward here, you can then maintain Washington and Sunderland West in its entirety and it only needs to pick up one ward down in Sandhill in order to then hit quota. That avoids splitting the town of Washington, which you are currently split three ways, reduces the number of splits within Gateshead and reduces the number of splits within Sunderland. You can see by abandoning the attempt to maintain Northumberland and instead of crossing the river at a more rational point, you actually find it much easier to then deal with the rest of the seats within Tyne and Wear. I will be submitting a comprehensive proposal for the whole of the region which demonstrates that it is possible to do this without having adverse effects on any of the other regions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MR AVERY: Do you have any questions?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, I will conduct this bit. In the light of the submissions that were made, would anybody like to come forward to seek any clarification on the points raised? It appears not. You are obviously going to forward that in the form of a written proposal.

MR AVERY: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is very good. Thank you very much.

MR AVERY: Right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next listed speaker is Charles Morgan. You are not listed until 10 o'clock, would you prefer to be heard now? Does it suit you to come a bit earlier? Come forward. At the outset, explain your name and address for the purposes of the recording. Thank you.

MR MORGAN: (South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council) My name is Charles Morgan. I am a barrister with chambers at 6 Pump Court, Temple, London EC4Y 7AR and I am instructed by Mr Mike Harding, the Head of Legal at South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council.

Madam, I am here to address you on the South Shields and Jarrow constituencies and until five minutes ago, I was proposing to introduce my submissions by saying that I believe them to be entirely uncontroversial and to invite you to receive them as such, but having heard the gentleman who has just spoken, they are certainly in conflict with his proposals for the Jarrow constituency.

Our submissions are self contained in the sense that they propose revisions to the South Shields and Jarrow constituencies which have no further ramifications unless other surrounding constituencies are in conflict as this gentleman, I believe, would

suggest.

Can I pass to you simply two sheets of paper at this stage? The council will be making written submissions before the deadline. There are only two sheets which I wish to put before you. The first is a summary of our proposals and the second is a map demonstrating our proposed boundary revision to the South Shields constituency, but by inference it demonstrates what we say in relation to Jarrow, too.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is your summary proposals and the map?

MR MORGAN: Yes. The current proposals, the initial proposals, are set out in the initial proposals document, pages 24 to 26. The essence of the suggested revisions by the council is to reflect existing social and cultural associations. We say that happily it does so actually with a greater preservation of the existing status quo than the initial proposals and, as I said, of themselves in a manner which involves rearrangements of only those two constituencies.

Referring you to the map ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There is a pen for your disposal to highlight.

MR MORGAN: Thank you. Could we go a bit more, please, so that we can see the river estuary? The wards with which we are concerned are the Simonside and Rekendyke ward there which, on the initial proposals, becomes part of the Jarrow constituency. Then if we can go south, please, the next ward we are concerned with is the Boldon Colliery ward, which under the initial proposals is part of South Shields, and then I shall also be addressing you in relation to a triangle there which constitutes one district of the Bede ward, which is presently within the Jarrow constituency. The gist of our submissions is that the Simonside and Rekendyke ward should be and in effect remain within the South Shields constituency. The Boldon Colliery ---

MR PRATT: (Inaudible) (Off microphone).

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you do not mind, if you are seeking clarification, would you mind waiting until the appropriate time? Thank you.

MR MORGAN: Yes. May I have a quick word, Madam? Thank you, Madam, the point that Mr Harding wished me to clarify is the Cleadon and East Boldon ward it is proposed should remain within South Shields.

The third element concerns this district within a ward and we make this submission in the knowledge of the desirability of maintaining the integrity of polling wards, but in our submission this is a circumstance which can be described as exceptional and compelling in that it achieved --

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you highlight the area, please?

MR MORGAN: Yes. It is effectively there. Yes. It is that polling district there, LC, and our proposal would bring that within the South Shields constituency out of Jarrow. That, first of all, objectively can be justified, but secondly and happily enables each of the revised constituencies to satisfy the quota and I have set out in tabular form on the document I have just given you the numeric effect of our proposals and you will see that they do satisfy the mandatory quota requirement.

There are other instances in the initial proposals of cross constituency wards within the North East and we will produce a table of those with our written submissions. On our analysis, there are six in Durham, five in Gateshead and three in Northumberland.

In effect, we say that the division of that ward enables the achievement of the other two aims which are, if you like, a greater good and the division is not of itself awkward or artificial and we make the point that the whole of the Bede ward was within the South Shields constituency until the last reorganisation in 2005. Whilst of course it does not retain the integrity of the ward, it does respect an existing political boundary, if you like, the polling district.

As far as each of the areas are concerned, can I address you first about the Simonside and Rekendyke ward, which is towards the north and it is shown on the plan I have given you in pink or light red, and it contains 6,324 voters. This has historic and cultural links with South Shields, which it is really impossible to overstate, and it is an integral part of what most local people would consider to be South Shields and that has been so since the early 19th century. In effect, it would be at the very least a linguistic anomaly for there to be a constituency called South Shields which did not contain Simonside and Rekendyke, but it goes much, much deeper than that. My instructions have used the expression that it would take the heart out of the constituency. You have, I think, already received a written submission by one correspondent who has described Simonside and Rekendyke as joined by the hip to South Shields.

Equally, it is not joined in any social or cultural respect with the town of Jarrow which you will see is distinctly to the west and one important natural barrier - well it is not natural, I suppose it is an artificial barrier, but it is a very significant one - is the area of Tyne Dock which is very much between Jarrow and South Shields and Simonside and Rekendyke is on the South Shields side of that industrial block of Tyne Dock.

The Tyne and Wear Metro system carries people directly from Simonside into South Shields and the local bus services integrate the area of Simonside and Rekendyke with the town centre of South Shields. We say that it has a very strong pull indeed to belong to that constituency and we believe there is a very, very strong body of public opinion from all quarters to that effect.

If I can then address you about Boldon Colliery to the south, please, this ward here, that contains 7,358 voters and for over 100 years has been culturally associated with the town of Jarrow and indeed to the extent that my instructions are that miners from the Boldon Colliery, which gave the ward its name, were allowed to join the Jarrow March, whereas miners from the collieries of South Shields were not. We are anxious also that the Commission should not, as it were, be misled by or attach weight to the fact that it shares the name Boldon with the two villages of West Boldon and East Boldon. That is so, but we say it does not reflect any strong social or cultural connection.

You will see also that the town of Boldon Colliery is separated from South Shields by the Newcastle-Sunderland railway line, so it does not have any real connection with South Shields, in any sense of that word, and it does with Jarrow. Again, you have that very telling double point. There is a connection with one place, there is the absence of that with the other. They are not ambiguous situations, we say.

If I can then address you in relation to the Brockley Whins district of Bede ward, that is the triangle which is shown partly in black and partly in blue on the plan. The Bede ward contains five polling districts and one can see that they are designated LB, LC, LD and LE, and I am told there is also an LA, and we are concerned with polling district LC.

You will see that it is to the very west side of the constituency of South Shields as initially proposed. If anything, the proposed revision would straighten the boundary somewhat rather than introduce any additional kink. It contains 1,324 voters and my instructions are that the residents of Brockley Whins are understood by the council to consider themselves citizens of the town of South Shields to the extent that I am told that when Mr David Miliband resigned as MP for South Shields, quite a large number of the residents of this district presented themselves at polling stations wishing to have a vote in the matter, although of course they did not. Again the local bus services integrate the Brockley Whins district with South Shields and the houses of Brockley Whins have South Shields post codes.

You will see that if our proposals were to be acceptable, then each of the constituencies would, as I have said, satisfy the quota and be actually pretty much the same size. The discrepancy, the change in the size of each of them, is less than 300 people and we also make the point that our proposed revisions would upset the status quo in relation to much fewer people. I do not have the exact figure in front of me, I think it is 8,000-odd. We invite you to recognise the attraction of these proposals.

As I said, before I heard the previous gentleman speak, I was going to describe the support for these proposals as widespread and rock solid and I think I can still do so, although I can see that that gentleman's proposals, if analysed in full, would have other designs, as it were, on the Jarrow constituency.

The proposal has the support of the Council of the Borough of South Tyneside and

the proposed revisions which I have put before you were unanimously agreed at a meeting of the council. It is supported also by former ward councillors and you have a letter before you in written submissions from Mr George Smith CBE to that effect. It is supported by the Jarrow Constituency Labour Party, the Jarrow Conservative Association. You have also a letter from a former independent and Liberal Party candidate, Mr David Wood, and you have also a letter from a former member of the European Parliament for, first of all, Tyne and Wear and then the North East European Parliamentary constituency. That is Mr Alan Donnelly MEP.

I think I can say, even in the face of the last speaker's submissions, that there are no rival proposals in relation to the constituency of South Shields, although obviously if one were to alter the Jarrow constituency in other respects, then one might, I suppose, start looking east to see if revisions were necessary or desirable. As far as our proposals are concerned, we believe there to be no direct rivals and of course the position is, I suppose, rendered more simple by the fact that the town of South Shields is bounded on the north by the river Tyne and the estuary of the river Tyne, which is a very wide and obvious obstacle, there is a ferry crossing between South Shields and North Shields and the Tyne Tunnel which passes between Jarrow and Howden, but it is a very obvious barrier, so we do not anticipate any appetite for bridging that gap, as it were, and then to the east, of course, the town of South Shields is bounded by the North Sea, so they are pretty rigid definers, as it were.

As far as the Jarrow constituency is concerned, then the neighbouring proposed constituencies are Gateshead and Sunderland and certainly the council is not aware of any movement to affect those boundaries between constituencies. We present our revisions to you as neatly self contained affecting revisions in only the two constituencies to which they intimately relate and in a manner which both corrects a certain negativity about the initial proposals and has the overwhelming merit of very positive reasons to support them.

Those are my submissions on behalf of the council. Obviously I shall answer any questions that you wish to put to me, Madam.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very well. Thank you very much. I will now turn to the audience and invite any representations seeking clarity on the issues raised. Thank you. Do not forget to state your name and address for the purposes of the record.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much. Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. Can I just clarify, if the only change was that Simonside and Rekendyke went into South Shields, obviously that would cause further knock-on effects in terms of Jarrow, but if in isolation Simonside and Rekendyke came into South Shields as proposed, that constituency would still be within quota? I just want to clarify whether that is correct.

MR MORGAN: The initial proposal places 71,143 voters and Simonside -- sorry, you are asking about the size of Jarrow?

MR PRATT: No. If in isolation Simonside and Rekendyke came back into South Shields as it is, would it still be within quota?

MR MORGAN: It would be 71,143 plus 6,324.

MR PRATT: Which I think is 77,467.

MR MORGAN: Yes.

MR PRATT: Which is within quota.

MR MORGAN: Yes.

MR PRATT: Okay. The other matter of clarification, you mentioned Boldon Colliery and Cleadon and East Boldon, I wonder if you could confirm that those are both currently in the Jarrow constituency, both wards?

MR MORGAN: Yes.

MR PRATT: Yes. You talked about West and East Boldon, could you just explain why there are no links between the two wards through West and East Boldon?

MR MORGAN: Well they constitute two separate villages.

MR PRATT: East Boldon is in one of the wards and West Boldon is in the other. Is that right?

MR MORGAN: Yes. Yes.

MR PRATT: I wonder, on the detailed map the Commission supplied, you would agree whether West Boldon was divided, it may be just where the name is, but it seems to me West Boldon is divided between the two.

MR MORGAN: The division is where it is. The bulk of that block of development, which is the village of West Boldon, is on one side, but that division, as it were, is what it is.

MR PRATT: Okay. I am grateful to you. Finally, although as you understand it there is not really much contention from you about the South Shields constituency, would you clarify that that is not the case in terms of the Jarrow constituency particularly because of an orphan ward of Washington within that constituency?

MR MORGAN: I am not aware of that and I do not believe those instructing me are either.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any further persons seeking clarification? That seems to complete that. (Interjection) Sorry, if you would not

mind, if you do want to make a presentation and submission you are very welcome to, unless you want to seek clarification from your speaker. If you do want to have something to say, please feel free. Mr Morgan, were you going to clarify something there?

MR MORGAN: Madam, yes. The point which Mr Harding seems to make, which is a very good one, is that if you simply transferred Simonside and Rekendyke into South Shields, then whilst South Shields would still be within quota, Jarrow would not.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is that what you were seeking clarification for earlier?

MR PRATT: Madam, my clarification was entirely South Shields on its own would be right; obviously it would have consequential knock-on effects, as I made clear, in terms of Jarrow.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: For the record you are Roger Pratt?

MR PRATT: Yes, Roger Pratt, for the Conservative Party. All I was seeking clarification of is obviously there would be knock-on effects in terms of Jarrow and other constituencies, but technically South Shields would be correct in size with Simonside and Rekendyke moving into South Shields.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have clarified the impact on Jarrow.

MR MORGAN: Yes, we accept that. I suppose it is inherent in our proposal that you have to look at the two constituencies together and it makes sense to do so because they form part of the same metropolitan borough. The beauty of our proposal is that it looks at the two together, which is sensible, and it does not need to look any further afield to make itself good.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very well. Thank you very much. Have you completed your presentation then?

MR MORGAN: Yes, thank you, madam.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. There are no further points being sought here. That completes that presentation. Thank you very much, Mr Morgan.

MR MORGAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: According to our schedule our next presenter is available, Lord Beith, and if you are content, would you like to come forward now? Thank you.

LORD BEITH: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Alan Beith, I am a member of the House of Lords and a resident of Berwick-upon-Tweed. I retired as Member of Parliament for the Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency in May 2015 after nearly 42 years representing what is currently the third largest constituency in England. During the whole of that time there was only one change to the constituency boundary, in fact, during the whole preceding century, I think, which brought it closer to Morpeth. It is because of my experience of how the constituency functions and of the communities within it that I am making this personal representation on the Commission's initial proposals for Northumberland.

In summary, my view is that the proposal for a Berwick and Ashington constituency ignores and disrupts natural community ties and should be replaced with a constituency which follows the natural links between Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth and that Rothbury should retain its close links with Alnwick and Morpeth by inclusion in this grouping. I have not so far met anyone in these areas who thinks that Ashington should be linked with Berwick rather than with neighbours in Blyth and Bedlington.

Alternative proposals have now been put to you to achieve the natural grouping of Berwick, Alnwick, Rothbury and Morpeth, including those put forward by Lord Shipley on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Party and proposals put forward by the Conservative Party which achieve the same objective in a slightly different way. Such a grouping is clearly achievable within the statutory provisions governing the review and such a grouping would satisfy more effectively the Commission's guidelines.

It is relevant to note that in the last boundary review the Commission saw the natural links as being best reflected in the Berwick and Morpeth constituency not including Ashington and that in its final proposals it recognised that Rothbury should be included rather than being attached to Hexham.

I recognise that the current review is required by law to work within a narrower band of total electorate per constituency, but this is practicable with the inclusion in a Berwick and Morpeth constituency of communities which are close to Morpeth and relate naturally to it as their local town.

The rules governing the review refer specifically to the need to take account of local ties which will be broken by changes in constituency. There are far stronger ties linking Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth with each other than link them with Ashington. All three are centres for the rural areas of Northumberland which Ashington is not. All three are market towns linked to each other by the A1 road which they have a shared interest in improving. All three are on the East Coast Main railway line and are served by stations on it. Regular, direct bus services connect the three towns, but there are no direct bus services between Berwick and Ashington and the road links are indirect and slow.

There is no direct public transport between Morpeth and Hexham and the only

practicable route by car is by the A1 and A69 via Newcastle which passes through two other proposed constituencies. Such a situation is specifically discouraged in paragraph 35 of the Commission's background guide to the review.

It also applies under the Commission's proposals to anyone travelling from Wooler to Ashington who would have to travel through the Hexham constituency because placing Rothbury in the Hexham constituency brings much of the A697 Wooler to Morpeth Road into the Hexham constituency as well.

The existing ties between the southern part of the current Berwick constituency and the market town of Morpeth are particularly strong. It is the main service and commercial centre for Rothbury and for places such as Felton and Olgham as well as the town of Amble and the areas of Hadston and Ellington. As Member of Parliament for these communities, I often had to take up issues arising in Morpeth because they were closely affected by them.

Very strong existing ties will be broken by the Commission's proposals for the Rothbury area which has been in the same constituency as Berwick and Alnwick for over 120 years without interruption. All kinds of links, including schools and social activities, are with Morpeth and Alnwick, not with Hexham and not with Ashington, which is seen as distant and different. The high school for the Rothbury area children is in Morpeth, but elsewhere in the ward, the Rothbury ward, the villages of Whittingham and Powburn their high school is in Alnwick with Wooler being their middle school, so the links are obvious.

From the standpoint of people in the Berwick, Rothbury, Alnwick and Morpeth areas, it seems clear that the Commission's initial proposal should be replaced by one which retains those natural links. I have no reason to think that many people in Ashington would see the point of a link with Berwick when their area has such a strong common heritage with Blyth and Bedlington. That area is normally referred to as south-east Northumberland as distinct from rural Northumberland.

The Commission's proposal to link Morpeth and Rothbury with Hexham presents a further problem. As well as the complete lack of public transport and direct road links, this combination creates an excessively large Hexham constituency, probably making what is now the second largest English constituency into the largest by area. In its argument for the Berwick-Ashington grouping, the Commission says at paragraph 25 that:

"Due to the large geographical area of the county, the alternatives we considered would not be practicable".

Practical alternatives have now been put forward which, by linking Morpeth and Rothbury with Berwick, avoid creating such a massively enlarged Hexham constituency, whilst following existing transport and social ties much more closely.

In paragraph 12 of its document, the Commission says:

“What we do not have is evidence and intelligence of how our proposals reflect or break local community ties”.

It is particularly on that point that you are seeking evidence through this process. My contention is that many local community ties are not at all reflected in the original proposals, they are comprehensively broken. They would be properly reflected by a constituency which combined Berwick, Alnwick, Rothbury and Morpeth and neighbouring communities and did not include Ashington.

Finally, when considering the name of the constituency, I bear in mind that there has been a Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency for the whole of the five centuries during which Berwick has been continuously in England. I would therefore welcome a name which recognised this such as Berwick and Morpeth or Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very good. Thank you very much for that. I will invite any persons who wish to seek clarification on the points that were made. Okay, there does not appear to be so. Thank you again.

LORD BEITH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next scheduled person is Andy Blanchflower. If you would like to come forward. Thank you.

MR BLANCHFLOWER: Good morning. I am Andy Blanchflower representing the North East England Green Party.

Yesterday we presented our overall case for North East England and today I would like to bring to you representations made from those of our local parties that are in the north of the region and then I expect to attend the hearing in Darlington on Thursday to speak about the representations we have had from members who live in the south of the region.

I have had these representations, all follow meetings of the various local parties to which all local members were invited. I have a representation from Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Green Party. It says the current Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency is characterised by being a group of market towns and rural villages bounded by the North Sea, by the Scottish border and by the Cheviot Hills and it is characterised and deeply influenced by its trading and cultural relationship and family ties across the Scottish border. It is a cohesive and identifiable community. There is a commonality of interest.

The Boundary Commission for England’s proposal to include Ashington within the constituency carries no logic. There are no cultural ties, no common interests, no common problems and very few transport ties between Ashington and the remainder of the proposed constituency. As an urban area and former mining community,

Ashington has a radically different heritage to the current constituency. It is umbilically attached to Tyneside facing away from central and north Northumberland.

Our preference would be for retention of the constituency within its current boundaries. A change of name to North and Central Northumberland would better reflect the geographical and cultural reality and would be more inclusive. If that status quo is not an option and if an increase in population of the constituency is required, our preference would be to retain the whole of the existing community plus the town of Morpeth. As another market town, Morpeth is natural focus for shopping and services, the many rural parishes in the southern end of the existing constituency.

I also have this representation from Wansbeck Green Party. At last night's meeting of Wansbeck Green Party it was agreed that we wanted to make some comments about the proposed changes by the Boundary Commission. One, the proposed Hexham constituency is geographically too big and there are no direct road, rail or bus links between Hexham and those areas which now make up Wansbeck and maybe put into the proposed Hexham constituency. In fact, Morpeth shares more with Berwick than Ashington, having a common interest in the rural economy of Northumberland. Berwick and Morpeth are linked by the East Coast Railway and A1. Ashington has no connection with Berwick and very little in common.

I have this representation from Tynedale Green Party. Tynedale Green Party is composed of the existing boundary of the Hexham constituency. At a meeting of Tynedale Green Party yesterday, Saturday, 9 October, the issue of the Boundary Commission proposed changes was raised. As I stated during your workshop at the Green Party regional conference, if the changes go ahead, then Stannington will be moving into Newcastle constituency. On a personal note I am happy to work with any Green Party I find myself in. However, after some discussion the members of Tynedale party felt that gaining Longhorsley, Morpeth, Kirkhill and Morpeth North, Morpeth, Stobhill, Pegswood and Rothbury substantially increases the size of the constituency and that any member of Parliament elected to serve this large rural area would find it very difficult to be available, accessible, to his or her electorate.

Unlike a geographically smaller urban constituency, where a Member of Parliament might have a single office point of contact and immerse themselves in the local community to understand the key issues affecting their electorate, an MP for Hexham and Morpeth would need to spend a great deal of their time travelling around this huge area in order to ensure that they are seen to be part and parcel of the community. A cursory glance at the map of the proposed constituency demonstrates how difficult that would prove to be and put him or her at a disadvantage compared to other members of Parliament.

We feel that an objection to the proposal would be under the section "Special geographical considerations including in particular the size, happening and accessibility of a constituency". We hope that this makes clear Tynedale Green Party's views and helps with any feedback the regional party is preparing for the

public consultation events.

I have representation here from Newcastle upon Tyne Green Party. At the Newcastle members meeting on 12 October, the Parliamentary boundary review for Newcastle was looked at. Members thought the process had major flaws and the following points were made. There were three points made by members. Suggestion that the Boundary Commission for England should use polling districts rather than sticking rigidly to ward boundaries. Look at centres which keep things together rather than imposed demarcation lines, eg splitting high streets, splitting communities like Gosforth. The narrow five per cent variation figure contributes to the drawing of arbitrary boundaries. Then, leaving out a bit about the democratic deficit, the point we have already made, and unfortunately it is not something that you can consider, then I go on to say the name for the new constituency, Blaydon, was commented on as not appropriate as it includes five Newcastle city wards.

Then North Tyneside Green Party say North Tyneside has not responded because our constituency boundaries have not changed. However, we request that the name of the North Tyneside constituency be changed to Wallsend and Killingworth, which makes sense because of the confusion with the North Tyneside local authority.

Gateshead Green Party say for the Blaydon constituency, the issue is the new constituency will cross a river to join with six wards in the west of Newcastle. We had a discussion about the conflicts and purpose of a more diverse cultural grouping, particularly as it crosses a strong geographical boundary; the river Tyne. They then say we have to look at the impact on a regional basis.

South Tyneside Green Party say, 30 October, following a meeting today, South Tyneside's response is as follows. The South Tyneside Green Party proposes that: one, Boldon Colliery ward remain within the Jarrow constituency; two, Simonside and Rekendyke ward remain within the South Shields constituency; three, in order to ensure that South Shields constituency meets the required 7,051 electors, in order to ensure that polling district LC, Brockley Whins, is moved into the South Shields constituency for Parliamentary elections; four, this is because this alternative configuration would better take into account patterns of strong local ties which residents have within the affected areas and would better reflect the real communities and geographies. The alternative arrangements proposed above, relate entirely towards within the borough of South Tyneside while balancing constituency electorates.

Sunderland Green Party say the main points of Sunderland's response to the Boundary Commission, Hetton ward has no links to Durham and seems to have been added purely to make up the numbers. That is point one. Point two is, Washington has always considered itself as a distinct community, it is now within the City of Sunderland, but still considers itself a distinct community. The splitting of its wards into three constituencies will not go down well with the residents. Also to have no constituency which includes the name of Washington will anger the community.

Three, the moving of one ward, Birtley, from Gateshead to Sunderland West and one ward, Washington West, from Sunderland West to Gateshead, makes no sense at all. Proposals: 1.1 reverse the Commission's proposals outlined in comment three, thus creating two more constituencies wholly within a single authority; 2. create a constituency that contains all five Washington wards based around Sunderland West; 3. rename Sunderland West as Washington and Sunderland west.

The final representation I have for you today is from County Durham Green Party and they are concerned that they are working, as we said yesterday, on the proposals which are virtually complete which will be submitted for open comment, as we said yesterday, by the end of this week. Their proposals avoid large parts of Sunderland and Gateshead being incorporated into constituencies which are largely County Durham. In particular, the Boundary Commission's proposal for a ward from Sunderland included in the City of Durham constituency and Gateshead divided between five constituencies is not acceptable. In our proposal, instead Gateshead would be divided into two constituencies, one of which would include Burnopfield and Dipton ward to make up the numbers. Burnopfield and Dipton wards are in County Durham, of course. Sunderland is unaffected. We think that this links more closely Gateshead than putting wards like Lamesley into County Durham.

Our proposal does include the two wards from Hartlepool, which are in your proposals already, but your constituency sprawls this will be from Newton Aycliffe to the coast. Now that will be Sedgefield, your proposed Sedgefield and Spennymoor constituency. Whilst splitting Hartlepool like this is not ideal, it is mathematically necessary. However, in our proposal they are included in a coastal constituency reaching up to Seaham. The City of Durham constituency we propose would no longer include the town of Tow Law, which is far from Durham City. A disadvantage is that it would include Sacriston, which has historic links to Chester-le-Street, although it is not as far from Durham.

That completes the commentary on the representation from local parties. I know that the Commission has a paper copy of that, I will be sending you electronic copies as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very good. Thank you for confirming that. Can you remain there to see if there is any clarification sought from the audience? Mr Pratt, yes.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. You have talked about the proposed Green Party Easington and Hart constituency which is the one that includes two wards from Hartlepool, De Bruce and Hart. I wonder if you could confirm that that constituency, proposed constituency, rather like what we have talked about yesterday in terms of Newcastle upon Tyne North and Cramlington, has one ward that is detached from all the others, that is the Sherborne ward? Would you clarify whether that is right?

MR BLANCHFLOWER: We propose to have in County Durham wards that are

contiguous to one another. Because we are a bottom-up party, we spent probably a bit too long, an honest admission, in consulting with our members, six weeks, and that was left us very short of time to actually put in or to make a perfect fit of everything. Can I assure you that for county Durham that we will submit our proposals by the end of the week, that all our proposed constituencies will link geographically, be next door to one another?

MR PRATT: In effect you are saying you will be putting in a revised proposal as far as Easington and Hart is concerned?

MR BLANCHFLOWER: Yes.

MR PRATT: Thank you.

MR HINDLE: Thank you. Frank Hindle, Liberal Democrat Party. You have said today that in the north of the region, in the Berwick constituency, you think the existing constituency should be enlarged with the addition of the area around Morpeth. That would imply that you wish to see Rothbury ward, which is not in the current constituency, retained with the new Berwick constituency. Yesterday your submission, if I recall correctly, had it in the Tynedale and Ponteland constituency. Could you just clarify that, please?

MR BLANCHFLOWER: Excuse me, I will just get my up-to-date papers on that. (After a pause) Frank, what you say is correct at the time being, but I appreciate your point and I have a lot of sympathy with it and I therefore go back to the local parties and submit and see if they want to accommodate that because I have a lot of sympathy with the representations made of Rothbury having more of a link with Alnwick, Berwick and Morpeth. What I will say is that we will submit our final proposal by the end of the week, as I have said.

MR HINDLE: If I could confirm, you have said your local party in Berwick wishes to retain the existing constituency including Rothbury?

MR BLANCHFLOWER: No, they do not say that. That is not what I have read out today in here, but I think you make a strong point so I will have to refer it to them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think it appears that you are looking for further clarification on the definitiveness of where they stand on the issue.

MR BLANCHFLOWER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But it is not available this morning. I think you are going to have to require some further insight and clarification yourself.

MR BLANCHFLOWER: That is right, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That will have to be provided within the

scope of some further submissions you are making, so should that help the situation?

MR HINDLE: Thank you.

MR BLANCHFLOWER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Anybody else seeking further points for clarification? Thank you very much for that, Mr Blanchflower, for that. Thank you.

MR BLANCHFLOWER: Thank you also the Commission and everyone for listening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. We will have a break now until five past 11. Thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 11.05 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning again. We will resume the hearing this morning. The next scheduled person to speak is Edward Malcolm. If you would like to come forward. Thank you. If you would not mind, state your name and address for the purposes of the record, please.

CLLR MALCOLM: Yes, my name is Cllr Edward Malcolm 59 Simonside Hall, that is South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE34 9DD.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

CLLR MALCOLM: (Simonside and Rekendyke) Thank you, Madam. I welcome the opportunity to participate in this public hearing regarding the Boundary Commission's proposals in respect of the review of the Parliamentary constituencies. I wish to address the Boundary Commission's proposals for the South Shields Parliamentary constituency and in particular the initial proposals to move the Simonside and Rekendyke ward from South Shields constituency into the Jarrow constituency.

As a councillor for the Simonside and Rekendyke ward, I can say that the initial proposals have met with incredulity by my constituents. South Shields people find it difficult to see how the initial proposals show no knowledge or understanding of the social and cohesion of the areas that the initial proposals cut through.

Now I appreciate that the proposals are based on a mathematical formula and that because of that the Commission have little or no knowledge of the area that they are dealing with.

A brief look at the history surrounding the ward will be a testimonial to the deep commitment that my constituents have to the South Shields constituency. Simonside and Rekendyke contain some of the oldest parts of South Shields.

Holborn riverside district of Rekendyke was first included in the new Parliamentary borough of South Shields following the Great Reform Act of 1832.

Janice Blower, who has chronicled life in South Shields for the past 42 years, latterly as a journalist on the *Shields Gazette*, which is Britain's oldest provincial evening newspaper, has commented:

"It is ludicrous that a whole area of South Shields, namely High Shields, and it derives its name from the old High Staiths which is integral to our history of mining and shipping coal, should be carved up and a greater part of it along with Laygate deposited in Jarrow".

We are talking about communities which over the centuries have shaped South Shields as we know it today. South Shields has a history of good community relations. The Yemeni community dates back to the beginning of the 20th century when South Shields was a massive merchant port. Many of the Yemeni seamen settled in Laygate, which is in the Rekendyke part of the ward. The leaders of the communities have written to the Commission supporting South Tyneside Council's alternative proposal. Tyne Dock is another area with a rich history attached to South Shields.

If these initial proposals were adopted it would mean that the Jarrow constituency would stretch almost to the South Shields market place which contains the South Shields old town hall built in 1768. As the chairman of the South Shields Conservative Party has commented regarding proposals, they are trying to rip the heartland out of South Shields.

Simonside and Rekendyke is intrinsically part of South Shields. There has been a massive response to the petition which local councillors have initiated objecting to the Boundary Commission's initial proposals and we will be presenting that petition to the Commission in due course.

That is why I, along with my two ward colleagues, are supporting South Tyneside Council's response to the Boundary Commission's proposals that the Boldon Colliery ward, which has been part of the Jarrow constituency for over 100 years and has no historical or geographical connection to South Shields, remains in the Jarrow constituency.

Cleadon and East Boldon is transferred to South Shields, the South Shields and Rekendyke ward remains within the South Shields constituency, and that in order to ensure that South Shields has over 70,000 electors, the polling district LC, known as Brockley Whins, is moved from the Bede ward into the South Shields constituency for Parliamentary elections. The district known as Brockley Whins has a South Shields postal address and residents consider themselves to be South Shields people and for many years Brockley Whins was part of the South Shields constituency being part of the Simonside ward.

Anecdotally, during the Parliamentary by-election, which was held in 2013, residents from Brockley Whins were going to the ballot station at the Monkton school in the Simonside and Rekendyke ward demanding a ballot paper to vote because they said they lived in South Shields and a new parliamentary by-election was being held. Unfortunately, they had to be turned away because they are part of the Jarrow constituency at the present time.

The alternative proposals have cross-party backing, they have the support of the South Shields Conservative Party and the Jarrow Conservative Party. Jarrow constituency Labour Party also agree with the counter-proposals.

I believe that the alternative proposals would address local community concerns and that the Commission will find that there is support amongst my constituents and other stakeholders for the alternative proposals which have been put forward by South Tyneside Council. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that presentation, it was very useful. Would there be anybody looking to seek clarification on the points that were raised? Okay, that appears to complete then your submission. Thank you again for taking your time.

CLLR MALCOLM: Thank you, Madam.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The next person listed is Edward Russell. If you would be happy to come forward. Thank you. Just to remind you to state your name and address, please.

MR RUSSELL: Edward Russell, 44 Caldwell Place, South Shields NE34 0SA. I am also chairman of the South Shields Conservative Association, but I am not here representing the Conservative Association, I am here simply representing myself as a concerned citizen, for want of a better word, with the decision to try to move Rekendyke and Simonside out of South Shields into Jarrow.

I myself lived in the Rekendyke ward up until 1950 when I still remained in South Shields. I lived at that time, my parents had an off-licence and general dealer shop at the corner of Reed Street and Alice Street which are right in the centre of the ward.

As Cllr Malcolm has said, the ward consisted at one time entirely of most of the docks along the riverside. In the centre of the ward there is the mosque which I suppose indicates our unity with the Aden and Yemeni people.

There is in High Shields the old High Shields Station which is now demolished, but closely to that is the Holy Trinity church which was built in 1833 which was a year after the Great Reform Act and for four years before Queen Victoria came to the throne. The site is now cleared, but people still go there to lay wreaths for their relatives who, in fact, were buried in the site.

Also in the ward is the old South Shields Corporation transport depot which is now obviously nothing to do with South Shields Council, but shows the connection with South Shields. Also the Simonside part of the ward, although that is fairly modern, built in general after 1950, many, many people there were, in fact, moved out of the centre of South Shields during the slum clearances of the 1950s.

I appreciate the Commission have a problem that they can only take the population of the constituencies at the time as laid down in their instructions. However, since then, considerable building has gone on in South Shields in Rekendyke ward itself, in Whitburn ward on the old rifle ranges, in Biddick Hall ward close to the railway line and in the new area of South Shields where there is a very large area being built, so that the 900 or so constituents will definitely be there now, even though they were not there at the time of the date laid down.

I now come to the suggestion that Boldon Colliery should be brought into South Shields. Boldon Colliery has been in Jarrow, has always been in Jarrow. It is separated from South Shields by the main Newcastle to Sunderland railway line, which is now mainly the Metro line, but was at one time the main line from Newcastle to Leeds under the old LNER. I go back a bit. Also the railway line separated -- there is also the burn, which is a stream which flows and becomes a contributory to the river Don at Jarrow which itself then becomes a contributory of the Tyne.

There is no connection whatsoever, I am afraid, between South Shields and Boldon Colliery. There is no direct access by road from Boldon Colliery to South Shields. The only way you can get through is to go along from Boldon Colliery through Cleadon and East Boldon ward and through a level crossing there at Boldon crossing and that takes you into Whiteleas Road. There is no direct route, as I say, from Biddick Hall into South Shields, although there is a direct route from Biddick Hall to Jarrow, so that would be. Anyway on this, although I am the chairman of the South Shields Conservatives, I am here supporting the Labour Party and the Green party proposals. I understand there are some problems with moving LC ward to South Shields, but I am sure that with all the power, we fly to the moon, surely there must be some way we can do something. What we cannot do is get to Boldon Colliery from South Shields without flying. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you could bear with us for a moment there, sir, in order that we can allow some points of clarification if they are required.

MR RUSSELL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anybody have any points they are seeking clarification on? No. It appears everybody is satisfied. Thank you very much for that presentation.

MR RUSSELL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have now completed our schedule to date. Is there anybody else in the audience who would like to come forward and make a presentation or have any submissions to make?

In line with that then, we will resume at half past 12 for an update and see if any other persons have arrived and wish to take the opportunity to make a presentation. Thank you.

After a short break

Time Noted: 1.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, everyone. We do not appear to have any further participants in the process at the moment, so in light of that, we will resume our hearings at 2 pm. Thank you

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon and welcome back to the afternoon sessions for the public hearings into the Newcastle area concerning the Boundary Commission's proposals to changes in the constituency boundaries.

As a brief reintroduction, I am Eileen Brady and I am chairing today's proceedings as lead commissioner assisted in the task by Adele Bomgard who is in the front row there. We are both independently appointed to hear the views expressed and assess them and make recommendations if appropriate.

The proceedings are recorded for the purposes of record keeping and we will just proceed now with the afternoon's list. Thank you.

The first person who is scheduled to be heard is Keith Cardigan. You are very welcome. Just to remind you that you must outline your name and address for the purposes of the record.

MR CARDIGAN: Right. Can everyone hear me okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR CARDIGAN: I assume this thing works. My name is Keith Cardigan, I live at 1 Grange Terrace in Berwick-upon-Tweed and obviously my interest is the Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency. I will start off as I have got it written out because otherwise I will lose my place.

The boundary Commission, as we know, is made up of an August body of intellectually and astute individuals who are independent in their views. We should, by and large, accept their recommendations as fair and unbiased and think we all do,

but history has taught us that lines drawn on a map do not always give us satisfactory results and I can quote Kashmir, Korea or indeed Iraq, and from a personal point of view I am familiar with the Pakistan-India border. I know it would be a little melodramatic to compare these places with Berwick-upon-Tweed, however, that is what comes from just drawing lines with not taking a view of what is involved.

I have looked very closely at the proposed new constituency of Berwick-upon-Tweed and considered the ramifications. In some respects the Commission's job is made a little easier by the fact there are two that borders cannot be moved, that is the Tweed and the north sea, so if there was any expansion of the constituency it either has to be south or west or south-west.

Basically what has happened to Berwick-upon-Tweed is the commissioners have added on or bolted on Wansbeck or parts of Wansbeck, namely Ashington, to give that magic figure which is, I think, between 71 and 78,000 for the electoral register.

There are divides between the rural and the semi-rural character of mid and north Northumberland and Ashington in the south. It may well be 16 miles between Norham and North Seaton, but the cultural divide is vast.

Ashington has a culture of its own and indeed it has its own dialect. The people there who emerged from 150 years of mining and allied manufacturing, this transition for Ashington has not been easy, but it has created a sort of siege mentality in which they are suspicious of outsiders. This has evolved into a credo which is not shared by the rural community in the existing Berwick-upon-Tweed constituency

The people of Ashington are rightly proud of their heritage, but they do not want to absorb and deal with the problems of a farming industry, they have bigger problems of their own and deal with them as well as they can. The rural folk feel the same, but from a different perspective.

The new Member of Parliament of the proposed constituency could never ever hope to manage effectively the diverse issues arising from either culture. He or she would have to choose. In such a case, it is likely that Ashington would win and the populace of Wooler, Norham and Lindisfarne would therefore feel disenfranchised.

I have spoken to many people in Berwick and the surrounding area as well as friends in Ashington. I have yet to find one person who would support the new proposals as they stand, which is a shame because one always likes a good argument.

The cultural differences are obvious and although historically must be taken into account, to impose random lines on a map may suit the arithmetic, but would cause resentment in both communities. It would indeed be like mixing oil and water, so to speak.

In Berwick itself we have specific problems. For instance, a large proportion of the

county council spending tends to be Ashington centric. No matter how hard we try, funding and emphasis appears to drift south to the south-east of the county, quite natural, some may say, because of the specific needs post mining and manufacturing, the fear is that we in Berwick-upon-Tweed would be second in the queue at all times. I find it totally inconceivable that the new Member of Parliament could encompass all that would be thrown at him or her. The complexity of post Brexit farming problems, for instance, would tax the most educated of man or woman. There are things like what do we do about farming subsidies? What do we do about rules and regulations? It is going to become so, so complex in the next five to ten years as we extract ourselves from the European experiment.

There has to be a common thread running through the wool and fabric of the constituency. To this end we need to consider Berwick-upon-Tweed as a rural entity. This way there will be a commonality of issues with precedence to make more simple the resolutions of the problems arising. The demographic of the existing constituency of Berwick-upon-Tweed must be taken into account so that people themselves can perceive the boundary changes to be fair and well considered. That for me is the crux of it, it is so, so important that that happens.

My own thoughts - and that of many I have spoken to - would be to exclude Wansbeck, but to include the ancient market town of Morpeth and diverse communities to reach the target electorate, I am thinking particularly, I will be honest, of Bellingham. This would seem to be a much more acceptable solution than one that would suit adjacent constituencies.

There are challenges ahead as a result of Brexit. I believe we need to give our members of Parliament a fair chance to address these. The people of Wansbeck expect their MP to be aware of their difficulties in detail on jobs, services, facilities and so on. The electorate of the rural community have different outlooks and aspirations. Shortly we are to lose 50 members of Parliament, that is going to make it much more difficult for the remaining 600. Give them a chance. Please reconsider these lines on the map.

Berwick-upon-Tweed has returned a number of Parliaments since Henry VIII created the constituency in 1510. I for one would like to retain the culture and character of the area for another 500 years. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that presentation. Would you mind waiting a little to check? Would you mind returning, hang on, in case somebody would like clarification on any of your suggestions?

MR CARDIGAN: Absolutely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. The usual formality that we are following, Mr Cardigan

MR CARDIGAN: No problem.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is there anybody present who would like to clarify any of the points that Mr Cardigan raised? No. Okay, it does not appear there are any, but we have to go through that, I am afraid.

MR CARDIGAN: Absolutely. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That was very useful. Thank you. The next person scheduled who is seeking to make a representation is Mr Richard Wearmouth. Come forward and just announce your details.

MR WEARMOUTH: Right. Okay. Ready. My name is Richard Wearmouth, I live in Morpeth in the Wansbeck constituency as it stands at the moment. Is that the extent of the address details you need?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Full address.

MR WEARMOUTH: Full address is Barmoor Farmhouse, Morpeth, and the post code is NE61 6LB.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MR WEARMOUTH: Okay. I guess I am one of these rare people that actually set my alarm clock so that I could see the boundary changes when they came through. I was surprised when the system went down and I had to wait until the next morning.

In terms of how our area is impacted on, first if I could dwell on one of the ways that Northumberland breaks down on the map.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you like to have the map illustrated, and using the pen to highlight would be useful?

MR WEARMOUTH: I do not know that I need the pen. I think that we probably can manage without that. What you have at the moment is essentially three constituencies that fall within Northumberland. However, you have one ward which sits across into, I think, Newcastle North West or somewhere like that, which is in the St Mary's and Stannington part of this map. Yes, it is Ponteland East and Stannington.

You may correct me if you feel I am wrong, but I think that the electorate contained within Northumberland is such that we could have had three constituencies wholly contained within Northumberland. That makes an awful lot of sense, I think, for anybody that is seeking to represent constituents, they are not going across two councils, as would be the case for the Newcastle North West seat. I think that there would be - and I am sure that you have heard already from some people - an element of concern about how easy it would be for someone who is going to be very

much Newcastle focussed in that seat to be able to adequately represent people in Stannington, parts of Ponteland and in Northumberland. It would become very much an after-thought and I think that that probably is a mistake that can be relatively easily rectified.

When it came to looking at the map when we got the chance I was surprised from a Wansbeck perspective to see Ashington and that sort of coastal strip in the south east contained within a Berwick and Ashington seat. Ashington has very little really in common with the communities that make up the rest of that constituency as it is drawn at the moment. It is a sort of post-industrial area, it has a demographic that it shares much more with the other towns that are currently in our constituency in Wansbeck, of Newbiggin, of Bedlington, of Blyth, and other communities as you go down the coast there.

Ashington and Blyth themselves have probably less in common with Cramlington, which is very much a sort of dormitory town for Newcastle, and so I think that there could be something looked at there, perhaps where there is a constituency that instead of the current boundary that you have here that took Ashington into Blyth and Bedlington probably with Newbiggin and Seaton Delaval and maybe Cramlington moved across into Hexham. That would trigger Morpeth moving into the Berwick constituency to become Berwick, Morpeth and Alnwick, which was something that was along the lines of what was considered in the last boundary review, as I recall.

That is the sort of logic in terms of how the south-east corner works and I think if you had a constituency like that with Ashington, Blyth, Newbiggin and those areas that were more reliant on coal, on ship building and the harbour at Blyth, I think that that would be a much more straightforward place for someone to deal with as an MP. The constituency team would have an awful lot more of a straightforward task there, as was mentioned a little bit earlier by Keith Cardigan, I think, with dealing with farming issues and dealing with trying to get urban or semi-urban regeneration going in Ashington, which is really what Ashington needs. It needs someone who can give it that full attention.

When you see schemes that are coming forward at the moment from the council and from government, it is getting the connectivity of Ashington and Blyth into the urban fringe and the urban belt further south into Tyneside, they really need that connectivity and they need a champion who can provide that from that emphasis that that needs to be done.

At the moment, I referred to it a second ago, there is an attempt to bring the rail line, rail services, passenger services, back into Ashington into Blyth, they might come through Morpeth or they may go south in an alternate direction through Seaton Delaval and so on, but that sort of thing is what is going to deliver the proper regeneration that you would see in our south-east corner there. I think that that is what people in Ashington really would appreciate. I have friends, plenty of friends, across the constituency and they all acted with varying degrees of horror at the idea of being bolted onto Berwick as an after-thought. The same in a different political

climate, I am sure Berwick, as we heard a moment ago, feels much the same. There is always going to be a community which feels a little bit out on a limb with that.

If we looked at an alternative mapping which probably looked more to what you did have in the previous review that was undertaken some time ago, you had the seat of Morpeth, of Alnwick and of Berwick, and also you would probably have Rothbury in that, I think, in order to make the numbers work and you could add to an extent Amble, another of the larger ones, Wooler, to that. Morpeth is perhaps a gateway town to Northumberland and historic Northumberland and then the tourist destination that this part of our county is. It links with, to an extent, the national park, with places like Crag Side, where people are visiting on a regular basis there, or ancient towns and market towns and that is their heritage and they have an awful lot again in common. Someone from a constituency basis representing those communities I think would have a significantly easier time because the people that they were dealing with would have the same sorts of problems as much with the way that those towns are served.

The other thing which is notable as well - and it has often been talked about - the dualling of the A1, which is something which should be being delivered, I think, during the course of this Parliament. The A1 runs through those towns, through Morpeth, through Alnwick, into Berwick and across the border. You also have the main railway line, the East Coast main line, which runs through that same area, so when it comes for an MP lobbying for funding, for these artery roads, for the services, for the main line, I think that it makes an awful lot of sense if it is one person that is able to champion that north of Newcastle because that is something that is quite important to those communities.

In terms of other things, I do not know that there is necessarily much else I would want to address. I think the only other thing I would say that surprised me with the map that was provided this time round was the number of council wards that changed into what you could say would be different blocks. Obviously we are starting from scratch and there is not an incumbent MP per se, but in some respects Wansbeck is the constituency that goes, you have a hub of Blyth Valley that is remaining, you have a big chunk of Berwick that then has other bits bolted onto it and the same for Hexham no matter how it would work, if you contained it within the unitary authorities boundaries, and so I think what I have outlined, which would be Morpeth, Pegswood and maybe I think it would be Choppington and Bothal into Berwick, provides a limited number of changes.

Pegswood as a ward is actually already partially in Berwick constituency as it stands at the moment, the boundary crosses Pegswood halfway across. You have moved, as things stand, I think Longhorsley into Hexham, which is the big sort of C/U shape that surrounds Morpeth and Pegswood, you can see it there. Again that is a change that to my mind does not really need to happen. These people have an MP and a constituency that they identify with already, it just seems like you have an awful lot changing there and the same for Hexham really, I did not really understand, as I have already touched on, this change around Stannington and Ponteland East, why

Ponteland East would become detached from Ponteland North and some of the other wards that make up that community. They all look to Ponteland as their service provider for schools, for shopping and so on, and so I think that there is plenty that can be done there to just tidy up that solution.

Obviously that will potentially change how things might shape up in Newcastle North West, maybe you need to change boundaries to accommodate for that, I am sure that there will have been people from those communities who would have a view on that.

I think that is probably it. I do not think I have anything additional to say. I will probably put some written representations in in due course.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That would be useful, if you could.

MR WEARMOUTH: Yes, absolutely. Just to make it a little bit more clear.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, it is clear enough what you have said, but it will be useful as well if you could have time to do that.

MR WEARMOUTH: Absolutely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Anything additional would be appreciated.

MR WEARMOUTH: Absolutely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If that completes and finishes what you want to say, I would like to ask the audience if they would like to seek clarification. Would anybody like to clarify any of the points raised? No.

MR CARDIGAN: (Off microphone).

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just announce your name there, just reintroduce yourself, please.

MR CARDIGAN: Sorry.

MR WEARMOUTH: How could we forget Keith.

MR CARDIGAN: I am sure ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you use the mic.

MR HARTLEY: We need to use the mic.

MR CARDIGAN: We have a problem in Berwick inasmuch as we have employment,

but we cannot bring in a lot of industry because there are not that many people live there. You need a population to obviously supply the labour for the industry, so that is not going to change. However, with Wansbeck and Blyth Valley you do have a serious problem there with unemployment and it would seem fair to me to have one MP who could concentrate on that and bring in industry, reducing unemployment and concentrate on that specifically and not having to bother with the rest of Northumberland. I think it was a very salient point.

MR WEARMOUTH: I agree completely with that. I think that it was sort of borne out in what I was saying which was that the south-east does have its particular issues, it is around regeneration, but it is a different type of regeneration, it is not the sorts of things that are needed to keep up market towns like Berwick, Alnwick and Morpeth going in the right direction. Yes, absolutely agree with that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is very good. Thank you very much. I think there is somebody who would like to clarify.

MRS BYRNE: Do I need to give my name?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please, your name and the address for the record.

MRS BYRNE: Right. My name is Janet Byrne and my address is number 1 North Terrace, Chopwell, Newcastle upon Tyne. Do you want the post code? NE17 7AQ.

I would like to make a comment that endorses everything that I have heard from these other two gentlemen. We are in a very similar situation because we are going to be - and I have not prepared anything, I am afraid, today - it echoes all my thoughts from what I have seen so far. We in Chopwell and Rowlands Gill were before in the Blaydon or are still in the Blaydon constituency. We are now being parcelled in with people who are south - south - of not just the A68 but the A66 in Weardale and Teesdale.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just very politely intervene here?

MRS BYRNE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because what you are saying is so useful and really is the kind of information that we are crying out for.

MRS BYRNE: Right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I know that you have good input there, this stage of the proceedings is purely for clarifying the points made, but please come up and say what you have to say in your own right, so we can formulate it into the proceedings, just to have it set out better. You obviously have quite a bit to say and it would be useful, as you have said.

MRS BYRNE: Do you want me to come up there?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will just conclude this. Please bear with us.

MRS BYRNE: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What you are saying is valuable to us. Okay? We appreciate your interest, so you can understand it is just supporting comment there.

MR WEARMOUTH: Yes, absolutely. No, I understand.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We want to invite that into the equation.

MR WEARMOUTH: Yes, I understand that. I see one of my friends has just left, I think, because she did have time, I think she probably ran out of time on her parking, but she did ask me to mention one thing on her behalf, which is a comment that I share and it is the name of the North Tyneside constituency. I believe that it came up yesterday and that there was a suggestion that it change its name perhaps was it Wallsend and Killingworth or something like that? That would be something that she asked me to just say that she endorses because North Tyneside, as it is, is a council in its own right and then to call the constituency North Tyneside and to have Tynemouth and North Tyneside making up North Tyneside just makes it a bit more complicated for people to understand.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: All right. That is on the record. Thank you very much for that.

We do have a schedule to follow at the moment. Mrs Byrne, would you be happy to come up now? Thank you. For the purpose of completeness you have to give your name and your address again. I am sorry. Just continue on with what you were doing there, just follow on from what you felt that you wanted to express.

MRS BYRNE: Okay. My name is Janet Byrne and I live at number 1 North Terrace, Chopwell, Newcastle upon Tyne, and the post code is NE17 7AQ.

I think one of the basic points I want to make is that our post code is Newcastle upon Tyne, our borough is Gateshead, we in the past belonged to County Durham. We are on a cusp, but because Chopwell is very similar to Ashington and very similar in size in having its own community style or dialect or whatever you want to call it, we do not feel as though we belong with people that we are now going to be parcelled in with who are in southern Teesdale, south Teesdale, in a very rural part of the swathe of the area of the North East which is sheep farming mostly, as far as I know.

Some concerns I have are, for instance, in a Parliamentary democracy where we

have representation by a Member of Parliament, we need that person to understand our standpoint as well as the standpoint of people in a rural area, and I know this echoes everything that has been said before, but I feel as though it needs to be said again because it is exactly the same problem that Chopwell and Rowlands Gill belong with the conurbation of the North East of Newcastle upon Tyne. That is where we belong and that is where our public transport and all of our work and all of our activities take place.

I have just spent this morning working in the Sage Gateshead. I do not ever go to Bishop Auckland or to Spennymoor - I do not know whether Spennymoor is in it - or down to Barnard Castle. Unless I am travelling south, I would never have anything to do with those places, not that there is anything wrong with them, and I worry that how would we, if there were surgeries held, for instance, in Barnard Castle, which I guess is fairly central to this, although I have not made a lot of sense of the map so far because it is just so alien to me, how would we get there? There is no public transport from Chopwell to Barnard Castle, absolutely none. Educationally our children belong with the North Eastern education system and in terms of hospitals we belong with the North East, with Newcastle, and we have the choice of Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary or the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We occasionally go to Durham, but Durham is not our constituency and there are so many issues that simply for us are absolutely nonsensical. I am going to run out of things to say in a moment.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are okay.

MRS BYRNE: I have not planned anything.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, no, what you are saying is making sense. I am following it. It is being recorded and I am making my own notes as well as I go along and what you are saying and the way you are saying it in terms of your emphasis. If you have anything further you want to add, you were elaborating there on the difficulties in accessing matters because of the distances and whatever and hospital. Is there anything further you feel comes to mind?

MRS BYRNE: Just simply if an MP was lobbying on our behalf, then I can give you a very good example of how bizarre people's notion of what Chopwell is. I worked for the National Garden Festival in Gateshead and I was in the marketing department marketing the festival to schools, and that was in 1990 and at the time there were various expert groups brought in to tell us what the demographic was. One of these so-called expert consultants came to me and said "Oh you live in Chopwell, don't you. Yes, that's" and I cannot remember the category that they put us into, but it suggested that it was a very middle class, owner-occupier area. Now has anyone here ever been to Chopwell? Yes, people own their houses because they bought them for a £100 when the coal pit closed down and they bought them very cheaply from the Coal Board. A lot of those houses are now rented and there are social problems that have been caused by the lack of work, by a lot of social engineering, I would say, from Newcastle and Gateshead where they have moved

people into Chopwell because they are easily found rented accommodation.

Those sorts of issues cry out to me that there is a social problem that would not be addressed by dealing with the sheep farming issues and the Brexit problems with the EU and for farming, which is obviously very, very important, but our issues are not those, our issues are different. But the crying out thing is that those people made a mistake, they were basing it on not knowing the area. They had never been. They had no idea what they were talking about and therefore their marketing was absolutely wrong.

It is an important lesson to learn there, but you can do all sorts of research in government, but unless you actually go and look, how on earth are you going to understand what the information is telling you properly and in that case they did not. I think I need to stop there.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right. Thank you very much. That was very, very useful. You know I have to ask the audience if there is anything that people would like to clarify.

MRS BYRNE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any points that anybody would like to clarify? No. Thank you again, I really appreciate that.

MRS BYRNE: Good.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We appear to be heading towards the end of the list here, but we are asking the audience again, is there anybody who would like to take a moment and if they would like to engage in making their views known, we can facilitate that if there is anybody in particular. Would Mrs Smith like the mic to maybe say a few words from where you are seated? Would you be happy enough to give your name and address for the record? Do not be terrified, we are all friends. You are far away, but do please give your name first and your details of your address and then you can fire ahead.

MRS SMITH: It is a very small issue, but it is a personal and --

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Name first, if you do not mind.

MRS SMITH: I beg your pardon. Patricia Smith, known as Pat, and I live in a sheltered accommodation at St Mary's Court in South Shields and obviously basically elderly people.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Did you make your way here today?

MRS SMITH: Yes, I did, I am fiercely independent.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very good.

MRS SMITH: But I do have handicaps. Now the thing is they are going to move my area from South Shields into Jarrow. Nothing against Jarrow at all, it is a nice little place, but I have lived in that South Shields for almost 80 years and I do not feel that I am part of Jarrow at all and they are moving what I consider almost the oldest parts of the town, like Chichester and Laygate and Tyne Dock into what is to us a foreign area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I am following that, yes.

MRS SMITH: I mean, basically speaking I realise what the other people have said about the difference in farming areas and industrial areas, we do not have that problem, it is just the personal belonging is very important and the pieces of town, pieces that are moving into South Shields, have been Jarrow areas, so why change them?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is there anything in particular that you want to draw our attention to that you feel strongly about being moved around?

MRS SMITH: I am very strongly opposed to it, I think we are South Shields and we should stay South Shields.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You do not see any merit or any benefit or advantages at all?

MRS SMITH: From moving to Jarrow?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MRS SMITH: No, no, I cannot see a benefit at all. I really do not think that an MP elected in Jarrow is going to have any interest with our little part of Shields.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MRS SMITH: You know. Sorry, South Shields, there are two. Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That would be a concern to you?

MRS SMITH: It would, yes, yes. It is a personal thing, it has nothing to do with finance or anything like that, it is just a personal issue and I think as people we are personal.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Absolutely. Okay. Is there anything else? Would anybody like to take any points of clarification here? Thank you very much for that, we really appreciate your input. You have done very well. Very well.

I am afraid that concludes the session for the meantime, so we will suspend and just adjourn until quarter to four and we will see if we have any further applicants who want to express some views. Thank you very much

After a short break

Time Noted: 3.55 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. We are going to close the proceedings today on Tuesday. There do not appear to be any further persons who are wishing to make any representations and bearing that in mind, we will conclude proceedings for the Newcastle hearing now. Thank you.

The hearing was adjourned

Time Noted: 3.56 pm

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