

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

at the

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

THE COTTON EXCHANGE BUILDING, OLD HALL STREET, LIVERPOOL, L3 9JR

ON

THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Mr Neil Ward, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
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Time noted: 10.00 am:

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My apologies for the delayed start but, as many of you will know, we were just waiting until we had a body of speakers that we could start with. Let me formally open the delayed first day of this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituencies in the North West region.

My name is Neil Ward. I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in two tasks, really; first, to chair all the hearings in the North West and, secondly, together with my fellow Assistant Commissioners, Nicholas Elliott and Graeme Clarke, to analyse all the representations we receive about the initial proposals for this region and then present some recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised.

A number of you will know already, but just for those who are new, I have had no hand in the drafting of these proposals. I have been appointed, effectively, as an honest broker to hear the representations and decide whether I should recommend change or not, as the case may be.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff, led by Glenn Reed, who is sitting beside me. Glenn will shortly provide an explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for new constituencies. He will also tell you how you can make written representations between now and the close of the deadline, which is 5 December.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from now until 8.00 pm this evening, and tomorrow it is scheduled to run from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. As you can see, I can vary the timings of these and I will do so if I think we do not have enough speakers to make it worthwhile continuing for the time being.

The one thing that is fixed is that the hearing can only run for two days - it cannot run for a third day - and we will finish at 5 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. At this stage, I will ask Glenn if he would just like to explain the Commission's view on their proposals.

MR REED: Thank you very much, Neil, and good morning everybody. As Neil has mentioned, my name is Glenn Reed and I am a member of the Commission's staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries.

At this hearing, I lead a team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As Neil has already stated, he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and to take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support Neil in carrying out

his role. Please ask one of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

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

We use the European electoral regions as the template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled, not including the two constituencies that are allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation.

This approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counter-proposals that include one or more constituencies being split between the regions, but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional based approach we adopted in formulating our initial proposals.

In considering the composition of each European electoral region, we have noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties. Therefore, we have grouped some local authorities 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. As previously mentioned, we will have 68 constituencies in the North West in our initial proposals, a reduction of seven. We have proposed that the Metropolitan Boroughs of Greater Manchester be combined in a sub-region with the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, the unitary authorities of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester and the boroughs of Halton and Warrington.

We propose two constituencies that contain electors from both Cheshire and Greater Manchester, which combine Altrincham and Knutsford in a constituency and the towns of Bramhall and Poynton in another constituency. Although we have treated Lancashire and Merseyside as separate sub-regions, we have proposed one constituency that crosses the county boundary which combines three wards of the borough of West Lancashire with the town of Southport.

We propose five constituencies entirely contained within the county of Cumbria. 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 ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for electoral registration and returning officers who are responsible for running elections.

It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances will splitting a ward between constituencies be justified and our initial proposals have not done this. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided and the extent of any such ward splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of this 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. As Neil has said, we are consulting on our proposals until Monday 5 December and so there is plenty of time after the 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 throughout the region. You can make written representations to us through our consultation website at www.bce2018.org.uk, and I would urge everyone to submit written representations to us before the deadline of 5 December.

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see, 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 the written representations for a four-week period, during which members of the public have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur during the Spring of next year.

The publication of the hearing records and written representations includes certain personal data of those who have made representations. I, therefore, invite all of those contributing to read the Commission's Data Protection and Privacy Policy, a copy of which we have with us and which is also available on our website.

Before I hand you back to Neil, just a very quick mention about the fire drill. There are no planned fire drills today or tomorrow and so, if we do hear the alarm go, that means that we need to evacuate by the nearest exit. Please do not use the lifts. The assembly point is in the park opposite. Thank you very much. At this stage, I will hand you back to Neil to begin the public hearing and thank you for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Glenn. Just a few points about

process for the discussions here. First of all, this hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals. It is not a place to debate with the Commission the merits of their case, nor is it the place to debate amongst each other the relative merits of speakers' views.

Those who have been in inquiries in the past will know that they are a bit more interrogative. It is not here. There will be an opportunity at the end of each speaker's presentation to ask points of clarification, but I will ask that you do so through me, please, through the Chair.

Finally, I am sure I will not need to make the point too often over these two days, but it is also not the place to make blatant political points. You will be surprised how little weight political points carry in this forum. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a time slot and I will invite you to speak at that time, or as near as I can to that time.

Typically, we allow ten minute slots for speakers. My experience is that not everyone needs ten minutes and there is no need to try and fill the time with any available information you have. If we have a bit of free time, I will allow the presentation to run on but, as a rule, I will expect people to live within the ten-minute timescale.

I can see there are quite a few professional speakers in the room here. There are people who will want to speak who are not used to public speaking. It is not too easy to come up and speak in public fora, especially in big rooms like this. I would just be grateful if everyone could be supportive of any speaker, as you would hope that they are going to be supportive of your views, irrespective of whether you share their views or not.

I think we have got enough business to keep us running until break time, which is currently scheduled for 1.30. If not, I will take a judgment call if and when we run out of speakers. We will have another break later in the afternoon. Before we begin, can I just check if there are any points of clarification on anything Glenn has said or that I have said? (No response).

Then, perhaps I might ask Mr Tyson to lead us off? Thank you very much for bearing with us while we delayed the start but, if you would like to come up to the podium on my right, give your name and full address and then begin whenever you are settled. We will put a map up as and when it is clear where you are going to speak about.

MR TYSON: My name is David Tyson. I live in Ainsdale, Southport. Let me say at the outset, I think the Boundary Commission have acted in accordance with their mandate and have come up with an excellent, yet simple, solution for Southport County Borough.

I am not sure if they are aware that they have also effectively enfranchised all

Southport's Tory and Liberal voters. Since Sefton came into existence, it has largely been a waste of time voting for Tory or Liberal councillors in Southport. Why? Because virtually every resolution they propose is overturned by the Labour majority in Bootle. It is not good when any one party regularly dominates a constituency, as in the case of the existing borough of Sefton.

May I remind you that Labour hold 38 out of 66 seats. This overall majority cascades down through all the sub-committees. In contrast, the proposed boundary changes for Southport County Borough will result in a marginal constituency with every vote counting, an ideal solution which has my full support.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Tyson. I allowed you to make a couple of political points there, but I think it helped set the scene and I did not wish to interrupt. Are there any points anyone would wish to clarify from that presentation? (No response).

Well, thank you very much. It is as important to the Commission that people tell them if they like their proposals, as those people who tell them whether they do not like them and so I am very grateful to you for that. I wonder if I might next ask Mrs Seema Kennedy MP to come forward. Thank you.

MRS KENNEDY (MP for South Ribble): Good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this public hearing. I shall be speaking in relation to the South Ribble constituency in Lancashire. I do not support the Boundary Commission's proposal for South Ribble and, instead, support the Conservative Party's proposal for a South Ribble seat of 77,276 electors.

The Conservative Party accepts the Boundary Commission's proposals that Tarleton, Hesketh Bank and Banks should move into the Southport constituency and that Rufford should move into the West Lancashire one. However, I object most strongly to the inclusion of Eccleston and Mawdesley into the West Lancashire seat. This does not reflect local ties.

It is vital that the Lostock ward, which includes the villages of Croston and Bretherton, remains in the same parliamentary constituency as Eccleston and Mawdesley. Historically, the four villages have always operated together. Indeed, if you look at the gravestones in the beautiful churchyards, you will be astonished by the number of Caunces, Iddons, Daltons, families who have intermarried and lived between the villages for centuries.

The three churches, St Peter's in Mawdesley, St Michael's and All Angels in Croston, and St John's in Bretherton, now operate as one benefice. All four villages in the two wards have streams and culverts which drain into the River Yarrow.

These wards have been prone to flooding, being particularly badly hit in 2012 and again on Boxing Day 2015. Local groups like Croston Flood Relief and Western Drive, Leyland are working together to combat flooding through the whole area. Most of the Eccleston and Mawdesley ward is rural, with farmers having large fields which cross between the Lostock ward and the Eccleston and Mawdesley wards.

The problems of flooding in that area are being tackled by the Environment Agency and it would make no sense for the EA to deal with two different Members of Parliament for the River Yarrow flooding issues. Children from the Eccleston and Mawdesley wards are educated in local primary schools, both Church of England and Roman Catholic, and the overwhelming majority then go on to Bishop Rawstorne Church of England Academy in Croston for their high school.

The residents of Eccleston and Mawdesley, as well as the Lostock ward, use the Chorley and South Ribble Hospital rather than the hospital in Ormskirk or the walk-in centre at Skelmersdale. This is the preferred hospital for the majority of South Ribble constituents. I am regularly in contact with the management of the local NHS Trust and can press constituents' cases effectively.

If Eccleston and Mawdesley were taken into a new West Lancashire seat, then that MP would have to be primarily concentrating on the Ormskirk Hospital rather than the Chorley and South Ribble Hospital. The supermarket, large chemist, library and other local facilities are in Eccleston and serve both the Lostock and Eccleston and Mawdesley wards.

I would like, briefly, to speak about the Boundary Commission's proposals for Bamber Bridge. I object to the Electoral Commission's proposal to split Bamber Bridge up and divide it between different constituencies. Bamber Bridge has a really strong sense of identity and a very successful local football club.

Splitting the town would not be in the best interests of the community. Dividing a community is frustrating for constituents and I support the Conservative Party's proposal to put the whole of Bamber Bridge into the Preston constituency. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Can I ask a couple of questions? Bamber Bridge, I think, is already currently divided between constituencies?

MRS KENNEDY: No, it is all in the Ribble Valley constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, my apologies.

MR WALSH: In fact, in South Ribble Borough Council.

MRS KENNEDY: It is all in one parliamentary constituency at the moment.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. I am sure someone will remind me from the Manchester hearing, but if we tried to link Eccleston and Mawdesley with Lostock, I think that certainly exceeds the quota for South Ribble, as currently defined with Eccleston and Mawdesley. Can someone remind me, if you do not know, what the counter-proposal does to knock-on?

MR WALSH (Conservative Party): John Walsh, New Audley and Bolton, representing the Conservative Party. The Conservative Party proposal is to put Eccleston and Mawdesley with Lostock into its proposed South Ribble constituency, giving an electorate of 77,276 and so it sits within the parameters. That is because Bamber Bridge would be then united in the Preston constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have got it. So that was the ripple effect.

MR WALSH: That is the ripple effect.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We move Bamber Bridge off on the right.

MR WALSH: You move Bamber Bridge out, it links to Preston, it unites Bamber Bridge, as has just been said, but still leaves the two constituencies within the parameters.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is there anybody else who has got any points of clarification they would wish to seek? (No response). In which case, I am grateful to you for coming along this morning.

CLLR SMITH (South Ribble): My name is Philip Smith. My address is Cage Farm, Cage Lane, Whitestake, which is PR4 4JP, which is virtually in the middle of South Ribble. I am a borough councillor on South Ribble Borough Council. I am also Chairman of South Ribble Conservative Association.

While we are broadly in support of the Boundary Commission's proposals for the South Ribble constituency, the proposal to move to Southport constituency Hesketh-with-Becconsall, North Meols and Tarleton is supported. It makes sense to move the Rufford ward in West Lancs to the West Lancs constituency.

The new County Council boundaries put Burscough and Rufford together in a division in West Lancs. The Commission's proposals to leave one ward, Lostock, which is Chorley borough, in South Ribble is supported. The one ward of Eccleston and Mawdesley, again Chorley borough, in West Lancs, is not supported.

The alternative proposal is to move Eccleston and Mawdesley back into the South Ribble constituency, joining the Lostock ward and keeping a strong community

cohesion. South Ribble Borough Council has strong links with the Chorley Borough Council, particularly with our joint shared services. This includes for financial services and accounting, corporate risk management, insurance services and procurement.

These links are growing. Eccleston and Mawdesley ward and Lostock ward look more to South Ribble than they do to West Lancs. Bamber Bridge West should join Bamber Bridge East in another constituency, possibly back with Preston. Over £3 million is now being spent improving the public transport links and highways' improvements from Bamber Bridge to Preston. That is being spent at this moment. Work has started.

The alternative proposal complies with all the rules in the legislation: The electorate between the two figures of 71,031 and 78,507; keeps together geographical locations with size, shape and accessibility; minimum changes to local ties. That is my presentation, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Smith. I have no points of clarification. Are there any points anyone wishes to raise?

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan, 56 Marcroft, Whitefield in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury. You mentioned about transport links between South Ribble and Preston, there used to be a bus going from Walton-le-Dale to Preston, you know, a pick-up bus; does that still run, do you know?

CLLR SMITH: As far as I am aware, yes, Walton-le-Dale is linked by a bus route to Preston, yes.

MR LARGAN: Thank you.

CLLR SMITH: But Bamber Bridge is the main transport driver, if you like, links from that area into Preston itself.

MR LARGAN: You were saying about £3 million had been invested in terms of improving the transport links between Bamber Bridge and Preston, could you just expand on that a little, please?

CLLR SMITH: Yes, I can with pleasure, Sir, yes. It is part of what is a Lancashire, Preston and South Ribble city deal, which is £430 million worth of investment into the various areas with a billion pound of GVA in that area. The transport link, which is the highways' link between Bamber Bridge and Preston, is a vital part of that investment into that area.

MR LARGAN: Thank you.

CLLR SMITH: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I do have a question, now, my apologies.

CLLR SMITH: That is all right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Did I hear you right that, in the context of that new road works that are going on, one of the possibilities you were suggesting might be that Bamber Bridge should link up with, West and East should link, and did you say possibly into Preston constituency?

CLLR SMITH: Well, that would be a view. Bamber Bridge East and Bamber Bridge West certainly should link together, I think and, with the amount of money that is being spent on the highways and transport links, which is a direct link to Preston, that would be my suggestion.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much

MR WALSH: Sir, can I follow up on one point. John Walsh. Bamber Bridge East, can you just explain its relationship to the wards of Coupe Green & Gregson Lane and Samlesbury & Walton in the context of the highway programme you have just been talking about, please?

CLLR SMITH: Yes, there are links definitely with Higher Walton and there are some again strong links with those areas, but the strongest link for me is the transport link directly with Preston, into Preston. I think you then have to get another bus out of Preston into these areas. There is no direct link there but you would have to get to Preston first.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our difficulty is that Clitheroe and Colne is a long raking constituency, is it not, proposed constituency?

MR WALSH: I will go straight back to certainly the importance of those four wards together.

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

CLLR SMITH: Thank you, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Martin Boardman, yes.

CLLR BOARDMAN (Eccleston and Mawdesley): Good morning. My name is Martin Boardman. I am the ward councillor for Eccleston and Mawdesley and, unfortunately, I too do not support the Commission's proposal for the Eccleston and Mawdesley ward.

The wards of Eccleston and Mawdesley are, geographically, in a fortunate position. Actually, could I just ask one question. Could you put the slide for the proposed West Lancs up there because it gives you some reference, if that is okay? Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And you should have, on your podium there, a laser pointer. If you press the button on the top, that should be able to highlight the points that you want to make.

CLLR BOARDMAN: Ah, you are right. I might not use it but I will see. Fortunately, because it is a delightful place to live and work, sitting in the rural Lancashire flat lands, known well for its rich, mature soil and their ability to yield an abundance of crop year on year. Fortunate as well because we are equidistant, so just seven miles, from the smaller towns of Leyland and Chorley and in some areas of the ward from Ormskirk. It is also well-served by the surrounding large towns of Preston, Wigan and Southport and, would you believe, exactly the same distance to the centres of Manchester and Liverpool.

I would quickly just point at where we are. We are here. Those of us that live in the ward joke that it feels like living in the centre of the universe, with so much choice around us. This being said, being in a geographical centre of a number of borough councils and parliamentary constituencies means that Eccleston and Mawdesley standing in these areas has been, in the past, somewhat of a mystery, even to the people who live there.

Currently, the wards are served by Chorley Borough Council, it is in the parliamentary ward of South Ribble, Mawdesley has a postal town as Ormskirk and a Liverpool postcode; whereas Eccleston, just two miles away, has the postal town of Preston and a Preston postcode. Just to add to the confusion, Mawdesley also has a Southport telephone number. Confused? Yes, I am, and so have the residents been for the best part of 42 years.

It will come as no surprise that the wards were once part of the West Lancashire parliamentary constituency. Not at the last boundary review, but at the one before did we come into South Ribble. I believe these wards are used as the balancing number between several constituencies of South Ribble, West Lancs and Chorley. Quite frankly, the residents of the ward that I represent are fed up with what appears to be the constant meddling.

The question is: Where do the people of Eccleston and Mawdesley feel like they want to be part of and who should represent them in Parliament? We believe we have stronger links with our neighbouring villages of Croston - I will just point to it, which is here - Bretherton - which again is just over here - Charnock and Heskin - which actually sits around about here, - than we do with Parbold - which is here - Skelmersdale - which is here - and Burscough - which is here.

As a serving Chorley councillor, I know that the two councils of South Ribble and Chorley, geographically close together, are working on several joint initiatives and service sharing and partnerships. South Ribble is a constituency made up of mainly rural areas, farming communities and small businesses. I believe that this fits better with Eccleston and Mawdesley than an urban area that contains Ormskirk and Skelmersdale.

I and my family live in the ward. Both myself and my wife work in the ward. We have two young children, aged 8 and 11. Both have been very well-served by the local village primary school, as have many children in the area. In our ward we have four small village primary schools: St Peter's CofE; St Peter and Paul's RC, both in Mawdesley; and St Mary's C of E, and Eccleston County Primary.

All are the main feeder schools to Bishop Rawstone CE High School in the adjacent village of Croston, where the majority of the children attend, Croston being both in the Chorley borough and the South Ribble constituency of Lostock. The nearest local Catholic secondary school is St Mary's in Leyland.

Again, South Ribble, where a few children from St Peter and Paul's Primary and some children from Eccleston attend each year. All the four primary schools are also part of the local small schools cluster, Sports Group, set up by the actual schools themselves of Heskin, Charnock, Eccleston, Croston, Bretherton and Mawdesley. This is a year on year partnership, run entirely by these schools working together.

Both schools in Mawdesley use the excellent South Ribble Community Sports Service Team to provide after school and extracurricular activities to the children. Eccleston and Mawdesley people see themselves as intrinsically linked with the other cluster of small villages in the area; those to the north with Croston and Bretherton, and the villages to the east of Heskin and Charnock.

These villages are currently represented by two separate Members of Parliament in Seema Kennedy and Lindsay Hoyle. How is it, therefore, practical and sensible to then add a third MP into the mix to represent a cluster of villages no larger than six miles square? As ward councillor and representative, I would urge you to look again at the proposal to move Eccleston and Mawdesley into the West Lancashire parliamentary constituency and link it with Lostock where it feels well-served, comfortable and fitting within South Ribble.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I have no points of clarification, does anyone else? Mr Walsh at the front here.

MR WALSH: John Walsh. Can you just confirm, please, that the Lostock ward and the Eccleston and Mawdesley ward sit in the same county division?

CLLR BOARDMAN: They do indeed, Chorley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council.

MR WALSH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The gentleman, there.

CLLR GREEN (Leyland South West): Good afternoon. Michael Green, borough councillor and county councillor. Thank you for the presentation of Cllr Boardman. Can I just make one point of clarification, please? You have made reference to the constituency in which Eccleston and Mawdesley sat previously up to 2005. My recollection is it was actually part of Chorley constituency rather than West Lancs up to 2005.

CLLR BOARDMAN: Okay, I stand corrected on that, Chair.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, that is very helpful. There are no other points, thank you very much indeed.

CLLR BOARDMAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What about now, Mr Pearmain

MR PEARMAN: Good afternoon, I am Alan Pearmain. I live at 50 Marine Gate Apartments, Southport, PR9 0EF. First of all, on Southport I think it is wonderful that Ms Seema Kennedy is losing Tarleton, Hesketh and Banks into Southport because, not only does it improve Southport, it means that Formby is kept as one, which I think is one of your main goals, is it not, is to keep places united?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It may be one of the Commission's main goals.

MR PEARMAN: Sorry, okay, wording. I am also Deputy Chairman Membership of South Ribble Conservative Association. I would like to agree with the previous five speakers that Eccleston and Mawdesley should not be taken out of South Ribble and put into West Lancs. In my opinion, the 4,964 - 964 was my last three numbers in the army, so I like that number -- electors of Eccleston and Mawdesley are just numbers. You are using it to balance your, well, what I would describe as a carbuncle that you are creating between Preston, Ribble Valley and the end of South Ribble. Whatever you are trying to do, I do not think it is right that it affects --

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I will make it easier, for every time you say "your", I will assume you mean the BCE.

MR PEARMAN: Oh, yes, yes. It is affecting Eccleston and Mawdesley, really, whereas you have no beef against Eccleston and Mawdesley and if you went there you would see it is a lovely village. I think you are doing it to try to create a figures result for what you are going to do in the Preston area. Hopefully, you will keep Bamber Bridge in - I did - which again, as in Formby, is one of the Commission's main desires.

I would like to think, if I can approach this from a different perspective of reason about Eccleston and Mawdesley through the perspective of a local football referee if you would allow me. I relocated to South Ribble after 17 years as a soldier and a further 25 years as an expat and I have no local connections whatsoever up here.

The reason I am up here is my wife comes from Liverpool. I soon learnt, refereeing in the local area, there were nice places and lesser nice places to visit. My assessment marks as a referee were not consistent, as was my enjoyment. The 25 quid that I used to get for refereeing was not worth what I was shouted at. I then suddenly twigged it was my attitude, why the games were getting messed up and things did not go right.

Let me just sort of explain that. I was relaxed and happy, arriving after a 45-minute drive from the outskirts of Preston deep into the jungles of Bretherton and Eccleston - that is an exaggeration - or I was being delayed by a couple of girls riding horses, or cars parked outside a church in Eccleston on Sunday mornings, to find when I got to the ground that the nets had not even been put up.

There were dog walkers on the park. On the children's playground, parents with their kids getting a little bit of outside entertainment. I would walk over there and I would chat to the groundsman and he would have some complaint or something happening.

You compare this to the places towards West Lancs where you have a 20-minute drive down the motorway to a town famous for its many roundabouts. You arrive at the ground that has got 12 football pitches run by the local authorities. Parking is chaotic. The car parks have holes in the ground. You enter the changing rooms which are like, do you know what brick-shit houses are? I do not know.

But they are like a jail. They are. They are concrete and cement from 40 years ago. Health and safety everywhere. You have got players shouting as to which pitch they are on. It is madness all around as the players strut their stuff, adopting macho stances that echo the environment - and this is important - they live in. Some games are brutal but the players involved love it. They enjoy it. That is part of their life and they tell me, "Referee [I cannot do a northern accent so I will not even try] football is a man's game." So we accept that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you just remind me where you are talking about at the moment, which is the tougher area compared to?

MR PEARMAN: I am comparing Ecclestone and Mawdesley, which is the fine place.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: With?

MR PEARMAN: With the other places in West Lancs, where the football games might take place.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: For example?

MR PEARMAN: Ormsk, Skelm.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR PEARMAN: Around there. You have got a different contrast, hence I take most of my games in the sticks. I should say places like Ecclestone and Mawdesley where life is easier and less stressful. As I say, I have exaggerated the discrepancies but you get my gist of what I am trying to say.

Football in South Ribble is dominated by the Lancashire Football Association having its headquarters in Leyland South Ribble. The Mid Lancs Football League is based in Preston, as are most of the officials and the referees. It is natural that football people living in the outlying villages and small towns, such as Ecclestone and Mawdesley, talk about Tom Finney and they look towards South Ribble for their football. They do not go towards the leagues in Ormsk and Burscough.

I am contrasting the difference in living in Ecclestone and Mawdesley with going to these other places. So why would you want to move a village which is content and has the same attitude in Bretherton and Croston and the rest of rural South Ribble? We all play in one major league. We do not take these West Lancs people in. We play and we develop that way. People go towards Leyland and South Ribble, not the other direction. Here endeth my lesson.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You never know, there may be questions.

MR PEARMAN: There cannot be any questions after that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am very grateful for anyone who paints pictures for me about what life is like in rural or urban areas.

MR PEARMAN: But you got it though, did you not?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Even brick whatever they were called, you know, I am not quite sure. I have no queries, does anyone else have any points of

clarification? (No response) Thank you very much indeed.

MR PEARMAN: You are welcome.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Green, would you like to come forward now. If you could give us your full name and your address? Thank you very much.

CLLR GREEN: Good afternoon, Sir. My full name is Michael Anthony Green. I am the borough councillor for Moss Side ward and the county councillor for Leyland South West and Deputy Chairman Political of South Ribble Conservative Association.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, but could you give your address and postcode as well, please?

CLLR GREEN: Yes, certainly. My address is 1 Wheatfield, Leyland, Lancashire, PR26 7AD.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

CLLR GREEN: The joys of going last means that, sadly, I am going to repeat many of the points which have gone before me and so apologies in advance for that. Thank you, Sir, for giving everyone the opportunity to speak at these public hearings.

I have to say it makes a refreshing change from your sister body, the Local Government Boundary Commission, which sadly does not afford interested parties a similar opportunity. Thank you also for the work which the Boundary Commission have already done, to date, to produce your initial proposals. This will, without doubt, have been a considerable task.

I speak today in two capacities. Firstly, as Deputy Chairman Political of my local constituency association and, secondly, as the county councillor for Leyland South West. Whilst there are many comments which I could make on the initial proposals regarding the South Ribble area, I shall focus my comments principally upon the Eccleston and Mawdesley ward, and, secondly, upon Bamber Bridge.

First of all, I wish to comment upon the Boundary Commission's proposals regarding the suburban village of Bamber Bridge. I have served as a South Ribble borough councillor for 14 years. For part of that time, I was a cabinet member with responsibility for community engagement.

The Boundary Commission is proposing to remove Bamber Bridge from the parliamentary constituency of Ribble Valley, to split the village in half and then divide it between the new constituency of Clitheroe and Colne and the constituency of South Ribble. From my experience, and with respect, this will be completely illogical. Bamber

Bridge is a village with a very strong sense of community with a common identity.

The local residents, who are known as 'Briggers', have a tremendous pride in their village. They all use the same community facilities such as shops, churches and schools at a local level, whilst looking towards the neighbouring city of Preston for offerings such as larger shops, a variety of entertainment and further and higher educational establishments.

To draw an artificial line right through the heart of Bamber Bridge would ignore two key considerations which the Boundary Commission is obliged by the Constituencies Act 2011 to take into account, namely, the boundaries of existing constituencies, and any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies. Prior to the 2010 General Election, the whole of Bamber Bridge was in the parliamentary constituency of Preston. To me, this would seem the logical constituency to which both electoral wards in Bamber Bridge should return.

Turning now to the ward of Eccleston and Mawdesley, the Boundary Commission is proposing to remove this Chorley Borough Council ward from the parliamentary constituency of South Ribble and to move it into the West Lancashire constituency. This would have the effect of dividing the villages of Eccleston and Mawdesley from the villages of Croston and Bretherton, the latter two of which make up the ward of Lostock. Those two villages would, therefore, remain in South Ribble. The four villages would be divided between two constituencies.

As Deputy Chairman Political, I have extensive experience of speaking to residents in these four villages. There is absolutely no doubt that these villages have always worked together as one rural community. The residents attend the same churches, send their children to the same schools and rely on the same local shops and community facilities.

When a boundary review takes place, the focus should be on people not numbers and not politics. It would be wholly wrong to divide this rural community between two constituencies and it should be maintained in its entirety as part of the South Ribble constituency. It should be noted that all four of the villages of Eccleston, Mawdesley, Croston and Bretherton are part of the same Lancashire County Council division.

Further, the Local Government Boundary Commission has once again kept the whole community together in one division in its boundary review, which has recently been completed. There is a very good reason for this and that is, namely, to keep the local ties within this community. As I have said, I am the County Councillor for Leyland South West, which is the neighbouring division.

As such, I am fully aware of the very close links between the residents of Eccleston and Mawdesley and the town of Leyland. History will teach us, and if you look back as far

as the Domesday book the Leyland Hundred is listed and it included Eccleston, Mawdesley, Croston and Bretherton. Many residents on the Eccleston and Mawdesley ward either work or used to work in the neighbouring industrial town of Leyland, for key local employers such as Leyland trucks and at the rubber works. The residents visit Leyland for many local shops and for Leyland Market.

There are also very strong educational links, as young people from Eccleston and Mawdesley attend the Sixth Form College and the Catholic High School which are both in Leyland. These strong local ties between the four villages and with the neighbouring town of Leyland mean that Eccleston and Mawdesley should definitely remain part of the parliamentary constituency of South Ribble.

I would, once again, refer the Boundary Commission to the rules of the Constituencies Act 2011, which require the Commission to take into account local government boundaries, boundaries of existing communities and any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies. The legislation clearly supports my belief that moving Eccleston and Mawdesley into West Lancashire would be totally illogical, as the links with that constituency are extremely weak.

The current proposal from the Boundary Commission would significantly diminish the feeling amongst residents of belonging to one community within the present constituency. I would, therefore, respectfully ask the Boundary Commission to amend their proposal for the ward of Eccleston and Mawdesley and to ensure that this ward remains within the parliamentary constituency of South Ribble. Thank you for considering my comments.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Green. The laughter that came out when you mentioned the Domesday Book is because the 11th Century is not quite the furthest back we have been, but it is pretty close to the furthest back we have been in support of arguments. You need not apologise for repeating arguments that have gone before. You have added to it and improved the argument and so I am very grateful for that. I have no particular queries. I see two in the front here.

MR WALSH: John Walsh. You refer to the very strong links between Bamber Bridge West and Bamber Bridge East, you will be aware the Conservative Party schemes links also Coupe Green & Gregson Lane, Samlesbury & Walton with those two wards as a proposed move to the Preston constituency; do you see similar links between all four of those wards?

CLLR GREEN: Absolutely, I do. It is, effectively, one community and the residents from Coupe Green etc., it is a much more rural community but they use Bamber Bridge for their shops and the local facilities. There are very much strong links between those communities and, indeed, the Local Government Boundary Commission has confirmed

that recently with county divisions which support that pattern.

MR WALSH: That is a single county division, is it?

CLLR GREEN: Not completely, obviously because of the numbers, but the Coupe Green and Samlesbury area and most of Bamber Bridge are all together as one division.

MR WALSH: Thank you for that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask for myself then. So the whole corner, Walton-le-Dale, West, East, Bamber Bridge West and East, maybe even Lostock Hall and them, or are you drawing the line arbitrarily between all these areas?

MR WALSH: Because of the numbers, the Conservative Party proposals takes the two Bamber Bridge's, Coupe Green & Gregson Lane and Samlesbury & Walton as a block of four wards linked through to Preston.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I will ask Mr Green, he will know, are they really extensions of Preston these days or are they separate from Preston, separate identities from Preston?

MR WALSH: Bamber Bridge links through very powerfully with the road network. If you look at the road network, Sir, you will see that there are very powerful links and there are bus networks which link through.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, but it is not part of a sprawl coming out of Preston.

MR WALSH: It is not a sprawl.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: They might join but only because both are growing, or what have you?

CLLR GREEN: It is separate from Preston but, inevitably, as a city their offers are the bigger shops and the education opportunities, the night-time economy, those things of that nature which Bamber Bridge residents tend to focus towards Preston if they go anywhere for those facilities.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, understood.

SIR ROBERT ATKINS: Robert Atkins. In this context, a former MP for South Ribble but representing North West Conservatives. Cllr Green, can you confirm, I should have asked this actually of everyone who spoke representing South Ribble, particularly the

Member of Parliament, would you emphasise for the benefit of all concerned that this constituency is South Ribble not Ribble South and that you would join with me and the Member of Parliament in ensuring that the Commission, whoever it is, understands that and makes sure that the press and others get that message clearly, South Ribble not Ribble South?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, I let you carry on, even though it was not a clarification but I am very grateful for that.

CLLR GREEN: Absolutely, it does annoy many residents when they see Ribble South and so I agree completely.

MR PEARMAN: Alan Pearman, 50 Marine Gate, Southport. Michael, relating to that argument that Preston was part of was part of Bamber Bridge, I think the joining part of it is the Capital Centre, is it not? Capital Centre is on the outside of Preston as you come up to the Bridge, then you go into Bamber Bridge and so it is all one.

CLLR GREEN: No, the Capital Centre is in South Ribble.

MR PEARMAN: Yes, but it leads on, does it not?

CLLR GREEN: But the links between the two is that Bamber Bridge was part of Preston constituency previously and, as I have said, has those natural links towards Preston.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, I have got that, thank you. Are there any other points anyone wishes to clarify? (No response) No, thank you very much, indeed, Mr Green. I am grateful to you for coming. Yvonne Legerton, are you ready to speak?

MS LEGERTON: Okay, thank you. My name is Yvonne Legerton. I am the Assistant Exec Director of Governance and the Monitoring Officer at Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. I am making this submission on behalf of the Council, and the address is Archway Road, Huyton, L36 9YU. A detailed written submission will be sent to the Commission before the deadline. However, today, I will provide an outline of the Council's position.

Last week, it was agreed at the full Council meeting that we would, as an authority, support in full the initial proposals put forward by the Boundary Commission. The reasons for this support include the following facts. The Council accepts the purpose of the Review and believe the Commission's initial proposals achieve those objectives in terms of the reasons and the purpose of the Review.

The objectives are achieved in a way that reflect local considerations, community

needs, townships and longstanding ties. These proposals work for the borough of Knowsley and our communities and we are quite clear on that. The proposals recognise and retain the identity of the borough. They acknowledge existing geographical and transport links.

The proposals minimise the risk of voter confusion, as they do not change any of the Knowsley parliamentary constituencies. In addition, it is noted that these initial proposals for the borough of Knowsley replicate the Boundary Commission's revised and final proposals from the 2013 Review which, as we know, was subsequently shelved.

The revised proposals which we put forward at that time, and which were subsequently adopted by the Commission, received an extremely positive response from the Knowsley community. We had numerous residents, community groups, key partners and businesses making submissions in support of those plans at the time.

As I say, these initial proposals, as they affect the borough of Knowsley, do replicate the 2013 review. Early feedback that we have received from those same groups, since the 2018 Review proposals were published, suggest that once again there will be widespread public support from within our community.

The fact that the proposals respect and do not recommend change to the parliamentary boundaries for the borough is particularly important at this time for Knowsley. The reason for that is, following on from a local government boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission, the Council's size has recently changed from 21 wards and 63 elected members to 15 wards and 45 elected members.

Consequently, in May of this year all ward boundaries within the borough changed and the majority of our electorate are now in new or newly named wards. Further consequential attempts to town council boundaries' warding arrangements will be enacted in 2019.

To impose further changes at parliamentary constituency level that will affect the borough of Knowsley would give significant risk of voter confusion and democratic disengagement. We, therefore, appreciate that the Commission's proposals retain the status quo for the borough's parliamentary constituencies and, in doing so, avoids this risk.

Just one further point that is related to this that we will be including in our written submission and we cannot ignore the fact that we have had recent local government ward boundary changes within the borough, and it is acknowledged that the Commission is required to use the local ward boundaries that were in force as at May 2015 rather than the new wards which we introduced in May 2016.

It should, however, be noted that these recent local ward boundary changes did result in two of our new borough wards being split between two existing parliamentary constituencies. In view of the requirement of the Commission to use what we call our "old" ward boundaries, this existing split ward position is retained within the Commission's initial proposals.

We have looked at this issue in great detail and do not believe a better alternative exists which would meet the criteria of the review in respect of constituency size and all the other supporting factors. We do not see any value in objecting to a small element of the overall proposal, as we are not able to suggest a viable alternative.

Given that the Commission's proposals would avoid electors having their constituency changed, the Council accepts the Commission's proposals maintain constituency for those communities and that this split will continue to be managed at a local level.

Just in summary, Knowsley Council fully supports the Boundary Commission's initial proposals and, as mentioned earlier, we will also be making a full written submission to that effect. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Just on your split wards now, are you able to tell me where that occurs? We have probably got three maps running in our heads here.

MS LEGERTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because you have got the existing constituency.

MS LEGERTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have got the Council, we have got the IP and now you have got the Boundary Commission changes. Can you tell me where the changes most affect us in relation to which wards on this?

MS LEGERTON: We have got some maps that we can hand out and we can go through in much more detail, obviously, in our submission but, just in summary, if you look at the boundary between St Helens South and Whiston constituency and the Garston and Halewood constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you tell me roughly where they are?

MS LEGERTON: So the Old Halewood North ward and Whiston South ward, I think they ran coterminous with the parliamentary constituency boundaries and the Commission has reflected them in these initial proposals. What we now have is a new

Whiston and Crompton Borough ward which takes in a little bit of both of those old ward arrangements. We have got approximately 120 electors in this new ward which are included in the Garston and Halewood constituency, and 8,086 from this ward are included in the St Helens and South Whiston constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, I am grateful for that.

MS LEGERTON: As I say, 120 electors. It is, you know, something that we can obviously work with. The other split ward in the east of the borough is where the Knowsley constituency joins the St Helens South and Whiston constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MS LEGERTON: Again, the old ward was Prescott west and Prescott East. Ward boundaries were coterminous with the parliamentary constituencies. What we now have is a new Prescott North ward which actually cuts that in half. We have got over 5,000 electors in the Knowsley constituency within that new ward, and we have got 2,500 electors in the new borough ward which are in the St Helens South constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MS LEGERTON: That is in position at the moment. It works okay. The MPs work together. From a returning officer point of view, there are no issues.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are always likely to have a fluid movement, whether it is on this or electoral roll changes during the period. I think we can only take whatever point in time we have, and that is both linked to 2015 rather than later.

MS LEGERTON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any points of clarification anyone wishes to seek? (No response). Thank you very much indeed.

MS LEGERTON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I do not think we have anyone in the room who wishes to speak at the moment. I will just check. Mr Poulson is not here, is he? (No response). In which case, I am going to suggest that we adjourn until 1 o'clock and then, after Mr Poulson, unless there are other speakers, we will break for lunch until half 2. Thank you very much indeed.

After a short break

Time noted: 1.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The next speaker has not arrived now so, rather than keep everyone waiting, I think we will adjourn for lunch and meet again at half 2. Thank you. Enjoy the sunshine.

After the luncheon adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for resuming. I see we have our next speaker, Luciana Berger. Would you like to come up? Whilst you are doing so, you were not here this morning but just a reminder. I know you were here in 2011. The rules are fairly clear. You make your presentation. We listen. People ask clarification, if they wish. We do not have a debate. We do not have an argument and we do not make any overtly political points. That apart, it is nice and easy. If you could give your full name and address, please?

MRS BERGER (MP for Liverpool Wavertree): Of course. My name is Luciana Berger. I am currently the Member of Parliament for Liverpool Wavertree. My work address is the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. In stark contrast, I think, to the evidence I gave last time, I only have a few remarks to make. I think last time it was a lot busier.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It was.

MRS BERGER: I was anticipating a small slot and I do not really have many long remarks, just a few reflections to share. I know that you like to hear both challenges to the proposals but also presentations in support and so I thought it was important that I should make those representations today. I just wanted to put on record my thanks, to welcome both the clear and comprehensive way in which the Commission has set out these proposals.

I think the notice which we have been given and also the materials that we were given which have been even more helpful than we were provided with last time. I think it is important that that is put on the record. I also welcome the Commission's efforts to stimulate and encourage public participation in the process and to consult with all political parties.

I know there has been a great deal of interest across the North West. I have been to a number of meetings already within my own party and I know that has been replicated. Obviously, in some areas there will be different ideas and views compared to my own but, again, this is a different set of proposals from those that we were presented with last time, very distinct in fact.

The case that was made last time is not relevant now because the proposals are so different to the ones we were discussing a number of years ago. I am very grateful for

the opportunity to join you today and, very briefly, to share my views on that. I know that we are not allowed to make political statements. If I am allowed to just to say that, obviously, the challenge for us here locally is that there are many people, particularly within Liverpool, that are not included in the figures.

Particularly as the constituency MP, there are many of my constituents who did not make it onto the register for one reason or another. If I reflect on one of my wards currently within Liverpool Wavertree, Picton ward, two-thirds of that ward changes every three years because of people moving around and transition and particularly within the private rented sector.

I just thought it was important that you knew that in the context of the decisions and reflections that you are making, that in some parts of the country, particularly here locally, we have lower levels of voter registration than in some parts. Even within my own constituency, I can see a massive gap and distinction between some wards compared to others. It is unfortunate that we know, at the very least, that there are at least two million people that are missing from your figures in terms of the boundaries being redrawn at this moment in time, compared to the figures that were agreed when this piece of legislation was put forward.

If I can just very briefly reflect on the proposals that have been put forward for Liverpool. I speak as a Liverpool MP and I am not in a place to be able to reflect on other proposals for wider Merseyside. I think the three seats that have been put forward to replace the current arrangement are very clear successors to the existing constituencies within the remit that you have been given and the constraints that you have to determine those seats, and without making political points.

Obviously, as presented, Liverpool Wavertree will remain intact but gains two wards. I think the two wards that have been proposed to be added to Liverpool Wavertree make sense, both Greenbank ward, and Tuebrook and Stoneycroft ward. There are many people that reside in those two areas that actually think I am their MP when, in fact, I am not, because there is a natural geographic connection between those wards and the wider constituency.

The borders of Greenbank ward, particularly along Smithdown Road, naturally people feel that they are in my constituency when, as I said, currently they are not. Tuebrook and Stoneycroft, my office currently is literally on the border and, again, many people just over the border, not just because of the location of my office but, more broadly, see a more natural connection with the Old Swan ward.

If there was going to be a proposal for any wards to join that constituency, I can understand why they have been proposed, not just for numerical reasons but also for the geographical reasons that they present. I welcome the fact that the new Liverpool Riverside, as redrawn, includes 88.1 per cent of the current electorate, while Liverpool

West Derby constituency maintains 84.8 per cent of the current constituency.

I know that you will, I believe at least tomorrow, be having evidence from at least one of those neighbouring MPs as well and you will hear perhaps more detail about reflections on the proposals for one of those constituencies. I think it is a sensible proposal and it reflects the Commission's remit to take into account geographic circumstances; the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency; local Government boundaries, and that is obviously particularly relevant, not for the next year because we do not have any local government elections but after next year; and, also, looking at the existing boundaries of constituencies, and any local ties that would be broken by changes to those constituencies.

As proposed, if I was going to do it, I think I can understand the decisions that have been made. I think they have been made again within the constraints that you are having to work with in the best way possible. Again, that is in stark contrast to the initial proposals that we started with at the beginning of the process last time.

I also note the fact that, broadly - and I stress the word "broadly" - that there has been support from across Merseyside for the Boundary Commission's proposals. Particularly within Liverpool, I know from our interparty engagement, not to speak on behalf of those other parties and you will hear from them, but I know broadly within specifically Liverpool that those proposals as put forward have been supported. You will hear that echoed and no doubt by others as well. I just wanted to put that on record for the purpose of your evidence sessions.

I know you have got a challenge on your hands. I know that what you are faced with is not an easy task and, politically, we will have our disagreements about whether we should be even here in the first place. I did think it was important to share with you in support of what has been put forward so far and, particularly, just to highlight some of the challenges that we have here, not just in this area but right across the country in certain metropolitan areas and, in particular, wards with issues around voter registration to make you aware that we are making those decisions.

Obviously, there are many people that are missing and will not, essentially, technically, be included even though as constituency MPs we still have a responsibility to make sure the voices of those people are heard. I am very grateful for the opportunity and thanks for allowing me to give my evidence today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I will ask whether anyone else has any points of clarification on that? (No response). It is a fact that, and we will hear from time to time that any electoral rolls are either under or overstated - normally understated is the case. The reality is that across the whole country we are going to hear that and so either everything will change or nothing. I think we are committed to the electoral roll that we have and that is the one we will stick with. Other

than that, thank you very much. So far, there has been no dissent around Liverpool but early days yet. Thank you very much.

MRS BERGER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As it happens, I do not think we have any planned speaker for another hour or so. Is there anyone in the room who I have not asked to speak who would like to speak at the moment? (No response). In which case, then, I am afraid, as we have done and will do again this afternoon I am sure, I am going to adjourn until 3.45, with apologies for those who keep walking up and down the stairs. Thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 3.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are going to resume again now and would Mr John Walsh like to come up and speak?

MR WALSH: I have been a councillor in Bolton variously since 1975 and in 2011 was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bolton for services to Bolton and so I am pretty well-grounded in Bolton's history, past and current. I have previously been Chairman of the Conservative Party in the North West and have been involved in a number of these inquiries. I think the first parliamentary one I did was in the early 1980s, so I have conducted a number and I hope I have been consistent in my arguments throughout.

I am going to principally deal with Bolton and Bury as referred to by Mr Pratt in his opening on the first day in Manchester, but I will allude to and make references to other aspects of this recent hearing. I want to begin with the township of Radcliffe which was an urban district in its own right until 1973 until it was incorporated into the Metropolitan Borough of Bury. It, effectively, sits as four wards and the block of those four wards I think is very important.

We have heard reference in the Oldham case to the importance of keeping townships like Saddleworth together, of Royton. Reference has been made in written representations, and no doubt will come up again, to Formby. Certainly, at the last inquiry that was very important. We heard about the issues of an orphan ward in Dalston in the Carlisle situation.

I think the importance of keeping together blocks of wards - and Bamber Bridge again is an example we have had today - is something that we should not underestimate. I would argue that Radcliffe East, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe West, sit in with Pilkington

Park, sits as an important block that needs to be treated as a single block.

For that reason, I am going to start with the Commission's proposal for the Farnworth constituency, in which the Commission propose to include one of those Radcliffe wards. My view is that that is inappropriate because it breaks the ties to which I was referring to a few months ago.

As a counter-proposal, I want to offer an alternative to that. I also want to pick up on something that the Member of Parliament said very strongly on day 1 in Manchester, when you will recall that Yasmin Qureshi, the Member of Parliament for Bolton South East, made a very clear point that the Great Lever and the Rumworth wards should not be split from Bolton South East.

They have a community of interest. Their social demographics are very similar. There are mosques and churches which cross the boundary. Parts of Great Lever was formally in the Farnworth district when Farnworth was a borough before a metropolitan borough and, as such, a strong community of interest between those two wards.

We also heard from Ms Qureshi that the Tonge with the Haulgh ward sits very strongly with Great Lever, crossing the Manchester roads which forms in part of the boundary and the major shopping outlet at Burnden Park, the former football ground, with an Asda and other stores, is a central focal point for many of the shopping trips for residents of Rumworth, of Great Lever and of Tonge with the Haulgh.

For that reason, I think we have a block there of three wards which ought to sit together in a single constituency. Because the links with Great Lever, Rumworth and Farnworth are so powerful, therefore, in my view they sit with the Farnworth core as having that stronger community of interest. We have primary schools in that area, St Michael's Primary School, Bishop Bridgeman's Church of England Primary School, the Clarendon Primary School, the whole range of primary schools, the majority of whom feed through to St James' Secondary School which is in the Harper Green ward, linked to Farnworth or the Harper Green school itself in that area. So very powerful links in that part of the world.

Therefore, I think that it is appropriate that those should be linked together. Interestingly, there is one ward which has less of a link with the Farnworth area and that is the Little Lever ward. If you look at the Little Lever ward there is a river valley, the former canal and the A666 which provides something of an open space between the Great Lever, Farnworth and Little Lever wards. That actually was formerly a chemical works and still creates problems with leeching of chemicals from that major site. It is largely public open space, and although the road over Little Lever to Bolton via Manchester Road comes through there, there is a clear and distinct break in that community.

There is, however, at the other end of Little Lever, a very powerful link between Little Lever and Darcy Lever, as the ward is known then and the Brightmet ward. The Brightmet ward was, until the last local government review, formally Brightmet come Darcy Lever and so Darcy Lever was the fulcrum of those two wards.

Coincidentally, had I not been here this afternoon at this very time, I would have been sitting in Bolton Planning Committee debating a planning application in the Brightmet ward for a cycle track, which has been called in by the councillors of Little Lever because it impinges upon that ward. There, you see a very strong link between the Little Lever and the Brightmet wards through Darcy Lever, which has been, as I said, linked to both.

In fact, if I could refer you to paragraph AC215 of your report of the 2011 public inquiry you will find that the Member of Parliament made reference to the strong links between Brightmet and Little Lever at that time, so this is not just a recent innovation. It is something which is historic and has longstanding views.

For that reason, I would argue that it would be more appropriate to keep the block of four wards of Radcliffe together, to link Great Lever and Rumworth with Bolton South East, retaining their links, and move Little Lever into a Bolton North East - and we will come to that one shortly - with its links through Brightmet. To compensate for that and to make the numbers work, we then have to address an additional ward to be added to that constituency.

I would advocate that the ward to be added should be the Atherton ward, the Atherton ward currently linked to Bolton West but, actually, its links are, effectively, to Bolton South East through the Hulton ward. When I was travelling here this morning, I came from my home via the south of the town centre of Bolton and travelled along the St Helens Road in Bolton, which becomes Newbrook Road and links through to Atherton. I did not go through any other ward. I linked directly.

In fact, I would refer you to, again, reference I made in the previous inquiry in 2011 when the road bridge between Atherton and Hulton was closed for reconstruction to allow for the electrification and mayhem prevailed. I have the press cutting which I submitted previously and I will submit a further copy to you, Sir, in due course, but that shows how very powerful and how important that road link is.

Actually, it has become more important because in 2011 I referred to what was then an aspiration of a major economic development site at the former Cutacre tip. That now is known as Logistics North. It is the largest economic development site in that area of the region, certainly within Greater Manchester. It is currently due to open actually this weekend an Aldi distribution centre as their major North West distribution centre. It will have an older retail store. Already, British Aerospace - MBDA as they now are - are locating on that site, and 4 million square metres of economic development on a site

that straddles the Hulton/Atherton boundary.

The rail halt, and the only rail halt to service that site, is in the Atherton ward. The road links and the rail links for a site which is mainly in Bolton actually exist in the Atherton ward and I submit, therefore, that there is a major link there. Importantly and interestingly, only last Saturday I went to a public presentation of a further development which will straddle the Atherton and Hulton boundaries. Peel Holdings have recently acquired the former home of Sir Jeffrey Hulton, Hulton Park.

Hulton Park straddles that boundary and they are proposing - and I have brought for you, Sir, a spare copy of a proposal - to build a championship golf course on Hulton Park which, aspirationally, they want the Ryder cup in 2026. Whether they achieve it, I am not going to speculate, but that would also have major residential development straddling the boundary. Most importantly, the principal access would be down the Newbrook Road linking through to Atherton to give a link through to the M6, ultimately, at the Croft Interchange on the Atherleigh Bypass.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry to interrupt. Aspirational or accepted as plans?

MR WALSH: Well, aspirational in one sense because it is the 2026 Ryder cup and a decision will not be taken until 2019 about whether they win it. They are going to build a golf course. But, actually, likely in part because the emerging Greater Manchester Spatial Strategy, which is the housing and industrial land developments predicated on the Devo-Max, the new agreement for Greater Manchester in devolution of power, has moved Bolton housing land requirements from a figure of about £11,200 to a figure of nearer to £16,000 in the next five years by 2021.

A large part of that, and the Bolton Evening News carried a story about it the other day, Hulton Estates would want to build about 1,700 of those houses across the Bolton Atherton ward on the Hulton/Atherton border. Whilst it is aspirational at this stage, whilst the plan is an emerging plan, it has not yet been to public inquiry or consultation, if Bolton is going to deliver its housing supply, as with other authorities in Greater Manchester, sites such as that will need to be included.

I suspect by the time we come back in five years' time to review parliamentary boundaries, it will not be aspirational but will be actual, in terms of the housing if not the Ryder Cup.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR WALSH: I think that is pretty clear. Interesting also that the hospital links for Atherton ward would be the Royal Bolton Hospital through Hulton ward. The Royal Bolton sitting just in Bolton South East in the Farnworth Harper Green ward on the

Farnworth Harper Green ward boundary. They would not go to the Albert Edward Infirmary in Wigan or to any other hospital. It is the Royal Bolton which would be the hospital for that area.

Also, in 2011 on page 96 of the transcript for day 2 in Manchester I did refer to a local charity which was based upon the winning of coal on what is now the Cutacre, the Logistics North industrial development site I referred to, Dame Dorothy Legh's Charity. That is specifically for the townships covering Atherton and Hulton. So very strong historic links between those areas over a long number of years.

I submit, therefore, that a Bolton South East consisting of the core wards of Farnworth, Harper Green, Great Lever, Kearsley, Hulton, Rumworth, Tonge with the Haulgh and Atherton, as proposed by the Conservative Party, best meets the interests of the community and existing community ties in that area. If we have, therefore, taken from the proposed Bolton North seat the Brightmet ward and added Little Lever to it, we need to look at that reconfiguration.

In order to meet the aspirations of uniting Radcliffe with Pilkington Park, those four wards, I submit they should sit in a Bury seat, a Bury core seat, as proposed by the Conservative Party. I think the links there are powerful and I do not propose to go into them further. Having adduced that Little Lever should sit with Brightmet in a proposed Bolton core seat, Bolton North seat, I then want to look at the links between those two wards through to Bradshaw, Bromley Cross and then to the north of Bury.

Those links are actually interesting because Brightmet ward variously has changed its boundary with the Bradshaw ward to the north and that ward boundary actually splits a council estate. The councillors have to work together because it is a community of interest. It is split very badly as a ward boundary, certainly not as a parliamentary boundary, through the middle of a housing estate at Top o'th Brow. For that reason, I submit that Brightmet sits with Bradshaw very strongly. Interestingly, then, Bradshaw sits through to Tottington and Ramsbottom.

If we look at the wards in the north of the proposed Bury constituency (and you would need to look at your proposed Bury constituency, Sir), you will see there are three wards to the north there of Tottington, Ramsbottom and North Manor. Those three wards were formed from two historically at the last Local Government Boundary Review. They formed all part of two urban districts, Ramsbottom Urban District and Tottington Urban District, prior to local government reorganisation in 1974.

There has recently been an on-going and marginally successful (but not completely so) campaign by the councillors in Bradshaw ward linking with their colleagues in Tottington and Ramsbottom for a bus service, a 480 bus service, to link those two areas. That service has been reinstated, not fully but has produced some success.

For that reason, and it works two ways, the people of Bradshaw wanted to go and shop in a very popular shopping centre in Ramsbottom, but by the same token residents in Ramsbottom and Tottington coming to shop at a major Morrison's supermarket in the Bradshaw ward. That is two-way movement across those wards.

Therefore, I would submit that a Bolton North East and Bury North seat - a slightly long title, there may be a better name for it - of Bromley Cross, Bradshaw, Little Lever and Brightmet from Bolton, of Tottington, Ramsbottom and North Manor from Bury, would give a workable seat across boundary. The merit of that is that, if those proposals were taken forward, Bolton would have only one cross boundary link with another borough in that sense. You would have that North Bolton link and the Wigan link, not three as might otherwise be the case.

I think that that would be in the interests of local government. Interestingly, the argument for Bradshaw sitting with Bury North was adduced by the Labour Party at the 2011 inquiry. That is at paragraph AC219 of your 2013 report, Sir. It has the benefit also at a previous inquiry - and I refer this one back to a discussion about Dalston in Carlisle the other day.

Paragraphs 228 and 229 of your previous report expressed the view that an orphan ward, as Radcliffe would be, was not desirable and if it could be avoided one ought to try to do so. At paragraphs 228 and 229 of your last report that was set out. It moves then to the Bolton West seat, which I would propose to be a seat wholly within the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton.

It would link my ward of Astley Bridge with Smithills. That would be a new link, I do accept that, but it would be new only in terms of elections. It would not be new in terms of the public perception, because you will see that if you look at the area between Astley Bridge and Smithills it is largely open land to the north. That open land is higher level, poor grade agricultural land, has been owned by the borough of Bolton since 1938 but was only in the last six months sold to the Woodland Trust.

The Woodland Trust have bought it in order to open up what is already a public access area through the Smithills Estate, which links the two wards and crosses the boundary of the two wards into a forested and open land and public access area. Smithills Estate, Smithills historic Medieval House in Bolton is in the Smithills ward linked by footbridge to a farm, Smithills Open Farm, now a major tourist attraction, in the Astley Bridge ward.

For 18 months to two years, the bridge between the two was not available. It had collapsed and it needed reconstruction. Visitors to Smithills Open Farm in Smithills ward had to come via Astley Bridge ward in order to access the site, thus showing a very close community of interest there. It is also linked further south of that to the A58.

The ring road is a very clear link between Smithills and Astley Bridge. It was

constructed in the late 1930s. The major shopping centre for many of the residents of the Smithills ward and the Halliwell area - and Halliwell would also be included in that proposed constituency for the north part of Halliwell - would be the Asda shop and other stores in the Astley Bridge ward at the junction with the A666 Blackburn Road. That becomes very much a linkage.

There is also, linking Smithills and Astley Bridge, the Barlow Park, gifted to the town by the Barlow family in the 1930s. Public access from both sides, vehicle access is very poor but a park heavily used. I have then got to say that from Astley Bridge I have two houses that I cannot canvass or leaflet unless I go into the Smithills ward - they are across the brook - thus, showing that there are common linkages in many many ways.

I, therefore, submit that a Bolton West constituency consisting of Astley Bridge, Smithills, Heaton, a Horwich North East, Horwich and Blackrod, Halliwell, Westhoughton North and two more, Westhoughton South, would be the most effective form of government.

You would have one Member of Parliament servicing the Woodland Trust joint venture. You would have one Member of Parliament servicing the open cast site at Logistics North and the proposed Hulton Park development. You would have a much clear line of involvement and continuity of those two major projects. Equally, there are very strong links, as I hope I have adduced, in the proposed Bolton North East between Little Lever through to Bradshaw through to Ramsbottom and that Bury North area.

I submit, therefore, that that proposal, as submitted by the Conservative Party retaining Bury as a core, retaining the four Radcliffe wards as a core, meeting aspirations elsewhere, gives us a workable and convenient offer of local government, parliamentary government in that part of the world. I hope, Sir, I have set out my views clearly.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, both clear and detailed. It is easier for me to follow because I have got the maps and we are, really, the target audience for this. Let me just check if there are any points that anyone would like to raise? (No response). It is not easy to do, so I recognise that. Can I ask a couple of points? One, am I right in thinking that you have given me a self-contained proposal for reshuffling four constituencies?

MR WALSH: The Conservative Party plan has a further impact in that it moves further on to recreate the Heywood and Middleton. It is self-contained within that Heywood and Middleton, Rochdale, Oldham banding. It is a band across that part of the metropolitan county.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But your four of the Bolton and Bury counter-proposals are not of themselves self-contained?

MR WALSH: They are not of themselves because they are wards in Bury which need to be linked elsewhere.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR WALSH: But we have tried to link communities of interest throughout.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I understand the argument about keeping towns together, Radcliffe or Bamber Bridge or whatever; is that a principle that we should adhere to strongly throughout, keeps towns together?

MR WALSH: My view is where that can be achieved it reasonably ought to be achieved and, throughout the Conservative Party proposals, we have sought to do that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I am clocking that in case we have a discussion about Preston at some stage.

MR WALSH: Well, Preston we will not split. Preston, we are proposing on those very points, Sir. We are proposing that the Bamber Bridge four wards, which sit as four, do have a very strong linkage to Preston, historically have been linked to Preston, and under our plan you would have the core of Preston as a core seat with a very clear and distinct area as its adjunct.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I am just anxious to avoid a situation where it becomes a major argument in some areas but, actually, elsewhere it is easy to look beyond.

MR WALSH: I trust, Sir, that I have sought to be consistent in my arguments throughout.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am sure you have. Thank you very much, Mr Walsh. Janet Bennet, would you like to come and say what you want? You are a good example I think here between what I would call the professionals, the people who know the maps and work through it and you, someone, a member of public who has come along to make some points. You are amongst friends here. Feel free to say what you wish.

MISS BENNET: Well, I would just like to make the point ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But you will need to say, I am afraid, your name and full address.

MISS BENNET: I am sorry.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Only because we are recording these and it is a part of our official receipt of representations. If you can say that first and then feel free to carry on.

MISS BENNET: Okay. My name is Janet Bennet. I am from Liverpool 8. I live at 25 South Hill Road in Dingle. I have lived there for about 13 years now. When I first moved in there, there was a much better transport system, which would fit in with what is being done in terms of the wards that are being moved into a Riverside constituency.

I have noticed Anfield and Everton. They used to fit into the Liverpool 8 area, even though they are not part of it because of the transport. But now the transport links are very poor and I think that, having looked at the map, Walton, Everton and Anfield would be much better as one constituency or however it is being played out.

I cannot see why Greenbank is being moved from Riverside to Wavertree and Tuebrook is also being moved into Wavertree. I do not agree with this whole system of the boundaries changing, because I think that the way that it is being organised is by the Conservative Government for their own self-interest and I think it is corrupt. I think it is very corrupt and I think that it has got to be challenged.

I am very disappointed that Labour MPs and others have not challenged this in the mainstream media. I did say to the other gentleman that I did not know about this meeting until yesterday. I had not seen it advertised in any of the local press. I do not watch TV. I just picked it up on my mobile phone on Facebook. Apart from that, there was nothing and I think that what is needed is much more clarity.

I think that when the Boundary Commission have a meeting, in whichever place, they should take out a full-page advert in the press and have adverts on TV and radio, because that does not happen. I think that if the Government, or whatever government, decides that they want to keep altering the boundaries then they have got to expect people to want to take part or people should be made to feel that they can take part in it.

Looking at the number of people here, it does not bode well for democracy in any shape or form. I think if this is going straight to Parliament, then they need to look at these things before they decide on any changes to local boundaries. Like I say, with Greenbank ward (that is quite near to me and I know people who live there) that does not really fit in a Wavertree constituency. It would be best left where it is. Anfield, Everton and Walton could be grouped together. That would make a lot more sense, probably along with Kirkdale.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Of course, you have got to the nub of the problem there that it is Parliament not Government who are setting how to decide to change the number of MPs and, therefore, in order to equalise the size of the constituencies all bar four constituencies in Merseyside have to change because they

are all too small literally.

Therefore, what you are seeing is the Boundary Commission's aim of trying to find the right balance between it. We, therefore, come here to allow me to hear the arguments in favour. You have heard some detailed arguments. I have heard your passionate views about whether it works or not. We cannot make it all work. If one just takes the examples of Greenbank Tuebrook, Anfield, Kirkdale, Everton that are going to split, somewhere else has to give.

MISS BENNET: Kirkdale for instance, I think part of that is in or was in Riverside and, because it is in North Liverpool and if they are going to organise areas geographically then you would expect to have Kirkdale, Everton, Anfield and Tuebrook, which I have noticed has gone into Wavertree now, I would have taken those to be one block which fit together transport-wise and, also, in other senses, socially and economically.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I take your point. That is a bit like the argument as to whether we keep Bradford. I am sorry, I am not debating with you, I am just trying to help fuel the discussion as it were. I will accept that as an argument, but we have to make offsetting changes somewhere else in order to do that.

MISS BENNET: Yes, but I think it should be done more with those factors in mind.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I take that and, indeed, I heard the arguments five years ago as well which rotate around a lot of this discussion. I am very grateful. Let me just ask if anyone has got any points of clarification they would wish to seek? (No response). In which case, then, thank you very much for coming along.

MISS BENNET: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The Boundary Commission will have heard your views about whether they have publicised enough the hearings. I think the local authorities have had quite a lot of information about hearings and the libraries but, whether it is getting through, I do not know.

MISS BENNET: Well, a lot of the libraries have actually been closed down.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Now do not take me down there. That is a different discussion. I am grateful, thank you very much.

MISS BENNET: It is part of the same discussion but ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for coming along and joining in with us, thank you. I reach a point where my next planned speaker is 6.30 and 7.00, so I am going to suggest that we break until 6.30. Thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 6.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back. Matthew Flusk. Have I pronounced your name right?

MR FLUSK: Yes, thanks.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The way it works is if you could give your name and full address, because we are recording all this for the public record and then begin your presentation, take us wherever you are going to take us and then at the end of it we will see if anyone has got any points of clarification. It is not a debate. It is not an opportunity to score points off you. It is a chance for you to try and give me --- I am the Assistant Boundary Commissioners, distinct from the Boundary Commission who made the proposals, and I am here to listen and see whether we think any of the proposals need revising.

MR FLUSK: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Feel free to start whenever suits you.

MR FLUSK: My name is Matthew Vincent Flusk. I am a resident of Apartment 7, 11 St Thomas Street, Liverpool. Shall I begin?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please.

MR FLUSK: Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I am a resident of the City Centre and of the Liverpool Riverside constituency. I am here tonight to express my concern at the changes to my constituency boundaries, specifically the increased size of the constituency with the addition of two wards and the loss of only one.

The Boundary Commission plans, as I understand them, involves moving Greenbank ward to Liverpool Wavertree and incorporating Anfield and Everton wards into Riverside. This would mean the Riverside constituency covers an area of vast population, incorporating heavily populated areas from Anfield down through Everton, Kirkdale, Vauxhall, the City Centre, Toxteth, the Dingle Valley and Aigburth.

Whilst I appreciate this process was not undertaken using population data, which at best would be an estimate open to challenge given the most recent census was over half a decade ago, the electoral data also raises questions in my opinion. As I understand it, the electoral data that was used was published by the Office for National Statistics in January this year, giving the electoral roll as it existed in December when

individual registrations took effect.

It has been widely discussed how this meant many people dropped off the register, and I will not labour this point as it is a well-worn ground. However, due to the significant student population in my constituency, I believe the register in December does not give an accurate representation of the size of the area.

Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that the majority of registrations occur in the run-up to election, as we saw for the Referendum this year when a quoted two million people joined the register in the preceding months. Again, having understood the timescales required for such a review, I do not wish to suggest, as others have, that the electoral roll as it existed for the Referendum this year should be used.

However, by considering the 2015 General and Local Elections' electorate just seven months before the data that was used, a different picture emerges. This figure that I have here shows ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What figures are these?

MR FLUSK: I have produced them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, from what period?

MR FLUSK: Sorry, I will explain. These figures I produced using the data as published by the Boundary Commission as it was in December and represent the electorate sizes as proposed in the new constituencies that include wards in the Liverpool City Council area. I have included Bootle and Garston and Halewood.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR FLUSK: The dotted lines represent the maximum, minimum and ideal sizes as determined by the Boundary Commission criteria of total UK electorate divided by 596. However, by considering the same wards in the same constituencies - that is, with the changes applied as proposed - using the May 2015 electoral data, as published on the Electoral Commission website, the profile of the constituencies changes dramatically.

Of particular note is Garston and Halewood, which is unchanged by these proposals, yet has a reduced size of around 6,000 between the two electoral rolls. As you can see, using the 2015 May election data, three constituencies fall outside the upper limit, including Riverside.

When the target constituency sizes, upper and lower bands, are recalculated using the May 2015 data, using the same formula the Boundary Commission used, i.e. total electorate divided by 596, the following results are produced shown by the red dotted

lines. As you can see, Liverpool Riverside still falls outside this upper 105 per cent bound.

I am, therefore, concerned that the proposed size of Liverpool Riverside constituency will be disproportionately large, resulting in a significant underrepresentation of its residents, and that the use of December 2015 rather than May 2015 electoral data has disguised this fact.

I ask you to consider this anomaly, which I am sure is replicated elsewhere in England, and to revisit the changes to Liverpool Riverside in order to produce a more representative ward profile. I thank you once again for the opportunity to speak this evening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I will ask in a minute whether people have got any queries or points that they wish to get expanded upon. It is interesting, is it not, that if you take earlier figures rather than later figures - normally government bodies or quangos get challenged for not using the most recent figures - they use the most recent figures and you say they are greatly different; why do you think it is different?

MR FLUSK: Well, it is mainly, I believe, due to the number of people who dropped off the electoral roll who did not partake in individual voter registration. They may now be on the electoral roll because of the Referendum, but at the turning point in December some of those people may have dropped off because they did not consider it a priority to register due to no imminent election at that point.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If we did it again next December, will it go down again?

MR FLUSK: I would imagine it would.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you think there is an underlying figure and they peak and then they drop down during the rest of the year and come back up again?

MR FLUSK: I believe that the drop was probably not unique but it was largely than normal due to the changeover of registration system, but I think if you took May election data rather than end of year data it might change.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR FLUSK: Especially given students who may be moving out of areas in the summer and others moving in.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I am fascinated by the figures but, unfortunately, the Boundary Commission are tied to use the last available electoral roll figures before they started the review and that pins them to December 2015 figures. They are the ones they will have ---

MR FLUSK: Who decided they should be that figure rather than the last General Election?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Parliament, I believe.

MR FLUSK: Parliament.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The legislation says you have to use the last available figures from the date you start the review.

MR FLUSK: Right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And that was the last set of figures.

MR FLUSK: How was it decided and what date did the review begin?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good question. I will ask the Commission.

MR REED: It is all part of legislation that was introduced in 2010. Also, the reviews are done every five years in a five-year cycle.

MR FLUSK: Yes.

MR REED: And it feeds in with the fixed term parliaments. It is almost sort of working backwards. There is wording in the legislation that says when the report has to be suggested and sort of work back and then the legislation says about which electorates you can use in terms of working backwards. That is why the Boundary Review was announced in February and March. Actually, the review that started in 2011 had the same sort of timetable because of that. It does not leave much wriggle room for when a review could be held and the various statutory processes that have to be held throughout that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR FLUSK: When you say the most recent electoral data, is that as published by the ONS in January?

MR REED: Yes.

MR FLUSK: So never a General Election?

MR REED: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But, of course, around the country we might have a different set of figures which would then cause us to have a different mean and, therefore, a different plus or minus 5 per cent, so we just have to take what we are given.

MR FLUSK: But the mean is set by the national electorate, is it not, the total UK electorate divided by 596? The mean would be the same for everyone.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, are you saying those figures are based on the national figures?

MR FLUSK: No, I am saying that the dotted lines are, sorry. The dotted lines are calculated. So the heavy dotted line ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Taking the national figure?

MR FLUSK: Yes, the national, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Got it, right, my apologies for that. Mr Walsh?

MR WALSH: In calculating your figures, did you give consideration to the known level of dual registrations, i.e. people registered to a new address but did not deregister at their old address?

MR FLUSK: I did not.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, if there are no others? (No response). Thank you very much for coming and taking the trouble. It is appreciated. We may have another speaker at 7 o'clock and so I will just sit quietly until 7 o'clock.

After a short break

Time noted: 7.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am going to have to ask you to come up and if you could give your name and address and then speak, because it is all being recorded as part of the public record. Feel free to say what you like, as long as you are not going to give me a lot of stuff about politics and things that I would have to rule you out of order, but see how you get on.

MS BYRNE: If I am out of order, you just tell me to stop.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I will, yes, but there are some things I can control and have an interest in and some things carry a lot of weight with me. Arguments based on politics, gerrymandering, numbers and all these things can carry virtually no weight with me in this context.

MS BYRNE: My name is Sarah Byrne and my address is 9 Blackburn Place Liverpool, L8. It is actually about numbers, and I do not know if there is anything you can do about it. I actually ticked the box because I thought I would come and listen, but it turned out it was to speak.

I just thought maybe you could look into as well the population rather than the number of registered voters as you were deciding what the boundaries are because. To my mind, those people still need to be represented, people who are not registered voters. I would expect, though I was not able to have a look, that certain areas had fewer registered voters than others.

Often, those people are going to be more disengaged for whatever reason. If you go 70,000 registered voters equals one MP, then in areas where you have more people who are not registered voters, you will have one MP but for more people. Those will be areas which probably have more problems through them whatsoever and that does not seem to me very sensible. I think that is all I needed to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Have you got anything to base that on? I understand the argument between registered voters and population and that is, in a sense, the whole issue around democracy there, is it not?

MS BYRNE: Yes, just that, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because registered voters are the ones that count.

MS BYRNE: Well, the other thing would be that, presumably, we are always trying to get more registered voters and people to be more engaged in politics and this is going to cost a significant amount of money, I would have thought, this change. If you do that, problematically at the moment, it is as if you are saying that is set, we are not going to continue trying to get more registered voters, which presumably we should always be trying to do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. Let me just see if anyone has got any comments from the floor? (No response). I think the issue is that, in a sense, our hands are tied by the legislation which says we have to use the December 2015 figures

for this exercise and the electoral roll rather than the Census, effectively, and we have to use the nearest one to the exercise we are doing. As it happens, we have had other speakers who feel not dissimilar to your own view on it but, in a sense, we are tied by what we can do. The Boundary Commission's proposals and the boundaries they put forward are based on the most recent available set of data and that is the ones we have used.

MS BYRNE: It is too late for any argument about that, is it?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, the law does not allow, it has to be the most recent set of data that was published at the date at which the exercise started. The date the exercise started is the date which enables it to be finished before the next election, effectively, and put into place.

MS BYRNE: I thought that might happen but I think it is quite an important ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Point well made, thank you very much.

MS BYRNE: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And as good a point as any on which to end the hearing today. Thank you very much for today. We will resume again at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. I think we have a reasonably full today tomorrow. Thank you for everyone who has been here all day. Thank you for coming in. Thank you.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Friday 21 October 2016

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