

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

**HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL, CIVIC CENTRE, STONE CROSS,
NORTHALLERTON, DL6 2UU**

ON

THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Mr John Feavour, the Lead Assistant Commissioner

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

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

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

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

MR BOWDEN: Thank you very much and good morning everyone. As John has mentioned, my name is Tim Bowden, I am Head of Reviews at the Commission and a member of the Boundary Commission's staff secretariat. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries, and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As John has already stated, he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support John in carrying out his role. So do please ask one of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

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

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

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

The scale of change in this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our initial proposals until Monday 5 December, so there is still time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are also reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing and they are also available on our

website and in a number of places of deposit around the region. You can make written representations to us through our consultation site at www.bce2018.org.uk, and I do urge everyone to submit written representations to us before the deadline of 5 December.

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

Before handing back to John as chair to begin the public hearing, I would like to do a few housekeeping rules. First of all we are not anticipating the fire alarm to go off, it should not be tested today. If it does go off it is real. The exit is through the two main doors of the entrance to the chamber (indicating) and it is literally directly outside and I think the meeting point is in the car park itself. If anyone wants to use the facilities during the day, the ladies and the gents are, again, out of the exit door and they are just round the corner to your right. And finally, a gentle reminder, if anyone has a mobile phone with them, we ask could you try and turn it on to silent or vibrate so it just does not disturb someone speaking. If you do need to take a call during the day we ask – I appreciate everyone has other things going on – we just ask people if they can just leave the room before doing so, please. So now I will hand back to John, the Chair, to begin the public hearing and thank you very much for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks Tim. Okay, now listen, as I said at the start I have got a running order of people who have asked to speak and as far as I can I will stick to that order. But frankly I am more interested if you have got something to say to hear from you than I am about sticking to a particular order, okay? So do listen to what is said and if you want to have a say yourself and you want to put it on record, if you remember what Tim said a moment ago, we ask for your name and address if you are going to put something on record. At the end of each speaker I will ask if anybody wants anything clarified, okay, so that is a clarification, and I make no apology for repeating that. If you want a clarification I will let you ask that, what I will not have is a cross-examination because that is not what this is about, okay? I am happy to answer any questions you have got about the process at any stage during the day and I will keep telling you what my plans are so you can choose whether to stay and listen or whether you can go on and do whatever else it is that you need to do with your Thursday.

So the first person who was booked in this morning was Mr Ron Kirk, Cllr Kirk, and Mr Kirk thank you for coming in a little early, we had got you down for 10.30 am, but you are the first speaker so can I ask you to come and take a seat at the front and we will kick off with you. And if you remember what we said earlier, if you could start by giving us your name and address and then tell us what it is you need us to hear.

MR KIRK: (Hambleton District Council) My name is Ron Kirk, I live at 2, Rose Hill, Great Ayton, within the current Richmond constituency. I want first of all just to make a short comment about the total area and then I want to home in on my own particular ward.

First of all with regard to Yorkshire and the Humber, the Conservative Party have put in counter-proposals which I am wholeheartedly supporting and those have been presented at a different hearing to this particular one. And why I wish to support them is basically on probably two or three principal grounds. The first one is that there is much less change within those recommendations than in the Boundary Commission's proposals. 177,142 less people would move constituencies. I think that is a significant number in Yorkshire and the Humber and needs to be taken into account. It also reflects things like geographical considerations, local authority arrangements and even local ties. So that is probably all I wish to say on the counter-proposal.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And just for the information of everybody else here, what the Cllr has just mentioned was presented to us by Conservative Party representatives at our hearing in Leeds last week, so we have got all of that already.

MR KIRK: Yes, and it is a considerable report so it would be wrong of me to do that.

I then wish to speak specifically about the Richmond constituency and my own ward which is Great Ayton ward. If you look at the map that is on the wall there, (indicating) Great Ayton ward is that carbuncle at the top on the right hand side.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just say it is a good job you said carbuncle and not me because that would not have worked!

MR KIRK: If you notice, on the big map (indicating) it is a little bit that sticks up over the top and it swallows down, if you could leave that one up that would be absolutely great, thank you very much indeed.

What I am wanting to argue for is for Great Ayton to remain within the Richmond constituency, and there are a number of reasons for that one. The principal one, to start with, is in fact geographical. There is a thing, or an area, called the North Yorkshire Moors and the Cleveland Hills, and that effectively separates my end of the constituency from the proposed link with Thirsk and Malton constituency. The access to get from the Great Ayton ward to Thirsk and Malton area, with the

exception of one or two B-class and C-class roads, has to go through proposed other constituencies.

And the other thing that is very important on there is the question of public transport. Public transport from Great Ayton to the proposed main area of Thirsk and Malton is basically non-existent. It is such a long journey that would be required to be taken – somebody has worked it out that the shortest time would be about two hours, which is a considerable time – whereas the current links with the Richmond constituency, principally based in Northallerton area, there is reasonable public transport. There is no transport on Sundays whatsoever, which is another thing. So geographic, I think, is quite a significant point on this particular one.

One of the other main issues why I think Great Ayton should remain is economic reasons. The economy of Great Ayton is not at all linked with Thirsk and Malton as an area. It is linked within its own area, Stokesley, which is to remain within the Richmond constituency and within the Tees Valley, which is much, much closer and much more accessible on that particular one. So there are really no links from an economic point of view with Thirsk and Malton constituency.

A further consideration that I think should be taken into account is education and the provision of education. Great Ayton does have primary schools, infant and two primary schools, it does not have a secondary school. The secondary school is at Stokesley. Stokesley is to remain in the proposals within the Richmond constituency. The vast majority of the children leaving primary education from Great Ayton go to Stokesley secondary. There are a few that go to private schools, it is a very small number, but they tend not to go the Thirsk and Malton area, they are more likely to go further north still on that.

Historic links – I think these are important. My research shows that Great Ayton has been a part of the constituency now which we call Richmond, or it will have done by the time these provisions come into being, for approximately 100 years. That is a significant period of time and a lot of local links have been built up in that particular manner.

I want to move on to media communications, if I may. Great Ayton is completely out of synchronisation with Thirsk and Malton as far as media communications are concerned. Great Ayton gets its television and its radio from Radio Tees, Look North and Tyne Tees Television. It does not get Yorkshire Television. It does not get Radio York. It can probably get it through internet provision but not as main providers. So the actual communication links, multimedia, is actually well and truly out of sync if we were to move into that particular area.

Another, probably a final one because my time must be running out, is probably to do with hospitals. Great Ayton, the local hospitals are either here at Northallerton at the Friarage or James Cook Hospital, which is just over the border approximately five miles away. We have no links, or real links, with hospitals at York or elsewhere near to the Thirsk and Malton area.

You have mentioned, sir, that it is normally the case that there is no desire to split divisions in two. If Great Ayton were to stay and the proposals that the Conservative Party have put forward for the whole of Yorkshire and the Humber, Richmond can stay as it is and all the numbers are met. So that is my presentation, sir, that I support the counter-proposals by the Conservative Party and request specifically that Great Ayton ward remains within the Richmond constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you Mr Kirk. Does anybody want to check with the Cllr about any matters of clarification of what he has said? (No response). There are no hands shooting up in the air. You have obviously made your case clearly; Cllr, thank you very much indeed.

MR KIRK: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So you will recall me telling you that I have got a batting order, if you will, about timings. The next person scheduled on the list to speak was Mr Tony Duff at 11 am but I think Mr Duff you are here? Would you like to go now? (Affirmative response). Thank you very much. Cllr, you know the routine by now – name and address and then tell us what it is you need us to hear please.

MR DUFF: (Richmondshire County Council) Yes, alright. Okay, I am Tony Duff and my address is The Mill, Constable Burton, Leyburn. Initially, when I saw the initial proposals I was quite happy, but having heard the very wise Cllr from Great Ayton speak, and I had not heard the Conservative proposals, I would actually support that of leaving Great Ayton within Richmond constituency. There seem to be very cogent reasons that Ron Kirk has produced and I would support those, really.

Otherwise, really I have very little comment. I will say, with reference to the previous proposal, thank god you are not trying to put Leyburn in with Skipton and Ripon, which was the previous proposal, which would have meant that where I live at Constable Burton I would have been in Richmond, but four miles down the road it would have been in Skipton and Ripon, and thank god that has not come back. I am very glad to hear that. But really, otherwise I think it is fine, and as I say I would support Great Ayton. I really have not got any more to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, so I think that was pretty clear. Mr Duff thank you very much. We were contacted by Mr Roy Hutchings, who said he was going to be along during the morning, Mr Hutchings, would you like to go next please? (Affirmative response). Thank you very much. Whilst you are just taking your seat, sir, allow me to introduce myself, you just missed the very start of the day. My name is John Feavyour and I am one of the Assistant Commissioners responsible for putting representations to the Boundary Commission as to whether or not the initial proposals for the Yorkshire and the Humber region need to be changed. You will have picked up from the others that we like you to give your name

and address before you start, so if you please do that and then tell us what you want us to hear.

MR HUTCHINGS: Thank you. My name is Roy Hutchings. I am a local resident, my address is Red Briar, Morton-on-Swale near Northallerton. I am also a secretary of the North Yorkshire County Labour Party. Therefore I have an interest in the whole of North Yorkshire. I am a delegate member of the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Board, so, again, my interest is quite wide.

I would like, first of all, to support totally the access that Ron Kirk is talking about Great Ayton being away from Thirsk and Malton in particular. Everything he says is absolutely true and there is no need to repeat anything other than to stress that North Yorkshire as a county, from my political point of view, is somewhat removed from the rest of Yorkshire and the Humber for exactly the reasons that Cllr Kirk is saying – that all our media sources are to the north, north east, and very little indeed at all to Yorkshire and the Humber. So as a political party we somewhat feel alienated in Tory land shall we say, but nevertheless, we do have an interest.

My interest is a little bit wider than just Great Ayton, because I understand what the Boundary Commission is saying about numbers and balances but there is talk about Filey going into Scarborough, and borough boundaries there are important too. And my party have an understanding about Filey being part of Scarborough and will support that concept. Making balances, though, of numbers, we would suggest that perhaps, again, there is going to be a presentation tomorrow by Barbara Hawkins, who also lives in Great Ayton, and a suggestion that maybe Derwent Valley and Scarborough might balance the numbers by coming towards Thirsk and Malton. It is just a concept, just an idea, and I know there is a lot of work to be done, but my principal reason here is to understand that North Yorkshire and Richmond constituency as a whole is, perhaps, better to stay as it is and any tweaking might be around the Scarborough and Thirsk and Malton concept. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you Mr Hutchings. Can I just check, does anybody want to clarify anything that Mr Hutchings has said? (No response). So we are quite happy with what Mr Hutchings has said? (Affirmative response). Mr Hutchings, thank you very much indeed.

MR HUTCHINGS: Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Not at all. So, we are just coming up to 10.35 am. The next person that is on my list that is booked to come and speak to us is a gentleman who is scheduled to come at 11.10 am who I do not think is here yet. But Mr Johnson, did you want to say some words to us this morning? It is entirely a matter for you sir. I do not want to put you ---

MR JOHNSON: Briefly ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, come on then. I spoke very informally to Mr Johnson when he arrived this morning. He had come to listen to proceedings and said that he would like to say a few words, given the opportunity. So Mr Johnson if you would just like to put your name and address on the record and then tell us what you want me to hear.

MR JOHNSON: My name is Colin Johnson, I live at 2, Church Drive, Great Ayton. I was born and bred in Great Ayton. I have managed to reach the age --- well, I am in my 85th year, and I would hate to think that we are going to go through this procedure again that we went through in the '70s, when we had to have a protest march from Great Ayton to Stokesley to remain in Yorkshire. And as we all know, that was a success. But whether we do need to have a protest march again, I would hope not. I would hope that the powers that be will see sense and leave Great Ayton alone. And I would like to thank the support from our Councillors who have spoken this morning. Their views are just as I think they should be and I do not want to go a lot further but it is of great concern to me, especially education and hospitals. I care for my wife, who is almost as old as I am, and she needs my care. We are very fortunate in Great Ayton, we have a very good health centre and thank god we do not have to attend too often, but whenever we have needed hospital treatment it has been there. And other than that I do not want to prolong the meeting and I thank you for allowing me to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Not at all, you are very welcome sir. Does anybody wish to ask any clarifications of Mr Johnson? (No response). Mr Johnson, thank you very much indeed.

MR JOHNSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So, as I said, there is nobody else who is on my list to speak who is present, but I will repeat what I said earlier – an open invitation – is there anybody else present who has not been on the list who would like to have a go? You do not have to. (No response). Okay, well let me do this then – it is my way of operating that when I am chairing these hearings I have to make sure that you know what I am up to, so that if you want to listen to what is going on you can come along and know that the hearing will be running. And if I adjourn, I will not come back again without telling you what time I am coming back again, because I can imagine a scenario where I say “Okay, let’s have an hour’s break because there’s nobody here”, people who wish to listen go away, somebody comes back after half an hour and we hear that evidence and you were not here to listen to it, and I do not think that is right, so I will always tell you what my plans are so you can make a decision as to whether you wish to stay or wish to go. So the next person booked to speak is scheduled for 11.10 am.

MR KIRK: Could I just ask, is it Richard Hudson?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is Richard Hudson.

MR KIRK: He is in the building.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR KIRK: Would you like me to see if he would come?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I feel very nervous at asking a local Councillor to be my runner! But yes!

MR KIRK: I have done other things as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Crikey, I can get away with a lot here, can I not? I would not normally ask a member to go and do that. Let us wait just a moment or two and see whether the Councillor can find his colleague Cllr Hudson.

I feel as though I have just got away with murder there – I sent one Councillor on an errand and he has brought the other one back and I have sat the next one down there without even telling him who I am. So, you know that, but I am going to tell him. Cllr Hudson, good morning.

MR HUDSON: (Hambleton District Council) Good morning.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: My name is John Feavoyour, I am an Assistant Commissioner with the Boundary Commission for England. In brief, it is my responsibility, together with my colleague Assistant Commissioner Collette Rawnsley, to consider all of the written and oral representations made to us about the Yorkshire and the Humber region and then to decide the extent to which we make representations to the Commission itself about whether any of those initial proposals need to be changed and if so to what extent.

All of those representations, written or oral, will end up on the Commission's website so that anybody else can have a look at and comment on anything that anybody else has said. So as you will have noticed when you came in, we are video recording proceedings today and there will be a verbatim transcript of that in due course. So just before you start, if you could be kind enough to give us your name and address and then tell us what it is you would like me to hear.

MR HUDSON: Yes, absolutely. Good morning everyone, my name is Richard Hudson. My address is 52, Wainstones Close, Great Ayton, TS9 6LD. I am a District Councillor for the Great Ayton ward. I would like to voice my concern and opposition to the proposal for the following reasons.

Great Ayton has been within the Richmondshire constituency for around 100 years. This period has allowed Great Ayton to forge deep links with the towns and villages within Richmondshire. From the age of six I have lived in and around Great Ayton. I attended a primary school in the village of Ingleby Greenhow, which is within the ward. Ingleby Greenhow primary school, when I attended, had around 60 pupils. Its

last Ofsted report notes 42 pupils enrolled. When I attended, the school, for obvious reasons, worked very closely with other small schools in the constituency, examples of those were Carlton, Great Broughton and Chop Gate, Chop Gate who also under the proposals will be moved to Thirsk and Malton. No such ties were present with neighbouring schools in other constituencies at the point where I attended. It follows that Ingleby Greenhow and Chop Gate primary schools would be isolated under the proposals, since the nearest school in the new constituency of a similar size that they would probably choose to work with would be some 18 miles away in and around Helmsley. Furthermore, in my opinion, ties with existing schools that Ingleby Greenhow has previously worked with would be reduced and at risk of deteriorating and pretty much detrimental to all of those involved, including the other schools which would remain in the Richmondshire constituency.

Ingleby Greenhow and Chop Gate schools and those in Great Ayton are all feeder schools to Stokesley Comprehensive School, as I am sure you are aware. It is my opinion that in an age where competition for school places is pretty high that any boundary that is put in place could be detrimental to these schools and it may result in an excuse to push them and keep them within their constituency of Thirsk and Malton, which would then push them up towards Helmsley. One thing is certain, I have not managed to succeed in demonstrating to myself any – and I am going to stress this point – any positive outcomes for education for Great Ayton and the surrounding villages as a result of the proposed changes.

Another point is that the geography of the area appears to, in my opinion, have been given very little consideration. Even when viewing the proposed constituency on a map without any contour lines, there is little merit for placing Great Ayton within the Thirsk constituency. Out on a limb would be how I would best describe our position. Add in the contour lines and it becomes blatantly obvious why Great Ayton has next to no association with Malton. I would submit that nearly every person travelling from Great Ayton to Malton would choose to do so by exiting the constituency and circumnavigating the North Yorkshire Moors, they would follow more established transport links. However the proposals appear to completely disregard such infrastructure, choosing to focus upon a road which is near impassable when snow is present. I would ask that you take time to travel the route through the proposed constituency where the natural boundary of the North Yorkshire Moors will be demonstrated. In summary, Malton is serviced by B and C-class roads, and the majority of constituents would choose to travel to both Malton and Thirsk through Richmondshire, who Great Ayton links with through A-class roads and dual carriageways.

Another consequence of the area's geography is the economic ties which result. Poor transport links and the natural barrier of the moors means that the majority of Great Ayton's economy is based within Richmondshire and the Teesside conurbation. Great Ayton's media would be separated from the majority of Thirsk and Malton constituency. Sadly the boundary for Tyne Tees television, which is transmitted from Newcastle, would lie within the proposed constituency. Given the transmission areas are well established and that reporting is tailored to each area, it

follows that Great Ayton would effectively be in a media blackout with regards to news about the rest of Thirsk and Malton. Such isolation would occur on the radio, as Great Ayton receives BBC Tees and not BBC York, and also the newspapers, the Evening Gazette versus the Yorkshire Post.

The Richmondshire constituency currently falls well within guidelines for the Boundary Review, therefore I submit that any change to its borders would be unnecessary and could be achieved through alterations to other constituencies in isolation, whereby a change to Richmondshire is deemed inevitable, it is submitted that the wards to the south of the constituency would not be subject to the issues of the same degree or number as would be for Great Ayton.

And to summarise, moving Great Ayton to the Thirsk and Malton constituency would be illogical, given the strong ties which are currently enjoyed with Richmondshire. Furthermore, such a move may prove detrimental given the comparative isolation from the suggested constituency with regards to schools, transport links and economic centres. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you Mr Hudson. Does anybody wish to ask for any clarification about anything Mr Hudson has said? (Affirmative response). Can I just get a microphone to you Mr Hutchings so that we can record what your question is? And again, just so that we can get the transcription right, I know who you are now, but if you just say your name and ask the clarification please.

MR HUTCHINGS: Thank you. Roy Hutchings. The clarification I would like to ask is about education. I would have thought that all schools are North Yorkshire schools and I would not understand how the boundaries had an effect on these particular schools.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you Mr Hutchings, would you like to just respond to that?

MR HUDSON: Yes, well, it is really my interpretation – and Stokesley is an academy – that a lot of power is devolved to those academies. Now, I do not pretend to be an expert on this but it is my opinion that any barriers that are put in place that were not there previously, provides possibilities for them to pick and choose if the school was at its limit.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. Any other matters of clarification? (None). Cllr Hudson, thank you very much indeed.

MR HUDSON: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Since I said what I said a few moments ago, about planning the rest of the day, we have had one new person join the room, good morning. Is it your intention to speak to us today? (No) Okay, let me say this:

I had started to explain that I will keep you informed as to how I am going to manage the hearing today. The next scheduled speaker is not until 3.40 pm this afternoon. It will come as no surprise to you that I do not intend to sit here until 3.40 pm this afternoon. Apart from anything else, if I tell you that my mother is from Harrogate and I have been to Betty's there and I understand you have got one here as well, it is really important that I do my research.

More seriously, what I am going to do is I will adjourn but I will not adjourn for more than an hour at a time so that if anybody comes in and wishes to speak we can come back together again and hear what it is that that person has got to say. But as I explained earlier, it is 10.50 am now so if I adjourn until 11.50 am, anybody coming through the door has got a maximum of an hour's wait before they get their chance to put their views on the record. If I put them on straight away and you wanted to hear what they had got to say and you did not come back until 11.50 am and I then said to you, "Well somebody has been in and had another go", you would probably say "John, hang on a minute you are not doing what you said you were going to do." So that is the way I am going to run it.

But before I adjourn I want to share a couple of thoughts with you all as well, if you will permit me do so please. The point of these proceedings is to hear what local people have got to say about the initial proposals. They are called initial proposals because that is what they are. They are a starting point from which we then have to decide what gets changed and what does not get changed. Clearly I am of the Boundary Commission because I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission but actually I am independent of the initial proposals. In fact I had no involvement at all in putting together the initial proposals. Why am I telling you that? I am not wedded to them any more than I am any other proposals. So you need to know that that is my starting point, that is where I am coming from.

But you also need to know two very important things about this particular review. In his introduction, Tim talked about significant change. It is inescapable, it seems to me, that where we have a region that currently has 54 constituencies, and parliament has decided that that is going to be reduced to 50, and they have given me the job of working out where to redraw the boundaries, there is going to be significant change. That we cannot escape.

There are a number of things that my fellow Assistant Commission, Collette, and I can take into account. I really want to emphasise the one thing we cannot do anything about and then I want to point to the things that we can do something about and why that might be relevant to you. So, the one thing we cannot do anything about is what is called the electoral quota. The mathematicians have looked at the numbers, divided the country up, and in very broad terms, you take the electorate and you divide it by 600. The upshot of all this is every constituency in England will end up with the same sized electorate based on the people who were registered to vote last December, okay? Now, we can argue whether that is the right thing or the wrong thing to do until the cows come home, but that is what parliament has said, so I cannot change that, so whatever counter-proposals people are asking me to

consider, please do not ask me to consider changing that number because I cannot, okay? So that would be wasted effort.

So that electoral quota gives just short of 75,000 for each constituency, and it says we can go up a bit and we can go down a bit but only between limits, and I keep reading this document – this is the guide – The Boundary Commission for England’s Guide – to the 2018 Review. The reason it is called the 2018 Review is because the Boundary Commission is obliged to report to parliament in September 2018 and this consultation will go forward to inform that review. In the guide, it tells you the things that are fixed and the things that are not fixed, so I commend it to you. It is available through the website and if you have not got access to the internet, I cannot remember which place of deposit it is in. (After conferring with the Secretary). Matt, would you just remind me in a moment where it is on deposit in North Yorkshire please? And there is a couple of copies available that you can have a look at today whilst you are here if you want to, today or tomorrow. So please do not suggest to me that the number is wrong or the methodology is wrong. It is fixed and it is done and it is there, okay?

But there are other things that we can change. We can have regard to geographical considerations and some of you have pointed to those today. We can have regard to the government boundaries as they existed last May and we can have regard to existing constituencies and we can have regard to local ties. And it seems to me that is the value of coming here to Northallerton to listen to you talk about the things which matter to you locally.

But I am regurgitating all this stuff, because the consultation period is open until 5 December. So up until 5 December you can go on to the website or you can write to the Boundary Commission with any counter-proposals or anything else that you think we need to take account of whilst we are doing this work and Collette and I will consider everything that gets sent in up until 5 December in addition to everything that has been said here today, Leeds last week, Sheffield earlier this week and Hull next week. And I suppose I am taking the time to really try and get over to you what an opportunity that is for you because having referred to the fact that mum came from Harrogate, I did not, okay? I know Yorkshire poorly, you know it better. So whilst I cannot escape from the fact that we are going from 54 to 50, I cannot escape from the numbers, what we have got some flexibility around is how we do that reorganisation to make the numbers work, okay? So you will have ideas around, you know --- we have heard lots this morning about leave Great Ayton where it is. I have heard that. But if we leave Great Ayton where it is I have got to do something else, somewhere else to balance the next door constituency. That is my job. If you can give me some help as to how I might do that, that would be very useful. If you simply say “Please leave Great Ayton where it is”, and do not suggest what else I might do then you are leaving it to me and I will do my best but that is as good as I can do. I do not know whether that helps, I just want people to know what the process is all about.

So in summary, you have got until 5 December to add to anything that has been said today and if you have spoken today that does not preclude you from writing in. Do not try and change the electoral quota, that is fixed. By all means tell us what you do not like, even better, if you can help me and Collette understand what we might do instead. So that is what we are about. As I say, the next speaker is not on until this afternoon, so we are just coming up on 11 am now, just before I adjourn, any questions from anybody about anything that I have just said there?

THE SECRETARY: Did you want to know where the documents are?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Oh, yes please Matt.

THE SECRETARY: Malton Library, Thirsk Library and Richmondshire District Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, did you hear that? Malton Library, Thirsk Library and Richmondshire District Council offices in Richmond have all got copies of all of these maps and bits and pieces and the documents if you have not got access to the internet and you need to see them.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I just ask if in Northallerton the County Library has copies?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does not, it is those three, but we have got copies here.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just wondered if it might be relevant to have them in Northallerton, in the County Library.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Those documents have gone out. If you have got access to the internet, I do commend it to you because all the stuff that you have seen up here you can do online. And whilst you might have a bit of paper and do some colouring in and work out what might go where, there are tools available online, for people who have got the nous to do that, where you can literally --- all the numbers are there and you can add one bit in and take another bit out and it will tell you how many people that then means and whether or not it is within the electoral quota, so it is a very useful tool to use if you want to.

Any other questions of me for just now? Yes sir?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You have got to report to parliament by when?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The report goes to parliament in September 2018 so the journey from now until then, this consultation period runs until 5 December. The staff have then got to make sure that they have collated all of the material and probably by about next spring all of the representations, oral and written, will be published on the website for a period of four weeks. So anybody who

wants to look and see what has been said can do so. And if I bring that back home here you will be able to see what you have said about Great Ayton and anybody else will be able to comment on what you have said. At that point Collette Rawnsley and I will have a look at all of that material and we will develop revised proposals. Those revised proposals, if I have got this right Tim, will also go online at a point later on and there will be an eight week period when you can comment on them but that will only be an online consultation, we will not be coming back here to do that. So if you are interested in it, make sure you are in touch with your Members of Parliament or your local Councillors so you know what the timescale is, or you just go to the website that is on there and that will keep you up to date with what the timeline is all about. But yes, the intention, as I understand it, it is all in the Act of Parliament 1986, is when the next general election is due in 2020, parliament needs time prior to that to enact what we propose in order that the new constituencies would take place for the 2020 general election.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have no idea when they are going to debate on it, have we?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is a matter for parliament. There is a process and it is all actually set down in here. My understanding is that because we report to parliament not to the government, I think the Secretary of State --- if parliament votes it down then it does not get enacted, and I think there is a provision for the Secretary of State to put a revised proposal forward. Far be it from me to comment on what the politicians might do, but it will have taken the Commission four years to get those proposals so I am not quite sure how that would then work in terms of modifying it with a view to putting it before the House again within the timescales that are available. But that is not my domain, my domain is listening to you and trying to do the best I can for you. Any other questions this morning?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I ask what time the last person is booked in?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Today?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have a 3.40 pm booking this afternoon, I have one at 6.40 pm. You will forgive me if I ask my staff to ring up that person and see whether they want to come any earlier. (After conferring with the Secretary) Okay, that person will be coming at 6.40 pm. I am scheduled to sit until 8 pm tonight, and the thinking behind that was if anybody wanted to come after work they could do so. You will also recall at the start of proceedings I said I can vary that schedule. I am not going to prejudge what happens this afternoon, but if I do not get anybody else come all afternoon and we get to 6.40 pm and we hear that last speaker, my sense is that by about 7 pm I may take a decision to call it a day. Alternatively I could be besieged by people this afternoon in which case we will be here as long as it takes.

Any other questions from anybody? (None) Well, based on the rationale I said earlier, then, it is just gone 11 am so I will come back at 12 pm and I will check at 12 pm whether anybody else has registered to speak. If they have not all that will happen at 12 pm is that I will adjourn again until 1 pm and then I will do the same thing again and I will be taking lunch between 1 pm and 2 pm. Thank you very much for all of your attendance this morning.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I ask who the next speaker is.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: (After conferring with the Secretary). The next speaker is Heather Moorhouse. I do not know Heather. Anything else? (No response) Thank you very much for your attendance this morning.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon everybody. Welcome back to the afternoon of day one of the hearing in Northallerton for the Boundary Commission for England's consideration of the initial proposals for changes to Yorkshire and the Humber region. My name is John Feavoyour and I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for England. It is good to see some people who have already seen me before. Sorry, but I am now going to say what you already know, but there are some people here who have not seen me before so I need to introduce myself properly to them. As I say, my name is John Feavoyour, I am the Assistant Commissioner and it is my job together with another Assistant Commissioner, Collette Rawnsley, to consider all of the representations that are made in relation to Yorkshire and the Humber region. It matters not whether those representations come in written or whether they are oral representations today. In fact I was chairing the hearing in Leeds last week, Sheffield earlier this week, I am here today and tomorrow and I shall be in Hull next Monday and Tuesday.

Once we have had a look at all of those proposals it is our responsibility to go back to the Commission itself and make representations as to whether or not any of the initial proposals should be changed, and if so, what they should be changed to. All of the representations will end up being placed online so that everybody else can see what you have said or what counter-proposals have been put forward. That includes a verbatim transcript of today, so you may have seen when you came in that we are video recording proceedings and in order that we know who has said what, may I ask you to come forward in a moment and sit down there in front of the microphone, that is just so that we get everything that you have said and I shall ask you to put your name and address on the record before you start, okay? You do not need to do anything with the microphone that will all take care of itself.

I have got a couple of people listed this afternoon at the moment, so I think we have Heather Moorhouse, Heather would you like to come up? Thank you. So as I said,

Heather, if you can give us your name and address and then tell us what it is that you want me to hear. Thank you.

MRS MOORHOUSE: (North Yorkshire County Council) I am Heather Moorhouse and I live in Easby Mill House, Low Easby, Great Ayton, TS9 6JQ. As Great Ayton's currently elected North Yorkshire County Councillor I wish to raise the following objections in regard to proposed boundary changes.

I fully appreciate that no one likes changes and the Boundary Commission were charged with making the figures add up when tasked with reducing the number of MPs. However, it would seem to me that they conducted a desktop exercise and ended up with Great Ayton being sandwiched between three constituencies, being Middlesbrough South East, Richmond and Scarborough and stuck us on the end of Ryedale in total isolation.

You will, I am sure, have heard the account today from various other people who have been here about the relationship between Stokesley, our market town, and Great Ayton, and many of its services are actually generated from there, including education and leisure. But along with that Great Ayton/Stokesley are very much a bonded community. They have rivalry in their football and cricket teams, the children go to the same school, they intermarry, Stokesley and Great Ayton are, as I say, very close knit and families do not travel away very often they are almost half-related most of them, there is a very strong bond there.

I really feel that having shared services is very important, particularly when you are looking at an MP's intervention which would come about where there had been a problem, whatever it may be. And therefore if there was some specific problem to do with, say, education, which as I say, the secondary school which is an academy now actually, two MPs would have to be involved in the same issue and to me, really, that is a bit of a waste of time really and I think one MP covering the same service would be far better. I appreciate the districts are a different thing, I mean obviously as a County Councillor I am aware that the district services are not going to change. There will be fewer MPs, they will be expected to do more, so duplication to me is one of the things I would raise.

However, one of my greatest concerns, which I do not know has been raised today, is something that plays the most important part in every electorate's life and that is the provision of healthcare. I am not sure if the Boundary Commission is aware of the split of healthcare provision currently between Ryedale and Richmond constituency, and which will – due to demographics – remain in situ. I wish to remind the Commissioners that Ryedale primary care provision is part of a completely different commissioning group. I presume you are familiar with the CCGs? And the CCG for Ryedale is Scarborough and Ryedale, and all their acute and elective services are from Scarborough, York and Hull hospitals. Great Ayton is part of the Hambleton and Richmond Commissioning Group and their primary care is generated from the hospital services of Northallerton and Middlesbrough.

As a member of the scrutiny of health [committee] I am very close to all the issues to do with healthcare and am more than aware that the health service provision is currently facing the most massive change in the delivery of their services, in particular to the elderly. What is happening is that they are looking at rather than taking elderly people into hospital they try more than ever to look after them in their own homes and provide more community care. And in each area it is delivered very differently according to what the needs are. As I said, this will differ for one CCG, the clinical commissioning group – for people who do not know these are the doctors who are actually the ones who commission the services from the hospitals and the care providers. CCGs do differ in what their needs are and obviously with any issue which would arise, of which I am sure there will be many over the next year and long term, the MP will no doubt become involved in trying to fight the corner for whichever person has an issue. And once again we will find that we will have two MPs having to deal with two lots of commissioning groups, and particularly the Ryedale MP would have to deal with two lots of commissioning groups, with York, with Hull and back over to Middlesbrough to deal with different issues because different areas have different issues.

And again – as I keep repeating – this will be a duplication of MPs' time as the Richmond MP who represents Stokesley will have to be doing exactly the same thing. I do consider that the health provision should be at the utmost front of looking at as to why we should be taken in with Ryedale. It is the most important issue that I can ever think of, particularly with the elderly population which is increasing year by year. North Yorkshire is one of the top areas in the country for older people and this one of my biggest problems I face with it.

Again, I will say, when we look at the map I think possibly they have started at the bottom of Yorkshire and they have got to the top and they have run out of places to put Great Ayton. Really I think that we should relook at it. Again, I know it is to do with figures but I would urge you to relook at the situation. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mrs Moorhouse, just a second, can I just make sure, is there anybody who wants to clarify anything that Mrs Moorhouse has said? (No response). No? Mrs Moorhouse thank you very much indeed.

MRS MOORHOUSE: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is it Mr Woodhead? Thank you would you like to come next sir?

MR WOODHEAD: Sure, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. So Mr Woodhead as you are sitting down, you heard what I said earlier, if you could give us your name and address and then set out what you would like me to hear please.

MR WOODHEAD: My name is Alan Woodhead, I live at Hillside, Howfield, Baldersby-St.James, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, YO7 4PZ. It is a strange area, currently in Skipton and Ripon constituency. When I moved to this area 29 years ago I was in Skipton and Ripon then I was put into the Vale of York and then back into Skipton and Ripon and if you look, it is Thirsk, but Thirsk and Hambleton, but I am actually in Harrogate, postcode YO, York, you know, basically I travel anywhere that I need services because you can go in three different directions, Middlesbrough, Harrogate or York for healthcare. And my attitude is I choose whichever one I think is the best for me, but that is another story.

Where I am coming from on this one is that it is making observations, essentially that there is a lot of flaws in the basic way this process has started off. I recognise that you might have been given this way of working but actually it is pretty flawed. First of all the register is out of date. I stood as a candidate in Wathvale earlier this year, I looked at what the population of that ward was the previous time four years earlier. It had gone down 4 per cent. Now, I do not believe the population went down, I think for that area, and it is recognised in the country as a whole, something went odd with the way the government brought in people registering because it was a single person had to register on their own behalf and people who were a main householder could not register other people. And I know that Harrogate Council have gone to great lengths to try and boost that register but still it was low and then when we had the European referendum, all of a sudden, was it two million people were found? And I think if we tried a bit harder that would find --- so essentially I think there are some flaws with the register.

My second point is that the population base for making this is electors only and that does not take into account children. Now, you know, issues that perhaps MPs have to deal with are not just for the electors they are for children as well. In fact some of the more serious issues are for children, you know, you see issues in the media about this, but they are not counted, as far as it comes.

Also, the population base does not take account of people who do not have the vote, such as asylum seekers, and one could argue that there is a lot of work associated with that that MPs have got to deal with and they are not counted as being in an area as far as an MP's electoral base goes. And another group of people that perhaps are not there as well are people who are from other parts of the European Union who are not allowed to vote in general elections as well. And we have just gone through a referendum which I would have thought makes it inevitable that people who are resident in this country who are citizens of other nations who have been our close partners for 40-odd years, they might well be asking for services off MPs as well.

And finally I think – and this is perhaps a little bit more contentious – any boundary change is inevitably going to be out of date because of the time it takes to go through this consultation process because essentially you are looking at a population at a point in time and by the time it comes into account things will have changed, such as people who were 16 in two, four years' time are electors at that point. So if you are only taking the cut-off at 18 you are not taking account of people who are going to go

into that. Okay, people are going to die, but people are living longer generally speaking. And this country desperately needs more houses built and that is going to change the population base of an area.

So essentially what I am saying in making these observations is that it is inequitable really, the whole basis on which this thing was started off. Now, I recognise certain politicians, perhaps with a view to gerrymandering this whole process, have started off with that basis but I object to it on the grounds of fairness really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much sir. Can I just check is there anybody who wants Mr Woodhead to clarify any of what he said? (No response). No. Mr Woodhead, thank you very much indeed.

I have nobody else on my list in front of me to speak next but let me just invite anybody who is present who has not spoken. Mr Johnson you spoke earlier on, we heard from you earlier. The nice lady next to you, did you want to speak at all? You were here earlier on. (No). You are quite sure? You do not have to but I just want to check with you. And there is another lady just here. (No). No? In which case let me tell you that my next scheduled booking for the hearing today is not until 6.40 pm this evening and in that case in a moment I will adjourn and we will adjourn for an hour or so and see if anybody comes along and I will keep adjourning for an hour until we get to 6.40 pm and see what happens.

But before I go away, particularly for both of you who were not here this morning, and the others in the room, you have heard what I am going to say and I make no apology for repeating it because I want everybody to know. As a Boundary Commissioner my responsibility only extends so far as to listen to what you have had to say and make representations to the Commission as to whether we should change any of the proposals. This particular consultation period extends until 5 December, so it is right up until then you can make representations and just because you have come along here today to say something or to listen does not preclude you from putting in a further contribution up until 5 December and I would encourage you to do so because my fellow Assistant Commissioner, Collette Rawnsley, and I will in the new year be looking at what people have said and trying to work out the extent to which we ought to suggest changes.

Having then reminded you that you have got until 5 December to say anything else or to reiterate what you have said, let me also point you towards the guidance that the Boundary Commission has issued. There are copies available for reference outside, if you have got access to the internet there are copies available on the website and again the details are there, and I commend the guidance to you. Let me tell you why: there are some things in it which are fixed, I cannot do anything about it. Mr Woodhead, I heard everything that you said. I can only take you to The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 and I cannot muck about with that so I know that will be at odds with some of the things that you have said, but that is what I am obliged to consider. The Review, it talks about the 2018 Review, the reason it is called the 2018 Review is that the Boundary Commission has to report to parliament

in September 2018 and it is going to take from now until then to get this report together and that is why the timescales are as they are. But the thing that is fixed in it is this notion of an electoral quota, this thing about getting all of the constituencies to the same size, plus or minus a little bit. That electoral quota is just short of 75,000, all the numbers are in here. I cannot do anything about that, okay? That is fixed, every constituency in the country will be 74,769 plus or minus 5 per cent. So that is the must.

The other statutory factors include things like geographical considerations. They include government boundaries as they existed on 7 May last year, and I recognise that in some areas of Yorkshire and the Humber they will have changed, but the legislation requires that that is our starting point. So the starting point for the initial proposals was not having any wards to be split across the whole of the region and the initial proposals do not split any wards. But if there are compelling reasons why we should, I need to know. And with the best will in the world, Collette and I will do our best to try and make the proposals make sense but if there are changes to be made and you can work out what they are and help us with those I would encourage you to let us know.

So Mrs Moorhouse, we heard much this morning about Great Ayton and clearly that will have an impact on our thinking. Saying that we have got Great Ayton wrong is important. Saying that we have got Great Ayton wrong and suggesting what an alternative might be to still get the numbers to add up, because if you remember what I said I cannot change the numbers, is more helpful because it will give Collette and I an idea, some options, about what else we might propose needs to happen. So whilst I might agree with everything you said and everything that Mr Johnson said and others have said this morning, if I am to change it I have to find an alternative and that is what I am looking to try and understand and that is why I am saying to you you have until 5 December to have a think about that and let us know, because it will make a difference, particularly, for your benefit Mr Woodhead, and I know you acknowledge this, much of what you have said is not within my gift to change. But you have made your points and they will be on the record so I think that is why you came.

So, with that, I commend that to you, thank you everybody for speaking to me this afternoon and I am now going to adjourn until 4.50 pm and then we will see if anybody else has come along, if nobody else has come along I will repeat that process through until the evening and we will be here until just after 7 pm and we are here again all tomorrow. Thank you very much indeed.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Williamson, good evening. I am addressing you personally because there is nobody else here. Even if other people had been here I would have still given you the same courtesy and given you the same explanation I am going to give now.

My name is John Feavvour, I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England and it is my responsibility to chair the hearing today as it was when we were in Leeds last week, Sheffield and we are in Hull next week. And it is my responsibility together my colleague, Assistant Commissioner Collette Rawnsley, to consider all of the representations made, either directly through the website of the Boundary Commission or at any of the hearings in order to see whether we make representations to the Commission itself as to whether the boundaries in the initial proposals for the boundaries for the Yorkshire and Humber region need to be changed and if so how.

In order to get that process to run all the way through, all of the representations including everything that is said in the hearings is being put on the website in due course including a transcript of what is undertaken here. So as you will have seen when you came in we are all on camera and the process goes like this: in a moment I will ask you to come and sit over here in front of the microphone and tell us your name and address before you then go on to tell us what it is you want us to hear. Just for the record we adjourned at about 3.50 pm, I think, and since then I have been holding regular reviews every hour in case anybody came but nobody has and we were waiting for you because we knew you were booked in this evening. So you are very welcome and in your own time, sir, would you please come up to the chair?

MR WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So as I said, if you start with your name and address and then let us know what you want us to know.

MR WILLIAMSON: Good evening. My name is Stewart Williamson, I live at 38, The Holme, Great Broughton, which is near Stokesley in North Yorkshire, and thank you for according me the privilege of being able to come and address you this evening.

The interest that I have and why I am here is that I had understood the previous proposals of incorporating Stokesley into the Malton constituency were dropped and I was somewhat surprised to learn of the new proposals to incorporate Great Ayton and the surrounding villages within the Great Ayton district into the Malton constituency. Looking at a map it seems to take no account of the topography itself and there are perhaps other matters which make it look a reasonable fit but this does ignore many vital considerations. The distance from Great Ayton to Malton sounds quite reasonable, it is 37.5 miles as a direct route through Bilsdale. It takes about an hour though, the road is not an easy road, and in fact this year for quite some time it was closed, requiring considerable diversion if anybody had wanted to travel to Malton. Northallerton is 18 miles from Great Ayton, it takes about 26 minutes as opposed to about the hour travelling to Malton. That is by using a car, and on the direct route through Bilsdale. That Bilsdale road to Great Ayton does in fact pass through the Richmond constituency, there is the possibility of using a shorter, perhaps, road, but it is a C road that comes off the top of the bank between Great Broughton and Chop Gate, but it is a very difficult road to use and does not in fact go directly into Great Ayton.

If people were having to use public transport, I have had a look at this, because I thought, well how would people get to Malton if they were travelling from Great Ayton? And there are two means of getting there; one is via Scarborough and round the coastal route and the other is through York and travelling that way by using bus and trains. The quickest means of getting there appears to be via York which takes about two-and-a-quarter hours and it can take as long as nearly three-and-a-half hours, or via Scarborough it seems to be anywhere from two-and-three-quarter hours to just over four hours travelling in that route to Malton by public transport. And it does not seem to me that that is very connected. There is no public transport as such through Biltsdale. During the summer and at weekends sometimes there is what is called a Moors Bus, which goes into Helmsley and I presume there is some form of connection from Helmsley to Malton, I do not know. It is not something that I have ever done.

There is, of course, a reason for this, and the circuitous route from Great Ayton round to Malton, and that tends to be geography. There is the North Yorkshire Moors, which sits with a northern escarpment with the hills anywhere from 1000 feet to 1400-ish feet. The road through Biltsdale is the easiest route to get through the North Yorkshire Moors unless you take roads up into the Esk Valley and then start moving along the Esk Valley back in towards Great Ayton. The result of this is that most connections from Great Ayton tend to be towards Stokesley and Northallerton, there is little connection with Malton itself. A day out might be taken by people from Great Ayton to Helmsley and the Pickering Valley, but it would be a day out it would not be for shopping purposes or any entertainment or anything of that nature. That would tend to take place in the immediate area of Stokesley or into Northallerton or Teesside to the north.

It is part of, I suppose, the true hinterland of Teesside, there is a lot of residential property where it supports people who have employment within the Teesside area. Very few people would tend to travel south towards Malton and Helmsley and Pickering for employment. It may be the other way round.

Schooling for Great Ayton and the villages around for local schooling is in Stokesley and so far as the media is concerned Great Ayton would pick up its news from Newcastle and Middlesbrough television studios and Radio Tees not Radio York. Leeds radio is not heard here. Press coverage tends to be from Teesside, it does not come up from Malton. Any constituency news I would therefore think would be fairly scarce and difficult to get into coverage for people to read in Great Ayton. The Darlington and Stockton Times, which is a weekly paper, would tend to be released within the Great Ayton area, there is not a Malton Times that I am aware of that would regularly circulate within the Great Ayton area.

Hospitals for the area are in Middlesbrough and Northallerton under the South Tees Trust and people do not tend to go to Malton or York or Hull for medical treatment. This is obviously all to do with the geography of the area and the way in which people have historically seen themselves as a community. Great Ayton has links

with the communities under the northern escarpment and that would include Chop Gate itself as well, even though it is perhaps at the top of the escarpment, and you would think naturally would head the other way. It does not, its entertainment tends to be closer and people would come 'down the hill', as they call it, to Great Broughton or Stokesley or Great Ayton and people will be members of clubs there. Sporting facilities are in Stokesley and Great Ayton, there is a local cricket club in Chop Gate, they are in the leagues to the north not leagues to the south and everything tends to reflect this within that general area.

Regular shopping trips by people would tend to be into Middlesbrough or into Northallerton if they want a little bit more than they can find in Great Ayton or Stokesley, they certainly would not think of going into Malton. The County Hall for North Yorkshire is, of course, in Northallerton and Malton is in the East Riding and there is evidence as to why that should be that way as well. And again, it is to do with geography. Great Ayton has been in the Richmond constituency for probably around 100 years and again that is probably because these arguments were understood then as to why it should not be in any other constituency.

The voting numbers, I understand, in Great Ayton are some 4,520, which represents just under 6 per cent of the vote for the Richmond constituency. I understand that the constituency vote for Richmond is 76,649, which is within the electoral size, as I understand it, of 71,031 and 78,507. It looks as though the district population count has been taken as a convenience rather than looking into whether it is a proper fit with the proposed constituency. Perhaps an MP travelling north from London might in fact find it more convenient to have some numbers dumped on him on the rail route north from London and call in to a constituency area there rather than have to travel to Great Ayton from London and then find some transport back to Malton at some ridiculous time on a Friday or Saturday evening.

It is really quite some surprise as to why this is thought to be a fair fit. It does, on the face of it, look as though it would be an easy fit but I do not think it truly and can seriously be taken as a proper proposal for the people of Great Ayton. And that is the reason that I have come along this evening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And I am very grateful for you taking the time to do so. Very clear, very well put, very understood. The only flippant aside I can give you is that as a Land Rover owner I would look forward to some of the routes that you describe, but I fully understand that there is not very many of those around who might appreciate it from that perspective, but that is a flippant response.

I think your later comments around what an MP may or may not expect are probably not as valuable as the earlier comments about topography which I think are incredibly pertinent. Thank you very much indeed.

MR WILLIAMSON: Thank you for the time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Not at all. I have allowed to go back to their seats but there is only you here so this appears slightly ---

MR WILLIAMSON: That is alright.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But it is okay. The process has been that people have come and said what they wanted to say, I have then asked if there are any points of clarification and typically there have not been. Had you been here earlier on you would have heard a number of local residents from Great Ayton and that area telling me the same sort of thing that you have told me this evening.

MR WILLIAMSON: I am sure.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So I am grateful for you coming along to reinforce that.

What I have then also gone on, as a matter of routine, to say, is to remind people of where we are in this process, how we got to where we are now and where we go next and I would like to do the same with you if I may, just for a moment, because clearly I am of the Commission, I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission but I am entirely independent of the initial proposals, okay? So I am not wedded to them any more than I am to any others. They are initial proposals and they are designed to serve a purpose. That said, there are some things – and you alluded to this in your commentary – there are some things which are fixed which I cannot do anything about. So that electoral quota, and you got the numbers spot on, that is fixed. And some people have challenged, if you like, how we got there. Well, I am sorry, I cannot do anything about that. We are where we are and they are stuck.

Everything else is not fixed. So what colleagues at the Boundary Commission endeavour to do, taking account of the rules in the legislation, and I commend to you the Guide to the 2018 Review, it is called the 2018 Review by the way because we have to report to parliament in 2018. I commend this to you because within it, under the rules, are the things which we have to have regard to, if you will, rather than we cannot change. They include community ties, you have spoken extensively about that. The initial proposals were developed to try and comply with another element in there as well, which is about not splitting wards, and it turns out to be very difficult to do in North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, just because of the sizes of wards and a whole bunch of things. But there is a solution without splitting wards and that is what we are here talking about now. I am only going on about this because, and I have said this to people earlier on today, if it was in my gift to take the weight of evidence about the poor fit of Great Ayton where it is currently put, if it were within my gift to use the weight of that evidence to fix it, this is easy, we just do it. What you have said makes perfect sense. But that is not the whole task that my colleague and I have.

MR WILLIAMSON: Yes, I appreciate that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And I am labouring the point because this consultation goes on until 5 December and if we were to do what you are asking me to do and put Great Ayton back into Richmondshire, I have got to find something else to move to balance it somewhere else. And because local people know the area better than I do, if you have any ideas as to how that might work I would invite you to let us have them.

MR WILLIAMSON: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because clearly if we have got some options which are informed by local opinion, that has got to be better than us sitting in an office somewhere thinking "Well, we'll just take no notice of the North Yorkshire Moors, how big can they be?", you know what I am saying?

MR WILLIAMSON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So if you can give us some solutions then at least we have got those and we can try and put them into the mix. In the absence of those solutions we have got to try and find them ourselves, and I am all up for people helping themselves.

MR WILLIAMSON: I am sure you can appreciate that normal members of the public find it difficult to look at individual populations, sizes and districts and convince you that there is a better fit somewhere else and that the topography of that area is better suited to join in than somewhere else, and why shift Filey out and move things around when it seems as though there is very little reason for it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, I absolutely understand that. All I can guarantee you is we will do our very best for you.

MR WILLIAMSON: That is quite alright, I just could not understand why, from a pure connection point of view, it was felt that it was a fit with Malton and I just could not see it apart from the figures being right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Well, and that is a key thing. I have just said, that is the 'must' bit and ---

MR WILLIAMSON: Which is why I said he may as well just stop off on the way north and take part of Peterborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, I know, I know, and there is all sorts of – if I might put it this way – silly solutions that do that and I am just trying to find the least silly solution for the whole thing. This is appearing flippant, I do not mean to be flippant, I am just trying to express the frustrations that we have got in trying to make the numbers work. But as I say, we will do our very best, and thank you very much, again, for coming along this evening.

MR WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Not at all.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So just for the record it is now just 7 pm at the end of day one of our hearing here in Northallerton. We had a very good attendance this morning and everybody spoke about Great Ayton, without exception. We have had those who had booked, plus one other person in this afternoon and I have had somebody who had previously booked come in this evening at 6.30 pm. We have no more bookings for the rest of the day. On the basis that we have had no other interest this evening I would have taken the decision straight away to adjourn at 7 pm, I have just checked with the three observers from the political representatives and they know of nobody else that is going to come this evening, so on that basis I am going to close now and start again at 9 am in the morning. Good night.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Friday 21 October 2016

Time noted: 7.00 pm

B

MR BOWDEN, 2

D

MR DUFF, 7

H

MR HUDSON, 10, 12
MR HUTCHINGS, 8, 12

J

MR JOHNSON, 8, 9

K

MR KIRK, 5, 7, 9, 10

M

MRS MOORHOUSE, 18, 19

T

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28
THE SECRETARY, 15

U

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER, 15, 16, 17

W

MR WILLIAMSON, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28
MR WOODHEAD, 19, 20