

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

**2023 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN
ENGLAND**

HELD AT

KENDAL TOWN HALL, KENDAL

ON

**FRIDAY 18th MARCH 2022
DAY 2**

Before:

Andy Brennan QPM, Lead Assistant Commissioner

ANDY BRENNAN: Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the 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'm responsible for chairing the hearing today. I'm also responsible, with my fellow Assistant Commissioner David Brown, for analysing all the representations received from 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, and sat beside me is Ewan Wightman, who will shortly provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for new constituencies in the region.

Ewan will also 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 9:00 to 17:00, and I can vary the time. I will take into account attendance and demand for the opportunity to speak. I should point out that under 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. 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 is any time free during the day or at the end of the day, I will invite anyone who hasn't registered but 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 debates with the Commission about the proposals, nor is this hearing an opportunity for people to cross examine other speakers during their presentations. People may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers, but they should do that through me, as the chair. I will now hand over to Ewan, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the North West.

EWAN WIGHTMAN: Thank you very much, and good morning. As the chair has mentioned, my name's Ewan Wightman, and I'm a member of the Commission staff. I'm responsible for supporting the Commission in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries. 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's 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 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 and have provided hand sanitiser 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'd now like to talk about the Commission's initial proposals for the North West region, which were published on the 8th 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 changed only to realign with local government boundaries that have changed. The 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies was formally launched in January 2021, and we held our first public consultation on the initial proposals between the 8th June 2021 and the 2nd August 2021, receiving over 34,000 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 we'll 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 on 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's likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional-based approach we adopted in formulating our initial proposals. The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on, or were in prospect, on the 1st December 2020. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries, known as wards or electoral provisions. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units, which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We therefore sought to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible, but in a small number of cases, have done so in order to better reflect the statutory factors.

The scale of change in this review is significant, and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday 4th April 2022, so there is 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, bcereviews.org.uk. You can provide a written representation to us directly through this website and give feedback on anything: from where proposed new boundaries are to the names of constituencies. We attach just as much significance to representations made orally at public hearings as to those made in writing via letter, email or our website. I do urge everyone to submit written representations to us by the deadline of Monday 4th April 2022, as we will not be able to consider representations received 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 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. Just as a note of admin, we're not expecting any fire alarms today, so if you do hear one, follow me and my team, and we'll direct you to your nearest assembly point. At this stage, I thank you for your attendance today, and we'll now hand back to the chair to begin the public hearing.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thanks very much Ewan. I mentioned earlier that we have a number of timed slot speakers; our first speaker's due to arrive at 9:35 and we have no other members of the public or interested parties available to make representations at this time. As a consequence of that I will adjourn immediately until 9:35. Thank you.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Good morning, everybody, and welcome back. I'm pleased to say that our first speaker of the day has arrived. Helen, could I invite you up to the front, please? Please make yourself comfortable. If you could start by giving us your name and where you're from or who you may be representing. And when you're ready you can make a start.

CLLR HELEN IRVING: Good morning, everyone. I am Councillor Helen Irving. I represent Ulverston West in Alston. I'm on the town council. I'm here this morning as a representative for our MP, Mr Simon Fell of Barrow and Furness. I'm sorry Simon's unable to attend, but he's got another engagement. This is what Simon has asked me to read. I am broadly supportive of the proposals as put forward by the Boundary Commission for Barrow and Furness. As I stated in my written submission, the proposed changes make logical sense, retaining the majority of the Barrow and Furness constituency as it stands and extending eastwards to the Cartmel Peninsula. There are clear historic and geographic links between Furness and Cartmel Peninsula, and they are linked and accessible by both road and rail. I am aware of counter-proposals which would extend this constituency to Millom. I do not believe that this would make logical sense, as Millom looks to Copeland rather than Barrow. In addition, this would result in the constituency taking in three local authorities under the current local government structures and two following local government reform. The Boundary Commission's Furness and Cartmel proposal would maintain the existing two-local-authority arrangement and would mean that following local government reform, the entire constituency would fall within the single Westmorland and Furness local authority. Therefore, for reasons of history, geography, local governance and links, I support the Boundary Commission's proposals as drafted for the constituents of Barrow and Furness. Thank you. Simon Fell, Barrow and Furness.

ANDY BRENNAN: Helen, thank you very much. I have no questions of clarification. Let me just check, please, with those present. Now there's questions, but please bear in mind that Helen's obviously reading this on behalf of Simon Fell, who isn't present. If you could start, please, by introducing yourself and who you may be representing.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Thank you. Brendan Sweeney, Barrow and Furness Labour Party. It's about maintaining the current constituency. Could you confirm that the Boundary Commission proposal removes a large geographical area of the current constituency from the Broughton area, running up towards the River Duddon?

CLLR HELEN IRVING: I don't think I can answer that. I'm sorry.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Any other questions? Please? Thank you, Helen. Thank you very much for taking the time to read on Simon's behalf.

CLLR HELEN IRVING: I'm sorry that I couldn't answer that one. I just got this topic.

ANDY BRENNAN: I appreciate it's a little bit difficult when you read on someone's behalf, which is why I'd forewarned that that might be the position. Could we ask that you leave the statement with us please? We want to make sure it's put onto the system. Thank you very much and give my regards to Simon.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Okay. Good morning, everybody, and welcome back. Can I just check, do we have Oliver Henley available? Oliver, can I invite you to the front, please?

OLIVER HENLEY: Thank you very much, Chairman.

ANDY BRENNAN: If you could start by giving us your name, please, and who you may be representing and what town you're from. You can then start your representations.

OLIVER HENLEY: My name is Oliver Henley. I'm representing the Penrith and the Border Conservative Association. I live, and always have lived, in the area of the City of Carlisle, and I don't think there are any other interests to declare. Having given those interests, I should just add that I think Penrith and the Border was created in 1955, and I've lived there since before it was created. I was born a couple of years earlier. Therefore, Penrith and the Border has been my constituency for my entire conscious life. I am obviously emotionally attached to the idea of Penrith and the Border, but accept that due to population demographic changes, we obviously have to look to changes in the constituency and all the constituencies in Cumbria. I am broadly content with what the Boundary Commission are initially proposing, particularly as I will be living in the new constituency of Carlisle, a constituency association that I have been actively involved with, as well as with Penrith and the Border, for a number of years.

I'm happy with this, and I think the proposals that the Boundary Commission put forward, which are broadly coterminous with the existing City of Carlisle, make a great deal of sense. Certainly, we in Penrith and the Border Conservative Association, and myself, broadly support them. We also broadly support your proposals for a seat for the rest of Penrith and the Border in that, I can't remember the precise figures, about a third or a bit more of the constituency goes into Carlisle, a tiny bit into the new Workington or West Cumberland seat and the rest into some seat in the south. The proposals that bring together the whole of the District of Eden with the adjacent areas of South Lakeland, I believe, are a coherent proposal, which bring together areas which have a lot in common. We would broadly support it though I think we would like to retain the name Eden in the name of the district council. We'd prefer a name such as Penrith, Eden and Kendal. The proposals put forward, as I understand them, by the Labour Party, sorry, I don't have the precise reference for them, would make Eden part of a very vast and disparate constituency which stretches from Alston, Kirkby Stephen, right over to Silloth on the Solway Coast. It does keep Eden together, but it dismembers Allerdale in what I believe is an unfortunate manner, separating

the main town of that community, Workington, from its natural hinterland. It sits very badly with the boundaries of the new councils, the new unitary councils, which we'll be seeing shadow authorities for elected this year, with two of the constituencies cutting the way from the east, going westwards right across the new unitary councils. Again, I believe that the Liberal Democrat proposals, again, sorry I don't have the precise reference, also dismembers Eden. Indeed, it splits the existing districts and communities of Allerdale, Copeland and Eden and splits Allerdale even more severely than the Boundary Commission proposals do. I think the proposed new version of the Penrith and Solway constituency stretches from Maryport-Silloth on the west coast to Alston East and therefore includes parts of three existing district councils and the entire combined east-west extent of both the eastern and western unitary councils. I can make no sense at all of throwing parts of different communities together into two vast seats, stretching from the Pennines to the sea, parts of which have little in common. The travel is already enormous in a seat like Penrith and the Border. I can never remember whether it's the largest in England or whether it's the second largest. This always used to be disputed with Richmond, I think, in North Wales. It stretches between parts that have little in common, and it takes, as I said, far too long to travel between them. There is, as I understand it, also an independent proposal (reference 75915), which makes some interesting suggestions, but we think the Boundary Commission's proposals are better and that is because that proposal divides existing districts. Again, we see a good case for Eden being kept together, having been a district in the past and crosses the borders of both existing and future local authorities, again sundering natural communities to a greater extent than the Boundary Commission's existing proposals do. In particular, those proposals almost completely separate two of the six main towns in Cumbria from their natural hinterlands.

That proposal would also put Penrith into a consistency which is essentially the remainder of Allerdale after you've removed Workington and therefore cuts Penrith off from its natural hinterland in the existing local authority area of Eden. Unlike the Boundary Commission proposals, this splits up Eden and again produces constituencies which cross the borders of both existing local authorities and the new unitary authorities. It would also create a proposed Whitehaven and Workington seat that puts the town and port of Workington and a thin strip between the Workington District in with Whitehaven and Copeland, putting together two towns which I think have a long history of rivalry and cutting Workington off from almost all of its natural hinterland in Allerdale. It also, I believe, has the effect of dismembering the current local authority area and community of Allerdale to a greater extent than your existing original proposals whilst going across the boundaries of both existing and future local authorities to a greater extent than is necessary. Can I conclude by saying that we in the Conservative Association in Penrith and the Border broadly support the Boundary Commission's proposals and hope that you will take note of the considerations that we've put forward.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you very much, Oliver. Can I just check, please? Do you have any questions of clarification? No. Could I ask if we could have a copy of the notes that you've read from, to make sure we capture everything.

OLIVER HENLEY: I will send a copy through.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you for taking the time to come speak to us and sharing your vast knowledge and experience of these areas. Okay. We have no timed speakers now till 13:30, but I'll adjourn until 11:00.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Good morning, everybody, and welcome back. Just an update for you. We've had no new speakers arrive whilst we're adjourned and our next speaker is still shown as being at 13:30. What I propose to do, unless anybody wishes to make any representations at this stage, which isn't the case, we will adjourn until 11:45. Thank you.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Good morning, everybody, and welcome back. I mentioned earlier that we've had nobody registered for the time slot for giving representations. We've had no new walk-ins. As mentioned earlier, I'll adjourn now until 12:15. At 12:15 if the position doesn't change, we'll adjourn for lunch until 13:30. Thank you.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome back. I adjourned a few moments ago with the view to come back at 12:15, but two members of the public arrived to make representations, which we are grateful for. Bernadette Tanham, could I invite you up to the front, please? If you could start by giving us your name, please, and what town you're from.

BERNADETTE TANHAM: Yes. I'm Bernadette Tanham, and I'm from Sedgwick, which is a village just four miles south of Kendal.

ANDY BRENNAN: Excellent. Please start your representations.

BERNADETTE TANHAM: Okay. I have a foot in either camp because I was born and brought up in Morecambe, and I saw that the proposed constituency for Sedgwick would be Morecambe and South Lakes. I've read some of the reports, and I know that it's based primarily on numbers, but I feel on this occasion that none of the supporting factors have been taken into consideration. The fact that Morecambe and South Lakes would be a cross-boundary constituency, I think, that hasn't been taken into consideration. Outside of this, we're having a unitary authority foisted on us. In the space of two or three years, we're going to go from being in Cumbria and the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency to being in Westmorland and Furness and Morecambe and South Lakes. I think, given what we've gone through over the past five years, it's a lot of change for ordinary people to have to deal with.

I understand the concept of each MP representing 75,000 people or 73,000 people, plus or minus 5%, but Morecambe in itself has so many complex needs and issues that they could do with an MP just for themselves. Putting South Lakes in with Morecambe will affect, detrimentally, the democracy of South Lakes. That might not make much sense but, given the needs of the people in Morecambe, I think that any MP who represented the new area would spend more time on Morecambe as opposed to the democratic needs of South Lakes.

ANDY BRENNAN: I get that. What brings you to that conclusion?

BERNADETTE TANHAM: Well, Morecambe is a larger area. I think population-wise, it's about 50,000 people. Within Morecambe, there are some of the most deprived wards in the UK. With the complex issues that Morecambe faces, the poverty, the lack of jobs and the

education abilities, any MP, rightly so, would be concerned with those people, with those constituents. Morecambe and South Lakes is such a broad area. How would one MP be able to represent the needs of everyone in a fair and equal way?

ANDY BRENNAN: I get the point. I understand the points you're making. Is there anything else you want to say at this stage?

BERNADETTE TANHAM: Well, only that I understand that the numbers for the constituency have been taken from the electoral roll. Again, in affluent areas, more people are likely to be registered on the electoral roll than in deprived areas. What fail-safes do you have that you've got the correct numbers for each constituency and the narrowness of the amount that you're allowed to go, is it 5%, plus or minus, from the 73,000?

ANDY BRENNAN: Let me just check. The reality is that I can answer certain questions around qualification. We can provide you with the information that's readily available. Normally, when we get people come in to make representations, they may say the reality is there's only 5.3 constituencies in Cumbria as a county; hence you have the overflow into the Lancashire area. Ultimately more of it can't go into another region; you can't go into the North East; you can't go into Scotland. There's only one way for it to come down at the end of the day. I recognise the points that you make but let me just check with people in the room. Are there any questions or clarification of the points that were made?

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Brendan Sweeney, Barrow Labour Party. I completely agree with your points on Morecambe and the challenges there, and it is a difficult one to do. I think on our proposal, you would still be within the Westmorland constituency. I am another person who grew up in Morecambe, and I completely agree on the challenges there that would bring out. Any MP is clearly going to have to work hard to consider the needs of the whole constituency. Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: We have one more question, please.

JOHN WALSH: John Walsh representing the Conservative Party; just for clarification, which ward do you live in currently?

BERNADETTE TANHAM: Sedgwick, which is Kirkland.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you. I just wanted to make sure I got the right ward. Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Is there anything else you would like to say while you've got the opportunity to say it before we let you go?

BERNADETTE TANHAM: Only that, because we are so close to Kendal, it would be nice to remain within a Kendal constituency.

ANDY BRENNAN: Excellent. Thank you. We've captured all your representations, and I do genuinely appreciate you coming in and making the effort to come and speak to us and give us your views, it's really appreciated. Could I invite Andy Connell, please? Could you start by giving us your name and what town you're from?

ANDY CONNELL: Thank you very much indeed. My name's Andy Connell. I happen to be presently Chairman of Eden District Council and Vice Chairman of Cumbria County Council. On both of these, I represent, in one case, the Appleby division, in the other case, the Appleby (Bongate) ward. I will stress I am not claiming to make representations on behalf of either of these bodies nor indeed of my political group, which is Liberal Democrat. I'm here wearing a different hat, which is that as a professional historian, which was the day job. When I scaled down the amount of teaching I did, I did historical research, some published research, some of which was focused on the history of parliamentary representation of Westmorland and Cumberland in the 19th and 20th centuries. I probably don't need to tell you that in over 800 years of parliament, never have Kendal and Penrith been placed in the same constituency, never.

Post-1885, when the old borough and county system ended, and it became the norm to have single-member constituencies, forever since then, there's been one which centred on Kendal, South Westmorland, then Westmorland, then Westmorland and Lonsdale. As far as Penrith was concerned, there was Mid-Cumberland, then there was Penrith and Cockermouth, and then there was Penrith and the Border. Now, of course, the two couldn't be in the same constituency, anyway, given the rules about not transgressing the borders of counties. But, post-1974, when there was Cumbria, and they're both in the same county, they still remained separate as Westmorland, Lonsdale and Penrith and the Border. I did wonder, and actually other people have talked about this, whether this arrangement was some consequence of the absolutely inane local government reform, which is being imposed on Cumbria. I'll say no more than that.

I've given you my view, but it can't simply be that for the simple reason that you've got a proposed constituency, as a previous lady said, which crosses county boundaries, namely South Lakeland and Morecambe. It cannot be that this is simply because you can't go outside county boundaries because you can. I do think the historical precedent is just something to be waved aside: centuries of parliamentary history. I think there are other points that can be made, namely that this proposed constituency is split in the important area of national health service provision. The two parts of it are in different hospital trusts and a Member of Parliament who gets a lot of matters relating to health provision would have an additional complication of two completely separate trusts to deal with.

There's also the issue of connectivity. Having arrived here by public transport, I came here via Carlisle because it's the only way to do it, it supports the point that public transport provision is very poor. Links between Penrith and Kendal or even Penrith and Oxenholme are not good. The bus services are a disgrace for reasons I won't go into now. Longstanding reasons. Of course, although there is a railway line between Penrith and Oxenholme, most trains stop at one but not the other, so it isn't as simple as it might appear to be. I think also there's an important issue, which the lady previously touched upon, which is the location of Kendal being on the periphery of a constituency. That not only goes against history but also creates a problem of the area to the south of Kendal, which has well-established cultural and economic links with Kendal. It'll find itself in a different parliamentary constituency. Honestly, I know you've got to do your best with numbers and all the rest of it, but I don't think that is a good arrangement. There is this southern hinterland, and I think Kendal should be linked with that. It's a huge constituency. The central point is, of course, Appleby. I think renaming Appleby, which has got historical precedence, is probably not something that you have in mind, and it's a bit of a facetious idea anyway. I honestly think that a better idea is, with respect to all the work that's been done within the constraints that you have had to work under, I would suggest go back to the drawing board and have Kendal and Penrith as the

centre of two separate constituencies, which is what has prevailed for over a century and should continue to prevail.

ANDY BRENNAN: You're not sitting on the fence, you're very clear in what you're saying, so we do appreciate that. I like the fact that you've got so much detail with the history around it, so that's absolutely great from our point of view, and your experience and knowledge of the area is really appreciated. However, let me just check, please, do we have any clarification questions? We do.

TOM SWEENEY: Thank you. Tom Sweeney, Barrow Labour Party. You mentioned that one of the previous seats for the north of Cumbria was Penrith and Cockermouth. Do you have the dates, off the top of your head, for when that was, roughly?

ANDY CONNELL: It was Penrith and Cockermouth in between the wars. I could even give you names of long-forgotten MPs that were pointless on the programme. It became Penrith and the Border post-war. That means the boundaries constantly shift, and we know that this happens, and you have your job to do.

TOM SWEENEY: Thank you. Just thought it'd be useful to add that on the record. That was my question.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you very much. John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. You clearly have a passion for Eden. I wasn't clear whether you had a scheme for Eden and what your perceptions were because you talked about having a constituency based on Kendal and one based on Penrith. Have you given thought to constituencies, or are you leaving that on the table?

ANDY CONNELL: I didn't come here in order to tell you what to do. I suppose you might think it's unreasonable saying, 'Well, I don't want you to do this. I'm not telling you to do that'. I think the various political parties have come up with their proposals. I haven't looked at them in detail, but no, my party's proposal certainly wasn't this, as far as I know; you might be able to correct me.

JOHN WALSH: Can I? Just to be clear, do you understand the Liberal Democrat proposals for the Eden District?

ANDY CONNELL: Are you talking about Parliament constituencies? Yes. I've glanced at them. I can't discuss them in detail.

JOHN WALSH: Are you aware of them?

ANDY CONNELL: I'm not here to be a political representative.

JOHN WALSH: No, I understand that political argument, but as Chairman of Eden District, sir, I just want to clarify as to whether you were aware that the proposal was to split Eden District into two parliamentary seats.

ANDY CONNELL: I'm not talking about Eden, as I will stress. I've said it already, I'm not talking about Eden as a precious entity. I'm talking about constituencies, respectively, centred round Penrith and centred round Kendal.

JOHN WALSH: I'm grateful for the clarification. Thank you, sir.

ANDY BRENNAN: Okay. Thanks to Andy. You did say you were here from a historical historian position.

ANDY CONNELL: I'm not here pedalling a particular Eden line, and if I were, I would've said so.

ANDY BRENNAN: Andy, you've made that perfectly clear. Thank you again very much for coming and sharing your knowledge and your experience of somebody who has obviously done a lot of research in the area.

ANDY CONNELL: Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you for making your representation. We'll take the opportunity to adjourn now, and we'll resume again at 13:30.

[After a short adjournment].

ANDY BRENNAN: Okay. Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome back to day two of this public hearing in Kendal. Could I invite Mark Jenkinson MP please? Please give us your name and where you are representing.

MARK JENKINSON MP: Thank you. I'm Mark Jenkinson, Member of Parliament for the current Workington constituency. Having made my initial submission, 82718, in response to the Commission's proposal to alter the boundaries to the Workington constituency under this review, I just wanted to elaborate on my earlier comments. First, to reiterate and underscore my support for the initial proposals, which involve less change and disruption to the existing constituencies and communities than any of the other suggestions put forward, since they represent a strong and coherent proposal, bringing together areas with existing community, travel to work, travel for leisure and transport links, and with much in common historically, culturally and geographically. The Boundary Commission's plan represents a much better fit, taking into account the lines of the existing local authority boundaries and indeed, the proposals other than the Commission's won't take them into account. However, these proposals, as they stand, give proper weight to the geography, demographics and communities of the constituency. I, therefore, have no hesitation in reiterating and expanding upon my earlier endorsement that they present the neatest and most logical solution.

Indeed, none of the alternative proposals submitted would come close to delivering the results promised in the common-sense recommendations put forward by the Commission. They risk tearing apart communities, isolating them from the re-elected representatives by virtue of geography and transport links. Recognising that the Commission considered the possibility of creating a constituency coterminous with the boundaries of Allerdale Borough Council but cognisant of the knock-on problems that would cause for other constituencies, this eminently sensible option preserves the majority of Allerdale, with the exception of two wards which are already partially in the neighbouring constituency of Copeland. They serve

to keep the greater Workington area together, recognising that villages like Seaton, where I live, and Allonby, have key habitual work, transport and school links to both Maryport and Workington and are very much part of this wider hinterland.

It recognises similar links between these towns and Cockermouth, and indeed some work I carried out recently highlighted the number of pupils, almost half, in Cockermouth School that travel from wards west of the Cockermouth wards, and a number of the higher-profile submissions would, of course, seek to sever those constituency ties. These towns and villages share links not only in terms of infrastructure but strong shared identity around, for example, industrial and coal-mining heritage. We have well-used commuter routes linking towns and villages like Workington, Cockermouth, Maryport, Flimby and Aspatria. Many of these places are connected by road and rail and established cycleways and footpaths. There is a strong family as well as social, sporting and business links, which should be kept intact. I can't stress enough how the debate around a new Cumberland unitary authority has highlighted to me people's deep sense of this cultural identity.

I'm pleased, therefore, that the Commission's proposals recognise and preserve the integrity of towns and villages, *these* towns and villages, under existing links, and that these places only make sense as part of an integrated whole. I also support the inclusion of Dalston Brough in the redrawn constituency, following the problems that the Commission highlighted in its initial report, with a coterminous boundary. It stands to reason that this ward on the western side of Carlisle fits most naturally with the existing constituency and the wider Allerdale area that it subsumes and benefits from good existing transport links not found in alternative proposals. As you might know from my submission, I consulted widely with elected members, parish councils and residents, and there is consensus that the name Workington no longer represents the makeup of the constituency in its current or its proposed form.

Allerdale would appear to be much more representative and inclusive. To name a constituency of this size after a town in the south-western corner is a misnomer. This designation served only to alienate people, even in the outlying towns and villages, creating the impression that they've been overlooked. Although it's true to say that Workington is indeed our largest and most populous town, applying the name to the constituency as a whole has already made many residents from rural areas and even nearby towns feel like their concerns are somehow secondary. Renaming the constituency Allerdale will be a welcome step that will go a long way towards addressing that perception. One of the reasons I chose to set up my office in Maryport rather than Workington was to have an office that was more centrally based, not only to the population but to transport links.

The decision was not just for practical reasons that allowed me to serve my constituents better; it was also a symbolic break with an established tradition that was also intended as a statement. I wanted to illustrate that I represent an area much wider than Workington. This includes, for example, the many communities on the Solway Plain in which they have felt neglected and disenfranchised for far too long. One of the questions I have to answer most often is why I refer to Workington so much instead of Allerdale, which I represent. This shows that many already believe the constituency to be called Allerdale. Moreover, the other historic and cultural reasons why I feel Allerdale would be more suitable and descriptively accurate are that large swathes of the proposed constituency were once in a medieval region known as Allerdale and, latterly, in the wards of the historic county of Cumberland, known as Allerdale-below-Derwent and Allerdale-above-Derwent. The name, therefore, not

only has a recognised and well-documented pedigree rooted in history and tradition but is also more geographically descriptive and relatable.

The Boundary Commission's proposals for a Carlisle constituency more closely aligned with the existing City of Carlisle also fits well with the new council boundaries and makes a great deal of sense. I'll reject the main alternative proposals as undesirable and without any real or practical merit. A sprawling Penrith and Solway constituency would cover a vast and disparate area, stretching from the Pennines at Alston and Kirkby Stephen to the Solway Coast, represented by only one elected member. This butchers the historic borough of Allerdale, severing the largest town of that community, Workington, from the settlements with which it enjoys the strongest ties. Any proposal that places Whitehaven and Workington within a single constituency is not credible and will not have public support. There's a great deal of deep historic rivalry and tension between Workington and Whitehaven, and not only in sporting terms. It also manifests itself in strong competition for investment and economic opportunities.

Placing these towns together would necessitate cutting one or both towns off from their natural hinterlands. A West Cumbria seat with both of these towns within its boundaries would have to be reasonably compacted by virtue of population. However, the numbers would force at least one, and probably two, other constituencies to become both huge and nebulous, with no obvious focus for these disparate communities. As a parliamentarian, I have to stress that, and I'm sure I speak for many of my colleagues, it is much better having one large town and its identifiable hinterlands in smaller towns and villages, than to have two large towns that risks putting an MP in the invidious position of having to support one town over the other for particular economic investment. I can't stress enough how, having been born and lived in Workington for over 40 years, this would just further disenfranchise people and would not only fail to gain widespread public support but would create active opposition. Unfortunately, as in many of these cases, only after the event, I fear.

A proposed new Penrith and Solway constituency stretches from Maryport and Silloth on the west coast to Walton in the east. It includes parts of three existing districts as well as the entire combined east-west extent of both new unitary councils, which again I know the Commissioner is not at liberty to take into account. This constituency would make no sense, bringing together different communities, which bear little connection to one another, to form an unworkable hodgepodge. Recognising the already rural nature of the existing seat, which I traverse from top to bottom on a weekly basis, the proposed seat would stretch from the Pennines to the sea, taking hours to traverse. I measure my transport now in the number of car charges on the electric vehicle, and that number to go from one end of my constituency to the other, in my mind, should always be less than one. In that proposed constituency, it would not be less than one. To me, this makes it completely impractical for transport, and of course, there are no decent alternative transport links. There was an independent proposal, 75915, which made some interesting suggestions, but I still think the Boundary Commission proposals are preferable. That proposal not only divides existing districts, but it also crosses the borders of both existing and future local authorities. I'd like to note that these proposals almost completely separate two of the six main towns in Cumbria from their surrounding towns and villages. Those places with which they have the strongest connections. This proposal will cut Workington off from almost all of its natural hinterland in Allerdale and does the same to Penrith. To conclude, while I don't envy the task in front of the Commission given Cumbria's sparsity, I do believe that the Commission's initial proposals are fair, workable and eminently sensible given the prescription.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you very much, Matt. I have no questions of clarification. Do we have any questions? We have two here, please. Could we start by giving our names and who we may be representing?

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Brendan Sweeney, Barrow Labour Party and representing the Cumbrian Labour Parties. You mentioned around your travel to work areas etc. and the importance of those in connection with the Allerdale constituency. I'd be interested in your comments on going with that proposal to create a Whitehaven to Windermere constituency. I would be interested in your comments as to how that is practical because it is the inevitable consequence of going with the Boundary Commission proposal that there is a Whitehaven to Windermere constituency, which has had a lot of adverse comments. I wondered how you would see that working for an MP. The second question, if I could, is around the rivalry between Whitehaven and Workington. It is, of course, a fact now that the two of them are going to be in one local authority area. Those tensions will be resolved within the new Cumberland unitary and are, you know, on it. I would ask for more evidence of that.

ANDY BRENNAN: There's quite a lot of questions coming out. In fairness to Mark, give him the opportunity to answer or qualify the first question, right? Is that okay? We'll come back to the second one.

MARK JENKINSON: On the Whitehaven to Windermere question, I don't feel qualified enough to necessarily speak. I can tell you that I travel hundreds of miles a week in the Workington constituency, and that has been my focus. That particular journey, for example, that you mentioned – I'm not sure my opinion would carry much weight.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: On the rivalry question, yes, historically there's been rivalry and there's clearly, you know, keen rivalry on sporting grounds still, but granted they're now within one authority. Is there evidence that those tensions currently are such that an MP couldn't manage them?

MARK JENKINSON: The rivalries are not just historic, and there are existing rivalries in the new authority. Of course, I supported the boundaries of the new Cumberland authority, but the difference there, of course, is that people are represented by a local representative in numbers of probably, I think, five to six and a half thousand across our Cumberland boundaries that are 46 single member wards. That is the key difference in that them being in an authority on their own isn't a problem. What becomes a problem, particularly for a parliamentarian, is that if we look at things like towns funds, high-street funds and the levelling-up fund where we can support one bid in a constituency; that would put an MP in an invidious position of having to choose between whether it supports Workington or Whitehaven, which would only deepen disenfranchisement and risk and deepen those rivalries.

ANDY BRENNAN: Any other questions, please?

JOHN WALSH: Thank you, sir. John Walsh representing the Conservative Party. I just want to follow up, if I may, on the point made by my friend across here relating to competing areas, which was one of the problems you referred to. Can I be clear that when you talked about competition and competing for economic regeneration, you were referring to things like the towns fund, the levelling-up fund and similar targeted and bid funding because they

are all predicated on bids from the local authority endorsed by an MP. Is that what you were meaning by that?

MARK JENKINSON: Yes, absolutely. Particularly latterly in the levelling-up fund, we have seen that an MP can only support one bid. I wouldn't want to be in that position. Not only on public investment, with specific examples like that, but private investment, when a big company comes knocking on my door to say, 'I want to build small module reactors in your constituency that has your support' or similar, then an MP for a seat that encompasses two large towns wherever that may be, whether it's Workington and Whitehaven or otherwise, is then put in that awful position where they have to, in many cases, eventually publicly support one large town over another. It's a very different issue where you have smaller towns of three, five, 8,000 around a large town because everybody tends to recognise that the large town is the attraction. However, when you have two large towns in a constituency, I just can see that being really difficult as a representative. The risk of disenfranchisement that could create would be huge.

JOHN WALSH: To my mind, I think I know the answer. What is being said is that two Members of Parliament, one for Whitehaven one for Workington, would actually give two opportunities to bid for such funding as opposed to just one and an MP having to make a judgement.

MARK JENKINSON: Yes.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you. The second question, if I may. You talked at one point that the Solway Coast felt disadvantaged, and then you talked about moving around the constituency rather than being at that south-western point. Does that mean that you hold surgeries across the constituency at different places?

MARK JENKINSON: Yes. I regularly, even on a weekly basis, will have booked appointments across the constituency, top to bottom. I also regularly set out a number of open surgeries top to bottom in various towns and villages, so those transport links, a lack of transport links particularly, would make that really difficult in the short time that we have in the constituency in recesses. It would make that incredibly difficult to be able to cover all of those towns and villages in that short space of time.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you, sir.

ANDY BRENNAN: Any other questions or clarification, please? Okay. Mark, thank you very much for taking the time to come and speak to us today and giving us your obvious vast knowledge of the area and in your professional position as well. Could I invite Paul Braithwaite up, please? If you could start first by giving us your name and what town you're from.

PAUL BRAITHWAITE: Thank you very much. Paul Braithwaite, Chair of Westmorland and Lonsdale Constituency Labour Party. My submission is based on Copeland and Western Lakes and West Eden proposals. One of the main issues we found with Cumbria is the main settlements are around the edge of the county, so you've got Barrow, Whitehaven, Workington, Carlisle, Penrith, Kendal, and Sedbergh to an extent, with not great yield population in the centre of the county. In our opinion, that leads to the best solution being formed on the basis of looking towards the centre of the county as opposed to across the

bottom. The Commission considers that special geographical considerations may have an impact on those which are primarily related to the physical geography of mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, estuaries and islands, etc. The Commission says that the new constituency of Copeland and Western Lakes is similar to the existing Copeland constituency. We propose that it isn't. It has the unconnected Broughton, Ambleside, Grasmere and Windermere wards to the new proposal.

Local ties in the constituency are also listed as considerations of the Boundary Commission, and the two areas don't have any sort of local ties. The Copeland area tends to look north for things like health provision and to the bigger cities of Carlisle and the satellite area. Windermere and Kendal tend to look south towards Barrow in the Morecambe Bay Health Authority and also perhaps even further down towards Lancaster. There aren't any sort of real links and ties. When we were discussing amongst ourselves in the Labour constituencies, I made a joke saying that the people in Windermere may believe that people in Copeland are in a different country. Everyone sort of laughed, but it does have a grain of truth to it. There are no links whatsoever. The thing that's the problem is there's a big mountain range between the two areas. The Boundary Commission says the positions of the wards should be continued to form the default building blocks for constituencies, and yet proposed to split one. One of the only splits in the proposal is to divide Levens and Bowness between constituencies. From the documents, it seems to be that the reason they want to do that is they want to retain the whole of Lake Windermere in one constituency. They seem to be more concerned about Lake Windermere being in one constituency than the people around the lake, who have to work and travel around there. That was one of the concerns.

Similar proposals in 2011 were heavily criticised by the Assistant Commissioners. They said, physically, the mountains are such a barrier that it is not sensible to try and embrace them in the ways proposed. Those comments are still relevant because the geography hasn't changed. There's nothing much happened in relation to road building, etc. in the county since then. Those issues seem to be addressed in the 2018 proposals, which we think need looking at again because they seem to address the issues that we had. The 2023 proposals don't adequately take into account the geography of Cumbria and, in our opinion, need revisiting. We believe the link between the Kendal area and the Windermere area, which is split between the constituencies in the proposal of Copeland and Western Eden, should be left alone, and the link shouldn't be broken. Thank you very much.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you. Paul, can I just check, please? Do you have any questions seeking clarification? No, thanks for taking the time to come and speak to us. Could I invite Rodney Lund, please? If you could start by giving us your name and what town you're from.

RODNEY LUND: Rodney Lund. I come from Sale in Greater Manchester. I'm a retired local government officer. I've been involved in my professional capacity, when I was working, I was involved in boundary reviews going back to 1977. The third review was when I worked in the North East. When I moved over to Manchester, I was involved in the fourth and fifth reviews and also in the abortive 2013 reviews. I've acquired an interest in this kind of knowledge, particularly in the three northern regions, because I originally come from York. I think I've got quite good knowledge.

I submitted a response, which was number 80774, about Greater Manchester, so I don't really want to talk about that today. I'll probably just submit a further written addendum. I would like to speak about Cumbria, which I do know very well both from visiting relatives

who live just outside Carlisle, that was over a span of 60 years, and also from coming up almost on an annual basis for holidays in the Lake District. I probably also want to make just one or two remarks about the Lancaster-Morecambe issue, which I've been following on YouTube. I just feel there were one or two things that probably should be mentioned in that context.

On Cumbria, I generally think that the Boundary Commission did a very good job in the North West, but in Cumbria was the area which I think I disagreed with. Although I recognise you've got a really difficult job here, the problem is, I'm sure people have said, there's six service centres and five seats. Effectively, given that one seat's got to be based on Carlisle and one on Barrow, you've either got to combine Penrith and Kendal or Workington and Whitehaven. Now, the logic to me says if you've got two towns about six miles apart, it's probably better than towns which are 36 miles apart. Albeit, I do accept that the M6 does link Penrith and Kendal. What I find a bit surprising is that there does seem to be very strong links between Workington and Whitehaven. The two local authorities, worked together in putting forward in the local government reorganisation, insisted that because of common interests, Allerdale and Copeland should be in the same authority. That was accepted by the government, and that had the effect that Penrith and Kendal also ended up in the same authority. It was interesting that they didn't actually put forward that proposal because Penrith wanted Eden. Eden wanted to be in a north-south split. South Lakeland wanted to be in a Morecambe Bay authority. It was really interesting that Allerdale and Copeland do see themselves very strongly linked, and they do have a lot of common interests. Now, obviously, there's history here, as you've been told, and in 2012 or 2011, the Boundary Commission put forward similar proposals to those they have put forward now. There was pretty universal opposition to them, obviously involving Whitehaven and Windermere being in the same constituency and also Barrow extending eastwards. There was an awful lot of opposition to it. At that time, all the parties seemed to be agreed that it was a bad solution, and it would be much better to have a solution which put Workington and Whitehaven in the same seat and that Barrow took in Millom and that Penrith and Kendal were in different seats. Obviously, when it came to the following abortive review, the Boundary Commission actually had proposals that way, and they went through, and there was very little public opposition. That was the common view, so what's changed? I suppose one or two things have changed because you've got to put two seats and two wards in with Lancaster.

The other thing that's changed, but should be irrelevant, is that there has been a change in parliamentary representation. The one thing that hasn't changed, really, is the mountains. I think there is quite an important point which Mr. Jenkinson actually made was talking about an MP being put in a very difficult position if there's a conflict of interest between two parts of his or her constituency. He said Workington and Whitehaven shouldn't be in the same constituency because there could be a conflict of interest coming to funding issues. Just think how much more potential conflict of interest is there if you put Whitehaven and Windermere in the same constituency because they have really different interests.

I think you saw it's with this proposed coal mine near Whitehaven, and, obviously, there's the nuclear industry. Everyone, well, most people, on the Copeland side was supportive because obviously they had a real interest in jobs, people. However, people on the other side of Cumbria, who were more looking at the environmental tourism issue, were strongly against it. If you have an MP who's got to balance those two conflicting interests, I will say it is far worse than actually the issue of funding for towns. Obviously, the two interests deserve an MP who can speak up, and that's probably one of the pluses of our electoral system in that you have an MP who can speak up for the interests of his or her constituents, and you

really don't want conflict. Basically, I just feel you've got a very difficult job here. I think I prefer, although I've got no involvement with them, the Liberal Democrat proposals, also similar proposals that are put forward by other private individuals, which kind of go back to the proposals that went through last time, linking Barrow with Millom; Workington and Whitehaven and having a Penrith and Solway constituency and Windermere-South Eden and probably Cartmel and Grange in the constituency there. I wouldn't support that, but I think there may be one or two tweaks.

There's an issue about whether or not the wards Eamont, I think it is, and another ward, which is just south of Penrith, could they go into those constituencies. Although I do know that they are historically the boundaries; therefore, I don't think it's a bad solution. If you did a switch round, I think you could put Eamont and Kirkby into the Penrith constituency, then you'd have to put Dalton would have to go into the Workington one. You'd probably have to put Keswick in with the Windermere one. Those are just suggested possible tweaks. Basically, I think the Liberal Democrat one, and also proposals put forward by private individuals, are the best solutions, but you do have a really difficult job, and I do recognise there are competing issues. Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Rodney, just before you jump on, can I just pause there for a sec because I got a little bit confused with your preferred options for the constituencies. Can I just revisit the constituencies which you said were probably preferable?

RODNEY LUND: You want me to make the point again? Obviously, I think one of the things that's happened here is that in relation to the Coniston and Broughton ward, the Boundary Commission seems to have influenced the Boundary Commission's proposals, is the fact that you can't put that ward, as a whole, in with both Barrow and the Millom area because the numbers are too big. They said because the Local Government Boundary Commission in 2016 had reconfigured it, that meant almost they have to spread the Barrow constituency eastwards. They didn't consider splitting that ward, but they did split another ward in the same local government district because they split the Bowness and Levens ward. I think that influenced the Boundary Commission because they wouldn't have thought that was the problem, that ward. Again as has been pointed out, I think it's wrong to put so much emphasis on not wanting to split that ward, particularly as it's going to cease to exist in a year's time. Actually, you can't take the new ward into consideration, but the new ward does split under the new wards. Coniston and Hawkshead will be in one ward, and Broughton will be in the ward with part of Barrow.

What I'm proposing is basically similar to the Liberal Democrats: put Barrow in with Millom but Barrow with two wards; Barrow and the Scafell and Black Combe wards from the Copeland District would go in with part of the Coniston and Broughton ward, which is in the Barrow constituency, and all the rest of the Barrow constituency. You'd have the existing Barrow constituency plus two from Copeland. Then the rest of Copeland would go in with Workington. Then the rest of Allerdale would go in with the one ward in Carlisle and the historic Cumberland bit of the Eden District. Carlisle will be as the Boundary Commission proposed. Effectively, you'd have a Westmorland constituency for the rest. I'm going to write a follow up on that.

Basically, it's very similar to the Lib. Dem. proposal, say I've got nothing to do with the Lib Dems, but it is basically their proposal. I noticed that there were a lot of private members of the public who put a similar proposal. I don't support the Labour Party one because that has

two cross-county constituencies. It also went across the mountain range, and I think it isolated Sellafield. There we are on that.

I just wanted to make a couple of points in relation to the Lancaster-Morecambe issue.

ANDY BRENNAN: You've gone over your ten minutes, so please

RODNEY LUND: I followed the debate on YouTube, and there seemed to be quite a lot of agreement that the two Skerton wards should be together and the Upper Lune Valley and the Lower Lune Valley, and possibly also Halton with Alton, should be together in a constituency. The argument was which should go in which. I tend to think it is better for the Skerton wards to be in the Lancaster one and the Lune valley wards to be in Morecambe.

The two reasons for that are one, the Skerton people, and I'll come onto the evidence, seem to identify with Lancaster. Whereas with the Upper and Lower Lune Valley wards, it strikes me sensible that if you've got a constituency that goes up into Cumbria, those wards, of which the Upper Lune Valley ward borders Cumbria, those wards sit better in Cumbria and the Morecambe constituency, which looks northwards, rather than in the Lancaster constituency, which really looks southwards. It goes to Knot End, just across the Wyre from Fleetwood. I think that shape's best. One of the issues raised was the Lune Valley wards didn't have very good access to Morecambe, and they had better to Lancaster. I think that was true up to 2016, but in 2016, the M6, there's a link road that's been built they spent over a hundred million on that from the M6 junction 34 going down to Heysham. That is with a turn off to Morecambe that actually means – and that is the A683 – that you can actually go on the same road: the A683 from Heysham in the south, and the road then goes almost between and cuts across and goes just north of Skerton inwards and meets the M6. Then it continues across the M6. It then continues as the A683, and it goes up to Kirkby-Lonsdale just over the border [points and describes route on the map].

I would recommend that you look at the map to see that or actually drive it. Actually, when I came up today, I drove down just to make sure that what I was saying was true. That only came into effect in 2016. I think that should be mentioned, and I think it's wrong to say that Lune Valley wards have equal access now to Morecambe as they do to Lancaster, although I do accept before 2016, that wasn't the case. The other thing on the Skerton wards, I feel that there's quite a lot of evidence that they identify much more with Lancaster than with Morecambe.

I would say three things on that. A) firstly, historically they were part of Lancaster Borough not Morecambe or Heysham Borough. Secondly, I think on the balance of the representations that you received, that is still the case. Thirdly, and I think most interestingly, David Morris MP, the MP for Morecambe, actually he put in a submission mostly about why Morecambe and Lancaster should be in separate constituencies. He did say that he conducted a survey of his constituents in Skerton West and that they were overwhelmingly identifying with Lancaster. He actually cited the figures; I think there were 96 people, and 93 of them identified with Lancaster. He's a Conservative MP, and I think that you'll obviously have his representation, but he doesn't seem to have been mentioned. That was my point on that. I would recommend that you look at the new road, as does he, and David Morris's representation – we basically talked about the identification.

ANDY BRENNAN: Excellent, thank you, Rodney. We need to really bring you to a close now. We've allowed you an extra five minutes, which is okay in the circumstances; however, you've told us a lot there, and I suspect it may well have generated one or two questions.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you, sir. John Walsh, the Conservative Party. Mr. Lund, you and I have met on many occasions at previous boundary reviews, so clearly, we understand each other. I do want to come back on a number of points that you made. Can I be clear that, at one point, you said that the west coast supported the proposed mine and that was a very strong case for the west coast to be linked. However, then the east of the county opposed it, but at the same time you supported a proposal that linked the west coast at the Solway through to Alston in the east. Is that not something I misunderstood?

You actually argued at one point that the west coast sat together because of the coal mining interests and influence, the east side of the county didn't support it and opposed the coal mine. You then said that you supported a proposal that linked the Solway through to Walston. Am I misunderstanding that or is that what you actually said?

RODNEY LUND: I said that the industrial part of the west coast, particularly Workington and Whitehaven area, I believe, proposed a coal mine that was in the Copeland local authority area. There's obviously a great concern over jobs, and that seemed to be a principal rationale for that, and quite understandably. Now, the Solway is not the same industrial area, although I do concede that the Maryport wards would be in the Solway constituency, but obviously, the constituency that I was supporting does have Workington, Whitehaven and Sellafield.

ANDY BRENNAN: I'm not sure if that sounds through fully your clarification.

JOHN WALSH: I think I will pursue the point at a later stage.

RODNEY LUND: I'm sorry that I didn't answer about the east coast. I believe it was one of the councillors from Workington that said people on our side supported this proposal to a man and woman, but the strongest opposition came from people at the other side of the mountains and lakes. Obviously, it went to Cumbria County Council, and I'm just giving my opinion.

ANDY BRENNAN: Just bear with us, Rodney. We have some further questions.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Brendan Sweeney, the Barrow and the Cumbria Labour Parties. My submission, 79182, is a submission that we've actually put forward from the local Labour Parties rather than the national one.

RODNEY LUND: It was the national Labour Party one that I was referring to.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: This is the map to ours, which you'll be able to see on the website. If you're putting in a written submission, you may wish to have a look at that, particularly the revised map that we've just put in this morning on that one. I'd be very interested in your comments on that.

You mentioned the connection for Morecambe on it. I'm originally from Morecambe, and I completely support you on that. Especially if you've driven it to confirm that road goes

through what was actually empty land between Morecambe and Lancaster. It isn't through a particularly built-up area, Skerton if to one side of it, and the two Skrlton wards are to one side of it, and all the Morecambe wards are to the other side of it.

When it was put in, it was deliberately taken through so that there were no houses knocked down in the making of that road. I think you'll have appreciated that this morning. I'm very interested in the points that you've made and, as I understood your point on the conflict over the coal mine, it was a conflict between the Windermere part of a combined Whitehaven, Workington and Windermere constituency and the Whitehaven part of it. You weren't making a comment about the whole of the east of the county on it. I think those really are my main points on it for you. Thank you for your explanations and the amount of detail that you gave. I can give you a printed copy of that map. I'll be interested to see your written submissions when they come in. Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Any other questions? Sorry, Tom?

TOM SWEENEY: Tom Sweeney at Barrow Labour Party. My grandma came from Morecambe, and I spent several years living in Lancaster as a student, so I'm quite intimate with that area. Would you mind zooming in again on the Skerton wards? It's just something I wanted to clarify, particularly the boundary between Torrisholme and Skerton West there. I don't know if you'd be able to speak to this, but I believe the historic boundary between what was Morecambe and Lancaster is actually roughly where the boundary between the two wards is, where the FE College is. I don't know if that's something you'd be able to speak to, given you did mention that the two wards were historically part of Lancaster. I believe that's roughly where the boundary was, and that's kind of coterminous with the new role that you mentioned.

ANDY BRENNAN: Are you familiar with that area specifically?

RODNEY LUND: No, I wouldn't claim to know that.

ANDY BRENNAN: We have another question for you, Rodney.

MATT JENKINS MP: Thank you. Matt Jenkins, Member of Parliament for Workington. I led what was then a historic memorandum of understanding in 2019 when I was Deputy Leader of Allerdale Council to work closer with Copeland Borough Council, which historically hadn't happened. Obviously, I spearheaded the Cumberland proposal as well. I set out some reasons as to why those arguments aren't applicable to constituencies. I suppose the question is, do you understand the argument they put forward about those authorities having far more local representatives and, therefore, the position that an MP would be put in having two large towns? The other thing I would say garnered many thousands of signatures of support for the coal mine as well, which did, I will say, come from across Cumbria, including some in Windermere. I'm not sure that carries the weight that you might hope on that one. Sorry, that was really the point. The question really is just the first point about the representation; how those arguments that I made on a Cumberland authority don't necessarily apply to parliamentary boundaries.

ANDY BRENNAN: Is the point to clarify for Rodney there, or were you trying to express a point, which you shouldn't have really been doing [laugh]?

MATT JENKINS MP: It was just about clarification around how the parliamentary boundaries and local authority boundaries are different.

RODNEY LUND: It was just saying there was a strong economic linkage between the Whitehaven/West Coast industrial area. I read the submission, and that did seem to be a main driver. There was this economic similarity of interest of the west coast industrial area.

ANDY BRENNAN: Rodney, I think there's no more questions. Your presentation's been most illuminating, and we're really pleased that you've made the time and effort to come all the way up from Sale in Greater Manchester to share your observations and your experience, some previous knowledge of where you used to work as well. We do appreciate that.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome back. Just a general update for you. We've no new speakers arrived. I will adjourn until 15:40. Thank you.

[After a short adjournment]

ANDY BRENNAN: Good afternoon, everybody and welcome back. I'm pleased to announce we have Trudy Harrison MP available to make representations to us. Trudy, could you start first by giving us your name and who you may be representing, please, and where you're from?

TRUDY HARRISON MP: I'm Trudy Harrison. I'm the MP for Copeland, which is the area I'm representing. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to set out why my support is for the proposed boundary set out by the Boundary Commission.

I've lived in West Cumbria and the Lake District most of my life. My mum still occupies my childhood home in Wasdale, and I think I'm right in saying that I'm the only Member of Parliament that has a constituency office within the Lake District National Park boundary. In terms of my experience to date working with local communities, my introduction to politics, if you like, was the campaign to save Captain Shaw's School in the heart of Bootle Village. I've been involved over many many years in shaping, changing and nudging policy, with a particular interest in rural communities. That has most definitely been the motivation for wanting to represent geographically separated communities – understanding the challenges that we have being far away from the borough council headquarters, the county council headquarters and, of course, Westminster. So this is coming from a perspective of understanding the importance of identity in villages and towns and everywhere in between. The proposed seat is geographically coherent, given the restrictions of the parameters of the minimum and maximum electors, I believe. I think it's common sense to use the existing Copeland parliamentary boundary, not taking away any communities but adding additionality, building on the area to include communities such as Broughton, Coniston, Windermere, Ambleside, Grasmere and everywhere in between.

I do not support the proposal to incorporate Whitehaven and Workington because whilst I've set out the importance of rural communities, also the importance of the nuclear community focused around Sellafield, the low-level waste repository, but also, and importantly for this conversation, Albion Square and Westlake Science and Technology Park. The way that the alternative proposals would incorporate Whitehaven and Workington but

not the specific site of Sellafield, which is the heart of the nuclear industry – employing about 25% of the working population in the area – does not make sense to me. In fact, far worse, I think it may jeopardise the future of the nuclear industry. I'm saying that based on the previous track record of decisions made in South Lakeland. I think that it is important for the local community in terms of the jobs, the apprenticeship, the skills, the lifeblood, but it is also important from a national perspective because the Prime Minister has set out that we are committed towards a nuclear future. If we're going to achieve net zero by 2050, that's a commitment to small module reactors, advanced module reactors and gigawatt plus. All of which is likely to go on that Sellafield site, all of which would be headquartered in and around the Whitehaven area. Yes, there are physical barriers – nobody can deny that the wonderful mountain range that occupies the Lake District National Park is not a challenge. It's imposing, and it certainly brings difficulties for physical connectivity. All of the proposed boundary changes would incorporate that kind of challenge, and I think that this proposal is the most coherent because it forms a ring, a circular connection, where we do have cultural and industrial similarities in both the challenges and the opportunities. Keswick, for example, is well connected with those themes with Windermere, Coniston and Ambleside. Grizebeck and Broughton have similar connections. The villages and towns in West Cumbria also have that more industrial farming and cultural connection as well.

Given the parameters that we're dealing with, given the restrictions of those minimum and maximum numbers, I hope I've set out why in some way I support that geographical boundary. It is actually more than just that. If I can cite the recent town deals. For example, for future high-street funding, I think there would be significant limitations in what one MP could actually bring to their constituency if it included two large towns. I've been fortunate in securing town deals for both Cleator Moor and Millom in the Copeland parliamentary boundary. I doubt very much if Whitehaven and Workington had formed that same constituency, whether I would've been able to do the same again. I do worry about the societal and economic impacts, talking about the nuclear industry, but also about the ability to bring in exchequer funding and also other funding, whether it be from the lottery, private sources, or other means of charitable donations. Lumping Whitehaven and Workington together, I think, would prove very challenging.

With that I think it pretty much sets out why I support the proposed boundary changes as set out by the Boundary Commission. I'm very happy to answer any questions, but I think it is about our identity, building on that identity, improving connections where we can but recognising that we live in an ever-increasing digital workforce and in an ever-increasing digital society. That would be my priority to focus on improving that connectivity, both the physical: improving the roads, improving the ways in which people can get to the places they need to be and receive the projects they need to receive, whether that's by road, rail or other means, but also improving the digital connectivity. I think in 2022, that will be absolutely key going forwards. Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you, Trudy. Do you have any questions seeking clarification, please, on what we've just heard?

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Brendan Sweeney, Barrow Labour Party and also the Cumbria Labour Party. Obviously, I appreciate that you weren't here yesterday, so you may not have realised that we've put in a completely separate proposal to the Labour Party National one. We've gone back to the 2018 proposal that was agreed by the Boundary Commission following the 2016 review, which does actually create a Whitehaven and Workington constituency that goes down as far as Bootle. Therefore, it does fully incorporate Sellafield

and fully includes all the nuclear areas, including several possibilities for the geological disposal facility and, obviously, the low-level waste repository site at Drigg. It is similar to the one that the Lib. Dems. have got in. I will be interested in your thoughts as to why you haven't actually backed the 2018 proposal, which was widespread agreement on the question you talked about.

ANDY BRENNAN: Bearing in mind it's about clarification and points which Trudy has made, I'm just trying to think of a way you can ask that question about clarifying her knowledge of the 2018 review.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: I'm not sure if you were involved with the review that was finalised in 2018. I don't think I can realistically ask whether that would solve her issues without separating.

ANDY BRENNAN: I'm just trying to help think of a form of words. I can't ask Trudy to clarify something which she hasn't presented herself. You could ask if she has knowledge of the 2018 review if that's important.

TRUDY HARRISON MP: I'm very happy to make some additional points. If I can intervene, because what I would also like to make the point of is whilst I absolutely value the importance of the nuclear industry, and I've set that out, there is a danger in just having communities which are overly reliant and don't have the diversification of industries. The ecosystem that I believe would be supported by the boundary changes from the Boundary Commission. I think it's also important to recognise the part that farming plays, that rurality plays and that the visitor economy plays. I think this proposal will give us a far more diverse environment, and society and economy whereby there would be a more holistic development of our communities, not with all eggs in one nuclear basket. If I can put it as clear as that.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Right. You covered the extent to which the Boundary Commission proposal spans across the highest mountains in the country. Could you give us some more clarification – how you, with your experience of being a Member of Parliament, would manage the relationship with your constituents from Whitehaven to Windermere, in particular the Windermere one?

TRUDY HARRISON MP: Yes, certainly, to start with, it's actually handier to get to Windermere from Bootle than it is to get to Keswick. I've represented Keswick from day one from my election on 23rd February. I want to make the point that the vast majority of inquiries that come to me are either by email or telephone; very few people take the trouble to walk into my Bootle office, but I do go out regularly to hold surgeries or 'chat-away Saturdays' as I call them. We alternate between town/village, town/village, right across the constituency that would continue. I am very familiar with the areas that would be added to this boundary, as are my staff team, as are my association. It would be a pleasure to incorporate surgeries in Windermere, Coniston, Ambleside, Grasmere, Broughton and everywhere in between.

ANDY BRENNAN: I think we have a question from John.

JOHN WALSH: John Walsh representing the Conservative Party. I've got a number of points. I'll take them one by one. In terms of your existing constituency, you talked about Millom. How integral is that to the constituency? Can you just be clear about that because you referred to the number of townships around it, and Millom was one of them.

TRUDY HARRISON MP: Yes, absolutely. Millom is my personal service town. It's the town where we've secured about £22.5 million for a towns deal. Twenty per cent of the workforce for the Sellafield site come from the south. Much of that is from Millom. It's important because of the connections on the railway line as well. The Cumbria Coastal Railway Line and Copeland Borough Council boundary obviously includes Millom. It's where the secondary school is where the majority of children, students aged 11 to 19, go to school although many do also go to the John Ruskin School in Coniston or indeed Windermere School. I think it's important to set out that there are existing connections, particularly for skills and education, especially from South Copeland to those areas.

JOHN WALSH: Millom is integral. To be helpful to you if you were not aware of the Cumbria Labour Party scheme. They would actually detach Millom from the constituency. Moving on, in that case, to Keswick. You talk about Keswick being as integral to the constituency as Millom?

TRUDY HARRISON MP: Keswick is equally integral, and it presents different challenges. It has a far more vibrant tourism economy, and the areas of West Cumbria are learning from Keswick, and we're developing policies. Similar to the housing challenges that Keswick now faces, and I'm talking about second-home ownership, we are seeing those difficulties starting to emerge in West Cumbria. It is integral we are learning from each other. It is geographically separated, but that has never stopped me representing Keswick and Keswick from contacting me.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you for that. Can I come back, just for clarification, to the high-street fund? You said that you have been successful in achieving high-street funds, towns fund, and towns-funding funds.

TRUDY HARRISON MP: Just shy of £50 million for two towns. Okay.

JOHN WALSH: Just to be clear, as a Member of Parliament, you're able to submit one scheme or back one scheme, not multiple schemes.

TRUDY HARRISON: Certainly levelling-up funds require the Member of Parliament to make a choice of one fund. That was not the case with the towns fund. I should just say that for clarity. In terms of levelling-up funding, it is the case. Regardless of the rules, I think common sense itself sets out why when the Chancellor is making a decision about where to invest money, it is unlikely that he would choose two locations, or the Treasury would permit two locations, because public money is a finite resource. I think it would serve the constituents of the proposed areas at a disadvantage.

JOHN WALSH: Thank you very much for that. Thank you, sir. No further questions.

ANDY BRENNAN: Can I just chat through the last point, I understand what you're saying, but if you had two large towns and both towns were saying, we want 'x' amounts, would you feel conflicted picking one over the other?

TRUDY HARRISON MP: I can't understand how anybody wanting the best for two towns, being asked to choose, would not find being asked to choose them conflicting. It's almost like being asked to choose which of your two children are your favourite. It's an unconscionable thought.

ANDY BRENNAN: No, it is based on a question that was raised early with somebody else. I just wanted to get your observations from somebody who's a peer to that individual. That's fine. Excellent. Thank you. Do we have any other questions?

TOM SWEENEY: Tom Sweeney, Barrow and Furness Labour Party. You mentioned before about obviously the clear links in Copeland in terms of the nuclear industry, which has obviously been a community in the city for a long time; it's one local authority and the links between Ambleside and Keswick in terms of tourism, which I would agree with. However, those feel like two distinct sets of interests. Would you mind speaking more to what combines the two in terms of, as you say, it being a cohesive unit? [affirmative] What is it that combines those two sets of interests?

TRUDY HARRISON MP: I think in terms of boundaries, it is the Lake District National Park boundary. I am not yet confident that the proposed name is the right one because I think it should possibly reflect the Lake District National Park more in its name, given that about 80% of this proposed boundary would include the Lake District National Park. That is one very significant boundary. While areas such as parts of Gosforth & Seascale and Beckermere are not in the Lake District National Park, they bear similar burdens and have similar opportunities. The burdens being those of sparsely populated communities and the increasing challenges of second-home occupation because of their desirability, but also the opportunities of the visitor economy as well. I think that certainly binds the proposed constituency together. The other addition is farming. When we think of Cumbria, there are three main economies, each worth just shy of about £3 billion. Those are the nuclear industry, the tourism industry and farming. Whether you're an upland farmer or a lowland farmer in West Cumbria, or indeed on the outskirts of Ambleside or Windermere, we face similar challenges in Cumbria. That's something that I'm already acutely aware of being a farmer's granddaughter. I know that there are synergies, and we will be able to put forward Cumbria-wide solutions for the rural economy and, in particular, the farming sector.

TOM SWEENEY: Thank you.

ANDY BRENNAN: Okay. Any other questions of clarification? Trudy, we appreciate you're really busy at the moment, various things going on, and you've obviously travelled some distance. We do appreciate your time and your vast knowledge of this area, and your personal observations are very much appreciated. Thank you.

TRUDY HARRISON MP: Thank you very much.

ANDY BRENNAN: Could I invite Tom Sweeney, please?

TOM SWEENEY: Yes, thank you. My name is Tom Sweeney, and I am speaking on behalf of Barrow Labour Party and the other Labour Parties in Cumbria who have supported our proposal, which is BC79182. It has been acknowledged by several speakers over the past two days that there is no perfect solution to a map of Cumbria. The central fact of the changes from the existing seats is that there has been a reduction because of the changes in the quotas from having six seats to needing to have just a little over five. This necessitates taking the current seats that are anchored around one of the big six anchor towns in Cumbria. That's Barrow, Carlisle, Workington, Whitehaven, Penrith and Kendal. Given the move down to five seats, at least two of those towns have to be put into one constituency.

The central then decision in any map of Cumbria is which of those two towns are merged together. As it stands, the initial recommendation to the Boundary Commission placed the towns of Kendal and Penrith together. We would argue that a better solution for preserving the community ties of Cumbria is instead to go with something along the lines of what was put forward in 2018 by the Boundary Commission and to put the towns of Workington and Whitehaven together. Now, there has been some discussion about the changes in quotas between that 2018 Commission and the current Commission, and that being a reason to essentially not look at that set of proposals, but it said to 'start fresh'. I would argue that this case is overstated, in at least the first instance, because the differences between the quotas, or the middle kind of quota for each of those reviews, are actually very similar.

In 2018, the quota in terms of the middle-range target was 74,769. In the current 2023 Commission, that is 73,393. This is a difference of 1,376, which accounts for a 2% difference in the numbers. Many of the changes are necessary between the two only really because of the size of the wards. When looking at the actual numbers, they are quite similar. Therefore there isn't necessarily any need to completely redraw the map. The fundamental challenges in drawing a map for Cumbria are the same as they were in 2018 and 2011. Essentially, going back upwards of 50 years to the formation of Cumbria, the mountains haven't changed, the major communities haven't changed, and their economic and social interests have not fundamentally changed. For the current proposal, if it's helpful, I think it would be useful to move to the initial proposals from the Commission.

As I mentioned, the initial proposals seek to merge Kendal and Penrith into one seat. The way they do this, essentially, is to eliminate what was the seat for Westmorland, currently represented by Tim Farron. What you do this by taking that seat and splitting it across four new constituencies. You take parts of it and put it into the Barrow seat. You push parts of it across into the Copeland and Western Lakes seat. You push some of it north into a seat that contains Penrith and Kendal, and you push part of it south into a Morecambe seat that crosses the boundary. We would argue essentially that this has some very negative effects on the people who live in Kendal and the areas around Kendal by splitting up the community based around that town across a number of seats.

The changes to community ties would be significantly lower by following the approach taken in the 2018 proposal and, instead, centring on a Workington–Whitehaven seat. This would have the effect of combining the previous seats based around Workington and Whitehaven instead of tearing asunder a seat that has existed for a while and serves as a clear community, as I think has been demonstrated by several of the speakers who've come to talk from that area. You instead take the core towns of the Workington and Whitehaven seats, put them together in a more combined area, and you take away some of the hinterland of both of those seats. There are obviously negatives to this, and I'll come across to those. We would argue that the negatives of doing that are less than the negatives of the current proposals and what they do to the area around Kendal.

To start off with, we've discussed moving the town of Millom into a seat with Barrow. This was what was recommended in 2018. Those proposals were generally quite well favoured, and there was very little opposition to them. There are, of course, links with Millom North to Copeland, but there are equal links to Barrow. Obviously, several of the people who live in Millom also work in Sellafield, in the nuclear industry there. Many of them also work in the shipyard building industry in the systems in Barrow, and to be frank, many of the people in Barrow also work in Sellafield; I know several of them personally. There are lots of job links

up and down that coast in the industrial industries. There are links up and down that coast. Moving across to Millom preserves some of the ties that exist between the two areas.

To be fair, there have to be some decisions about schools. I went to a sixth-form college in Barrow, and I did know people from Grange-over-Sands who went to the same sixth form I did. I knew an equal number, if not more, who came from the Millom areas. I think one thing to flag as well is when we discuss Millom in terms of its relationship to Copeland, the distances we're talking about up and down that coast and to Barrow both have substantial differences. I have here the travel times between Millom and Barrow and Millom and Whitehaven, and I've taken these figures from Google suggestions from this morning for all of the ones I'm going to talk through today. Millom to Barrow by car this morning, Google suggested, would take between 43 to 48 minutes and approximately 33 minutes by train. To Whitehaven, it would take 53 minutes to an hour and two minutes and 49 minutes by train. The train service is the same service north and south. They run by fairly consistent times. I won't comment on that. But the point being that actually taking Millom out from Whitehaven; there are relationships there. There are also relationships south. That's a fairly even split. One clear negative of our suggestion is that it takes off Maryport from the town of Workington, and also the areas north into Allerdale get split off into a seat that covers North Cumbria. The time difference between there and Workington is only 13 to 15 minutes. Between Penrith, that would be the centre town, it's up to an hour. For some of the other areas north of that, it's very similar. Silloth to Workington is about 40 minutes. Silloth to Penrith is about 50 minutes to an hour. Those are negatives, and we would concede those are negatives.

But, if you look at the differences between travelling between Windermere and Whitehaven in the proposed seat there, Windermere to Whitehaven takes an hour and a half to an hour and 45 minutes. The hour and 45-minute route would be via Kendal, which currently takes 20 minutes to its main close town. Between Grange and Barrow is about 40 minutes to 50 minutes. It's half an hour by train to go to Kendal, which is its closest town. Generally, part of its community is 20 minutes by car and roughly 20 minutes by the X6 bus. As has been covered by many people across the two days of this hearing, creating a seat that doesn't contain the seat that exists with it – Copeland and Western Lakes have some enormous travel areas in it – would create significant issues travelling across it. They also represent areas that are very different.

There's obviously been some points made as to the differences between Workington and Whitehaven, and those are genuine. There are some rivalries there, but it's also been said those two seats, those two towns, and local authority areas apply to be posted into the same local authority boundary on the basis that there are clear economic links there. Indeed, as one of the speakers earlier said, it makes a lot more sense to combine two towns which are seven miles apart than two which are up to 13 and have never been in the same seat.

That is a rough outline of the major points that we wanted to go over on this. I think many of the main points around community size have been made by previous speakers, but also many of these arguments exist in the 2018 report that have been submitted as evidence. There isn't really a need to go over those in more detail because those have been submitted as evidence, and you can read them. I think all of us currently in this room can understand them.

If we could look down to Lancaster and Morecambe and some other changes there, actually, and if we flip up north a little bit, one advantage of what we have suggested in terms of what you move down south into the Lancashire seat is that the current solution takes out essentially what would be part of the middle of the proposed new local authority. It's taking out Bowness and parts of that Bowness and Levens ward and moving it south. We suggested moving Sedbergh and keeping that Bowness and Levens area in a more contained Westland seat, which has the benefit of not carving out the centre of the local authority and shoving it into a seat that's primarily focused on a completely different council.

Moving south to Lancaster itself, several of these points have been raised before. To go over them again, I previously lived in Lancaster as a student. I ran for the city council for the ward of Castle, so I'm quite intimately aware of the politics of Lancaster City Council and the types of arguments that people make about the two places. Some of the rivalry between Morecambe and Lancaster, I believe, is overstated in the same way that some of the rivalries between Workington and Whitehaven are overstated, but there is a clear distinction there. Based on the numbers that we have, it makes sense to put a division there. Skerton West, on the other hand, and has been stated before, most definitely sees itself as part of Lancaster. At the very least, Skerton is a cohesive area that views itself together.

We would very much suggest that it does make sense to move Skerton West southwards, and by doing that, you have to make some changes to the numbers. Upper and Lower Lune Valley would need to be moved north into the Morecambe seat. This is sensible, given what's been mentioned about the new free road that links the Morecambe area into those areas. The areas in Lower Lune Valley have more in common with the kind of rural areas up north like Halton and Carnforth going up into Sedbergh, so we've recommended putting one seat there.

In conclusion, I think, as I said in the beginning of my statement, you really have essentially one major decision to make when you are looking at a seat in Cumbria and its which of the two towns you merge. We would simply state that it does make more sense to base it on Workington and Whitehaven because whilst you cause problems with either one of them, the problems that you create by having Copeland and Western Lakes are so drastic in terms of community ties that they make the case for being more liberal with the types of breaks you make in political boundaries.

That brings to a conclusion my summary. Although, actually there are two other points I would draw on briefly to reply to some of the comments made earlier about the differences between the Keswick and Ambleside areas and Workington–Whitehaven areas. One clear problem with the Copeland and Western Lakes seat is the thing that binds it together, as was mentioned by the previous speaker, is it's part of the national park. I would suggest that the national park doesn't vote. It's fundamentally not a community tie. It is about mountains and geography, which is very much the problem with that seat. I think it's quite telling with that seat that it's directly in the middle of it is the current tripoint of three local authority areas.

There's perhaps a reason why there's a tripoint there. It's because it's, in a sense, a large mass. In terms of the types of issues between those two areas, I noticed something when looking at two sources concerned with house prices about the issues in housing between those two areas. I can send these to you separately as pieces of evidence. I have one source from the Cumberland Star on the average house prices for Allerdale and Copeland, which says that they are among the cheapest in Cumbria. The average house price being

£136,000 to £378,000. Another one from the Evening Mail, dated from last year, has the average house price being around £320,000 within the national park. I would suggest that, based on the previous speaker's comments about seeing similar issues in terms of housing price between those two areas, that perhaps is not the most accurate assessment. I will leave it there for any questions.

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you, Tom. Do we have any questions, please, seeking clarification on what we've just heard. Tom, thank you very much for the explanation. Could I invite Mr. Walsh, please?

JOHN WALSH: Thank you very much, sir. John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. Can I begin by reminding you that we are dealing with the rules which pertain to the 2023 review and not those which may have been introduced and presented at either 2013 or 2018. In the abortive review of 2018, of course, being a completely revised House of Commons of 600, not 650. On that premise, we must work within the rules which are set before us. It is on that basis that the Conservative Party has supported the proposals from the Boundary Commission in draft. I think we're agreed unanimously, I've heard no dissent on the five seats of Cumbria being appropriate and that the problems of the county are in some sense unique: its size, its geography and its diverse and widespread population. I concur with the previous speaker that there are effectively six townships spread generally around the periphery of the county. One accepts that that is a major constraint. I think we're also agreed that there needs to be a cross-county boundary seat in order to provide equity and to sustain the rules. I would hate Cumbria to be short-changed, and, out of 5.3, only getting five Members of Parliament. For that reason, we concur with the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats, both the national and the Cumbrian Labour Party

On that premise, there's agreement, I think, from all of those parties that the wards of Ambleside and Milnthorpe and Burton and Kirkland are two wards which are appropriate for the transfer. We support, the Conservative Party supports, the Commission with the split of polling districts within the Bowness and Levens ward in order to give a more equitable electorate across the wider area of both Cumbria and North Lancashire. I can't because of the diverse range of options been put before, I can't, as I've done previously, just do a whistle-stop tour of each of the constituencies. I may be a little disjointed in some of the things that I say, and I apologise, in advance, if the confusion of names and the duplication of some might just be an added complication, but I'll try to be coherent.

I'm going to deal with Barrow. The Conservative Party, of course, concur with the National Labour Party in this matter as paragraph 6.6.1 in their submission. In which the National Labour Party supports the draft proposals. I recognise that the Cumbria Labour Party, with their counterproposals, create, in my/our view, create a greater disparity, a greater split in existing communities. I would have to say that coming from Lancashire as I do, I'm pro the county palatine. I looked at the historic map of the county palatine, which reminds me that Barrow and Grange were part of the county palatine and remained so. Boundaries remain confirmed, and never did that county palatine boundary cross the Duddon. For that reason, Millom was always beyond the county palatine. Of course, that was spelled out earlier today by Helen Irving on behalf of Simon Fell when they recognised that the Duddon had always been that northern boundary. In terms of the counterproposal from the Cumbria Labour Party, I would have to say that, in terms of local authorities, it crosses three existing and would have a part of two of the new electoral division districts/wards within Cumbria. We heard this morning from Helen Irving that Millom looks northwards to Copeland, towards Whitehaven, and that actually is evidenced across Cumbria, where most of the major routes

are on the north–south axis. Far fewer of them are east–west. In many cases, east–west links do not exist. For that reason, we disagree with the proposals from the Cumbria Labour Party in terms of Barrow. Carlisle we can finish very quickly because I think the unanimous agreement from the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party (nationally and from Cumbria) is that the Commission is right to have a single Carlisle seat. Though as a Member of Parliament said, it's unfortunate that Dalston has to be detached in order to achieve the electoral quota. In terms of the agreement thereafter, I've got to submit that there are few diverse views very clearly. The Conservative Party remains of the view that we support the Commission. Chris Whiteside, yesterday morning, set out very clearly in his opening comment that there is no perfect solution to Cumbria. He talked about Workington within the Allerdale district, Copeland-Whitehaven: strong links exist to each of the hinterlands in each of those wards. Each of those constituencies both have an urban core, and both have a rural hinterland, and James Bainbridge reinforced that in his comments during the course of yesterday. That urban–rural combination has been supported very powerfully by the two Members of Parliament that we've heard today, Mark Jenkinson and Trudy Harrison.

Chris Whiteside reminded us also that Kendal and Penrith are similar in nature. They're agricultural towns. They have tourism, and the fact that both have in or are close to a livestock market is indicative of the agricultural rural nature of those towns. The other great thing about the Commission's proposals, pointed out by Chris Whiteside, is that it keeps Eden together, and I will come to that in more detail. There is a very powerful arguments from a number of speakers about the Eden district, the smallest in the county, albeit it will become part of the new larger authority. Nonetheless, there was a coherence that was powerfully induced by various speakers.

The Liberal Democrat proposal, it seems to us with their Westmorland and Copeland, has nothing in common with the two extremes of that constituency. We heard of the nuclear-power body, on the one hand, and the opposition, on the other, are very diverse. Of course, it breaks up Eden as a district. It's interesting that in that constituency, Dalston, a ward orphaned from Carlisle for reasons that we agree with, actually ends up then being linked to Alston at the furthest eastern point of that constituency. When we heard Mr. Lund earlier this afternoon, he was opposed to a cross-Cumbria seat but supported that concept. That seemed to be something of a dichotomy of his view. It would be a huge seat, and it would cross the new local government boundaries. I repeat something I said earlier, the north–south links and the road access make that a very interesting issue. We must remember that the M6 is not the only road that goes north–south between Kendal and Penrith, the Roman road, the A6, also does. There are road links (important but not critical, I accept). We heard from John Stevenson, the Member of Parliament, and also James Bainbridge that Dalston with Wigton sits very carefully along the A595 to Workington: very strong links and community interest there. As opposed to the Penrith-Solway seat, Dalston linked to Alston.

James Bainbridge also reminded us that Kendal and Penrith, as I've said a few minutes ago, have that commonality of agriculture, tourism and livestock. If we were to follow the line of the alternatives or Workington and Whitehaven split from the rural hinterland, as we heard from the MPs, that of itself would create other problems, and I'll come to them in more detail. Chris Bagshaw, interestingly, a resident of Alston in the Eden district, albeit wearing another hat yesterday, and Oliver Henley, Lord Henley, earlier this morning, referred to the smallest district being Eden as being a coherent whole and that it should not be split. There was a community of interest, a district rather than a town I accept, but nonetheless recognised as a community. The Liberal Democrats, of course, and the Cumbria Labour Party, but not the

National Labour Party, I give them credit, would split Eden. The National Labour Party, as do ourselves, believe Eden should be retained. Tim Farron, yesterday in his evidence, spoke very powerfully about the lack of connectivity. It's interesting that one of the things that he repeatedly said was that a constituent in Windermere wanting to see the Member of Parliament in Whitehaven would have a torturous journey.

Well, I take you back to this time last week. We heard from the Leader of Hyndburn Council, who used the phrase digital age. 'We live in a digital age', he said. It's born out that MPs, and we've heard it in part today from Trudy Harrison a short time ago, deal with constituents by email, by telephone, by zoom and other means. Of course, post the tragic death of David Amess, Members of Parliament, as indeed councillors, receive advice from our own councils that we should not be meeting constituents on a one-to-one basis. They should try to use other means for personal security; sad, but a fact. Interestingly enough, as I was walking out of this building yesterday afternoon, there's a poster that says, 'Can Tim help?' The Tim in question is a Member of Parliament, and he is in the present constituency. His poster says you can telephone him on this date. You can meet him in Milnthorpe on this date, then by telephone the following week, in Kendal the week following that by telephone in Kendal, on to a second venue by telephone, then in Grange. In other words, a Member of Parliament goes to the constituents, not expecting the constituents always to come to them. I would point out, reinforced by Mark Jenkinson and by Trudy Harrison earlier, but given that there are 14,000 plus voters in the Windermere wards, nearly 20% of that constituency, an MP is not going to ignore them and is almost certain to go to them for surgeries in that area. Andrew Jarvis is a councillor for Windermere and made an interesting point. He didn't agree with the Commission, but he actually recognised and acknowledged that there was this distinct east-west split in Cumbria. It wasn't north-south across the county and was less appropriate than north-south. For that reason, I believe he is right. Seats which are predicated largely on a north-south axis have far more relevance and accessibility across Cumbria.

Arthur Lamb, a councillor in Whitehaven, referred to the Commission's scheme being the best option. Names were an issue, and I'll come to names shortly. He believes, and very clearly said, and was not challenged, that in his view, Carlisle and Workington seats, as proposed by the Commission, more coterminous with the districts are appropriate. Whilst Copeland and Western Lakes was not ideal, it was a workable option. He did remind us that two-thirds of Copeland district is actually in the national park, so has similar issues to Windermere and beyond. I mentioned earlier, and repeat something that Chris Bagshaw reminded us, that Eden is a community – his phrase not mine. Mark Jenkinson, this morning I thought gave a very clear exposition of the links from Dalston and Wigton into Workington and why a constituency he would like to be called Allerdale is the most appropriate. He referred to the fact that Solway Plain feels disadvantaged over the years, and that's within a fairly tight constituency within the context of Cumbria. How disadvantaged would it feel if it were part of an amorphous mass from the Solway to Alston?

He referred rightly, and it's something I have personal experience on, to the issues of bringing together two towns, given that a lot of government funding these days – and I'm not going to go into the merits or demerits of that – are based on bidding and endorsement from Members of Parliament, and sometimes you have two different Members of Parliament supporting two different projects: one in Whitehaven, one in Workington. It's far better than a single Member of Parliament having to determine which should get the endorsement between the two. Given that Whitehaven and Workington are two of the three largest towns or cities in the county, clearly, to give them both a voice with a separate member of

parliament, as both Mark Jenkinson and Trudy Harrison said, would be of enormous importance. He used the phrase 'competition for economic regeneration', and that is absolutely correct. Trudy Harrison reaffirmed it.

Rodney Lund spoke at length, though I'm not quite clear on what his ultimate conclusion was. He has wide experience in boundaries, and I give him credit for that. As a former local government officer who dealt with boundaries in Greater Manchester, he has experienced them. However, I don't think he came up with a comprehensive set of proposals. He had a number of criticisms, but I couldn't deduce from his comments that there was a comprehensive view, save that he didn't believe that an east-west seat was appropriate, though he then endorsed one.

I also don't think he appreciates the change in the climate of bidding for towns funds, levelling-up funds and other such bids. When he talked about the Morecambe and South Lakeland seat. We had this debate at length during the week with universal agreement that Skerton's should sit together. I would argue, as we had some agreement on Tuesday of this week, that Skerton West has very powerful links westward with Torrisholme and Westgate wards. Therefore, those two wards, along with the two Skertons, more properly sit in the same constituency and that, as a necessity, would be the Morecambe and South Lakeland seat. Trudy Harrison, most recent to memory, talks about the combination of an urban and rural hinterland. A balance that she's achieved as a Member of Parliament, as with Mark Jenkinson, doesn't seem to be a great problem. She recognises that a Member of Parliament has got to be available across the constituency in a manner that I referred to earlier. I note the comments from Mr. Sweeney a few minutes ago, but I'm not going to rehearse or-challenge things that he said.

I'm going to come to names, If I may, of constituencies. There has been a very clear view coming out that if the Commission's proposals are adopted, those which we support, in any event, the name of Allerdale is more appropriate than Workington. Oliver Henley and others presented the fact that Eden is a small district and the smallest district. Part of that eastern seat, more properly perhaps, could be entitled Penrith, Eden and Kendal. A view endorsed by Sir Robert Atkins, who also supported Allerdale, as did Mark Jenkinson.

I want to conclude with one or two important, in my view, statistics. If we take the National Labour Party proposals, three of their proposed constituencies would involve three existing local authorities. Even under the new boundaries, they would cross two - both of the authorities. Under new boundaries, the Labour Party proposal will actually be worse because two of them would be two of the authorities. Sorry, that's the Cumbria Labour Party. Turning to the National Labour Party, two constituencies would be in three currently and in both subsequently. The Commission's is the 'least worst option', and I'm not going to set out all of the figures.

The final point I would make is that we've heard a great deal over the last few days about health services. Looking north and south, constituencies look to different health authorities. Clearly, under the new local government boundaries, there will be some crossing of those health districts and authorities, health services, education and the like will cross existing boundaries. We don't see that as a huge impediment. We don't see it's a problem for the Member of Parliament. In endorsing the Commission and the draft proposals, the Conservative Party commends them.

Could I conclude by thanking you for the manner in which you've conducted, not just this final two-day hearing, but the four that went before, and thank you to all of your staff for the kind and courteous way in which they've assisted all participants, not just myself, but all participants during the course of the last day. What seems an indeterminable length of time, but it's only just over two weeks (I realise).

ANDY BRENNAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Walsh. Do we have any questions seeking clarification, please?

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Thank you, Brendan Sweeney, Barrow and the Cumbrian Labour Parties. On the question of the county palatine, I just wanted you to confirm that the whole of the current Barrow constituency is within what was the county palatine, and may still be in some people's reckoning, and that the Boundary Commission proposal actually hacks quite a big piece of that out. The county palatine boundary being the River Duddon.

JOHN WALSH: It does indeed. I can't deny that, but equally, Millom and the area north of the Duddon has never been in the county palatine.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Thank you. On the question of where Millom looks to, Helen Irving isn't from there, she's from Ulverston, and quite a lot of information came in on the previous review from the parish councils up that way. I believe there is some in from some of the parish councils this time as well. There is ample evidence, which we will put in subsequently. There's a written one on it. I would like to give you the chance to perhaps comment more on the fact that north and south of Black Combe, I would suggest, look in opposite directions.

JOHN WALSH: I suspect that any community that you might want to look at both look north and south, east and west. They're not absolutely bound to a single direction, but we heard only this afternoon from the antepenultimate speaker Trudy Harrison that she has very strong links with Millom and that Millom in her constituency has got a very clear and distinct line within that constituency and that the rail line and the main road, that Cumbrian coastal road through Millom, up to Whitehaven.

BRENDAN SWEENEY: Thank you. Both of them do run in both directions. I think that's the main points that I wanted to cover. I think we'll pick up some in writing.

TOM SWEENEY: Tom Sweeney. For the Labour Party. I apologise to the speaker earlier. His name was Rob Lund. I thought it was Lund. You mentioned that he didn't necessarily come to a conclusion, but I think it's to clarify the Commission's, and it'll be on the tape. Obviously, I think he did say that he thought highly of the Liberal Democrat proposal and some of the proposals by private members of the public. I know he mentioned that he approved of the seat that went round to Broughton–Millom and one that went across to kind of Soloway and north of Eden. I just wanted to just clarify that point that he did say those things, at least in his conclusion.

JOHN WALSH: He did say that. Many people have partial schemes, but unless there is a comprehensive scheme, clearly, it is not possible to comment on it. We didn't have that from Mr. Lund. I'd be happy to look at them if he did bring forward full counterproposals. I'd be happy to look at it. He didn't fully endorse the Liberal Democrats. He didn't fully endorse the Cumbria Labour Party, the Labour Party scheme or the Commission's scheme. Therefore, for that reason I came to view that he didn't have a comprehensive view.

TOM SWEENEY: That's fine. You mentioned, speaking of roads in Cumbria, the north–south roads of the Roman A6 and the M6. I wanted to ask you to clarify that in terms of east–west roads, the M6 and the A6 do meet the A66 at Penrith in terms of moving east and west, so there are, to clarify, some road links east and west in the north of the county.

JOHN WALSH: I accept that. I'm not denying that there are some roads, but the main thrust is the north–south axis. Perhaps it's because most people go through there up to the lakes and through into Scotland and vice versa. Yes, I accept that there are some. I'm not denying that.

TOM SWEENEY: One final question. I should have asked this to previous speakers, I admit. Talking about having two towns, Workington and Whitehaven, and the towns fund and the issue of having two towns together – to clarify would the same thing not apply to a seat that contained Penrith and Kendal as being two major towns?

JOHN WALSH: Given the major funding streams, and I wear my local government hat here as a member of the council, such as the towns fund and the levelling-up funds, which are predicated on a single-member endorsement. Some of the smaller funding streams, such as the regeneration schemes, are for smaller townships, and I use that phrase advisably. I'm not being disparaging of Penrith or of Kendal, but they are not in the same scale of funding as the former industrial towns of Workington, Whitehaven and similar.

TOM SWEENEY: That's fine. That's all the questions for me.

ANDY BRENNAN: Do you have any questions? Thank you, John. Thank you very much for taking the time to go through everything as you have done on previous occasions, and we very much appreciate the efforts and the support that you've given the teams with other matters other than the representation. I don't propose to make any consultations at this stage due to the late time. I am going to bring the second day to an end. We'll conclude today's business now. Thank you very much.

[Hearing closed].