

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

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**PROCEEDINGS**

**AT THE**

**2023 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN  
ENGLAND**

**HELD AT**

**PRESTON TOWN HALL, PRESTON**

**ON**

**MONDAY 14th MARCH 2022  
DAY 1**

**BEFORE**

**Andy Brennan, Lead Assistant Commissioner**

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the North West region. My name is Andy Brennan, and I'm an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the North West. I am responsible for chairing the hearing today and tomorrow, and I am also responsible, with my fellow Assistant Commissioner, David Brown, for analysing all the representations received about the initial proposals for this region and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised. I'm assisted here today by members of the Commission staff, led by Wotey Tannoh, who is sitting beside me. They will shortly provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for new constituencies in the region.

Wotey will tell you how you can make written representations and will deal with one or two administrative matters. The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10:00 until 20:00. And tomorrow, it is scheduled to run from 9:00 to 17:00. I can vary that timetable, and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak. I should point out that, under the legislation that governs the Commission's review, each public hearing must be held over two days and cannot be extended into a third. The purpose of this public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the North West region and the comments we have so far received on them, which have been published on our consultation portal, [bcereviews.org.uk](http://bcereviews.org.uk). I look forward to hearing your views today. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a time slot, and I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time.

If there's any time free during the day or at the end of the day, then I will invite anyone who hasn't registered but who would like to speak to do so. I would like to stress that the purpose of this public hearing is for people to make oral representations. The purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposals, nor is this hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine other speakers during their presentation. People may seek to put their questions for clarification to the speakers, but they should only do that through me as the Chair. I will now hand over to Wotey, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the North West. Thank you, Wotey.

**WOTEY TANNOH:** Thank you, Andy, and good morning. As the Chair has mentioned, my name is Wotey Tannoh, and I am a member of the Commission staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries and, at this hearing, I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As the Chair has already stated, they will chair the hearing itself, and it is their responsibility to run the hearing at their discretion and take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support them in carrying out their role. Please ask one

of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance. I encourage all attendees to wear a mask throughout the hearing, but please remove the mask while you are speaking during your presentation slot. We also encourage you to practise social distancing during the day.

We have provided hand sanitisers around the venue to help you sanitise your hands regularly. If you have coronavirus-related symptoms or develop them during the day, please leave the hearing straight away and follow government advice.

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for the North West region, which were published on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The Commission's proposals for this region are for 73 constituencies – a reduction of two. Our proposals leave 10 of the existing constituencies wholly unchanged and one change only to realign with local government boundaries that have changed. The 2023 review of parliamentary constituencies was formally launched in January 2021. We held our first public consultation on the initial proposals between 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021, receiving over 34,400 representations in total. The Commission is required to ensure that the number of electors in each constituency is roughly the same.

In doing so, the number of constituencies in England will increase from 533 to 543. We are undertaking an independent review of all constituency boundaries in England and will present our final recommendations to Parliament by July 2023. We use the English regions as a template for the allocation of the 543 constituencies to which England is entitled, including two constituencies to be allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation. 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 region-based approach we adopted in formulating our initial proposals. The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on, or were in prospect on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries, known as wards or electoral divisions. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units, which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We have, therefore, sought to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible, but, in a small number of cases, we have done so in order to better reflect the statutory factors. The scale of the change in this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022, so there's still time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing, and they are also available to view on our easy-to-use consultation website at [bcereviews.org.uk](http://bcereviews.org.uk). You can provide a written representation to us directly through this website and give feedback on anything from where the proposed new boundaries are to the names of the constituencies.

We attach just as much significance to the representations made orally at public hearings as those made in writing via letter, email or our website. I do urge everyone to submit written representation to us by the deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022, as we will not be able to consider representations made after that date.

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation, and you will be asked to confirm your name and town and/or organisation 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, which will be made available online on our YouTube channel shortly after the hearing. After the secondary consultation, we will publish a verbatim transcript of the whole public hearing and publish all the responses we have received via our consultation portal, email or letter throughout the consultation period. These may not be published until the commencement of the revised proposals consultation. The publication of the hearing records and written representations include certain personal data of those who have made representations. I, therefore, invite all those contributing to read the Commission's data protection and privacy policy, a copy of which we have with us and which is also available on our website. In terms of administration, we are not expecting a fire alarm test today. However, if the alarm goes off, the team and I will direct you to the assembly point. At this stage, I thank you for your attendance today and will now hand you back to the Chair to begin the public hearing. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thanks very much, Wotey. Okay, we do have a particularly full calendar today. We've got speakers starting at 10:15, and I notice that we're slightly ahead of time. Can I just check, please, do we have Sir Mark Hendrick in the audience? Sir Mark, can I invite you up a few moments early? Is that okay, please? Now, Sir Mark, if you'd like to make yourself comfortable. For recording purposes, please, if you could give your name and the town you're representing?

**SIR MARK HENDRICK MP:** My name's Mark Hendrick. I'm the Member of Parliament for Preston. I represent the Labour Party. Obviously, like many people here and elsewhere, I've had a good look at the proposals, and I'm particularly concerned about a number of issues in relation to some of the wards, which are aimed at being redistributed elsewhere in the county. I'll start with Fishwick & Frenchwood. I think the last time there was a Boundary Commission, there was an attempt to move Fishwick, but not Frenchwood – Fishwick, which is part of the inner city of Preston, into the Ribble Valley constituency, if I'm not mistaken. I, and many other people in Preston, resisted that proposal. And it was eventually retained – I think for good reasons. I understand the considerations around population movement, changes in demography, new housing developments, et cetera.

But I think the very nature of Fishwick and the nature of the people who live there meant that it was very strongly drawn to the centre of Preston, and it was retained there. Similarly, the new Fishwick & Frenchwood ward, which has developed since then, has the same characteristics and should be retained in the Preston constituency. It's an inner-city ward adjacent to the town centre. Fishwick &

Frenchwood have never been outside of the Preston constituency, and the local feeling is very strong that it should remain part of the constituency. Ribbleton, as well – this is a real surprise – should also, I believe, remain in the constituency, as it's another ward in the heart of the city of Preston which has very strong local feelings, particularly that it belongs to Preston. Many Preston North End fans and people who have always associated with Preston want to stay in Preston. On the other side of the city, Lea & Larches, again, I believe, should be retained in the Preston constituency for the same reasons as the previous two.

Another characteristic that gives them the same identity is that there are high levels of deprivation Mr. Brennan. Also, they're particularly ethnically diverse, and, whilst they're ethnically diverse, I think there's a strong pull between them and other parts of the constituency. Also, the housing style makes for a very different occupancy. And I think all of these factors result in particularly complex issues arising in these areas that form part of the core of what I would call inner-city Preston.

Now, the proposal that I put forward to the Commission is based on the current city of Preston seat, which has formed the major core of the parliamentary seat for more than 30 years, and for 22 of those years, I've been the parliamentary representation, so I do have a very strong view on this. Now, I do agree with the Commission's proposals that Preston Rural East and Preston Rural North should be moved into the Ribble Valley constituency.

I think they would fit comfortably into the seat due to their more rural outlook and village lifestyle. Now, where there is some agreement and disagreement is with regard to Fulwood. I think the Fulwood wards of Greyfriars and Sharoe Green wards should be moved into Ribble Valley instead of moving out the Frenchwood and Fishwick and Ribbleton wards, which, as I said earlier, have been long established in the city wards in Preston. Fulwood, in the past, has had its own town council and is quite a distinct part of Preston's local authority area. However, having said that, I'm quite relaxed about and would be happy to agree that Cadley and Garrison wards should be moved into the Preston seat because they are Preston city council wards i.e. they come under the administration of this town hall, and they would bring the size of the seat into that required by the Boundary Commission in terms of the electorate – the number of occupants. So, I'll leave it there, Mr Brennan, and thank you very much.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you. Can I just clarify something with you, please, sir? You mentioned a moment ago about Fulwood and use agreement uncertainty it sounded like, you said, instead of Fishwick & Frenchwood, you mentioned a number of other wards. I think one of them was Lea & Larches. What was the other one?

**SIR MARK HENDRICK MP:** Yeah, I'd like Lea & Larches to stay inside the Preston constituency. But I'm quite relaxed about Garrison and Cadley coming into the constituency because, obviously, you've got to make up the numbers somehow. And those two wards would do that in meeting with the government requirements in terms

of additional electorate to make up the numbers that, obviously, the government's looking for.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Excellent. That's answered my clarification. Can we just check, please? Are there any other questions seeking clarification of what we've just heard? We have one question here, please. Could I ask that you start by giving your name and your town, and then please ask your clarification question.

**SIR ROBERT ATKINS:** Sir Robert Atkins, formerly the Member of Parliament from Preston North, long before Sir Mark was involved. Can I just ask a question of you, Mark, in two areas? Firstly, is Frenchwood now part of Fishwick? In my day, Fishwick was a free-standing ward of its own volition. I agree with your judgement, by the way. But why was Frenchwood attached to Fishwick? Do you recall? And, secondly, what is the difference between Garrison, including the northern parts, which are very much rural, as opposed to Cadley, which, again, in my day, Cadley was always part of the Fulwood area and still would look upon itself as Fulwood. So, I just wonder what your thinking is behind that?

**SIR MARK HENDRICK:** Thanks, Robert. You know, I think we both go back a long way [laughs]. I remember being in the European Parliament when you were a Member of Parliament, and we sort of switched roles not long afterwards. First of all, on Fishwick & Frenchwood, it was, for whatever reason, merged into one ward. So, it's not two wards anymore, it's now one ward. I don't particularly know why, but that's what came out of the most recent local government boundary review. So, whilst there were two wards, they're now one ward, like a super ward, if I can describe it as such. On the question of Garrison and Cadley, both of them are in the old Fulwood District council area. The argument I would make is that Garrison isn't the old Garrison. I mean, I live in Garrison, but the old Garrison – I live in what was the old Garrison.

The old Garrison was very much north of Deepdale. There's been population shifts and movements, which actually mean that Garrison has very different occupancy than it was historically. But, secondly, it's a much bigger ward now, Garrison; in the same way that Fishwick and Frenchwood have been merged, Garrison takes in part of the old St George's ward and other wards that were more city centre. So, it's sort of been pulled towards the centre of Preston rather than gravitating towards Ribble Valley or further out from Preston. On the question of Cadley – Ingol was brought into Preston, I think around 2010, into the Preston constituency, I should say. It was always part of Preston's local authority area but not part of the constituency and, at that time, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge were in the old Preston constituency, which were traditionally part of Ribble Valley and also the south Ribble local authorities, which you'll know very well.

Those were moved out, Ingol was brought in, and because Cadley is adjacent to Ingol, I think that makes more sense in terms of the population gravitational pull, if I can put it that way, in the way in which the city makes up. So, I'm cognisant of the numbers that are required in order to make up the requirement to have 70-odd

thousand – or whatever it is – constituents in the constituency but, also, the fact that we can't just rely on this sort of core. I mean, in the older days, you'll know, Robert, there was a Preston North and Preston South because there was such a population towards the centre of Preston, which meant that it needed two seats. The growth of housing around Preston pulled that population outwards and meant that there was much less of a concentration in the centre. And it moved out more, which meant that there was one Preston City seat and bits of Preston going off into other areas. So, that's why I made the proposal that I have. And that's why I think it fits in with the demographics of where the constituency has changed over the years. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Sir Mark, thanks for clarifying that and giving us a lot more than we anticipated, which is really, really useful, to be perfectly honest because you've probably got more about this area than the vast majority have known, other than Sir Robert, who's been in this area as well. Could I check, please, if we have a Graham Jones? Graham, are you ready? I know you've just come in. Okay. Could I invite you to just go and, first off, make yourself comfortable. Then, if you start by giving your name and what town you're from, then, as and when you are ready, you can start your representation, please.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Thank you very much to you for allowing me to come today to make an obvious case. I appreciate the time that you allocate. My name's Graham Jones, and I'm from Accrington. I want to primarily talk about the constituency of Hyndburn, but I appreciate the Commissioners have a difficult job. So, just to touch on the issues just bordering Hyndburn as well, regarding one or two of the other areas which I know have drawn quite a large response. So, Hyndburn itself, as you know, by its very nature, is a deprived constituency, and, to make the numbers up previously, Haslingden was added in. Haslingden has very good connections with Hyndburn. The road goes in – all the transport connections – so you can see the flow of people between Haslingden and Hyndburn, and, as it currently stands, the constituencies of Blackburn, Hyndburn plus Rossendale and Darwen all meet the quota.

I think part of the issue has come about because of the West Pennine Moors, which has affected Rossendale, and there's been a knock-on. Just to touch briefly on that – and I know others will speak about the Chorley side of things up into Walton-le-Dale. Obviously, there's some contention there about how the boundaries do flow, but taking parts of Chorley into Haslingden at their extremities is – the current constituency of Haslingden is in the current constituency – is quite a stretch. And I know it's drawn quite a bit of correspondence to yourselves regarding that issue and the knock-on consequences. But the three constituencies as they stand now – Hyndburn, Rossendale and Darwen and Blackburn – all meet the criteria. And I think there is a strong case for that to be an option going forward to retain that because that would only mean that Burnley – I think it's got about 64,000 – would need to make up, but again, last time the Commissioners saw fit to move it to Brierfield and Nelson because I'm sure the Commissioners are aware there's quite a large BME population that spans the A864. I can't remember the name of the road – Corn Road, to me. And they're either side of the boundaries at the minute as you go into

Brierfield, and it would make much sense, as the Boundary Commission identified last time, to pick up the shortfall which Burnley currently has to go eastward towards Brierfield and Whitefield, as you can see there. That would be, in my view, a good proposition because you would be bringing people together.

Just to turn to the substantive issue of Hyndburn. Hyndburn has no connections with Whalley and never has. And I think this is born out with, I think, some of the comments which I read from the initial feedback. Whalley connects to Clitheroe at one end and Blackburn at the other, and no one travels between Whalley and Hyndburn, even though they're very close. I'm sure the Commissioners will have noted the problems we've had in trying to get a single bus service between Whalley and Hyndburn or Whalley and Great Harwood, and no bus operators will commercially take on the route between Whalley and Great Harwood, which I think is indicative of the huge disconnect between the two, even though they don't seem far apart on a map. The current bus service between Whalley and Great Harwood only runs every 90 minutes, and it's subsidised. It's been intermittent, and, without that subsidy – and the subsidy could be withdrawn – again, we're back to the status quo, which is no bus service between Whalley and Great Harwood, let alone Whalley and Accrington. So, no public transport at all. And the train lines run largely east to west Clitheroe to Blackburn. It's worse for Read and Simonstone, which, if they are to go to Hyndburn or Accrington, they need to go to Padiham first and change at Padiham. Now, there are five commercial buses an hour between Padiham and Hyndburn, and the bus service also feeds most of the towns in Hyndburn. It's a very popular commercial service compared to the service that requires a subsidy between Whalley and Great Harwood. And I think that demonstrates where the connections are as far as Hyndburn is concerned. Those flows of people – if you go to Padiham, for example, or even Haslingden, you'll find large copies of the Accrington Observer on sale, as many as the Burnley Express in Padiham because this goes back over many generations. If you go back pre-1974, and I note in the submissions that quite a few people from Padiham said they would prefer to be with Haslingden, and it was the Boundary Commission's preferred choice last time. Not only are there copies of the Accrington Observer, and not only are there five buses an hour between Padiham and Hyndburn, what you've also got is a long-standing connection where Padiham wasn't in the county division – the old pre-1974 Burnley Borough County division excluded Padiham.

So, if you passed your 11+ in Padiham, you went to Accrington Grammar School. The old rail service was between Padiham and Great Harwood, and the bus service, as I've already said, are very frequent, and the Accrington Observer's on sale in Padiham. And the same goes for Haslingden as well, although, again, there was a train service, there's a frequent bus service. Those are the two areas that connect to Hyndburn. When you contrast that with Whalley, it's easy to understand why both people in Whalley and people in Hyndburn just think that this just doesn't fit. And I'm noticing our own submission from the Labour Party we admitted that it didn't fit, and we were struggling with the quotas. As I said at the beginning, the current boundaries, as they stand now for those three constituencies, do meet the quota. So,



the problem is, if we lose the bus service, which we're likely to do when the subsidy's withdrawn, there is literally no connection between Whalley and Hyndburn.

And I know, on the map, there looks to be a close road, but nobody travels on it. So, I think the travel-to-work studies for Whalley also indicate there's more people working in Manchester than working in Hyndburn. People want better-paid jobs. They go on the motorway to Manchester. They don't go and seek jobs in Hyndburn. And that's why – that's reflected in the bus service, you know, that no one catches the bus, the bus has to be subsidised. Sometimes there's only five or six people on a subsidised bus service. So, it is anomalous, as the Labour Party said, it makes no sense. And, also, I do feel for the people from Whalley because they're going to see Whalley divided (this is just the town of Whalley that will be divided) - part of it will be in the Ribble Valley - Part of it will be in a new constituency, and then Read and Simonstone can't even get to Hyndburn unless they go to Padiham.

So, it's a hugely problematic addition that might as well be the Himalayas, it feels like, between Whalley and Hyndburn. There are one or two groups – I think it's a couple of groups – who do span the Whalley–Hyndburn – I know CVS do it. But my partners, actually, one of the trustees on CVS, and if you speak to the other trustees, the trustees from Whalley or from Clitheroe, where they're actually from, they have really no connection or knowledge of what goes on in Hyndburn and vice versa. It's rather a forced compromise, but there are many more organisations, such as Citizens Advice, who were Rossendale and Hyndburn. So, it's Rossendale and Hyndburn Citizens Advice are a far more influential and far larger organisation, and it just goes to show the connections.

But I would – towards the conclusion – just say I think the bus routes speak volumes. You have six buses an hour between Padiham and on Sundays and a frequent night service. And the same from Haslingden – six buses an hour from Haslingden into Accrington. And, effectively, without the subsidy, there are no commercial buses between Whalley and Hyndburn, you know? And so, I think that that speaks volumes. And if you go into the newsagent's – in Padiham or in Haslingden – and you see piles of the Accrington Observer, it tells you where people think that their natural links are. Now, you won't get any sales of the Accrington Observer in Whalley if you walk into a newsagent's; no one will buy it.

And I think that demonstrates – and I'll just finish on one common point, which I made about Burnley and Brierfield – Hyndburn has numerous challenges. Read and Simonstone, for example – I think they're 364th on the indices of deprivation out of 30,000 Super Output Areas. That's pretty rich, you know, whereas you've got Central ward in Accrington – I think it's 310, oh, I'll be in or out by 10 or 20 – you know, which is in the absolute poorest in the country. And that Central ward represents large parts of Accrington. So, as a constituency, you're always going to end up arguing for two different constituencies if Whalley comes in. It's very hard to represent the people of Whalley when pretty much all the efforts in Hyndburn are all geared towards trying to level up. Whereas there's no need to level up in Whalley or Read and Simonstone, so it is anomalous, as the Labour Party said, to put the two together, and it will be

very challenging to deal with them, both for residents in terms of public transport communications, but also in representation.

But, historically, there are no connections. So, the poorest areas that you've got on the map are Church, Central, parts of Brierfield are some of the poorest, the Super Output Areas. Spring Hill amongst the Peel ward, are in some of the poorest in the country, the most 10% deprived – Peel just edges into the most 20%, I think it's about 11%. So, you've got this contrast between absolute poverty – and east Lancashire's the poorest subregion in the country – and Read and Simonstone, who can't even get a bus service to Hyndburn, are the most wealthy. And for an area, that's very, very hard. It's an uncomfortable fit, whereas places like Padiham and Haslingden, you are, as an MP, you are representing a lot of people, and you've got the opportunity to make the case for the issues that are relevant to those areas, which are just post-industrial, where Whalley is an affluent market town. I'm sorry for probably going on a little bit too long.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** That's fine. Can we just take a moment, then, to summarise? So, what you're saying is, Chorley ward out, Brierfield East and West in, is that right?

**GRAHAM JONES:** So, I think, no, just for Burnley, I think you're all – the one that you did previously, and I know the numbers were slightly different, but it didn't really affect us – is you, the Boundary Commission last time took parts of Brierfield and bits of Nelson in to top Burnley up. I think because the constituencies had to be slightly larger, Padiham was taken in to Hyndburn. So, the options, you know, as I see – they already meet the quota as they are, so it would be stable to leave them as they are, but, should the Commission decide that they're going to make some movement, the natural links are either the current one of Haslingden, or Padiham – that's where people commute. And the Burnley one is to go up the Corn Road, the A686 or whatever it is, towards Brierfield and Nelson.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** That's fine. I just wanted to be clear in your mind that's where you were coming from with that, but you explained it absolutely perfectly.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Okay. Can I just say thank you very much for your time? I really appreciate it.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Before you leave us, can I just ask, are there any other questions or clarifications, please? Thank you. Again, if you could start by giving your name, please, and who you may be representing.

**JOHN WALSH:** Thank you very much, sir. John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. You referred in your presentation, Mr Jones, to the Labour Party proposals. Can you confirm that the Labour Party proposals recognise and support the proposals for Hyndburn?

**GRAHAM JONES:** No, they don't.

**JOHN WALSH:** I'm sorry, sir. It's in the report.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Sorry – what the report says, and I'm quite happy to read it out, it says it's anomalous, which is quite right, and that the Labour Party will be looking to other suggestions. It appreciates that there'll be other, better solutions towards this particular area because it is anomalous. That's exactly what it says. And, you know, I think we're all here to try and make a better representation to the Boundary Commission and reflect on what the Boundary Commission has done before. So, no, it doesn't confirm wholeheartedly what's been proposed.

**JOHN WALSH:** Refer yourself to paragraph 6.6.1 of the Labour Party counter-proposals.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Can I refer to 6.2.12, which I'll read out, or – what would the Commissioners prefer? Not read it out?

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Well, if you just give us the references and we will – what I don't want to do is – there's a question of clarification here you were asked, and I think you've answered the question that was posed from you. You disagreed with it – as far as I'm concerned, you've had the opportunity to answer that. The question was asked, and – is there any further qualification that you require, Mr Walsh? Okay. So, we've got both your accounts and your stance in relation to that point. And when we go back to look at it, we've got the relevant paragraphs. We can do that.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Yeah. Well, there are two paragraphs – I think he makes a good point – and I think they're both accurate.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Absolutely. And what I want to avoid is: this is my interpretation, this is your interpretation. We've got the paragraphs. We can read that, and we'll make representations accordingly. Graham, can I take the opportunity to thank you for coming and speaking so passionately around your experience and your knowledge of these areas. It does help us immensely when we've got people like yourself coming in to talk to us. Thanks very much.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Thanks for your time.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Could I check, please? Do we have a Katherine Fletcher in the audience? It's important because it's a public hearing – it's being recorded – that we start off by your full name, please. And what town you're from or who you may be representing. When you are comfortable and ready, you may start.

**KATHERINE FLETCHER MP:** Oh, thank you very much. So, my name's Katherine Fletcher. I am the MP for South Ribble as it's currently configured. And I'm going to be talking today about both the losses and the Boundary's new proposals. If I could give a headline and a summary to the theme of my remarks, it will be primarily – oh, super, thanks. Just for the record for the tape, they've put the marks on.

So, what I wanted to actually talk about wasn't necessarily too much of the old ones, but the theme to these remarks is that, especially here in South Ribble, where we're bordered by the – oh, does the red not appear on the map? I'm quite happy to stand up if I'm audible. So, what I was trying to get at is, with the existing constituency, obviously we're bordered by significant geographic boundaries at the north and west with both the sea and the river. So, the theme of my remarks is primarily around infrastructure creating the communities. There are a series of corridors within here which create the communities. So, the existing South Ribble constituency kind of adheres to that. It runs up the A565 and the A59 in the west, but it also ties into the north–south railway line, from Rufford, Croston, up to Leyland and through into Preston. So, the current proposals separate off what we call the northern parishes and put those into Southport and take the Chorley wards – that's wonderful, thank you, whoever was helping – and take the Chorley Borough council wards and put them into the Chorley constituency.

And if you could just zoom out momentarily – what that does is that breaks how people live and play within South Ribble. So, for example, if I just give you two or three – Penwortham Cricket Club has got a pitch shortage. So, it plays its games at Bretherton Cricket Club because it's straight up and down the A59. The Bishop Rawstone School in Croston, because of the railway line, takes a catchment from Rufford, Leyland, all of the northern parishes, along with Tarleton High School, which is just there in the middle. They take catchment from all of the northern parishes of Rufford, but they also take, Longton, New Longton. And they're part of a schools grouping which is doing wonderful work with schools that have historically been underperforming within Leyland, both at junior and senior level.

So, the idea of those communities – I won't continue to make the point. But they are very much together. The A59, the railway, the schools catchment – this is where people live, work and play, along those major infrastructure roads. One of the things that dominates my inbox, not only is people from Middleforth, Higher Penwortham and Lower Penwortham and Longton writing to me about the challenges of that right angle – literally this morning, I've got three letters in about the condition of that road from residents that are living up here, not part of the Southport community. But the other thing that unites them is this is where they live, work and play together within those major infrastructures. And that theme will come up in the boundaries proposals.

So, I would argue that's a consistent hole, but I understand that the Boundary's got a difficult challenge because it can't chuck us out into the sea, and it can't cross a river with no bridge. I completely get that. But if we could just overlay the future proposals, I would – oh, forgive us. [laughs] So, for the future proposals, you know, there's the parts of the community that are going lots of different directions, and I've heard some talk of Rufford perhaps in another iteration facing out into West Lancashire. I just observed to the community that people in Rufford look to Croston, Tarleton, Leyland and Longton – just by dint of infrastructure, you can, much more so than Burscough, Ormskirk or Skelmersdale. I mean, you can't get there by public transport or by rail links.

But the other thing with the new proposal – so, I would be very regretful if we broke up those communities, genuinely. But if I just addressed the proposals – now, whether you can see, there's – just north of where it says South Ribble in green – that's the ward of Walton-le-Dale West. But that's not within the community. So, if you just zoom out a touch – the proposals have given the new proposed South Ribble community Walton-le-Dale East. But it's further east than Walton-le-Dale West, which is closer. And I would argue very strongly that both of those are the same community, but they're also, in a similar theme, linked with the same infrastructure, which is The Cawsey. Whereas, because of the way the railway lines work, actually the bits of Bamber Bridge being retained in Ribble Valley are actually splitting the Bamber Bridge community along that infrastructure.

So, I would, to make sure that the numbers added up – I'd reunite Walton-le-Dale, and I'd reunite Bamber Bridge. I would say that out there, but I think – I'm not going to read any more of my written oral statement. I don't think that makes sense. I think this needs to come from the heart and from the representations I've heard from the community.

But if it would be possible to just zoom out to conclude, these parishes here, whilst they're geographically close to Southport because it's just a single link road, their community, their schooling – it's all part of that line, that Longton line that runs up the A59, the A556, and with the new infrastructure that's been put in place where you can see the green just above Whitestake, the Sir John Horrocks Way makes a big difference and runs that community through.

And I would just point out very gently that Bretherton, in the current proposal, going into Chorley, that's within five minutes of the sea. That's a very different part of the world to the hills of Chorley and the M61. So, I would encourage the Commission to consider how people move around this part of West Lancashire, as opposed to what the local council boundaries say, because that's not really how they see themselves. And I thank you for your time. I appreciate it. It's not easy. And I'm happy to answer any questions.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** No problem. Do you want to take a seat and we'll see if there's any questions, please. Thank you.

**SIR ROBERT ATKINS:** Thanks. Sir Robert Atkins, the former member for South Ribble. To the present member for South Ribble, can you confirm, Katherine, that it – certainly, I can put the point to you that, when I took over that constituency, Walton-le-Dale was a unique, very old community that has existed for many hundreds of years. Even the name is old, and dividing it in an arbitrary fashion like that would actually damage the fabric of that community. And, by the same token, dividing Bamber Bridge, which again is a very ancient community in its own right – it's just folly. It would divide the community in such a way that it would cause problems. Would you agree with that?

**KATHERINE FLETCHER MP:** I would be foolish to disagree with any of your [inaudible] Robert. But no, seriously, Robert, in this instance, you are absolutely right. I mean, when you talk to people at the moment, they're slightly confused by why you would split something up arbitrarily, and, actually having been through Bamber Bridge yesterday, actually, it's a proper little lovely hub now. It wouldn't make sense to me to separate that out. You know, it's really got a sense of community to it. And, if you look at where the railway lines are, you can see why, you can see how that's happening with the road, setting it up.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you. Do you have any other questions seeking clarification, please? No. Okay. Thank you very much for taking the time to come speak to us today. Could I check, please? Do we have James Groves available? James, you've heard how it goes this morning. If you could, make yourself comfortable. Start off by giving your name and what town you're from.

**JAMES GROVES:** My name's James Groves, and I'm a resident of Lancaster. I'm also the secretary of the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency Labour Party. I have made written representations as an individual that covers essentially the whole of Lancashire and Cumbria. But, today, I'm going to focus particularly on where I live and the town I live in, which is Lancaster. And my basic thesis is that Lancaster is a well-defined community – that, therefore, the seat of the Lancaster county constituency should include the whole of that, and that includes the community of Skerton. And that can be achieved, although sadly, the Boundary Commission has currently divided Skerton, but, because it is possible to put Skerton in, I would recommend that that happened. Next slide, please – essentially, it's an opportunity to show off some old maps.

This is one of my favourite maps. It's a wonderful Ordnance Survey map of Lancashire with all the old boundaries on it. And this shows really rather well, I think, the situation around Lancaster. And you can – maybe it's a little bit tricky to see – the Lune, sort of going through maybe the top one-third to one-quarter of Lancaster there; north of the Lune – that is Skerton. And you could also see the boundary between the old kind of urban borough, and then, to the right, that is the Lunesdale Rural District, I believe. It's on the Vision of Britain website, if any of the Commissioners want to consult these old maps – or speak to the OS, I guess. So, we're going to zoom in on Skerton now.

So, next slide please. So, here is Skerton. And, again, thanks to the Ordnance Survey's wonderful election maps thing for giving this. And you can see that, essentially, the boundary of Skerton, as the northernmost part of Lancaster, is pretty much exactly the same as it was 50 years ago and, indeed, pretty much, it's been unchanged for even longer than that. There's just a very small community sort of sticking out to the left, which is Grosvenor Park. But the rest are the historic boundaries of Skerton. Now, Skerton is north Lancaster, and Skerton was part of the Lancaster county constituency, I think from the establishment of the county constituency, or when Lancaster was re-enfranchised up until 1997. At that point, the dividing line was set as the Lune, and those two wards have been in Morecambe

and Lunesdale, but I think there is no doubt – and I'm sure Cat will hopefully confirm this in a little bit – that Skerton people see themselves as Lancastrians, no doubt about that.

My central claim, I think, is that Skerton people would like to see themselves as in Lancaster. So, the re-establishment of the Lancaster county constituency should very definitely, if possible, include the whole of Skerton. Now, what the Commissioners have proposed is that Skerton East do go into the Lancaster county constituency, but that Skerton West remain within the Morecambe and – whatever it's going to be north of – in the Cumbria constituency, but certainly the constituency that Morecambe is in. Now, that creates some interesting anomalies in terms of dividing communities. Indeed, it literally divides communities. So, in the middle there, and you can see maybe where the word Hare Runs is – a little bit up. That is the Vale Estate. And, in fact, you can see where it says Hare Runs is the top bit of the Vale Estate.

And if he goes where the word Skerton East is superimposed, that is the southern part of the Vale estate, and it is one estate. And the dividing line between Skerton West and Skerton East is literally slap-bang through the middle of the Vale. Indeed, it dates from when Skerton used to be divided into three council wards – Skerton West, Skerton Central and Skerton East – and, essentially, the Vale was Skerton Central. And when they turned it from three two-seat wards to two three-seat wards, they kind of divvied up the Vale. It means that the Vale is – that top bit of the Vale, where the word Hare Runs is, is an odd thing. It's almost like if you were to put that in the Morecambe seat and Skerton East in Lancaster, it'd be an odd sort of semi-exclave because the only way out of the Vale, which wouldn't be going through Lancaster, would be either Hamilton Hall Lane or Barley Cop Lane to the north.

And these are not well-travelled paths, if you like – it's along by the crematorium. And, indeed, if you go to the next slide – I was going to go to the Vale and take a photo, actually. But I ended up going to Google Street View. So, if you have the next slide – here we are on the Vale. And, over on the left, on Brock Close, that's in Skerton East, and on the right, on Longlands Road, that is Skerton West. And it is, as I say, slap-bang through the middle of an estate, all of whom see themselves as residents of the Vale in Lancaster. Now, it doesn't create too many problems – just which councillors do you have within the same authority? I do claim that it would be odd for people on, essentially, one very coherent, cohesive estate, the Vale, to be divided between two different MPs when you don't have to because it is possible to put both Skerton East and Skerton West into Lancaster.

And, therefore, I propose that is what we do. Next slide for one of my hand-created maps – well, hand-coloured. So, my essential proposal, and this is in the full document that I sent last summer, which I still think stands up today, is to essentially put Skerton West in with Lancaster. And, in return, if you like, the Lower Lune Valley ward, which is the big bulgy yellow one out there, go into the Morecambe seat. The numbers add up – the bulk of the Lower Lune Valley ward was in the Lunesdale Rural borough – that makes the numbers add up. That is a way that keeps

Lancaster, as a town, together. The Lancaster county constituency deserves to have the whole of Lancaster in it. Final slide, please.

This is essentially what I'm going to claim – Skerton is part of Lancaster. We should try not to divide it if at all possible, especially as a boundary line between the two is essentially slap-bang through the middle of a residential estate. Luckily, it is possible to put the whole of Skerton in the same seat, and, as part of Lancaster, that should be the Lancaster county seat, if at all possible. Therefore, I think the Boundary Commission should do that. I'm happy to take questions. I'm also happy to take questions on the rest of all my proposals, as I would endorse what Graham Jones has said in respect to central and east Lancashire, which I think are great. Thank you very much.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you, James. Can I ask if there are any questions seeking clarification? Yes, we have some, please. Can we wrestle the microphone off James?

**JOHN WALSH:** Thank you, sir. John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. You make a very powerful case for uniting Skerton, and we agree with you on that one. But, can you just confirm that, actually, Skerton West ward also has very powerful links with the estate on the extension to the west of that new gate area, as shown on your Skerton map a short time ago, whereas the compensatory proposal, the Lune Valleys, have very limited, if any, links physically by road with the Morecambe constituency.

**JAMES GROVES:** So, in terms of the sticky-out bit to the left, sort of northwest of the S in Skerton West, that's the Grosvenor Park estate. And that is an interesting place. It's officially part of the parish of Heaton-with-Oxcliffe, and it's been moved around between wards over the years.

And, indeed, it is parished with places to the southwest of it. But the rest, I would say – in terms of a coherent community – people in Scale Hall certainly see themselves as part of Skerton and look towards Lancaster. You are right. I mean, clearly, you can see there are good links to Torrisholme and Morecambe, but I would say Skerton people would go on the bus or go shopping more often to Lancaster than to Morecambe. Point made about, for example, places like Caton – it is clearly easier to get from Caton to Lancaster than from Caton to Morecambe.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** I think you may have answered the qualification question there.

**JAMES GROVES:** Yes.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Rather than us repeating or going elsewhere, do you have any other questions of clarification, please? James, thank you very much for taking the time to come and speak to us today. And I appreciate you coming around slightly early to cover a little gap. That's absolutely fantastic. Thank you. Cat Smith, are you



okay to come down, please? Would you like to take a seat, please? And if you could start by giving us your name, please, and who you may be representing.

**CAT SMITH MP:** Okay. I'm Cat Smith. I'm the Member of Parliament for Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency – have been since 2015. And my apologies for being a little bit late. I had a sick child this morning, which completely threw my morning off. But I'm here now. I don't have a fancy presentation. I just thought I'd tell it how I see it. I do agree with the presentation made by Dr James Groves ahead of me. I think that was a very accurate and very academic presentation. I think mine's going to be a bit more lived experience by comparison.

I probably want to start by saying that I do appreciate the work that, as Commissioners, you have to do in north Lancashire is never easy. It does appear that our populations do not divide neatly into nice tidy seats, hence the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency, which, I'm fairly sure my constituents would agree, is very much two different communities.

However, I think that the draft proposals before us could be improved by making a few changes. And I just want to talk a little bit about Skerton, you might be surprised to hear. But Skerton considers itself to be part of Lancaster, since if you live there, you send your kids to school in Lancaster, you do shopping in Lancaster, your GP is likely to be in Lancaster. And that is all part of Lancaster. I'd say that the main divide between where Lancaster ends and Morecambe begins, roughly speaking, is where the new Bay Gateway road runs through. It's actually falling on quite a natural boundary there. So, the idea of keeping Skerton together, I think, is being made quite powerfully.

The current Skerton West–Skerton East boundary does run right through the middle of a housing estate. That is a very cohesive estate with a very strong sense of identity. And I'm sure you've seen as well as I have from the public submissions that many members of the public have flagged this as a concern. So, all of Skerton has an LA1 postcode, which ties it into, I think, being part of Lancaster. If you look at things like the addresses that schools put on their websites or anything like that, they always put their addresses down as being Lancaster. And, as a Member of Parliament, I'd say, in any given week, I probably get three or four queries from people in either Skerton East or Skerton West currently, asking for help as their MP. And I have to explain several times a week that I'm not their MP.

And I do direct them to my colleague in Morecambe and Lunesdale. So, I'd say that, at the moment, everyone in Skerton probably thinks of themselves as being Lancaster. They certainly don't want to be split as a ward. And, in terms of dividing the numbers, it strikes me that the obvious solution is to do a straightforward ward swap, which would be nice and neat and tidy, to put the Lower Lune Valley in the Morecambe constituency, which would unite it with the Upper Lune Valley ward as well. So, that would keep that Lune Valley community in the same parliamentary constituency but also keeps the same Skerton communities in the same constituency in the Lancaster seat. It would give us the opportunity to have every single urban

ward of Lancaster in the same parliamentary constituency. I think that's easier for the public to understand, and it's easier, I think, for the Member of Parliament to be held to account. There are strong links within the Lune Valley between the Upper and Lower Lune Valley in terms of shared school places and facilities like swimming pools. And, of course, the Lower Lune Valley, which I currently represent, has previously been in the Morecambe constituency. That's the end of my formal remarks, and I'm very happy to take questions.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Oh, thank you very much. Can I just check, please? Do we have any questions seeking clarification of what we've just heard? Thank you very much for explaining that so clearly, that's really appreciated. Thanks for taking the time. I know you're really busy at the minute. Could I invite Jake Berry please.

**JAKE BERRY MP :** I'm Jake Berry. I'm the Member of Parliament for Rossendale and Darwen. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak today at this hearing. I want to start, like many others, putting on record formally my thanks for the Boundary Commission for the work you have done. It is a difficult task in Lancashire. You have the sympathy, I think, of everyone in this room. I don't have a detailed presentation. I simply have come to make three points, and those three points have been powerfully transmitted to me by my constituents, who have taken a more-than-usual interest in the Boundary Commission proposals for Rossendale and Darwen.

My first point relates to the division of Rossendale into two separate constituencies, not just from me, but you can see from the response to the consultation that this is universally unpopular within the Rossendale Valley. It is a tightly-knit local community where people regard themselves as being part of one community, not two. It has a long history going back to the 13th century, and it is the cradle of the UK Industrial Revolution and the Rossendale constituency, in various forms, has been represented in Parliament for over 137 years as one community. I accept that the current inclusion of Haslingden into the Hyndburn constituency means that the constituency is already split between two parliamentary constituencies. I would make the point that the vast majority of the Rossendale community is in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency. And it was identified, not just in this Boundary Commission hearing but previous Boundary Commission hearings, and by many residents of Rossendale, that the reunification of the Rossendale constituency, like the Berlin Wall falling in 1989, was a key ask for any Boundary Commission changes.

And, in previous Boundary Commission hearings, when it has been proposed that Rossendale is split, or, in fact, when it has been proposed that Rossendale is not unified, evidence from communities, Members of Parliament and councils has persuaded the Boundary Commission that this is an extremely important community with local links that wants to be bound together. Residents in Bacup and Whitworth do not want to be put with people in Burnley, and residents in Rawtenstall and Edenfield feel no natural affinity with people in Chorley. The overwhelming wish of the community in Rossendale is to remain united. And this is reflected by the local council, who is backing the proposals to keep the Valley together. I want to,

therefore, put on record my opposition to the plan to split Rossendale. And my great disappointment would be that, if the plans were to proceed as the Boundary Commission have proposed them, the historic community of Rossendale, the very name of that community, would disappear in the House of Commons.

My personal preference would be for the Boundary Commission to keep all of the borough within one parliamentary constituency or retain the current constituencies on its boundaries, which is both right in terms of size and also is one united community. I do, however, realise the constraint the Boundary Commission is working under, and I accept that you may not be able to do my preference under the current guidelines and, therefore, would like to just mention the guidelines without a significant knock-on effect across Lancashire. Personally, I feel that these effects are worth it to keep the Rossendale community united; however, I accept that others will feel differently and the Boundary Commission may well choose to keep their current proposal for a West Pennine Moors constituency as the least worst option in Lancashire.

This leads me to my second and third points, which pertain to the proposed West Pennine Moors constituency that I have significant concerns about.

It consists of many disparate communities that have little or no connection with each other in Lancashire. In fact, it spans four local authorities and bridges the gap between east Lancashire, which is a defined community, and West Lancashire, which has a different community indeed. It's clearly been put together as leftover parts of Lancashire after what you've done everywhere else. And I think there's significant opposition from local people. As I said earlier, I understand that, despite the objection of the local authority, despite the objection of many of the local MPs and despite the objections of hundreds of residents, the Commission may well wish to decide to split Rossendale to create a West Pennine Moors constituency as their least worst option for this part of Lancashire. If this is to happen, then I would like to submit two proposals that I feel could significantly improve the proposed West Pennine constituency.

My first proposal relates to Blackburn South & Lower Darwen ward. On the current parliamentary boundary, this ward is split. One polling district is in the Blackburn constituency, and two polling districts are in Rossendale and Darwen. Now, this is a significant anomaly, even on current boundaries, and the Commission should address its mind as to why this is. Well, the Boundary Commission proposal places the whole of the Blackburn South & Lower Darwen constituency within the constituency of Blackburn. This breaks important local community ties between Lower Darwen and the town of Darwen. I understand that many people, when they look at the map, will perceive the M65 as the natural boundary between the towns of Blackburn and Darwen but they are very much mistaken. Lower Darwen may look like an anomaly on the map, but it is an anomaly for a very good reason, and, in previous hearings, this has been accepted by the Boundary Commission.

The community of Lower Darwen sees it very much fundamentally part of the community of Darwen, not the town of Blackburn. Children from Lower Darwen primary schools attend secondary schools in the town of Darwen, not in Blackburn. People who live in Lower Darwen choose to shop in Darwen, not in Blackburn. There was even a recent court case, which appeared in the crown court, that found that someone who had a bail condition saying that they could not enter the town of Blackburn had not breached their bail conditions when they visited Lower Darwen because the court found that Lower Darwen is part of Darwen, not Blackburn. And, if you look at the public responses from people that live in Lower Darwen – the ones that they have submitted to the Commission – there is an overwhelming response from the people in the area they want to maintain their strong community links with the town of Darwen.

I would, therefore, propose that the Commission split the Blackburn South & Lower Darwen ward in the way it is currently split today. So, the Blackburn South part would be included in Blackburn, and the Lower Darwen part would be included in the West Pennine Moors constituency, which includes the town of Darwen. To clarify, this would mean that polling districts BSD-1 and BSD-2 remain in the West Pennine Moors constituency and BSD-3 within the Blackburn constituency. This would keep both constituencies within their quotas and also fulfils the Commission's remit that we should seek the least amount of change. My final point relates to the inclusion of two wards from Chorley Borough council into the West Pennine Moors constituency. I accept that if the Commission are to press ahead with their current plans, there are some areas of Chorley that must be included in the West Pennine Moors constituency in order to make it to the correct numbers.

This is despite the fact that the area of east Lancashire, clearly defined by the local authorities, the European Union and central government as Pennine Lancashire, does not include any of the town of Chorley. Whilst I support the inclusion, with reservations, of Chorley North East into the West Pennine Moors constituency, it is a largely rural ward. I do not support the addition of Adlington & Anderton ward. Adlington & Anderton ward consists of Adlington, Anderton and Rivington. The overwhelming majority of residents who live in Adlington, which has historically always been part of Chorley, look towards Bolton and Wigan and not to the town of Darwen. Their children go to school in Bolton, Wigan and Chorley. They go to hospital in that area. They are not part of east Lancashire. Adlington and Anderton do not see themselves as part of east Lancashire. They use Chorley or Wigan hospitals rather than Blackburn or Burnley hospitals. Their children go to primary schools in Chorley. They do not attend secondary schools, as far as we are able to ascertain, in Blackburn with Darwen. They are a very separate community belonging to the Chorley constituency, not belonging to the West Pennine Moors.

Although a substantial and populated portion of these wards does include parts of the West Pennine Moors, the geographical feature around which the parliamentary constituency would be named, no one actually lives there. We are in the business of finding where voters live. Sheep cannot vote at general elections, they are not my constituents. There are no meaningful road or transport connections between

Adlington & Anderton and the rest of the proposed West Pennine Moors constituency. And any that exists, particularly in terms of public transport, are extremely poor. There is no rail link or direct bus services.

And the only road is known as dangerous, narrow and often closed during the winter and itself just connects with the small village of Belmont in my constituency, which is extremely difficult to get to and has no geographical or community ties with those areas. If you were to drive from Adlington to Darwen, it would take 25 minutes. That would be the largest town in the constituency. Historically, the MP for Rossendale and Darwen has had his office in Rossendale as well as Darwen, and a drive – which would only be available for you to drive because there is no public transport links you could reasonably take – would take in excess of an hour. If you look at the public response from residents within Adlington & Anderton ward, you will see that I don't believe there's one public response that supports the Boundary Commission's proposals as currently written.

I believe, in terms of seeking a solution, that a better proposal would be to retain Adlington & Anderton within Chorley and place the Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton ward in the West Pennine Moors constituency instead. It is a straight ward swap and would better represent those communities. Whilst I accept this does break ties within Clayton, I believe that it is a better fit with Chorley North East ward because both wards have a large rural element and are linked by reasonable transport connections. And, in fact, if you look at the wider West Pennine Moors constituency, one of the unifying factors of it is the rurality of it. Children from this ward's primary schools are more likely to attend secondary schools in Blackburn with Darwen, and residents are more likely to use the hospitals and to shop in the town of Darwen. In addition, the Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton ward is linked to Darwen by the M65 motorway. This provides reasonable road access to those who wish to access their Member of Parliament or the community in Darwen, which would be the largest town in the proposed constituency. So, in summary, I do hope the Commission will think again in terms of its plans. And I'm happy to accept any questions that anyone may have in relation to anything I've mentioned today.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much. We do have a question. Could you start by giving your name, please, and what town you're from or who you may be representing?

**GRAHAM JONES:** Graham Jones from Accrington. Could you describe the journey from the proposed wards in Chorley to Haslingden, and how many other proposed constituencies would you need to pass through to get to the other side of the West Pennine Moors constituency?

**JAKE BERRY MP:** It sounds like you may know the answer to the question which you've posed. What I would say is it would be extremely difficult. We have low car ownership and minimal access to public transport. And one of my main objections is that, if you put the two Chorley wards as proposed into the West Pennine Moors constituency, it will be exceptionally difficult, via public transport, for people to access

their Member of Parliament, to access services – both public transport, policing and health is split on an east–west basis in Lancashire. East Lancashire is a self-contained health authority. Policing is done on that footprint, and transport is largely on that footprint. So, that makes it very difficult, nay impossible, for people in that part of Chorley to access the eastern extent of the proposed West Pennine Moors constituency. It does seem to me that splitting between two areas like east and west Lancashire doesn't make sense for many reasons.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Is it a clarification of what you've heard happening? Yes. See, the questions really should be around clarification. So, can I just check that there are no further questions? Jake, I appreciate you coming and speaking to us today when I know you're really busy, thank you. Could I ask if Jamie McGowan's available, please? Jamie, could you come down to the front please and make yourself comfortable? Jamie, could you start by stating who you are, please, and who you may be representing, your town you're from?

**JAMIE MCGOWAN:** My name's Jamie McGowan. I am a Burnley resident. I am a Conservative Party member, active in local politics within Burnley. I'm going to make this quite brief, I don't have a big presentation to go through. I would, first off, like to say that I am a bit sad to see Burnley not be one constituency just with Burnley, as I've always known. That's the first thing. So, I can understand that the Electoral Commission have a very difficult job with any proposals to get Burnley up to the threshold that we need in terms of voters. However, looking at the proposals that have currently been laid out, I do actually think that this is the best that we can get, really.

And I say that for a number of reasons. One is the similar demographics that exist between Burnley and Bacup. Bacup, in particular, I speak about as I have lived in Bacup myself. I have friends who live in Bacup. There is a lot of crossover between what happens in Burnley and Bacup, anywhere at the moment. Take the schools, for instance. A lot of people I know went to BRGS, as did I, and then after school ended up living within Bacup itself. I think, in terms of moving south, which is what the Electoral Commission's essentially done with this, is sensible in the sense that, like I said, there is a similarity between Bacup and all the area down there towards Whitworth.

A lot of common links, whether it's the nightlife in Burnley – I know people, in the new part proposed, go out in Burnley. And then, like I say, I'm looking at this from a position of – I was born in Burnley. I've lived both within Burnley and in Bacup. I think that it's sad that we're having a change, but if we are to have a change, I think this change is probably the best that we can get, for the reasons I've mentioned there. The connectivity is good between the two, you can get easily between Bacup and Burnley within 15 minutes. It didn't stop me seeing family or friends when I was living in Bacup.

It was very much similar. I have actually seen that the former leader of the Burnley Labour Party has put an alternate proposal forward. But I just see it as

gerrymandering, really. So, this is not a positive for me in the sense of, I seek this change, but I just think, with the amount of difficulties that the Electoral Commission are going to find – the Boundary Commission, sorry – are going to find with all the submissions, that people will say, oh, well, this should happen, this should happen, this should happen. It's a difficult one, but I just wanted to come today to basically put my support on record.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Jamie. That's much appreciated. Can I just check, please? Are there any questions seeking clarification from what we've just heard? Jamie, we really appreciate you taking the time to come down, especially with you having been to school there, lived there and having family in the area as well. That's much appreciated. Thank you.

**JAMIE MCGOWAN:** No problem. Thank you.

[After a short adjournment]

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Good morning and welcome back. Could I ask if we have Anthony Higginbotham available, please? Anthony, could you please make yourself comfortable? And, when you are ready, you can start by giving us your name and where you represent, please.

**ANTHONY HIGGINBOTHAM MP:** Absolutely. Good morning. My name is Anthony Higginbotham. I'm the current Member of Parliament for Burnley, elected in 2019. Much like everyone else, can I start by thanking the Boundary Commission for the work they've put into these initial proposals. I think, as the previous speaker said, it is with some sadness that I saw the proposals would change the current constituency of Burnley. For as long as the constituency existed, it has been identical to the Borough of Burnley and Burnley Borough Council. That brings with it enormous simplicity for local residents in terms of knowing who their Member of Parliament is, who their councillors are and who to go to. That said, I also recognise that the current constituency is not of the right size and so needs to grow. And, having looked at the proposals, as you'd expect, I looked at various options and tried to see where I would change it.

I think the Boundary Commission has broadly got to what is a sensible proposal. As the previous speaker said, anywhere you look to change Burnley, you're going to be trying to add somewhere that is not within the local authority boundary. But Bacup is an area that has transport links, that has educational links, that has familial links. And I say that as someone who lives in Burnley – I live in Hapton, a small village in the borough. My brother lives in – Weir within Rossendale, just above Bacup, an area that would come within the new proposal. So, I can see why, having looked at all the options, the Boundary Commission proposed including Bacup. On the transport links, I mean, from the centre of Burnley, from Burnley bus station into Bacup, there's already a clear bus link.

It takes between 15 and 20 minutes. It's not an area that doesn't have transport links, which I think is one of the concerns raised by the Member of Parliament for Rossendale and Darwen about some of the changes made there. So, actually, on this one, there are clear transport links. And, actually, during term time – to the education point – those transport links increase when schools are sitting. So, during term time, there's an extra two buses from Burnley to Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, BRGS, which I think goes to highlight the strong education links between the two areas, BRGS being the only grammar school (the selective school) within the area for children from Burnley to go to, and, going around schools across the constituency, I know that a lot of parents try and get their children into that school.

It's also fair to say that the police – every time I meet with them – they run lots of the Rossendale operations through Burnley police station. So, I think that there are clear links that would justify this, notwithstanding the fact that I think lots of people in Burnley – certainly those who have written to me – would, in an ideal world, have seen the constituency remain exactly as it is.

I do want to pick up on some of the counter-proposals that have been brought forward. Specifically, someone who gave evidence today mentioned about moving Padiham, which is the second-largest town within the Burnley Borough as well as the current constituency, into a different constituency. Padiham is synonymous with Burnley. They are one and the same thing. There are enormous economic, transport and educational links between all of them. Anyone who goes to Padiham will know that one of their secondary schools is called Burnley High School.

This is an area that is as much Burnley as any other part of Burnley is. The newspaper's the Burnley Express. The people who work in Padiham live in Burnley and vice versa. So, I think any proposal that was put forward – and I've seen this in my own email inbox since some of those proposals were published online – would be treated with quite a lot of hostility from people in Padiham who already had a perception that they were kind of orphaned. And that's the final point I wanted to make on the proposals that the BCE published. I think lots of other proposals you could make work in terms of numbers, but you would ultimately end up with an orphaned part of another borough. And so, this one, the proposals that the BCE have published, I think broadly get that split right of trying to make sure that there is enough in the new constituency from Rossendale with Bacup – we are going all the way down to Whitworth – to make sure that part of the constituency also gets the right focus from whoever the Member of Parliament is.

Any other change – even to try and include Padiham – you would probably end up with two council wards. I live in one of those council wards. I know that it would end up feeling orphaned. So, I'm just not sure if that would work in practice. So, I think, to conclude, this is broadly the right proposal – there will obviously be residents in Burnley that are disappointed not to have the simplicity that they have right now, but I think everyone accepts the need to grow will bring with it some changes. And this is the most sensible.



**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much for that. Can I just check something with you? BRGS has been mentioned a few times. Is it Bacup and Rawtenstall or Bacup and Rossendale?

**ANTHONY HIGGINBOTHAM MP:** Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School. But it is the only grammar school that – broadly, most of east Lancashire – you would go there if you're looking for a grammar school.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Yeah. That's excellent. Can I just check, please? We have a question. Again, can I just remind people that these questions should be on clarification on what you've just heard, please, as opposed to general questions or challenges.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Would Mr Higginbotham confirm that, when the Boundary Commission last reviewed the boundaries in 2018 and placed Padiham with Hyndburn, that the Boundary Commission said that there were no objections throughout the process from the people of Padiham to being included in the constituency of Hyndburn?

**ANTHONY HIGGINBOTHAM MP:** Well, I can only talk to the current proposals from the Boundary Commission and what I've seen in my inbox from residents since the proposals came out, and then the public evidence. And I can say, from that point, and as someone who lives in Hapton, which is the village next to Padiham, I have yet to speak to a single resident who would endorse Padiham moving out of the Burnley and Bacup constituency.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** We have some more questions there, please. Again, could I remind people just to introduce themselves and who you may be representing, please?

**JOHN WALSH:** Thank you, sir. John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. Mr Higginbotham may not be able to answer this question, but, in the light of the question he's just been asked, could he confirm the last parliamentary review, in 2018, was leading to a reduction in the number of parliamentary seats from 650 to 600 and therefore, larger, constituencies?

**ANTHONY HIGGINBOTHAM:** Yeah, I think that's a very fair and valid point. The circumstances of this boundary review are very different to the circumstances of the last boundary review. And, ultimately, there was a reason that the last boundary review was not implemented.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Can I just check check please, any other questions of clarification? Thank you very much for taking the time to come speak to us today and making your representations. It's really useful for somebody who knows the area as well as yourself. Thank you. Could I check, please? Do we have a George Rear in the room? George, would you like to come up to the desk, please, and make yourself

comfortable? If you could start by, firstly, introducing yourself and saying what town you're from or who you may be representing, please?

**GEORGE REAR:** My name's George Rear. I'm speaking on behalf of the village of Rufford in the Borough of West Lancashire, currently South Ribble constituency, proposed to go to Southport constituency. In the interest of full transparency, I'm also the Conservative Party's area campaign manager for Lancashire. So, I'm speaking today to support the Commission's proposals to keep Rufford united with the other three villages that comprise the so-called northern parishes of West Lancashire. I'm going to be speaking to villages here, not electoral wards. But, to briefly summarise, North Meols electoral ward covers the village that I'll be referring to as Banks. The village of Mere Brow is in Tarleton ward, along with the village of Tarleton and what is in electoral terms called Hesketh-with-Becconsall. In my basic vernacular, I will call Hesketh Bank. I've been prompted to speak today on reviewing comments from various members of the public who are putting forward the proposal that Rufford should stay in West Lancashire.

I think this is a degree of confusion here, based on the fact that often our parliamentary constituencies in Lancashire share the names with our borough councils, where they are not coterminous. And I'm quite pleased to see that, in various areas around the county, the Commission's taking action to change this. For example, in Burnley and Bacup, the name makes clear that it covers two separate areas. I do not believe that Rufford is best being moved into the rest of the West Lancashire constituency that is largely focused on the town of Skelmersdale. Instead, Rufford is a much better fit staying in whatever the parliamentary configuration is. It should stay as one of the four northern villages. So, to begin, I will cover religion. Rufford is part of the Diocese of Blackburn, along with Tarleton and Hesketh Bank.

Rufford, to this day, shares a parish priest with Tarleton. This then bears out into educational links. Kids at Rufford Primary School tend to go to Tarleton School or to Bishop Rawstorne School in the borough of Chorley and the village of Croston. There are not many kids that go from Rufford School to Burscough Priory Secondary School. The movement of children out of the village looks north. At a sixth-form college level, kids in Rufford would generally go to Runshaw College in Leyland, where I went – other kids my age at the time were going to King George V College in Southport. Again, the movement was north or west, not south into the rest of the Borough of West Lancashire. In terms of health, Rufford and the smaller village of Holmeswood that makes up the ward are linked at the lowest NHS level – MSOAs – with the villages of Banks and Mere Brow.

So, effectively, if you were going in that direction and a slice out towards the sea, that might be a bit of a technicality. But MSOAs, I became first aware of because they were what we used to define COVID restrictions at the time in various areas. So, these things do have real-world relevance. Clearly, Rufford is a rural village. We have some of, I believe, the richest soil in the country outside of Cambridgeshire because this was the Martin Mere, as you can see there, was the largest lake in

England prior to being drained by the Hesketh family, who ran Rufford Old Hall. You can see Mere Brow at the edge of the lake, and there's this great big space in the centre where there are no villages – that was the lake.

So, this is very rich agricultural land – it's arable farming. Rufford shares with the other northern parishes the challenges of supporting our farms whilst, at the same time, finding routes for HGVs to get up and down the A59 to the motorway. It's a common issue that the villages share, particularly in Tarleton and Hesketh Bank, but Rufford is very much part of that shipment of agricultural goods to the broader country as a whole, which brings me on to transport. As you can see, Rufford sits on the A59 link road that broadly looks north to Tarleton. The only road that runs through Holmeswood – the only main route in and out of Holmeswood – is the B5246, which then connects to the rest of the northern parishes at Mere Brow and then runs on to Southport.

There are strong local public transport connections to the rest of the northern parishes. Bus service 2A runs from Rufford up to Tarleton and then on to Preston. Bus service 347 connects Rufford through to Holmeswood, and then it goes through Mere Brow and Banks before terminating in Southport. The 347 was, when I was younger, a service that ran twice a day, so it was quite difficult for me trying to get to Southport. But, I think, due to increased demand, that is now an hourly service, so there is a strong link running out that way. All of these arguments, I think, reinforce the decision that you guys have made to keep the northern parishes united in a single parliamentary constituency. I believe all four wards have been in the same constituency since at least 1974, but I think actually it goes back to about 1885, from basic looks at old maps that I've had a look at.

They were part of the West Lancashire constituency from '74 to '97, when the constituency was coterminous with the Borough. And they've been part of the South Ribble constituency since 1997. It's an interesting point, when looking at those maps – these West Lancashire Borough villages have been part of South Ribble constituency for longer than they were ever part of the West Lancashire parliamentary constituency.

So, the object to this presentation has been, whatever the configuration is of constituencies at the end of the day, to emphasise the importance that these four wards are a natural block that sit together – they are a natural fit, and they should not be split up in any sort of odd way. I will make a few brief remarks on parliamentary constituencies, if I may. So, on the whole, I would echo Katherine Fletcher MP's point that the northern parish villages, and Rufford in particular, probably looks more to the north and to Preston than it looks to the south.

Clearly, this is somewhat intangible. It would be stupid to say there are no links looking south at all, but, clearly, I believe that the links looking north are much stronger. There are links that I haven't really talked about, but quite strong links between Rufford and the Chorley Borough villages of Mawdesley and Croston. And if the Commission could come up with some way to keep all of these villages –

Tarleton, Croston, Bretherton, Rufford, Mawdesley – together in one constituency, I think that is something that might be worth exploring, were it possible to do. However, appreciating that you are operating under constraints, I don't think Southport is a bad fit at all for the northern parishes. I grew up in Rufford. I moved to Rufford in 1999 at the age of seven. So, Southport was, particularly as a teenager, a big focus for my social life, to go to the shops there. I'll say now, while we're amongst friends, we did quite a lot of underage drinking in the sand dunes at Birkdale, and that was a convenient place to go from Rufford. Southport was the local cinema for us. And I applied for a part-time job in Southport. I was in Southport quite a lot – it was a natural focus for me, along with Preston, in the way that Ormskirk wasn't to the same extent, and certainly Skelmersdale wasn't even in the same ballpark.

My final point on the proposed Southport constituency – and this links into the comment I made a little bit earlier on about, to my mind, the problems with giving our boroughs the same names as our constituencies. Southport – clearly the electorate of the proposed new constituency – the majority of it is made up in the town of Southport. But, in a geographical sense, the town of Southport is probably a minority of the constituency as a whole. I, therefore, propose some sort of name change to recognise the constituency does not solely comprise of Southport. And I think the Commission has already done some good work in setting a precedent with the Burnley and Bacup constituency to recognise that Burnley is not the sole focus of the constituency. The name I have proposed for the constituency – but I'd be interested to hear other options – is Southport and Douglas, recognising the River Douglas makes up the eastern border of three of the northern parish wards.

But, clearly, there are other options. Southport and the Northern Parishes could be one, but I recognise the Commission – I believe you prefer less wordy names. So, from that perspective, I think Southport and Douglas is a good bet. One way or another, I think it would hugely help the legitimacy of the constituency if the name is changed to recognise that it is a constituency of two halves – the town of Southport and then the rural outlying villages. I'll just end with a plea that, across the county of Lancashire, we start to consider constituency names that recognise that constituencies, I think, now in no cases are coterminous with their boroughs. The one that I think is most important to recognise is the proposed – if I can go off-reservation and speak to it very briefly – the proposed Hyndburn constituency. I think the name of Hyndburn and Whalley for that constituency is a much more appropriate fit because, as with our part of the county, it recognises outlying areas that might not have a huge affinity for it. It recognises them in the name of the constituency and shows to them that the constituency is for them as well. It is not just the same as a different borough council. I think, at that, I will end my statements, and thank you very much for letting me speak.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** No problem. Are there any other questions seeking clarification from what we've just heard? Great. George, thank you very much for taking the time to come and share your local knowledge and experiences of the area. Can I just check if we have a Brian Rollo available? Brian, you're slightly early. Are you all right

to come down? Thank you. Brian, could you start by giving your name, please, and what town you're from?

**BRIAN ROLLO:** I'm Brian Rollo. I'm a retired city councillor, a retired wind tunnel engineer. I'm about to be made an alderman of Preston. I stepped down from the council in May last year.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Was that when you come to start making representation?

**BRIAN ROLLO:** Yes. First of all, I took part in the reorganisation of the Preston city council wards, three years ago now. So, I appreciate the problem you've got. What I'm most concerned with – there's one other item I want to talk about a little bit later briefly – is Ribbleton and Fishwick & Frenchwood on the eastern side. The proposal is that they're moved into Ribble Valley. Now, Ribbleton ward has some of the most deprived Super Output Areas in the city, the whole of Ribbleton – can I refer to my submission, which is BCE 82448?

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Give us that number again, Brian.

**BRIAN ROLLO:** 82448, which contains lots of data and tables and deciles. We're basically splitting them up into deciles, into tenths. The Ribbleton ward has only two in the second most-deprived area and the rest are in the most deprived area. Fishwick & Frenchwood actually has one in the third most, but they're also equally deprived. Ribble Valley, which has got 40 LSOAs – Lower Layer Super Output Areas – has only one in the fourth decile. That's on the index of deprivation. On that basis, there is virtually no similarity between Ribbleton and Ribble Valley. Ribbleton fits in Preston. It doesn't fit into Ribble Valley. Similarly, Fishwick & Frenchwood is very slightly less deprived but is also far more deprived than the whole of Ribble Valley.

The other thing that I'd address about the two wards and the constituency Ribble Valley is Ribbleton ward, which is my old ward, is predominantly now white working class, with some of the worst outcomes for white boys in the whole of Lancashire. Fishwick & Frenchwood, on the other hand, is a very, very multicultural ward. I don't actually have the breakdown, the percentages, but it's a very large percentage of the population – Preston itself has a very high population – Preston has about 15% non-white. Fishwick & Frenchwood is probably much, much, much higher than that. I would not like to give a guess, but I'd double it, at least. Whereas, from experience in education, we used to get a breakdown, ethnically, of Lancashire results, and Ribble Valley, I seem to recall, was the most monochrome council area in Lancashire. And, again, that's completely at odds with Fishwick & Frenchwood.

So, I object strongly to moving those two wards to where you're proposing to move them. They just don't fit. I looked at the other wards in Preston. I understand that we need 72,000, and we'll get 72,000 with exactly 12 wards in Preston. 13 wards will take us above your upper limit. 11 wards will take us below your lower limit. So, if we keep those two in Preston, that means that we need to lose two other wards, and, looking at the ethnicity and index of deprivation, the two wards that I can see as the

most similar to Ribble Valley are Greyfriars and Sharoe Green, which border onto the rural areas, which will form a natural part of Ribble Valley if they get put in there. So, my proposal is that we move those two wards out of Preston into Ribble Valley and keep Ribbleton and Fishwick & Frenchwood in Ribble Valley. I don't think there's anything else I need to say on that.

There's one other point I'd like to make, which I didn't mention when I sent the email in, which is the Morecambe and South Cumbria constituency, which I think, for anyone who wants to be an MP there, they're going to have – well, at present, there's two county councils and two district councils that they're going to have to deal with, with completely different policies. And you're splitting a constituency, transport, everything else. And you're going to ask an MP to stand there and fight for one thing that he can't get. And the other and reverse. And I think that needs really seriously looking at – not splitting that into two. That means a lot of rejigging, but I really don't think that should be a constituency. I think that's all I've got to say.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much for that, sir. Brian, before you get up, can I just check, please? Are there any questions of clarification? Brian, thanks very much for coming and sharing your local knowledge and your experiences. That's really much appreciated.

**BRIAN ROLLO:** Thank you. Thank you for listening.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Sara Britcliffe? Could you start by please stating your name and where you're representing, then, when you're ready, please make a start?

**SARA BRITCLIFFE MP:** Yes, no problem. My name is Sara Britcliffe, and I am the current Member of Parliament for Hyndburn. Firstly, can I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today, and can I thank the Boundary Commission for the work that they've done. As the current Member of Parliament for Hyndburn and Haslingden, I support the proposals which you've put forward.

It's never easy for an MP to be told that they're losing part of a constituency. We get to know the people, the places and the issues very closely – a strong bond forms with the areas we represent. As such, if I'm re-elected, I'll keenly feel the loss of Haslingden. It's a fantastic area with an identity of its own. But, whilst that makes it a great place to represent, it also adds weight to the plans to detach it from Hyndburn. The two do not naturally face each other geographically, administratively or economically. Haslingden has far more in common with Rawtenstall than it does with Hyndburn, as was stated by Jake Berry.

None of the comments, which even people against these proposals have made, propose keeping the two together. Although it's very sad for me personally, it's clearly the right thing for our area to split the two parts off from each other. And this brings us to the second part of the proposal, namely, to make up for the loss of Haslingden by adding wards from the Ribble Valley, including the villages of Simonstone, Read, Billington, Langho and parts of Whalley. I'd like to talk briefly about why this is the

best possible solution to balance numbers across Lancashire as a whole whilst ensuring that communities are linked in a way which makes sense geographically, economically and for the local connections and services. I'd also like to talk a little bit about why other proposals which have been put forward to completely reconsider how the boundaries should be organised across our part of Lancashire as a whole just don't make sense.

The current proposals are, with a few minor alterations, that I'll discuss in a moment, the best possible way to make the numbers balance. But, before I do so, I want to talk about names. The proposal is to call the constituency Hyndburn County constituency. Given that the Ribble Valley wards which are to be included are administratively not part of Hyndburn council, I do wonder whether some recognition in the names should be given to their inclusion. I've seen the suggestions for Hyndburn and Whalley, as has been previously stated, or Accrington and Whalley as possible alternatives. And I believe something like this should be considered. Many of the objections to these proposals centre around the fact that they would see part of Whalley transferred into the new constituency. And that's why I wonder whether it might, therefore, be administratively and geographically better to transfer all of Whalley across to the new constituency to ensure that the community continues to feel whole. This would mean moving the wards of Whalley, Netherton and Sabden. Hyndburn has always been called the gateway to the Ribble Valley.

And I believe these proposals to include all of Whalley would strengthen the ties which exist. Hyndburn as an area has always been a constituency based around a central hub in Accrington, with the rest of the area acting as a link to other places. Knuzden links us with Blackburn, Altham with Padiham, Huncoat with Hapton and Burnley and Great Harwood with Whalley and the Ribble Valley. We are the gateway and always have been. The proposed boundaries that you've put forward would enhance this role in a way which includes numerical and geographic sense. The parts of the Ribble Valley which would be included are the linking parts of that area too. Prior to 1983, Great Harwood was in the Clitheroe constituency, and the links between the areas have remained strong. Moving Whalley into the Hyndburn constituency would greatly enhance the role of the linking hub and would, I believe, further enhance links across Lancashire. From a travel and transport perspective, these changes also make sense.

These areas are served by linking buses through Whalley station. Businesses, too, have a positive view of these proposals and have highlighted why they make sense. The Hyndburn Chamber of Trade in their submission said the link between Hyndburn and the Ribble Valley, and many, in deep businesses in Hyndburn have always worked across Hyndburn and the Ribble Valley. And there have always been many businesses which have offices in both places. There are significant transport links plus the business connections between the two areas. And there have also been a large number of local businesses who call both Hyndburn and the Ribble Valley home. I agree with this submission. As the local MP, I frequently visit businesses, and I'm struck by how many of them look towards the Ribble Valley. The social links between Hyndburn and Ribble Valley are far greater than between any other parts of

Lancashire. People who live in both Hyndburn and Ribble Valley cross the border for schools, jobs and events like agricultural shows.

Pupils at schools such as St James in Altham come from areas like Read and Simonstone, and children from the Great Harwood area attend schools in Langho and Billington. And, as stated in the Hyndburn Labour group submission, I quote: 'Great Harwood, prior to the Ribble Valley parliamentary constituency was in the Clitheroe parliamentary constituency then, on the creation of Ribble Valley parliamentary constituency, became part of the Hyndburn parliamentary constituency, including the hamlet of Whalley. The linkage in education, secondary schools, farming, employment, Hyndburn Ribble Valley community voluntary services, etc, continues in many forms to this day. The parishes of Whalley and Altham are historically linked – again, on the formation of Ribble Valley parliamentary constituency, Altham parish transferred from the prior Clitheroe parliamentary constituency to the new Hyndburn parliamentary constituency. To this day, the children from the villages of Altham, Read and Simonstone maintain a school in Altham village, with the major employment sites in Altham drawing their parents to employment, with farming still playing an important role within these parishes.'

Finally, I want to comment briefly on some of the content in other submissions that have been made, which are alternate proposals. A lot has been made of the previous set of boundary proposals and some objections. And I hope that the Commission will see that times have moved on, relationships between areas have changed and new development has come on stream since those proposals. Firstly, I'd like to just comment on some of the objections, as it seems, after talking to residents in the Ribble Valley, many have seemed to be inadvertently misled to believe that, with the constituency boundary change, they would then fall under the control of Hyndburn Borough council and change local authority. I've also heard some comments that the house prices would drop if this was to happen. This is categorically untrue, and I believe many of the objections may have been potentially submitted with these above comments in mind.

It will now be the duty of local leaders to put residents' minds at ease. So, getting more into the details suggesting that Rising Bridge and parts of Rossendale are part of a continuous Accrington urban area have been put forward as reasons to not make these changes. I find this argument wholly insulting to the people of both Hyndburn and Rising Bridge. For too long, this area has been forgotten and treated as a sort of afterthought. The idea that a crude and administrative term for a diverse range of communities should be used as an argument for keeping the status quo is wrong. Our areas have their own identities and should be treated with respect. Similarly, the argument that parts of Haslingden have an Accrington postcode and, therefore, should be in Hyndburn is equally wrong. For example, in the south of England, the city of Winchester has a Southampton postcode whilst being 20 miles from that city.

That logic just does not stack up. Equally, I saw the suggestion that a possible future abolition of district councils in Lancashire should be taken into account. It is vital that



we use the evidence of what is happening now rather than possible future reorganisation as a basis of these constituencies. We all know how politics can change, and so any uncertain possible future should be disregarded. I further absolutely reject the idea that the provision or not of bus services between two parts of the proposed constituencies should be a determining factor when considering parliamentary boundaries. The shape of a constituency should not be based on how quickly people can travel across it. For example, the current Ribble Valley seat is geographically huge. To suggest that all the villages are currently easily linked by a bus service or can quickly travel from top to bottom does not reflect reality. And we do have bus services that connect the two.

When it comes to political representation, it's a responsibility of the MP, for example, to – as I have tried – to get around all of their constituency and make themselves accessible. To suggest that lack of access to an MP is a good reason to not proceed with the boundary change would be a poor excuse. I've also concerns about suggestions linking Padiham with Accrington. As has been mentioned, Padiham is correctly more closely linked with Burnley, as has been stated by the current Burnley MP. I'd finally like to highlight the fact that both the national Labour and Conservative Parties, as well as the local Conservative and Labour groups, support the proposals for the Hyndburn constituency as put forward by the Boundary Commission with only minor changes from either side, such as the name change and putting the whole of Whalley into this seat. Whilst Hyndburn currently has a Conservative MP, locally, the council is run by the Labour Party, who passed a motion at their full council meeting unanimously in support. This proves that this goes beyond politics and that the two parties have come together in support of what is best for our area and what is the best option for the constituency. I believe that this submission I've made today and the plans to include all of Whalley in the Hyndburn seat reflect that solution.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much, Sara. Can I just check, please? We have questions of clarification. Can we start off here, please?

**GRAHAM JONES:** It's just a clarification. And then, may I ask one simple question? The clarification is that the Labour Party in Hyndburn's made a submission opposing these, and it was passed unanimously by the Labour Party, and that submission's on the Boundary Commission's website. And, just for a matter of public record, that vote was unanimous. Not one single councillor voted to include Whalley in that, and the submission has been submitted. So, we can reject the idea that the party support this particular proposal. Can I ask a question about the four villages? Can you confirm, Sara, that the fastest way to get from Billington & Langho is to take the train to Blackburn and then to come to Accrington, and there are no direct transport links between those two villages. Can you equally confirm that Read and Simonstone–

**ANDY BRENNAN:** You need to make the clarifications based on what you've heard.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Sorry, I apologise. The bus services were raised and I just wanted a clarification.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** But you've had the opportunity to make your representations.

**GRAHAM JONES:** Thank you very much.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** You don't use the time that's for other questions to be made in order to make statements against what you've just heard. That was said at the very beginning. So, I must remind you, please, that isn't what these clarification questions are about. Do we have any other questions seeking clarification, please, on what we've just heard?

**JOHN WALSH:** Thank you, sir. John Walsh of the Conservative Party, I'm afraid my hand and brain didn't quite work in coordination, and we heard quite a long piece about the area around Altham and the links. Who were the authors of that?

**SARA BRITCLIFFE:** That was the Hyndburn Labour group's submission to the Boundary Commission.

**JOHN WALSH:** Thank you, sir.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Sara can I thank you on behalf of the haring today. Can we ask Liam Pennington to come up, please? Liam, you'll be used to this having seeing you in Manchester. Could you start by giving your name, please, and what town you're from?

**LIAM PENNINGTON:** My name is Liam Pennington, and I'm here from Preston. I'm here to talk about Preston and Ribble Valley, and some of what I'm saying today, I said in Manchester a few weeks ago. When I wrote originally to the Boundary Commission, I asked the Commissioners to find a swap to resolve what is a major problem with the proposed Preston constituency without, at the time, suggesting anything specific. I was interested to find, with the submissions on the website, that so many people – local people, local parties, local councillors – have found that solution, which is to move two wards into the Preston constituency, Ribbleton and Fishwick & Fulwood and we also seem to be in agreement that the best swap out is Greyfriars and Sharoe Green. There are many natural divides in Preston. In the west, Lea & Larches is a natural divide, and in the north, Fulwood. For many years, Lea and Cottam have been removed from Preston for parliamentary purposes.

And, for many years, Fulwood has been moved into constituencies along that A6 corridor of, currently, Wyre and Preston North, and previously, for many years, Ribble Valley. There is a natural divide between Fulwood and Preston. That divide – economic, geographic, even architectural – represents and reflects that divide and that sense of detachment. Fullwood does not have its sphere of influence within Preston city centre. Lytham Road and Watling Street Road is a natural divide, and it's not a coincidence that the southern boundary of Greyfriars and Sharoe Green are these roads. In stark contrast, and it is stark, the two wards of Preston – Ribbleton and Fishwick & Frenchwood – have no natural divide from Preston because they are Preston. It is clear from the layout of the traditional terraced streets, their social and

ethnic mix, the general demographics, that their sphere of influence is Preston, both the city and the constituency.

While, for constituency purposes, Lea and Cottam have been consistently divided into the Fylde constituency and Fulwood into Ribble Valley and currently Wyre and Preston North, these two southern Preston wards have never been divided from a Preston constituency in modern times. Their core connection socially, economically, culturally is Preston. I agree with the submissions that there is this easy solution. By putting Ribbleton and the ward of Fishwick & Frenchwood into Preston, you're not just reflecting minimum change. It is minimum change. I believe 99.9% of the current Preston constituency will be retained. By putting Greyfriars and Sharoe Green in Ribble Valley, you are retaining them in a constituency along the A6 corridor somewhere they have been for decades.

Fulwood is much more closely aligned with Ribble Valley than the core of Preston. It is predominantly owner-occupied and reliant on cars or public transport. That A6 corridor is vital to Preston schools and employment. Culturally, socially, economically, Ribble Valley is a borough that looks like Fulwood, stretched out across a vast area. Its ethnicity, its economy, its reliance on private transport. More than any other review process, I'm conscious that this is numbers-led. I have contributed many times to these review processes over many years, both as an – I think I said ordinary member of the public last time, but it's not that ordinary – but as an individual and as a representative of a political party. I'm here as an individual today, but I know from previous reviews how you used to be able to do these things county by county, city by city. There are knock-on consequences now.

You could make one change in east Lancashire and cause a knock-on effect in West Lancashire. A big change in Cumbria could make a big change further down south. Here, I believe there are almost no knock-on consequences. You're simply swapping two wards. The numbers barely change. And because of that, I hope with the might of individual contributions and those that you've heard from local people and councillors, you will make a very simple swap with what I hope has little knock-on consequences. Ribbleton and Fishwick & Frenchwood are Preston, and I hope that, for parliamentary purposes, they remain. So, thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you. Can I just check, please? Are there any questions of clarification on what we've just heard from Liam? Liam, thanks very much again for coming to share your local knowledge and your views and your representations. They are much appreciated.

**LIAM PENNINGTON:** No problem. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you. Could I check, please? Do we have Peter Wilson available? Peter, would you like to come down, please, and make yourself comfortable? If you could start off by giving your name and where you're representing, please, and when you're ready and comfortable, you can please make a start.

**CLLR PETER WILSON:** Of course. My name's Peter Wilson. I'm a councillor for Adlington & Anderton, which is in the Chorley constituency. So, I will be addressing comments today, obviously, relating to the proposals for both Chorley and the new constituency of West Pennine Moors, and then in particular to my own ward in Adlington & Anderton. So, firstly, as the Commissioners will be aware, the current Chorley constituency is undergoing some significant changes with the removal of Adlington & Anderton and Chorley North East ward into the new constituency of West Pennine Moors. This in itself has caused some significant concerns amongst residents. And I'd just like to articulate some of those points where we believe local ties, perhaps, are being overridden by the very important consideration of making sure that the numbers are equal and we have fair representation. So, we do acknowledge the difficulty here, but we'd like to make a couple of points before coming up with an alternative.

Firstly is, historically, of course, these areas have been part of Chorley and the Chorley parliamentary constituency for well over 100 years. In terms of local ties and links – education wise, children go into the Chorley schools, health, economy, housing need wise – these are very different from, perhaps, some of the issues over in east Lancashire. So, again, we look at the connections with GPs, we look at where the health authority represents, we look at where the police area represents, and all these remain focused in the south of Lancashire, in Chorley, South Ribble, Preston, with nothing stretching into the east Lancashire area. So, again, in terms of the local ties and connections and the historical basis, of course, Adlington & Anderton and the Chorley North East ward, very much link in to Chorley, and not across to east Lancashire, where there are no direct transport links, not even direct road links, actually, for that matter, not a common travel-to-work area.

And, of course, the constituency of West Pennine Moors is really dominated by the Pennines, in one respect. So, you've got two very distinct areas. You've got the towns of east Lancashire on one side, and then, just on the fringe, we've got Adlington & Anderton and the Chorley North East ward. So, as I said at the start, my concern is that this breaks all local ties. Secondly, though, recognising the need to make the numbers work, we will, of course – and I'm not proposing to do it now because it's too complicated – put in writing what, perhaps, could be alternative proposals. Obviously, we recognise that that affects the rest of Lancashire if you start changing wards, but that will be attempted to be done. But what I would like to do today is, perhaps, make a second appeal to yourselves at the Commission, which is, if you are still minded – obviously, you've done one round of consultation, you're now doing a second – if you are still minded that the West Pennine Moors seat is needed and that this is the only way to have fair representation and to make sure that the whole of Lancashire works, then I would make an appeal that Adlington & Anderton is put back into the Chorley constituency.

And that, perhaps, if we are to move an area of Chorley over, that that'll be better done with the Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton ward. And the reason I say that is that there are some links from that area, particularly from the Brindle and Hoghton area – children from there do go to school in the east Lancashire area, which would

be part of the West Pennine Moors area. There are some who travel to work into Darwen and Blackburn from the area. The numbers would add up, of course, because you're simply removing one council ward into the new West Pennine Moors seat and taking one out. So that would allow balance. It would keep those ties, particularly from the South Lancashire point of view – Adlington & Anderton very much forms into Chorley rather than being segregated off with an area of no connection. And I would, again, be happy to put that in writing to follow this up but would strongly urge that that would be considered on the basis of more cohesive local communities.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Sorry I was looking confused there, I was trying to get my bearings in relation to the obvious transport connections with Clayton East, Brindle & Houghton, and the difference with Adlington & Anderton.

**CLLR PETER WILSON:** Well, first of all, you can see, distance-wise, if you're driving, it's significantly nearer going across there because, when you look at Adlington, although on the map, it looks wonderful, you've got the Moors, so whichever way you go – you either go south to Belmont and the Bolton route, or you go north. So, of course, it's significantly further. Although, I see on the map, it's probably, as the crow flies, not necessarily much difference, but in reality – and there's certainly no public transport links, whereas there is a bus that runs through the Abbey Village area and goes across, ends up in Pleasington and Blackburn.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** That's fine. I just wanted to get my bearings – although I do go around there quite a lot on my motorbike, I don't really look on a map. It does look slightly different.

**CLLR PETER WILSON:** That is one of the things we're addressing. It looks very different on the map to the reality of the actual direct links.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Excellent. Do we have any other questions or clarification, please? No. Peter, thank you very much for coming to make your representations. Thank you. Could I ask if we have a Jayne Rear in, please? Jayne, could I ask you to come and sit down, please, and make yourself comfortable? And, when you are ready, if you could start by giving us your name, and what town you're from, and when you're comfortable, please make a start.

**JAYNE REAR:** I'm Jayne Rear, and I have come in support of my local village of Rufford. I'd like to speak in support of the Commission's decision to keep the villages of Rufford and Holmeswood united with the neighbouring communities of Tarleton, Hesketh Bank, Mere Brow and Banks as part of the boundary review. All these villages already form part of the South Ribble parliamentary constituency. And, whilst I fully understand that it may be necessary to move the northern parishes away from its current constituency, I would urge the Commission to keep them together.

I've lived in Rufford for 22 years, and, as well as raising my family here, I have served my community as a school governor, member of the PCC and the WI. The

links between all three organisations were strongest with our neighbouring communities of Tarleton, Hesketh Bank and Mere Brow. Rufford St Mary's Church of England Primary School works closely with the cluster of schools in the northern parishes, sharing good practice and mutual support. The importance of this link was very apparent during the recent COVID crisis when the schools worked very closely together to ensure that places were available for all children of key workers throughout the whole summer period in the very difficult first lockdown. The link between the churches of the northern parishes is strong too. Not only does the parish of Rufford with Holmeswood share its vicar with Tarleton as part of the Blackburn Diocese, the two parishes combined to support the local community by hosting joint local events and fundraising activities.

Sporting links are important for the northern parish villages, too, with Tarleton Sports Club offering the opportunity to play cricket, rugby and football to members of all the local communities, as well as healthy inter-village competition between the four. In my view, by far the most important link between the villages is their rural nature. All have strong farming communities working together to produce the potatoes, root vegetables and salad for which our area is renowned in the rich, fertile soils and the many greenhouses that cover the area. Shared, too, are our concerns about HGVs and their impact on the local community versus the need to support the food production industries located here and get local produce to markets and stores across the whole of the UK.

Turning to transport, I believe that our communities are further joined together by the local public service transport links we share between the villages, the city of Preston and the town of Southport, both of which can be easily accessed from all four villages. The A59 also provides an essential artery, linking the villages with further afield. I believe local residents look more towards the north and west, rather than to the south, of the area for work and recreation purposes.

I appreciate that the Commission has a very difficult task to ensure an equitable distribution of people between the various proposed parliamentary constituencies but would urge them to remain with the existing proposal to keep the four northern parishes together in the same constituency to enable us to maintain historical, current and future links. A best-fit scenario for me would be that the northern parishes remain united within the South Ribble constituency. But, given that this looks unlikely, the next-best alternative would be to unite the villages with the Southport constituency. To avoid the confusion about what this means, the new constituency should be named in such a way as to reflect the rural nature of the northern parishes that sit within it.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Okay. Thank you very much. I have no questions of clarification. However, can I just check, please? Do you have any questions? Jayne, thank you very much.

[After a short adjournment]

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Good afternoon. Could I ask if we have a Damian Bretherton? Damian, would you like to take a seat, please? Now, when we start, because it's a public hearing and it's being recorded, could you give your name and what town you're from? When you're comfortable, you can start.

**CLLR DAMIAN BRETHERTON:** I'm Damian Bretherton. I'm the local councillor for Walton-le-Dale. And that is where I live. I've lived in Walton-le-Dale for over 30 years. I know the area very well, and I represent the local residents and often speak to them about their views and opinions. Walton-le-Dale is what we call a village. For some reason, it's been split up into east and west, but we always look at Walton-le-Dale as Walton-le-Dale, and wherever you live within it, west or east, if people ask you where you're from, we say Walton-le-Dale. That dividing line doesn't make a difference to us. We as residents, and I personally, don't believe that we should be splitting up our village. We should retain it as one community because we do see ourselves as a community, and it wouldn't feel right for any of us to split our community in half.

There's another point I'd like to make. For the last 40 years, or at least 30 years, we've been expecting Walton-le-Dale to come closer to Penwortham because there's always been planned a link road, a new road that will connect the two small villages together. There's Penwortham and Walton-le-Dale. I don't know if you can see it on there, but there's a cross-borough link road. I can't see it there, but there is a cross-borough link road that opened in 2020, very widely used. What you'll find with a lot of residents in Walton-le-Dale – they often commute to Penwortham, which is our nearest neighbour. Our children go to Penwortham schools. We shop in Penwortham. We feel more affiliated to Penwortham than anywhere else. Walton-le-Dale and Penwortham can all almost be seen as one place.

So, it does seem a bit odd that we've got this situation where one half of our village – Walton-le-Dale East – goes into South Ribble, when we feel that we're in South Ribble anyway, and Penwortham's in South Ribble, but suddenly we've got Walton-le-Dale West in the Ribble Valley, and it doesn't seem to make sense at all. We're connected more to Penwortham than anywhere else. We pay our council tax to South Ribble Borough council. We feel more affiliated to living in South Ribble. And you can see the River Ribble – we are the south of it. Anybody from Walton-le-Dale, often, if they're going for walks and places like that, they'll go to head towards the river over what used to be Old Tram Bridge and into Preston. So, I just feel that we shouldn't be splitting up Walton-le-Dale.

We should keep it as one community. We are one community, and it would be silly to split our community in half. And we just feel that it should be kept intact. It wouldn't seem right for our neighbours to be suddenly belonging to another constituency. We should stick together. We believe we should be in South Ribble, especially now that we've got this link road that's more or less connecting us to Penwortham. So, Penwortham and Walton-le-Dale, West and East, is almost like one community. We socialise – our children go to school – in Penwortham, and we just think it should stay together. So, my main argument for coming here today is, we don't want

Walton-le-Dale split up. The residents that I represent and speak to were all of a similar mind. And I'm here to represent the residents that I've spoken to. And we feel that our village, our community, should not be split up. We should stick together as one community. The village of Walton-le-Dale should stick together. It shouldn't be split up, and we do feel that we belong to South Ribble. And if Walton-le-Dale West should be in South Ribble, as should Walton-le-Dale East. That's all I'd like to say. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much for that. Can I just check, please? We have a question seeking clarification. Two questions.

**SIR ROBERT ATKINS:** Sir Robert Atkins, formerly the MP for South Ribble. Is it not the case, Damian, that the new link road was built especially – wholly, really – to connect the east of the borough with the west of the borough in a much more efficient way than certainly was the case in my time, when it was a trek, and that has made a significant difference to the whole community of Walton-le-Dale?

**CLLR DAMIAN BRETHERTON:** I totally agree with you, Sir Robert. That's the situation well explained. I'll give you an example. Living in Walton-le-Dale for the last 30 years and shopping, commuting, taking our children to school, we'd have to go the long way around, through Lostock Hall and we've all been looking forward to that point where we can get connected more efficiently to our neighbouring village of Penwortham. I'd say probably 95% of people did celebrate the fact that this long-awaited link road is open, which has connected our communities together and made it very efficient. And it takes 10 minutes off our journey now – we used to have to go through Lostock Hall and through Charnock, Middleforth, and that way. Now, we just go straight across to Penwortham. And you'll probably find that it's highly unlikely that people from Walton-le-Dale are going to travel north. If they're going to go shopping or take the children to school, they tend to gravitate towards South Ribble.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much. We do have another question. Again, for the recording, please could you state your name and what town you're from?

**GEORGE REAR:** George Rear here, just asking a quick one for clarification, Damian. Can you confirm on the map that the link road is the road marked The Cawsey and Carrwood Road, and it's immediately beneath the sign that says Walton-le-Dale West?

**CLLR DAMIAN BRETHERTON:** Yes, I can confirm that. Locally, we refer to it as the cross-borough link road, but the official name is The Cawsey and Carrwood Road.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Damian. Any other questions, please, seeking clarification? No. Damian, thank you very much for taking the time to come and speak to us today. We do appreciate it. Your knowledge and experience of that area is much valued and appreciated by everybody. Thank you. Could I check if we have a Joan Burrows available, please? Joan, would you like to come down to the front,



please? Please make yourself comfortable. When you're ready, if you could start by stating your name and what town you're from.

**CLLR JOAN BURROWS:** My name's Joan Burrows, and I'm actually the county councillor for Penwortham East and Walton-le-Dale. I'm here to support the fact that Walton-le-Dale is kept in the South Ribble constituency. So that's me personally, but as a county councillor, I spend a lot of time walking around my division, and I listen to what the residents say to me. Walton-le-Dale naturally gravitates to Penwortham. That has been enhanced these last couple of years by the opening of the cross-borough link road – the road that runs along The Cawsey and Carrwood Road. Now, when the road was opening, there were a few people against it, but the majority of people welcomed this road. I'll give you some examples.

There was a resident that said to me one day, 'When is this road opening? We need it opening,' because he had a child that went to Penwortham Girls' High School, and he was having to travel all the way around through Lostock Hall and down Leyland Road to then get into Penwortham, whereas now it's a two- or three-minute journey just along the link road for him. His social life was in Penwortham because he drank in one of the pubs there on Liverpool Road. And he also played golf at Penwortham Golf Club. He wasn't the only one. So that shows you that residents living in the Walton-le-Dale area travel over to Penwortham. They see it naturally. They come over to visit the shops as well. So, it's a natural community, Penwortham and Walton-le-Dale. And hence, of course, my division – it's Penwortham East and Walton-le-Dale.

People have their recreation, people from Penwortham actually go and walk along the Old Tram Road, as do the people from Walton-le-Dale, and the people from Walton-le-Dale actually come over to Penwortham. And some of them come over to walk in our parks and spend time in Hurst Grange Park. So, there's a lot of connectivity between the communities and people as well in Walton-le-Dale – they see themselves as part of the South Ribble constituency. So, as I said, there's a lot of connectivity there. And so, I would actually urge that Walton-le-Dale is kept in the South Ribble constituency, and I think that's what my residents would like to see as well.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Joan. Can I just check, please? Do we have any questions of clarification from what we've just heard? Joan, thank you very much for taking the time to come and address us today. We do appreciate it. Thank you. Is Gillian Taylor available, please? Gillian, can I invite you down to the front, please, to make your representations?

**GILLIAN TAYLOR:** Thank you very much.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Please make yourself comfortable, and whenever you're ready, start off by giving us your name, please, and what town you're from.

**GILLIAN TAYLOR:** Thank you. Hello, everybody. Good afternoon. I'm Gillian Taylor. I'm from Rufford, and I'm here on behalf of Rufford Parish Council and myself. We're here asking for the Commission to consider keeping the parish of Rufford and Holmeswood within the northern parishes boundary for the parliamentary constituency. The reason behind that, from my perspective, is that we have more links in the northern parishes rather than in the parishes of Burscough, which is further to the east of us and to the south of us. My main perspective is from the community aspect of the church and the schools. Since 2007, Rufford has been very closely aligned to Tarleton through being awarded the United Benefice of Rufford and Tarleton from Blackburn Diocese. And so, we have lots of links – traditionally, anyway – but have been further enhanced through becoming a United Benefice, which also includes the village of Mere Brow and Holmeswood. And we'd like to preserve that in terms of our parliamentary constituency as well.

The rector is shared between Rufford and Holmeswood and Tarleton and Mere Brow, but it also includes the schools, from an educational point of view. We have a Church of England school in Rufford, a Church of England school in Tarleton and a Church of England school in Mere Brow. They're all served by the same rector, and a lot of our pupils from the schools traditionally go to Tarleton Secondary School and Bishop Rawstone Church of England Secondary School in Croston. So, we don't really have as much – we do have links with Burscough, obviously, through the road system – but we don't have as many links as we do with Tarleton and the northern parishes. So, it's looking to just remain cohesive from that perspective of community across the educational – certainly primary education – and the church community.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Okay. Thank you very much, Gillian. Can I just check, please? Are there any questions of clarification from what we've just heard? Thank you so much, Gillian. Thank you very much for taking the time to come speak to us.

**GILLIAN TAYLOR:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come and talk.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you. Could I ask if John Gordon's available, please? John, could I invite you down to the front, please? Make yourself comfortable, please, then, when you're ready, start by giving your name and the town you're from.

**CLLR JOHN GORDON:** Thank you. My name's John Gordon. I'm a parish councillor and borough councillor for Rufford. Obviously, I'm in support of keeping Rufford in the northern parishes because, as has just been explained, there's a lot of close links. I'm going to be quite brief here because I'm coughing like anybody's [laughs] business. I've been a parish councillor for over 20 years, and parish councillors are usually parochial. We understand this, but Rufford's been quite good in the fact that we have reached out to other parish councils. We've never actually done anything with Burscough, though we have reached out. All our business has been taken up with the northern parishes because we share a policeman. So, there was a police initiative where we all met – we did that many years ago. My colleague will [laughs] be on soon because we're doing a road initiative now, which includes Mere Brow. So, obviously, that's Tarleton. And then we've got, like most communities now, we have

water issues. Obviously, being a rural area, most of ours are open ditches and pumps and all that sort of business. And we have a commonality with Banks and Hesketh Bank and Tarleton, whereas Burscough – we have spoken to them but [laughs] they have a more urban problem of water – sewage, surcharging and manholes lifting and that. So, there was no commonality there, really. And, I'm sorry, [laughs] that's about all I've got to say.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Do we have any questions of clarification for what we've just heard? Nope. John, thanks for taking the time to come and speak to us today. I appreciate you're not 100% as you'd like to be, but thank you anyhow for making the effort. We do appreciate that.

**CLLR JOHN GORDON:** Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Could I check, please? Do we have a Lawson Pryke? Lawson, could I invite you down? If you make yourself comfortable and, whenever you're ready, you can start by please introducing yourself and what town you're from.

**LAWSON PRYKE:** Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Lawson Pryke. I'm a parish councillor for Rufford. I've been a resident of Rufford for some four years and a parish councillor for nearly one. I have a responsibility for highways and for footpaths. The object of this short presentation is to demonstrate the close working relationship we have with other northern parishes, namely Tarleton in this respect, due to the fact we share common ground. This is an initiative that we're doing at the moment. I'll elaborate a little later. Rufford connects with Tarleton. If you would like to just show the second page, please.

Rufford connects with Tarleton via the main trunk route of the A59 to the right-hand side of the triangle and the heavily used B5246, which is the left-hand side of the triangle. And it's bordered by the A565 at the top. Rufford - we are at the bottom end of the triangle. In detail, the issues that we have with these routes are shared in that we suffer speeding drivers that use these roads through the villages, especially the B5246 – again, that's the left-hand side of the triangle – as their own personal racing playground, and very often come out of the area to do so. That's clear. We've had several incidents, and indeed one death on the fastest part of this road where I've indicated that the 60 mile-an-hour – right at that bend there in the middle – we had a motorcycle death in the middle of last year.

This presents obvious dangers to the residents of the villages and especially pedestrians on our all-too-often narrow footpaths. Now, we do have several schools in the area and one in each village – one in Rufford, Holmeswood and Mere Brow, which is the Tarleton parish council. Coupled with this is antisocial behaviour, which is the noise pollution that we suffer sometimes late into the night. So, you can see this initiative that we're doing. We've got it now in leaflet form, and will start to be distributed next week. The two parishes in this instance, it's our latest initiative working strongly together. On the last page, please, we've got statements from Councillor Gordon, and also one from Rosie Adams of Mere Brow – Tarleton. They're

making statements, making the cases about the problems that we have within the area.

So, we actually attended the parish council meetings before Christmas launching this. And there is a close relationship enabling us to put this thing together. With all this in mind, we, the parish council of Rufford and Holmeswood and Tarleton, are working together on our latest collaboration, as John Gordon has alluded to. I say our latest collaboration – the collaboration beforehand has been working on the water aspects and drainage. So, this is our tie, if you like. A campaign to mitigate the speeding through the villages and, therefore, reducing the dangers and a speed reduction in the national zone of the B5246 to 40 miles an hour. Interesting to note, we have one of the fastest roads in the area, and it's a B road.

That's the B526, that's between Rufford and Holmeswood, and it's a long, straight – it's 60 miles an hour where they normally do about 80 or 90 to 100 on Wednesday nights. Ridiculous. But unfortunately, as the seasons change, the weather improves, this just becomes a race track and, coming this way, it goes into a 30 mile-an-hour, and the best you're going to get is about 60. As I said, I'm responsible for footpaths. There are footpaths that cross this road. In fact, in the distance, that's Mere Sands Woods, and their outlet from their car park is onto that, which is the fastest part of this road, 60 miles an hour. It's just crazy. I've got to the point where we've got to do something about it.

So, this is culminating with the production of a campaign flyer, as I say. I've brought that today. We've got QR codes direct to the police, and we've also got emails and PO boxes managed by our clerk to the parish council. With that, I fail to see that Burscough, Ormskirk or Skelmersdale, et cetera, would be remotely interested in these local issues, which the two parish councils are working together on, which are extremely important to those that live in the area. We need the rural parishes united as a single entity, where a single Member of Parliament can represent them, as our MP does now, if only geographically. It makes sense. That concludes my presentation. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Lawson. Just before I ask you to move across, I'd like to see if there any questions, please. Any questions of clarification? Lawson, no questions other than to say thank you very much, and good luck with your initiative to make the road safe in and around the areas which you've identified for us. Do we have Margaret France, please? Are you available to come up? Please make yourself comfortable. And, if you could start by giving us your name and the town you're from and who you may be representing.

**CLLR MARGARET FRANCE:** Thank you very much. My name is Margaret France. I'm here this afternoon as a borough councillor for Chorley North East ward and I'm speaking also on behalf of my husband, Gordon France, and Councillor Jenny Whiffen, and together we make up the three councillors for Chorley North East. It's quite an interesting idea this to create this wonderful geographic area called the

West Pennine Moors. It sounds a very romantic title, but it seems to me it's a very diverse population across such a massive area.

I've lived in Brinscall now for 40 years or so and, from a lot of these villages, we can actually see Darwen Tower. Darwen seems to be the main town in this massive, great geographical area. We can see Darwen Tower, and it's a walk of about five miles, I would say. The most direct route is from Withnell to Abbey Village via Tockholes and Roddlesworth Plantation, up to Darwen Tower and dropping down the other side. And that is a walk of about five or six miles, I would think. On Google Maps, it tells you it's 4.1, but the footpath does meander a bit. If you want to take a road route, it's about eight miles, and that's using the M65 motorway. So, we consider ourselves very much outliers in this new, massive constituency, the reason being that, when you look at a map, what you fail to see is the height of those moorlands that separate the area. So, historically, Chorley has been our place to go for schooling, for both secondary schools and colleges, and Preston for universities like UCLAN. For healthcare, we go to Chorley Hospital or Preston Royal Infirmary.

The services on the east Lancashire side are pretty well not used at all by our constituents here in Chorley North East. So, whilst we may not be geographically a million miles away, culturally, we're nothing like them. So, as I say, for education, for health, for social life, whatever – we consider ourselves part of Central Lancashire. Chorley, South Ribble and Preston together constitute Central Lancashire. And I'm working together with Central Lancashire on the Central Lancashire New Local Plan, which will come into effect in 2023. And this is because these three boroughs work closely hand in hand. We have no ties whatsoever with Blackburn with Darwen unitary authority. We have no shared services such as we have with South Ribble. So, whilst I'm sure everyone says they don't like to move out of the area they're in, I think in this particular instance, there are some very good reasons. As I say, we work very closely with our neighbours, particularly South Ribble.

So, I understand the need to lose some constituents from Chorley. It's one of the most rapidly growing towns in Lancashire and will continue to be so, given the figures that have come out of Westminster about the housing numbers, and that, again, is something that we're working on very closely with our neighbours on this emerging Central Lancashire Local Plan. So, to take us out of there – it makes no sense to me to have an MP who's more likely to be based in and living in Darwen. And, if I can quote from your own website, 'the Boundary Commission is heavily informed by public consultation'. Well, make no mistake, I know which way my residents want to go, and it isn't towards Darwen. And can I also quote that you say that you 'take into account local ties that will be broken'. Well, you would significantly damage local ties with South Ribble and with Preston that we have worked hard and long to achieve, and the inconvenience is attendant on such changes.

Well, that would mean getting on three buses to get to see your MP in Darwen. And if I could give you a word of *[laughs]* a word about the public transport system we have. If you look at the map, from our lovely villages here, Brinscall, Withnell, Abbey Village. So, as I say, Darwen isn't far geographically, but there isn't really much in the

way of a road there. Most people would use the M65, I think. Bus services from us to get to Darwen are pretty well non-existent – have to go through Blackburn. So those residents on the Heapey and on the Whittle-le-Woods side would have to get one bus into Chorley and, next bus, Chorley to Blackburn, and a third bus from Blackburn to Darwen. And, those of you in the room who are old enough to remember the Ribble buses, if you remember when the Ribble buses ceased to be and the routes went out to tender.

The bus that leaves Chorley bus station and goes to Blackburn bus station, it was the 124 back then. It's a profitable route in the daytime, but not in the evenings or the weekends. So, Lancashire County Council, together with Chorley Borough Council now pay for an evening route that leaves Chorley bus station after seven in the evening or on a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday. And it goes all the way to Abbey Village, and then it stops, turns and comes back again. Now, you might think that's not a very useful service, but the reason behind that is, when Blackburn with Darwen unitary authority were contacted to put in their fair share of completing that route, they wouldn't contribute a single penny to it. What does that say to you about how connected our hill villages are with Blackburn with Darwen unitary authority?

They consider us so important that they weren't putting a penny in. So, to my mind, this is absolute madness. We have a system that works really well with our neighbours, both at South Ribble and at Preston, and Blackburn with Darwen might as well be on another planet [laughs]. So, please don't go ahead with these changes because it seems to me that, if Chorley needs to lose some residents, the sensible thing will be to lose some into South Ribble. We have shared working arrangements with South Ribble. We have one single chief executive across Chorley Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council. 48% of the workers of the offices at Charlie Borough Council work across both sites under shared services. We have no shared services arrangements whatsoever with Blackburn with Darwen. And I think that probably concludes what I have to say. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Margaret. And thank you for sitting on the fence in how you view these [laughs]. I am family with Darwen Tower and what you say about the moors. Can I just check, please? Do you have any questions of clarification from what we've just heard? Margaret, thanks very much for coming to speak to us and talking so passionately about the area which you represent. Anyone in the room who would like to make representations? Sir Robert please introduce yourself.

**SIR ROBERT ATKINS:** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Sir Robert Atkins, currently a Wyre borough councillor, but formerly the MP for Preston North and then South Ribble for 18 years. And then, subsequently, I was a Member of the European Parliament for the North West of England for 15 years. So, I think I have a reasonably fair knowledge of the region and also some of the specifics. And I want to take this opportunity, since Lancashire, obviously, is predominantly my base, to go through some of the constituencies that are under consideration. First of all, I'd like to deal, if I may, with Morecambe, which is my submission – 62535 – in which I make the particular points, which I've done before in other places, relating to the division of

communities, as I shall say later about Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge, so it is with Skerton.

And I think there is a measure of agreement here with political opponents, at least that the Skertons have to stay together. Our argument, however, is that the Skertons stay together, but they stay together in the Morecambe constituency, where they are based now. Bearing in mind that there are plenty of places who can say that they're related to a particular part – we've been hearing about Walton-le-Dale, we've heard about other places where there is a connection and it doesn't make any difference – but, in this instance, there's a river between the two, and it's quite a big river, and it's fundamental. And, as the Commission is proposing that the Upper Lune Valley should be part of the Lancaster constituency, so, I think that the ward, which is pretty well the Lower Lune Valley, i.e. Halton-with-Aughton, which is that one there, and arguably Kellet, but certainly Halton-with-Aughton is the Lower Lune Valley, effectively, with the neighbouring ward being the Upper Lune Valley.

And I think it's very straightforward to swap Halton-with-Aughton to put that into the Lancaster constituency. The numbers work out, it fits with the Upper Lune Valley and it allows the Skertons to stay where they should be, which is in the Morecambe constituency. It's also worth making the point, since someone said it earlier today, that there's no actual access roads between the Upper Lune Valley and the Lower Lune Valley and Morecambe, at least not easy ones. So, to suggest that that, therefore, makes sense, in my book doesn't. So, I'm, therefore, leaving the Skertons in Morecambe Bay and swapping it with Halton-with-Aughton. The numbers work out. There's no particular problem in that regard. Moving on, if I may. Incidentally, there is an argument for changing the name of Morecambe to Morecambe Bay. Morecambe Bay is a well-defined and well-known area and I just wonder whether, perhaps, rather than Morecambe, which is a bit banal, that Morecambe Bay might have a little more romance to it.

Moving on, if I may, to the Lancaster constituency in which I live. This is my reference number 62537. I don't support the proposals for the Lancaster constituency as proposed by the Boundary Commission. I've mentioned about the Skertons and Halton-with-Aughton in the north, but there's also another area, which is the ward of Elswick and Little Ecclestone, presently in the Fylde constituency, which, frankly, are part and parcel with Great Ecclestone, and it seems to me logical that that ward of Elswick and Little Ecclestone should be in the Lancaster constituency. And I've spoken to numerous people in the Fylde area who live around there, and they all share that view.

So, it does seem to me to be something which would be acceptable. I think, also, that the constituency name ought to be changed. It used to be, years ago, Lancaster and Wyre – indeed, the present Member of Parliament won it as Lancaster and Wyre – because it has a substantial chunk of the borough of Wyre in it, not least the town of Garstang, which I have the privilege of representing on Wyre Borough Council. And, therefore, I believe the name should be Lancaster and Wyre. Those small amendments that I've suggested – Halton-with-Aughton in the north and Elswick and

Little Eccleston in the south – again, make the numbers add up without any problem at all. That follows, therefore, that the Fylde constituency would be amended slightly by the removal of Elswick and Little Eccleston. We're talking here about 1,200 or so people, and it doesn't make any difference in serious terms to the numbers in the Fylde constituency.

If I may move on, then, to Hyndburn and Whalley over in the east. As someone was saying today – I can't remember who it was – it has always been the case that Lancashire is half a seat too heavy or half a seat too light, and that, also, communications by and large through Lancashire have historically tended to be north–south rather than east–west. And it was the M65 that was a much-needed change to all that and has facilitated easier access to parts of the east. I think what the Boundary Commission is proposing in relation to Hyndburn makes every sense. But I would add, as Sara Britcliffe MP said this morning, that, actually, it would be folly to divide Whalley as such, and that therefore the addition to that of Whalley Nethertown and Sabden – slightly over to the right there – being added to that would make the transfer of Whalley as a community, a whole.

And then that would follow, as she said, and I concur entirely, that the constituency should be called Hyndburn and Whalley. Those numbers of those two small parishes are literally 2,000 or 3,000 of Sabden and Whalley Nethertown, so, it wouldn't make much difference in that respect. That, incidentally, I should have said, is my submission 62540.

Moving on, if I may, to Ribble Valley. Ribble Valley is at the, sort of, centre of Lancaster. And, as someone was saying earlier, it's a very large area, very rural. It's always been quite difficult to get about, particularly if you're going to a restaurant in the darkness of the winter, as I'm sure many people have, but there are many flaws in the proposals, understandably because as I said, it's very difficult. The argument's been made and heard – I think resonated – about the Preston aspect of all this, that Ribbleton and Fishwick – simply, it's daft putting them into Ribble Valley.

They have always been core Preston wards. And, certainly when I was the MP for Preston North, Ribbleton and Fishwick, who by no means voted for me in large numbers, nonetheless were a very crucial part of the Preston North constituencies and have remained so in Preston ever since. Again as a number of people have said today, and I've indicated in the past about splitting communities – and, incidentally, I should say Ribble Valley is submission 62545. When I was the MP in Preston North, Preston South was the neighbouring constituency and included, as a whole, Walton-le-Dale. It's a very ancient conurbation with many traditions. Indeed, if you know the area well enough, you'll know that there is a restaurant there which was where Cromwell parked himself on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1640, or whatever it was, in order to conclude the Second Civil War.

So, it's tremendous history in that part of the world, but as an innate community and one that should be kept together. And, to balance that – because Walton-le-Dale East ought to be in, and it ought to be united with the West, or rather the West with



East, I should say – so it should be the case with Bamber Bridge in the south, where the two Bamber Bridge wards, which are an equally ancient conurbation, should be retained in the Ribble Valley constituency, which is where they are at the moment, which makes every kind of sense numerically. And, finally, in this context, in the east of Ribble Valley, I just want to emphasise, again, the numerical reasoning of joining Whalley to the Hyndburn constituency, but the move from Ribble Valley of the additional wards of Whalley Nethertown and Sabden, whilst to be regretted, and I do understand that because these villages are unique institutions in themselves, but to emphasise again, in case of misinformation, this doesn't change the local authority ownership, so to speak, of those wards. They stay within the Ribble Valley borough council, but would be in the Hyndburn and Whalley constituency.

Now I'm going to turn, if I may, to South Ribble, which is my former constituency, which I represented for some time, and this is under my submission 62548. I share the concerns that were expressed this morning by the current Member of Parliament for South Ribble, but equally, it's numerical. That's always the problem. When I first represented this constituency, it was coterminous with the borough. It was the first time that that had happened. And then, additionally, when I fought in '97 as the candidate and lost, that's when those rural areas, all four of which are collective – they form a whole and are very much part of that. So, from Rufford in the south to Hesketh in the north, and so on. I never represented them, sadly, but I did get to know them very well, and they should be a whole. Coming back to South Ribble itself, if we swap Walton-le-Dale West so that it is together with its fellow in Walton-le-Dale East, and that Bamber Bridge stays in the Ribble Valley constituency, the numbers, again, add up without any trouble at all. That was 62548.

My last one in this context is 62553, which is the West Pennine Moors. This, I know, is an immensely complicated thing. It's always the way that, if you are looking at Lancashire, you either start from the edges and work in or you start from Preston and you work out. Whichever way you do it, you get an entirely different set of statistics, which is why, as I should have mentioned at the beginning, we've had to go across the border in Morecambe. And I understand that, and I think everyone else does, and we support it as they do, I believe, in Cumbria. But, West Pennine Moors – I agree with the comments that were made today. I can't remember who it was now, but the point about – let's get my wards right now.

Adlington & Anderton is nonsense. It doesn't fit at all and, therefore, should be put back into Chorley. And to compensate that, we're talking then about Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton, which is that ward in the north. So, I do beg to differ with the lady who was speaking earlier. She does know her patch, I know. But, given the numerical problems that we have, I don't see there's any alternative to Chorley North East being added to the West Pennine Moors. But, to go along with it, it needs to have Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton, rather than Adlington & Anderton in the south, which are much more clearly identified Chorley wards where I suspect that the locals would feel very strongly about that.

So, all in all, then, Chairman, I've made some contributions at the other hearings on specifics, but this is an area that I know pretty well like the back of my hand, from north, south, east and west. And I think that the Boundary Commission have had immense difficulties in trying to get the numbers to stack up. I do accept that, and whatever we get is not ideal, but we have to work with the figures and facts that we have. The biggest reservations I have are about the Lancaster constituency. But then, one can't do much about that because of the numbers, and the same with Ribble Valley. So, in conclusion, Chairman, I'd add my thanks to you and your colleagues for the work that you are doing on what is always an immensely difficult situation. One other point – I just want to emphasise what my colleague George Rear said, which is about borough names. Given the misunderstanding, potentially, about Hyndburn and Whalley, for example – and Lancaster and Wyre is the one I cited – I really do think that, if you do nothing else as a Commission, changing some of the names of these so they actually represent the communities they purport. And you've only got to look at the House of Commons register and see some of the very long-winded names that you get from Scottish constituencies, where they amalgamate three, four, five towns or whatever. It's not ideal, but frankly, in order to assuage community concerns, it's easy to do. And I would urge you to give some consideration to that. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much, Sir Robert. Can I check, please? Do we have any questions of clarification? We have one here, please.

**JOHN WALSH:** Thank you very much, sir. Sir Robert, can you just confirm that, under your proposals, you would unite in a single constituency the Skertons, Whalley, Bamber Bridge, Walton-le-Dale and Adlington?

**ROBERT ATKINS:** Absolutely. It's been a fundamental tenet of my contribution throughout these inquiries that we should not split communities, particularly ancient ones, like Skerton, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge. It's really only a case of where they should be. And that's a matter of numbers and natural divisions.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you. Has that answered your question? Any other questions of clarification, please? Great. Thank you very much, Sir Robert, again, for sharing your experiences and your knowledge of these areas. Much appreciated.

[After a short adjournment]

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome back. Sheila, could you start off first by introducing yourself, giving your name and what town you're from?

**SHEILA MCCAULEY:** My name is Sheila McCauley. I live in Adlington, so I'm interested in the changes being made to the Adlington area, the proposal being to take it out of Chorley and put it into the new West Pennine Moors constituency.

I have filled in the online comments, and I didn't really expect to say anything today, so please forgive me if it doesn't sound particularly well put together, but I've lived in Adlington for about 25 years, both my children pretty much grew up there. Adlington is so much more connected to Chorley than it is to any of the places in the West Pennine area. I don't think I've even been to half of those places [*laughs*]. It's certainly very difficult to get to any of those places. We have no connection with them whatsoever. My children went to high school in Chorley, we use the hospital in Chorley, the bus service goes to Chorley, the train service goes to Chorley. The supermarkets are in Chorley. The theatre is in Chorley. We are just linked, basically, to Chorley.

We have no connection whatsoever with any of the areas over in the West Pennines. And that's basically all I wanted to say, really. So, I think we should stay with Chorley. I think, in a way, it's actually something that's to our detriment because we have an MP who is the Speaker. And, in many ways, he's not really an MP for us because – we can ask him to do things, but he can't vote on many things. So, in a way, I'm cutting off my nose to spite my face. But I do think that we have much more to do with Chorley, a much closer day-to-day relationship with the Chorley area than we do with anywhere in the proposed new constituency.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** No problem. Sheila, thank you very much. Sheila, we do appreciate you coming on at very short notice, and your knowledge of that particular area and your lived experience really comes through. So, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to us.

[After a short adjournment]

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Welcome back. Could I check to see if we have a Peter Malpas in the audience? Peter, would you like to come and sit down? We need to start off with your name and what town you're from. When you're ready, you can start with your representations.

**PETER MALPAS:** Thank you very much for this presentation opportunity. I'm Peter Malpas. I live in the original Chorley constituency, and I want to represent a case for four areas. I want to introduce the case for Adlington & Anderton to remain in the Chorley constituency, that, instead, Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton join a new West Pennine Moors constituency, agree that Chorley North East being part of a West Pennine Moors constituency and also to support that the Chorley borough communities of Bretherton, Croston, Eccleston, Mawdesley and Ulnes Walton, with the remainder of their two wards, rejoin Chorley constituency. That's Eccleston, Heath they are returned to Chorley (they are split at the moment). Only Eccleston is in Chorley at the moment and Croston and Mawdesley, Chorley Borough wards would move back in.

So, that's that little bit there.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Does that have any particular impact on numbers?

**PETER MALPAS:** Yes, I will sum that up at the end.

So, first of all, if I can concentrate on Adlington & Anderton remaining in Chorley. I don't support the proposal that this ward leaves Chorley. You'll know already that 75% of all borough-wide comments were about this particular ward – 318 comments – and I'm sure they weren't all positive.

And, taking Darwen as a centre point of a new West Pennine Moors constituency – a reasonable assumption, it's reasonably centre in the West Pennine Moors there. Taking that as a reasonable centre point, it's a very challenging journey to get from Adlington & Anderton through to Darwen in a reasonably straight line because you're taking C-class roads across the Moors. And in winter conditions, that's more than hazardous – only foolish people go on to the Moors in the winter, believe you me. I don't live in Adlington & Anderton, but when I had the benefit of having to go to the Rossendale and Darwen constituency some months ago, the natural route is to head north up to the M65, across and then drop down into that particular constituency.

So, that is a natural route. And, if you don't want to join the motorway at the north end, there are good A-class and B-class roads as well that would deliver you far more easily into the West Pennine Moors constituency. And, of course, it cuts two ways. It's not just residents wanting to go into the West Pennine Moors to do their business with the MP or whatever. It's also in reverse. It's convenient for the MP and his staff to get easily into the Chorley constituency, if Adlington & Anderton were not in the proposal. So, that's the challenge travelling to Anderton – the connection isn't an obvious one in terms of transport between the two constituencies. So, a quicker route is northwards through Chorley North East ward, and adjacent to the Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton ward, via the M65 motorway, and the A and B roads near there. And that's why substituting Adlington & Anderton with Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton makes a great deal of common sense because they sit on the motorway. They can swiftly get into the West Pennine Moors without too much problem.

So, that's the case for Adlington & Anderton remaining in Chorley, basically on connectivity grounds, and 75% of all your respondents didn't like it anyhow, on those grounds, probably. I also agree that Chorley North East ward becomes part of a new West Pennine Moors constituency. I'm supportive of this proposal from the Commission on the grounds that alternative moves are limited by the number of electors in neighbouring constituencies. And if you went west, you've got the boundaries of the River Ribble and the coast and Merseyside. And so, you are limited going west. So, there's only one alternative, and that's to go east, I'm afraid. I note that it's supported by the national Labour and Conservative Parties that this is a particularly sensible move. And the Chorley North East ward has strong links with the West Pennine Moors as a geographic entity because of the nature of the area. And the M65 has a junction to the northern edge of the ward, providing excellent connections to the centre point of the new West Pennine Moors constituency.

So, that's the argument I would put on that particular case. And then, in recommending that Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton joins the West Pennine Moors

constituency, I've already said it sits on the M65 motorway with two junctions, easily accessible to the ward, giving swift access to the West Pennine Moors, whereas Adlington & Anderton does not, and neighbours the Chorley North East Ward, which makes it a convenient connection into the West Pennine Moors. And, finally, I agree that the Bretherton, Croston, Eccleston, Mawdesley and Ulnes Walton communities rejoin the Chorley constituency. It brings together the two Chorley council wards of Eccleston, Heskin & Charnock Richard and Croston, Mawdesley & Euxton South wards that currently straddles two constituencies back into Chorley. And I note that only five of the borough's 423 comments were from these two wards. So, I think that expresses a degree of contentment that those communities return to their Chorley borough homes.

And you asked about what difference it makes to the numbers. Well, on the Commission's original plan, West Pennine Moors, if I've understood it correctly, is 2% less than the midpoint, and Chorley constituency 2% above. If you take this counter-proposal on board, they get closer together. So, West Pennine Moors would then be 1.4% below the midpoint, if you like. And, conversely, Chorley would be 1.4% above the midpoint. So, getting closer to that midpoint in the statistics. And that is my summary, apart from forgetting the name of the wards at the beginning [*laughs*].

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Just help me a little bit – can we focus on Adlington & Anderton? What's the public transport routes like in relation to Darwen from there?

**PETER MALPAS:** I would say – and people in the audience might well agree – next to impossible. I wouldn't be aware of any. But if you get into the town centre, there are bus services that go up through Brinscall and across that way to the Blackburn area. What the connections are from Blackburn to Darwen, I'm afraid I don't know personally. But, as I say, it cuts two ways. But if you're comparing the ones that are being proposed with Adlington, it's chalk and cheese. You're just making a challenging journey from that direction, I would argue.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** So, although there's the M65 motorway at the top end of the borough there, the reality is that there's nothing – I know there's not a motorway at the bottom end in relation to Adlington & Anderton.

**PETER MALPAS:** You end up going into Manchester and then up out again, which would be more torturous.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Is that the M61 there?

**PETER MALPAS:** That's the M61 there, yes. So, in reality, if you went up to the M61, up the motorway, you'd be joining it literally on the corner of the Chorley North East ward to go north. So, you're just cutting right through Chorley to go north and across, while the Clayton East, Brindle & Hoghton ward is at the top. It's so close, taking Darwen as the midpoint – and it is an assumption – taking Darwen as the midpoint of the new constituency.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Excellent. Can I just check, please? Are there any questions seeking clarification from what we've just heard? Peter, thank you very much for taking the time to come and share your knowledge of the area with us. This is very much appreciated.

[After a short adjournment]

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Good evening, everybody. Could I invite Alison Metcalf up, please, to make your representations? Alison, when you've got yourself comfortable and you are ready, start off first by giving us your name and what town you're from. Then, when you are ready, make your representations, please.

**ALISON METCALF:** Alison Metcalf from Out Rawcliffe, Preston. Good evening. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this review. The first point I'd like to make is in reference to the name of the new constituency. The Commission has already proposed to put the seat in the heart of Wyre council within the Fylde constituency, thereby severing the physical ties of the constituency and to simply call it Lancaster or North Lancashire would be to obliterate the actual word Wyre as well. Whilst the constituency is large parts of Lancaster, 36% of it is Wyre. Therefore, I would respectfully suggest that the constituency be named Lancaster and Wyre, as it was previously known prior to the last boundary change. I understand that this review is driven by the changing numbers of the electorate. And, within this framework, certain criteria come into play, one of which is that communities not be separated.

So, dealing with the constituency from the top down, which I've had a look at, I'd like to make the following submissions. The ward of Skerton East up at the top, with an electorate of 4,912, should be included in the new Morecambe constituency and not be divided from Skerton West. It's historically been part of the Morecambe and Lunesdale seat and Morecambe council. It's a very distinct community, and including it in the Lancaster seat not only separates it from that community, which is against the principles of the Boundary Commission's aims, but it separates it geographically from the rest of the proposed constituency because the River Lune runs through the middle of it. The Boundary Commission Review of 2018 had Skerton East in the Morecambe constituency. So, it seems entirely consistent that the sole purpose for its move appears to be to satisfy the numerical requirements.

To compensate for this increase in numbers in the new Morecambe seat, we would suggest that the wards of Halton-with-Aughton and Kellet, which is part of the Upper Lune Valley in community connections, be included in the new Lancaster seat. So, this has an electorate of 2,105 and 1,798, respectively. Both these wards are either mixed-rural or rural areas and are more aligned with the Lancaster constituency as they're adjacent to the Lower Lune Valley, which, as already proposed, would be in that Lancaster constituency. Many of these communities in these two proposed wards go to school or work or socialise in that area and community ties are very strong. In order to further balance the numbers, moving south now to the ward of

Elswick and Little Eccleston, which currently sits in Wyre. Now, this is very close to my heart because this is where I actually live.

I would propose to put the ward of Elswick and Little Eccleston into the new Lancaster seat. This ward and the ward of Great Eccleston are a very close-knit community and have connections across the River Wyre to Out Rawcliffe, which is part of the Great Eccleston ward. And we feel that they should be united. There's a strong geographical and community argument for this, as the parish of Little Eccleston stretches from the Cartford Bridge, which goes over the River Wyre, and it joins the village of Great Eccleston, which is the village centre for the Over Wyre communities of Little Eccleston, Out Rawcliffe, Inskip, Elswick and St Michael's. So, in order for the residents of Out Rawcliffe to access the facilities in Great Eccleston, it necessitates passing over the Cartford toll bridge. The bridge house on the north side of the river is in the Great Eccleston ward, and the other side of the river is in the Fylde constituency. So, we have to cross the river, go up Cartford Lane into Little Eccleston – four houses on the very western boundary of Little Eccleston are already in the Wyre and Preston North constituency – and then we go through Little Eccleston to our main centre there, which is Great Eccleston.

The village of Great Eccleston is the service centre for all of those parishes that I previously mentioned in terms of doctor's surgery, supermarkets, bakers, dentists, butchers and hairdressers, and the nearest other service centre providing these facilities is six miles away in Garstang or five miles away in Poulton-le-Fylde. These amendments would return the seat to a pretty similar composition as the one that was abolished in 2010. So it would bring the changes and the numbers to: Lancaster, 75,803, Morecambe, 75,046, Fylde 73,823. So, I would respectfully submit these recommendations for your consideration.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much. Just bear with me one second. Do we have any questions or clarification? We do. If you could just start by stating who you are, please, and who you may be representing.

**JOHN WALSH:** John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. Can you just confirm what you were saying – the community in Elswick and Little Eccleston is largely to the east of that ward. You were talking about the properties in that area linking to Great Eccleston. Is it correct that the majority of the properties, therefore, are to the east of that ward?

**ALISON METCALF:** North of the River Wyre, where you can see the word Little Eccleston, there is Out Rawcliffe to the west and St Michael's to the east. So, both of those come over the Cartford Bridge, which is in the middle of Little Eccleston. And then, north of that Little Eccleston boundary is currently Wyre and Preston North. As soon as we come over the Cartford Bridge, we are then into Fylde for that short stretch of road from there to there. Then, once we join the main road, we go back to Great Eccleston. If you could just zoom in, please, on Little Eccleston. Now take the arrow to where that pond is.

Then come down. Four of those houses along there are already in Wyre and Preston North, the ones that border the main road. The rest of that village is in Fylde. Of course, the rest of it to the right and east is Great Eccleston, which is in Wyre and Preston North. And then it wraps around underneath to Elswick, which is in Fylde. Does that answer your question?

**JOHN WALSH:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Thank you very much for taking the time to speak to us. Peter Pimbley? Peter, would you like to come and make yourself comfortable, please? As you've just heard me say to Alison, if you'd start off by first giving us your name and what town you're from, then, when you're ready and comfortable, please make a start.

**PETER PIMBLEY:** My name's Peter Pimbley. I live, like the previous speaker, in Out Rawcliffe. I'm not going to waste your time going through the same points that the previous speaker has made. I'd just like to add a little bit, particularly with the Little Eccleston ward. For 20-odd years, I was a Wyre borough councillor and deputy leader and quite a lot of other positions in there. When Out Rawcliffe was amalgamated with Great Eccleston, it then was quite problematic with the residents of Little Eccleston because they themselves could not understand that I was not their councillor because logically it is. And that did cause quite a bit of confusion for such a small area. The other thing is the access to Little Eccleston. There is no way anybody could get to Little Eccleston without going through Wyre.

There's no other access. And, as a previous speaker has said, the whole thing has always been a real anomaly and should always have been with Wyre or wherever Wyre goes. The other thing I would like to say is that I think the other anomaly that is now going to come up if the proposal goes through is that the Civic Centre for Wyre is now going to be in Fylde as well.

And I think, going back to my previous experiences, that is going to cause a lot of problems with the Poulton wards that are going out. They're used to having that on their doorstep, and they've now got to travel to another constituency for anything they wish to do at the Town Hall, Civic Centre, whatever Fylde calls themselves. And it's been like that for a long time. My main thing is, having been through it all, I know how the people locally think, and it's very hard to get change, especially when change is illogical. And that's all I have to say, other than to endorse what a previous speaker said, but I'm not going to go through it verbatim.

**ANDY BRENNAN:** No, that's absolutely fine. We understand the points that have been made which you're concurring with. So that's absolutely fine. Could I check, please? Do you have any questions of clarification? Peter, you're free to go, other than us saying a big thank you for making the effort to come down and tell us your representations and your experiences of that area and the common sense which you talk about has been noted. And, we've noted the representations and we'll go forward. Thank you.



[After a short adjournment]

**ANDY BRENNAN:** Good evening everybody, as I mentioned this morning during my opening statement, I have the discretion to vary the timetable for the hearing, in making such a decision it is important I take into account the attendance today and the demand for opportunities to speak. There are currently no persons registered to speak between 19:00 and 20:00, I am satisfied that sufficient information has been made available by the Boundary Commission for England, for members of the public and interested parties. Additionally, day two starts tomorrow morning and run from 09:00 to 17:00, where representations can be made during this time. I have also consulted with the lead officials present, John Walsh, Conservartive Party who has no objections in these circumstances in varying the closing time today. Taking all these factors into account I am satisfied it is reasonable and proportionate to close today's hearing at 19:00 and we will remocomece tomorrow morning, at the same venue at 09:00. Thank you very much.

[Hearing closed].