

THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

PUBLIC HEARING

2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies

Held at:

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Edinburgh

EH1 3BH

on

Wednesday, 7 December 2016

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN

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Isabel Drummond-Murray (Secretary)

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SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this public hearing which is a very important part of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's 2018 review of the UK parliamentary constituencies. First of all can I introduce myself. I am Mhairi Stephen, I am the Sheriff Principal for Lothian & Borders and I have been appointed to chair this public hearing. It is important that I assure you that I am entirely independent in these proceedings and independent indeed of the Boundary Commission. I am very happy to be regarded as a relic because I think I am the sole surviving relic of the last review, which would be the sixth review of the Westminster constituencies, and these are very intimate surroundings in which to have the public hearing. The last time it was in the City Chambers which were rather more austere so I hope this will promote constructive comment and that is exactly what I want to speak a little about.

These hearings are an integral and very important part of the public consultation on the Commission's proposals which were published earlier this year in October. It is designed to be true consultation in the sense that the Commission have very helpfully published not only the proposals but the reasoning and thinking behind the proposals. Obviously the legislation must be followed. The Parliamentary Constituencies Act of 1986 and the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 are the legislation which governs both the public consultation and this public hearing, so the emphasis is on consultation and it has to be true consultation. This is only part of the process. You must remember that anyone wanting to make representations may do so in writing and this initial consultation period is open until 11 January next year.

An important part of my function is to determine the procedure for this hearing and, as I have said, this is a fairly small, intimate room. I aim to be as informal as we can be whilst recognising the importance of keeping to procedure and timetable.

The proceedings will commence with a presentation by the Secretary to the Boundary Commission for Scotland who is sitting next to me. She will explain more about the consultation process and how written representations can be made. After that we will proceed to hear from representatives of the qualifying parties and any individual MPs, MSPs and councillors who wish to speak, and obviously members of the public. Oral evidence will be given from this lectern here. A transcript will be made so it is important that you speak clearly into the microphone and the device at the lectern in order that an accurate transcript can be provided. That will be made available on the Boundary Commission's website in due course so if you can identify yourself at the beginning for the purpose of the transcript and then if you can speak in clear ringing tones, perhaps not as essential in this room as it was before but still it is essential that everyone hears.

I have given an indication as to the order of speakers. We have to adopt a fairly fair balance of time and there is no set time limit. If you are monopolising the time I may have to suggest that you quickly conclude but I am sure that will not be necessary today because I want to create a degree of informality within the margins of what has to be a proper and formal consultation process. That really is as much as I need to say but anyone who does give a presentation should be prepared to answer some questions if appropriate from the floor and I hope you understand that. Just one gentle reminder: this is not the forum to challenge or discuss or debate the legislation which brings us here and which brings the proposals here. These are set by parliament and this is not the forum for challenging that legislation. The purpose of the hearing is to give the Commission an opportunity to explain their proposals and for you to comment, and bear in mind that you can comment in whatever way you wish. You may wish to challenge the proposals or indeed you may wish to support the proposals, or you may wish simply to comment. I will not be asking any questions unless there are matters that have to be clarified. I think that is probably as much as I should be saying and I hope we have an interesting hearing. We will begin proceedings with the Secretary giving her address.

MS DRUMMOND-MURRAY: Thank you very much. I am Isabel Drummond-Murray, I am the Secretary of the Boundary Commission for Scotland, and I feel I should apologise to Mr Tosh that this is the fifth and final time that he will have to sit through the first part of this anyway. I am just going to give a quick overview of the legislation, policies and procedures that apply to the review and then explain the initial proposals.

The legislation governing the review is the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. That Act has been substantially amended by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act of 2011. As a result of the change in the legislation there will be a UK parliament of 600 constituencies, down from 650. In Scotland there will be 53 instead of the current 59. Two Scottish constituencies are specified in the legislation, that is, Western Isles and Orkney & Shetland, and each of the other 51 must have an electorate within 5 per cent of the electoral quota, which is 74,769.2 for this review. This means that each constituency must have no fewer than 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507. There is an exception to this when the constituency's area exceeds 12,000 square kilometres and it may then have an electorate lower than 95 per cent of the electoral quota if it is not reasonably possible for it to comply with that requirement. No constituency can exceed 13,000 square kilometres.

In 2011 we commenced the sixth review of UK parliament constituencies. However, parliament amended the legislation governing that review in January 2013 and as a result we stopped work on it and did not complete the review. This is therefore the first review at which specific numerical limits have been applied to the electorate or to the geographical area of constituencies.

The legislation also states that we may take into account factors other than the electorate, namely, special geographical considerations including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency; boundaries of council areas and electoral wards; existing UK parliament constituency boundaries; and any local ties that may be broken by changes in constituencies. We are aware that the Scottish government has introduced new ward boundaries in many council areas in Scotland. However, the legislation requires us to have regard to the ward boundaries that were in use at the last local government elections. When designing constituencies we have aimed to design as many as practicable that do not cross a council area boundary. We have also tried to avoid breaking local ties and have taken into consideration local geography such as transport links, electoral and administrative boundaries, and natural features.

As part of the review we must also recommend a name for each constituency and designate it as either a county or burgh. That designation affects the expenses allowable at elections. The guidelines we have adopted when proposing names are to use an existing name where a successor constituency is recognisably similar; to prefer short names rather than attempt to describe an area exhaustively; to ensure the names of UK parliament constituencies in general differ from those of the Scottish parliament where an appropriate and distinct alternative is available; not to place compass points at the beginning of a name unless it is used as part of a council area or town such as in East Kilbride or East Lothian; and not to use the same name for a constituency in a council area unless the two are coterminous. We have published a booklet setting out all the policies and procedures for the review which can be found on our website and I think there are copies at the back still if you have not already had a copy.

As an independent and politically impartial body we do not take into account patterns of voting or the results of elections when reviewing constituency boundaries and nor do the political parties' views on where a boundary should be have any more weight than those of members of the public. To assist with design and with minimising the number of constituencies crossing council area boundaries we designed groups of council areas which can be exactly covered by a whole number of constituencies. The strict limits on the number of electors in each constituency mean that the design of each may affect the design of a number of others across a wide area. We considered whether to design any constituencies in Scotland larger than 12,000 square kilometres to which the exception to the minimum electorate rule would apply and we have not applied that exception in these initial proposals.

In the initial proposals 35 constituencies are contained in a single council area and the remaining 18 combine parts of two council areas. Thirty wards are divided between constituencies out of 353 wards in Scotland. There are 13 constituencies which contain only whole wards, 23 contain a number of whole wards and a part of one ward, 14 contain parts of two wards, two contain parts of three wards and one contains parts of four wards. Where wards have been split we have generally tried to do so using community council boundaries, major transport features and other recognisable geographical and community boundaries.

The council areas that form the geographic focus of this public hearing are Clackmannanshire, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Falkirk, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, Stirling and West Lothian. However, you are welcome to comment on any part of our initial proposals at this hearing. In our initial proposals this set of council areas is exactly covered by 12 constituencies. In West Lothian and City of Edinburgh council areas we have proposed six constituencies. Linlithgow follows ward boundaries in West Lothian with one exception, ward 6, Fauldhouse & Breich Valley, which follows a community council boundary. Edinburgh Pentland & Livingston constituency contains the remainder of West Lothian as well as Edinburgh ward 2, Pentland Hills, and part of ward 7, Sighthill/Gorgie. There are four further constituencies within Edinburgh. These are Edinburgh East, Edinburgh North & Leith, Edinburgh South West & Central, and Edinburgh West. The proposed constituencies follow ward boundaries with three exceptions: ward 7, Sighthill/Gorgie, and ward 15, Southside/Newington, are split by following community council area boundaries, while ward 5, Inverleith, is split by following a community council area boundary and the rear fence of properties. In East Lothian we retain the existing constituency which comprises the whole council area. In Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling council areas the entitlement to constituencies is quite low at 2.89 which means the average electorate per constituency lies close to the minimum permitted. In our proposals four of 21 wards in these council areas are divided between constituencies and these are: Falkirk ward 2, which is divided using the River Carron; Stirling wards 5, 6 and 7 which are generally divided along community council boundaries; Falkirk South constituency is wholly contained in Falkirk council area; Stirling South constituency is made up from part of Falkirk and Stirling; and Clackmannanshire & Stirling North constituency is made up of parts of Clackmannanshire and Stirling council areas. Midlothian and Scottish Borders council areas together are covered by two constituencies, Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk, which is wholly within Scottish Borders, and Midlothian & Peebles, comprising all of Midlothian council area and communities in Scottish Borders including Peebles, West Linton, Stobo and Blyth Bridge. One ward is divided between constituencies, that is ward 2, Tweeddale East, which is divided by following a community council boundary to enable all of Peebles to lie within a single constituency.

This public hearing is one of five being held around Scotland, it is the last of the five, where you have an opportunity to voice your opinions and suggest alternative constituency designs. In addition to commenting at a public hearing you can write to us, send an email to us with your comment or you can use the consultation area on our website which includes interactive mapping. Details of how to submit your comments are available on our website or please feel free to ask any of us at the end of the session and we will give you any advice you need. We have arranged for a transcript of today's proceedings to be made and we will publish that on our website. We request that those who wish to comment in Gaelic do so in writing. Our privacy policy is that we will publish names of individuals and organisations commenting on our proposals but we will not publish personal contact details such as address, phone number or email address. We have already published on our website the minutes and meeting papers from our meetings leading up to the publication of our proposals and these include information about alternative constituency designs which we have considered before deciding upon our initial proposals.

The consultation closes on Wednesday 11 January and in early spring we will publish on our website all the comments we have received, and the transcripts from these hearings. There will then be a scrutiny period of four weeks during which you can look at all the comments and remark upon them, and after that scrutiny period we will consider all comments and remarks and, where appropriate,

produce revised proposals later in 2017 for further consultation. Finally, we must submit our report containing the recommendations to the Secretary of State for Scotland before 1 October 2018. That ends my statement.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you. I think we should proceed and I am proceeding on the basis of the names that have been intimated already. There may be people who have not given their name and there will be an opportunity at the end to find out whether there are other people who want to speak but, using the list I have and based on what I have already said, I think I should invite Murray Tosh who is representing the Scottish Conservative Party.

MR TOSH: Thank you, Sheriff Principal. I do promise that what I will say this morning will be much briefer than the statement I made at the Ayr hearing and nobody is to be alarmed by the volume of water that I have just poured out.

My name is Murray Tosh. I have represented the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, as you will have gathered from Ms Drummond-Murray's remarks, at all five local hearings. The treasurer is having a nervous breakdown contemplating the mileage claim I am going to be making. Currently I live in Melrose in the Scottish Borders, having moved there after living in Edinburgh for 15 years. I was elected to the Scottish parliament in 1999 for the South of Scotland region and in the division of constituency duties in the Conservative group of MSPs I have responsibility for constituency work in East Lothian, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. Today I am going to give the Scottish Conservatives' interim response to the proposed constituencies, the 12 constituencies which are the focus of this hearing.

As I have said at the other hearings, we are still consulting on the initial proposals. We are gathering and assessing the reaction to them from the public, from local authorities and from other political parties before we lodge what will be our final formal response, which we will do by the 11 January deadline. In the previous four hearings I have been able to indicate support in principle for most of the groupings of councils adopted by the Commission for the purpose of drawing up the constituencies and I have been able to indicate my party's support for most of the proposed constituencies. In general we have found that the Commission has done an excellent job and while we have given notice of minor amendments which we will propose in some constituencies we have so far made only one detailed counterproposal for two constituencies in Dumfries & Galloway. We acknowledge in general that the Commission's initial proposals for the proposed constituencies before this hearing conform with Schedule 2 of the 1986 Act which lays down the rules for distribution of seats. The rules require the Commission to take into account local government boundaries and we agree that the rules have been followed in the allocation of constituencies in such a way as to minimise crossings of council boundaries and dividing wards, and we intend to support most of the constituencies under discussion today.

Turning to the constituencies in detail, I confirm our support for the constituency of East Lothian, coterminous with East Lothian Council's area and which has sufficient electors to be a constituency in its own right. We also agree with the grouping of Midlothian and Scottish Borders councils. These councils were grouped for the creation of Scottish parliament constituencies and it seems logical to use the same groupings in this review. We have looked at the detailed options considered by the Commission at its August meeting and we agree with the option, option 1, which it has recommended. Option 1 crosses the border of the two councils at a point where Midlothian adjoins

the former Tweeddale district council of Peeblesshire and the council boundaries are crossed here also in the Scottish parliament constituencies, and also incidentally in constituencies which existed from 1918 to 1959 so it is well precedented. The constituencies for the two parliaments cannot be identical of course but shape and accessibility are relevant considerations for the Commission and we think it preferable that the boundary should be crossed at the western end of the Borders rather than in the central Borders although we do acknowledge both that there is a strong connection between the Borders and Midlothian down the A7 corridor and that the rail link has strengthened that connectivity, also that much of the land mass of Borders ward 3 although not its electorate was formerly a part of the historic county of Midlothian.

If there are representations against the proposal to such an extent that the Commission decides to look again at the other options to come into the central Borders our preference would be for the ward 3 Galashiels option. The Lauder & Melrose option would take out of a Borders constituency the strategic A6091 trunk road which links our main transport spines, the A7 and the A68, and it would mean that there would be no direct A road link within the constituency between Peebles and Galashiels in the western Borders, and Kelso, Jedburgh and Eyemouth in the east. This corridor is in many ways at the heart of the Borders, containing our rail terminus, our district general hospital and three of our most iconic tourist attractions, Melrose Abbey, Abbotsford and the Eildon Hills, possibly to be followed soon by the Great Tapestry of Scotland. I have only been there two years and I talk about “us” already! We note that the Galashiels option would also have placed the constituency boundary across the A6091 but this could be remedied by a small division of ward 3 and by following the line of the A7, A6091 and the Kingsknowe roundabout instead of following the Tweed. This would have the effect of moving from Midlothian and Galashiels a detached housing estate of around 30 houses at Kingsknowe which in our view strengthens the case for choosing option 1 instead as the Commission has. I am sorry to go into such detail but the Commission’s mapping expert will readily recognise the fine detail that I have mentioned there.

I want to turn now to the City of Edinburgh. It is clear that Edinburgh has too many electors to stand alone and must now be grouped, and that it can now be grouped with West Lothian. We agree that creating a constituency wholly within West Lothian forming only one constituency combining areas of West Lothian and Edinburgh minimises the crossing of council boundaries and is consistent with the Commission’s practice elsewhere in Scotland. The Commission has had to divide some wards in the grouping but we consider that it has made good use of motorways, main roads and watercourses, and within the city of natural features. We welcome the restoration in particular of the traditional boundary of the Blackford and Braid Hills to separate the city’s south-western constituency from its southern or, as in these proposals, its eastern constituency. We see the proposed Edinburgh East as a natural extension of the traditional constituency of that name and its expansion to take in the Inch, Gilmerton & Liberton means that the Commission is able to retain a constituency based on Leith. There has been a Leith constituency since Scottish MPs first attended the United Kingdom parliament in the early 1700s and while its borders have varied over the years Leith has been relatively stable in the past century, stretching westwards from Leith Links through the heart of the old burgh towards Granton, Trinity, Newhaven, Broughton and Inverleith. We welcome the proposed Edinburgh West as a compact, well defined constituency which has strong boundaries with Edinburgh South West where good use is made of main roads and the Water of Leith. Edinburgh South West & Central is in turn separated from the East constituency firstly in the

south by the Braid Hills, an exceptionally strong physical boundary, and then north of that by the ward and community council boundaries.

The other constituencies this hearing has before it today are in the grouping of Clackmannanshire, Stirling & Falkirk. I represent a political party which is itself an aggregate of local associations and our associations in Stirling and Perthshire have advised us that there is opposition in their communities to the proposed division of Stirling both in principle and in detail, and to the proposal to place Strathearn and Kinross in a constituency with the areas around Burntisland and Cowdenbeath. There the objection is that there is little or no synergy or connectivity between Crieff and Muthill on the one hand, or the Fife communities on the other. I therefore gave notice at the Dundee hearing that we would seek to amend these groupings and would bring forward proposals for Fife and Clackmannanshire which were validated in the sixth review, which you announced had been unconcluded in your earlier comments, Sheriff Principal, and also for Falkirk, Stirling and Perth & Kinross on the basis that the latter two were grouped in the unconcluded sixth review, and that there were sufficient electors in that grouping for the grouping to form four constituencies. To date we have been unable to identify strong boundaries for a four constituency model within Falkirk, Stirling and Perth & Kinross and we are currently looking at models within a wider five council grouping but I repeat here what I said at Dundee that we do accept the proposed constituencies of Perthshire, Fife North-East and Glenrothes & Kirkcaldy.

On a purely personal note, I did prefer the name proposed for the last constituency in the sixth review which was Kirkcaldy & Glenrothes as I would have given primacy to the older and famous town of Kirkcaldy. My suggestion might not have people dancing in the streets of Raith but it might enjoy support all the way from Raith to Dysart. We will also model constituencies on the basis of other possible groupings. We are aware that a significant counterproposal might be made from another quarter which could lead to North Lanarkshire coming in to the Stirling & Falkirk grouping, and we will continue to work on counterproposals in this part of Scotland.

In conclusion, the Scottish Conservatives respect this process of local hearings and we have participated in them all. In some parts of Scotland they have uncovered public reactions of which we might otherwise have been unaware and we will try to reflect in our final formal submission to the Commission as many as possible of the community based representations which have been made. Finally, I want to thank the Commission staff for their co-operation and professionalism throughout this process, and also the five Sheriffs Principal for the informal and relaxed way in which they have conducted each hearing.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you, Mr Tosh. Are there any questions for Mr Tosh?

MR LAWRIE: John Lawrie, Liberal Democrats. At the risk of being dubbed the nerd of the century could I correct Mr Tosh on one small point in that when he referred to the linkage of Midlothian and Peebles he is correct to say that it was previously linked but it was from 1918 to 1955, not 1959.

MR TOSH: I have felt, going through this process, and these terms themselves might be out of date now but I have wondered if I might have appeared to these young people working for the Commission a bit of an anorak or a nerd, or a geek but I am bound to say that whatever the title is I am very happy indeed that Councillor Lawrie has taken it from me.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Are there any further questions? (Negative) Thank you, Mr Tosh. Moving on swiftly I would like to invite Mr Murray to address the hearing. Mr Murray has provided a written alternative proposal.

MR MURRAY: Good morning. Thank you very much indeed, Sheriff Principal, and also thank you for allowing me to speak early in the proceedings, having to hotfoot it back to Westminster to do my democratic duty this afternoon in votes. I should also declare an interest that I did vote against the original legislation but I do appreciate that this is not the forum for that particular debate.

I am Ian Murray, I am the member of parliament for Edinburgh South, former Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland and also the Scottish Labour Westminster spokesperson. Today I will be speaking on behalf of my own constituency but also on behalf of Daniel Johnson who is the member of the Scottish parliament for Edinburgh Southern and indeed for the Scottish Labour Party in terms of the proposals that are in front of us today. I was a councillor from 2003 to 2007 in the Alnwickhill ward which is affected by these proposals and then when the multi-member ward system was introduced from 2007 to 2010 in the Liberton/Gilmerton part of the ward that was referred to by Mr Tosh earlier.

Can I give credit to the Boundary Commission for the proposals they have put forward under quite strict and stringent legislative criteria from the Parliamentary Constituencies Act as amended, as we have heard already. I make no comment on anything outwith the City of Edinburgh council area and indeed I am mainly concentrating on the proposed Edinburgh South West & Central and new Edinburgh East constituency, and I will try to make sure the terminologies of the constituencies that I go through in this short presentation are clear. What I want to do this morning, Sheriff Principal, if I may is just go through the five specifications that the Boundary Commission have set to Schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act as amended by the Parliamentary Voting and Constituencies Act of 2011. Those five main policy requirements in order of importance are: the electoral quota of plus or minus 5 per cent of 74,769; keeping together where appropriate boundaries of council areas and indeed individual council electoral wards; maintaining where possible current Westminster boundaries, which of course is a challenge given the legislative constraints on the Boundary Commission; keeping boundaries as close as possible to Scottish parliamentary boundaries, again given the differential sizes and boundaries very difficult but certainly something that we can try to achieve; and finally respecting existing geographical local natural and community ties.

My proposal is incredibly simple. It would be to remove City of Edinburgh Council ward 11 which is City Centre from the proposed new South West & Central constituency and place it in the new Edinburgh East constituency, and remove Edinburgh Council ward 15 in part from the new Edinburgh East constituency, and place that full ward 15 in the South West & Central constituency.

If I may take each of the legal and legislative specifications in turn, all under of course the auspices of the Boundary Commission, to maintain public confidence in the review process, making sure that no constituency is larger than the square kilometres that are specified in the legislation and indeed not breaking the sacrosanct rule that no constituency should be plus or minus 5 per cent of the electoral quota, on page 4 of the report that I have submitted there is a table that shows the electorate that the Boundary Commission have used from the electoral register of December 2015 and the number of electors in each of the particular council wards. You can see from the initial proposals that the Boundary Commission have put forward in these two Westminster seats that the Boundary

Commission proposals for Edinburgh South West and Central give a total electorate of 77,029, and for the new East constituency 74,009. That is for South West & Central a deviation of plus 3 per cent from the legislative electoral quota for South West & Central and minus 1 per cent of the electoral quota for the new East constituency. My proposal of removing ward 11 and bringing in ward 15 to South West & Central would mean that the amended proposals would have a deviation on the South West & Central Westminster constituency of only plus 2 per cent and indeed the new amended proposal for Edinburgh East brings it in at minus 0.4 per cent so much closer to the electoral quota in those particular areas.

The second thing that I would wish to raise at this point is the special geographical considerations. We heard from Mr Tosh earlier about the Braid Hills being a natural boundary. I would agree with that. I think the west end of the new South West & Central constituency is bounded by the Pentland Hills on one side and indeed the Braid Hills on the other. I think that is a very sensible geographical boundary and many of the other electoral and administrative boundaries follow that particular course of action as well.

The issue around ward 15 would mean that if ward 15 was pushed into South West & Central and this switch was made the natural boundary from the Braid Hills would then run through the Inch Park, and Cameron Toll of course, where there are no electors, the major road junction of the arterial routes into Edinburgh across to Peffermill and round Prestonfield, where there are indeed no electors, and then on to Arthur's Seat and Duddingston Loch, which again are very clear natural boundaries between constituencies. The whole East constituency both old and new has been determined by Arthur's Seat and that geographical boundary for many years.

In terms of electoral wards the Boundary Commission have suggested that they will try where possible not to split council electoral wards and indeed we heard in the presentation from our Secretary this morning that only 30 of 353 multi-member council wards in Scotland are split. My proposal would ensure that that number, all things being equal and no other changes being made across Scotland, of course, would reduce to 29 from 353. If I could just highlight the proposal in terms of what that would mean in practice, the Boundary Commission's initial proposals by wards in South West & Central would mean that Edinburgh City Council wards 8, 9, 10, 11 and part of 15 would be replaced by 8, 9, 10 and the entirety of 15, and the Boundary Commission initial proposals for the new Edinburgh East constituency are 14, 16, 17 and part of 15, that would be replaced by entire wards 11, 14, 16 and 17. As I understand it the amended proposals would also comply, although not part of the legislation, with the amended council wards in the City of Edinburgh as well, there are just some minor amendments to be made, so the proposal in terms of council wards would mean that there would be no splitting of ward 15.

If I can put that into context, if I may, Sheriff Principal, with regard to keeping it in line with existing Westminster boundaries and refer you to page 7 where there is a table that shows that the amended proposals that I am putting forward this morning on behalf of my member of the Scottish parliament colleague and the Scottish Labour Party, although very difficult to do, would bring the amended proposals much more in line with the existing seats. The table there shows that the current proposals would mean that the percentage of current Edinburgh South electorate voters in the new East seat is 59.3 and in the new Boundary Commission proposals is 40.7. In the amended revised proposals that I am putting forward this morning the percentage of voters that are currently

in the Edinburgh South Westminster parliamentary constituency that would be proposed into the new amended East constituency drops to 37.6 and in South West & Central increases to 62.4 from 40.7, so a significant increase in the number of electors who stay within an existing boundary. In the new East constituency the Boundary Commission proposals as they currently exist have 84 per cent of the East constituents remaining in East and 12.9 per cent in South West & Central. That actually increases with the revised proposals of voters who are currently in the East constituency, now in the amended East constituency, up to 84.7 so it marginally improves the position with regard to the Westminster constituencies.

If I can then turn to the Scottish parliamentary constituencies, the table with the figures is on page 8 of the proposed document. This shows that the current Boundary Commission proposals, and we are regarding the seats that are covered by the proposals as Edinburgh Eastern, which is the Scottish parliamentary seat of Edinburgh Eastern, and the Scottish parliamentary seat of Edinburgh Southern. It does cover other parliamentary seats but these are the two key seats that are taken into account with the proposals. The Scottish parliamentary seat with regard to the initial Boundary Commission proposals, if you look at Edinburgh Southern, is currently split 40 per cent into the proposed Edinburgh East and 60 per cent into Edinburgh South West & Central. My amended proposals would reform that to a quantity that 16 per cent of the current Edinburgh Southern seat would remain in the proposed new East Westminster constituency, and there would be an increase to 84 per cent of voters who are currently in the Edinburgh Southern seat being in my amended proposals for South West & Central, so a significant increase in the number of voters who are in the Scottish parliamentary seat of Edinburgh Southern being contained within the new South West & Central seat under the amended proposals. If you look at the Edinburgh Eastern constituency my amended proposals would mean that it would be 100 per cent contained within the new proposed Eastern constituency.

If I could just very briefly touch on some of the other geographical/local/natural community ties, under my amended proposal for the first time Edinburgh University campuses would be within the same constituency of South West & Central, that would be their campuses at George Square and their Science & Technology campus at Kings Buildings, and of course the vast majority of students and staff who work and attend the University of Edinburgh also would live within the South West & Central constituency, which is very important for local community ties in terms of dealing with the issues that university students, staff and teachers would have in terms of what they raise with their Westminster member of parliament. Local policing is made much better in terms of the number of wards that are split between the local policing divisions and page 9 runs through those in detail; I will not go through them this morning in great detail. Then we come to the administrative boundaries of the City of Edinburgh Council in terms of local neighbouring partnerships. The amended proposals keep ward 15 Newington/Southside together and therefore the number of neighbourhood and council neighbourhood offices reduces by one, and maintain a number of four for the Edinburgh East constituency.

The next thing I want to concentrate on, page 10, is school catchment areas which is incredibly important in terms of the mailbag of elected members in Edinburgh and particularly Edinburgh South, and again whether it be denominational schools, high schools or indeed primary schools the amended proposals, because of the communities in the Southside and Marchmont being held

together, are much more coterminous with primary school catchment areas, with denominational school catchments and also high school catchments.

Finally, Sheriff Principal, let me come on to community councils. There have been some significant discussions within community councils about these proposals and there may be some written evidence put forward to the Commission by the deadline of 11 January with regard to this. My many proposals would mean that many of the community councils in the south of Edinburgh that have worked together for many generations, that is Grange, Prestonfield, Marchmont, Sciennes, Southside and Morningside, stay together as a unit. The current proposals would mean that Marchmont/Sciennes community council is split down the middle and that Morningside community council is shaved on the eastern side, and that Grange/ Prestonfield community council would come back together for the first time. It is currently split between East and South parliamentary constituencies. This is incredibly important not just for the geographical boundaries that I spoke about earlier but also the fact that there are some major developments and major concerns in the south of the city at the moment, mainly the selling of the Sick Kids Hospital and indeed the potential disposal in the next three years of the Astley Ainslie Hospital, on which Marchmont, Sciennes, Grange, Prestonfield and Morningside community councils are working hand in hand in order to be able to make representations on behalf of the community with regard to those proposals.

Those community councils have always worked incredibly closely together and you can see on pages 10 and 11 where those would now not be split, and would come together. The proposals would mean that Tollcross community council would be split. Tollcross community council has always been the centre of the wheel for constituencies in Edinburgh and had been split for some considerable time but the important fact here is to ensure that Marchmont/Sciennes community council stays together. You may not be able to determine the maps on pages 30 and 31 of Church of Scotland parishes so I can merely just assure you that in terms of the amendment that I am putting forward today it does have a much more coterminous view with regard to St Catherine's, Marchmont, St Giles and Mayfield Salisbury parishes in terms of keeping them within the Edinburgh South West & Central constituency.

My many proposals very much comply with the legislation and if the Boundary Commission were of the view to accept these proposals then I would propose perhaps a name change for the seat and would ask the Boundary Commission to look at that. Perhaps an Edinburgh South & South West designation would be much more appropriate but I would leave that to the Boundary Commission to determine.

In conclusion, Sheriff Principal, the amended proposals I am putting forward this morning would bring the new constituencies of South West & Central, and East more in line with the electoral quota, ensure there is no split in the City of Edinburgh Council electoral wards, align the new constituencies much more to the former Westminster constituencies, align the new constituencies much more to the current Scottish parliamentary constituencies, much better reflect the natural boundaries and major road boundaries of Edinburgh and this part of Edinburgh, much better reflect local community ties, and much better reflect local administrative boundaries such as the council, the police command areas, community councils, neighbourhood partnerships, school catchments and church parishes. Thank you for your time this morning.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you for your comprehensive proposals and concise address. Are there any questions for Mr Murray? (Negative) I think, Mr Murray, in the absence of questions you are in the fortunate position that we know that there is one member of the public, Mr West, who has come to speak in support of your proposals. Is Mr West here? I think you have just arrived, Mr West.

MR WEST: I have just arrived.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Perhaps this is an opportune time. Mr Murray has addressed the meeting, he has spoken to his written proposals, which we are grateful to have. Would you like to speak now or is that putting you rather on the spot?

MR MURRAY: Sheriff Principal, would you with your permission excuse me if I have to leave after Mr West?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr Murray. Mr West, you were not here but we have this lectern and if you would just speak clearly because everything is being recorded.

MR WEST: Good morning, everybody, and thank you, chair, for allowing me to speak. I have to say I am not an expert in these issues. I should introduce myself. My name is Roger West, I live in Fairmilehead in Mr Ian Murray's constituency and I am on the electoral register there. I am a member of the Labour Party though I do not hold any office at any level in the party. I am a regular attendee at Fairmilehead Parish Church and I am a member of the committee of the Friends of Braidburn Valley Park which is a voluntary community association involved in keeping one of Edinburgh's parks looking nice.

My first acquaintance with your proposals was when I saw them mentioned in the Edinburgh Evening News and my initial reaction on seeing the map was that the proposed constituency about which Mr Murray has just finished speaking struck me as being of the wrong shape, and this was an instinctive gut feeling. It seemed to be too extended in the north-south direction and not nearly wide enough in the east-west direction, and I could not help feeling it might have been possible to draw a better boundary for it. I am well aware that it is not helpful to you to have gut instincts and this sort of thing inflicted upon you. I am well aware also that the Boundary Commission for Scotland have said that if anyone wishes to raise an objection could they please provide a reasoned alternative and I must confess to you that I felt that was entirely outside my competence to provide anything that would be at all useful to the Boundary Commission. However, on Monday afternoon there landed in my email inbox with a loud thud a copy of Ian Murray's proposals. I looked at them. I thought that the shape of the constituency seemed to me a rather more natural one than the one that is being proposed here so I read them carefully and I have come to the conclusion, madam, that Mr Murray's proposals are apposite, well considered and closely argued, and as I read through them I felt that I could support them without reservation. Any one of his proposals taken by itself might not seem conclusive but the whole of his arguments taken together seem to me to make a powerful case for a revision and my appeal to you is basically that you should give Mr Murray's proposals the detailed consideration which I think they richly deserve, and that they should be adopted. He has made a case I think that in a number of respects they are actually an improvement on the objectives

which the Boundary Commission for Scotland has set itself, for instance where there is less variation in the prospective number of electors in the constituencies.

I have only one rather brief comment. As I said, I am a regular attendee at Fairmilehead church. Of the two churches that I know in that area, Fairmilehead and Greenbank, they both have quite sizeable congregations. They are of course the hub of church activities and they are also the centre for a number of community activities which help to give the area its cohesion. I should imagine that parochial catchment areas are not at the top of your list of priorities, they must be somewhere down at the bottom, but for what it is worth I think on Mr Murray's proposals under that heading it is the only thing on which I feel I can add anything to what he said. I feel that for what they are worth his proposals are correct in that respect and I would like to support them. As I say, I would really like to support the whole of his proposals. I do very much hope they will be adopted. Thank you very much, everybody, madam chairman, for hearing me.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you, Mr West. You are the embodiment of these hearings, that members of the public can come and viva voce tell the Commission. Obviously I am independent of the Commission. This lady is the secretary of the Boundary Commission for Scotland. What you have said has been recorded and will be an important part of the consultation process. I have to ask if there is anyone in the room who has any questions of you, Mr West. (Negative) I would just like to thank you for attending and giving your views. Thank you very much. Moving on, is Mr Burnett here? Mr Burnett, I think you are a member of the Scottish parliament for Aberdeen West and you are not so much interested in this area but you have an issue that you would like to address this meeting about. You are a member of the Scottish parliament for the Scottish Conservative Party. Thank you, Mr Burnett.

MR BURNETT: Thank you very much, and thank you, Sheriff Principal, for leave to speak today, especially given that I would like to speak about the Aberdeenshire constituencies which were primarily discussed at Dundee which I was unable to attend, because of my role as an MSP I was attending a parliamentary committee, so thank you for the opportunity today and apologies to those who may be less familiar with the subject I am about to speak on than the Edinburgh constituencies.

I would like to speak today, mainly because I have been contacted by a number of constituents who regard, without offence to the Commission, how completely illogical it is that the largest town in Deeside, namely Banchory, has been excluded from the constituency of Deeside & Gordon. Not only have I been contacted by a number of constituents, I should point out also to the Commission that there have been a number of errors on the map. There may be some people who are unaware of what is going on in the area. I note that Aboyne has been renamed Heughhead, Braemar has been renamed Tomintoul, and a number of significant villages, namely Strachan and Finzean, have not been mentioned at all so I make that point to the Commission.

That aside, I would really like to speak on four issues which basically imply that the guidelines that the Commission set itself have been directly contravened. Three of the main areas have probably been brought to the attention of the Commission before but there is a fourth and final one, an historical quirk which I hope will at least keep the interest of those in the room until then. The first area is that of geography and topography. For those of you who are familiar with Deeside, and I should probably point out that many people now feel that the Commission is not familiar with the geography of Deeside, Banchory is very clearly in Deeside as opposed to the constituency that is

being proposed which is in Angus and is separated by a large range of hills, connected by just two roads, the Cairn o'Mount and the Slug Road to Stonehaven, which are often closed in times of bad weather.

That leads to the second point, the area which is the administrative areas. Banchory sits in the Marr area committee in Aberdeenshire Council, obviously named after the Braemar area, and it seems logical that it remains within the Marr area committee, the area that it looks after is kept as one. This basically covers a number of topics which I feel are better coming under the auspices of one parliamentary seat. We have obviously had the disasters at the beginning of this year, the floods. We also had problems and issues over the River Dee which runs the whole way along and we would like to keep that in one constituency, and also with roads, public transport and other administrative areas such as local school catchment areas. There is also, thirdly, the main feeling of community that nobody in Banchory does not consider themselves to be a Deesider and Banchory itself is not only home to Deeside rugby club but also Deeside Piper, the local newspaper, and certainly very strong feeling both in the club and amongst the journalists that they should remain part of an area called Deeside.

My fourth and final point is really in response to a subject that I believe was raised at the Dundee hearing by Willie Rennie where he said that Banchory should remain outwith the Deeside & Gordon constituency because historically it lies in Kincardineshire. I feel at this point I have to take some personal blame for this. The reason that Banchory sits in Kincardineshire goes back to 1646 where a question to parliament, probably in a discussion very similar to today, when they were discussing boundary changes there was a petition that Crathes in Aberdeenshire was annexed to Kincardineshire as the Laird of Leys, who was also of the name of Burnett, had lands and residences in the Mearns. I can assure you that is no longer the case and therefore the argument that Banchory and Crathes are still part of Kincardineshire is an anomaly that causes much confusion not only to those who live there but also to postal services, delivery services and, it would appear now, the electoral commission.

For all of the reasons above I would heartily beseech that Banchory and the surrounding areas are moved to the Deeside & Gordon constituency. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you, Mr Burnett. Are there any questions arising for the Deeside issue? (Negative) It appears not. Thank you very much, Mr Burnett.

MALE SPEAKER: It is lovely to hear about things going back to the seventeenth century.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Yes, it is social history. I was going to call at this stage on Mr Briggs, the Conservative MSP for Lothian, to speak. Thank you, Mr Briggs.

MR BRIGGS: Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the meeting this morning and with these two beautiful Christmas trees I will maybe start by wishing you a merry Christmas as we begin. As you have mentioned, I am Miles Briggs and I am a regional member of the Scottish parliament for the Lothian region. I am here today to support the proposals for the Lothian region including the City of Edinburgh proposals. I fully appreciate, as has already been laid out today, the difficulties faced by the Commission in producing constituencies that reflect natural community boundaries and also meet the quota criteria which you need to work to. In terms of the specific proposals I would

like to focus on two constituencies in the Edinburgh City council area, that proposed of Edinburgh West and then the proposed Edinburgh South West & Central constituency.

With regard to Edinburgh West I support the proposed natural boundary of this seat which reflects the traditional Edinburgh West constituency and offers, I believe, the least disruption to the local electors. In relation to the Edinburgh South West & Central constituency I am delighted to see the traditional link once again return between Fairmilehead and Colinton. These communities are in the same Scottish parliamentary constituency and were in the same Westminster constituency, and I will stand corrected if I have to be, between 1918 and 2005. It is right, I believe that these are re-joined in the new constituency being proposed. Colinton Road forms a natural corridor between Craiglockhart and Merchiston. Again there is a historical tradition of these communities being in the same constituency. Craiglockhart, Morningside and Merchiston community councils have a very strong tradition of working together on local issues which I have been involved with such as the Craighouse campus and common parking issues faced by these suburban areas. There is a great deal of interaction which will be helped by being contained within one parliamentary constituency and I know my colleague Councillor Jason Rust, who is also here today will be speaking on the natural boundary of Lanark Road, also within that constituency.

Morningside, Bruntsfield and Tollcross form a natural constituency following the A702. This also reflects the Boroughmuir High School catchment area. The city centre forms a distinct community and I am delighted that it is to be included in one constituency. Many constituents in the city centre are disheartened when boundary proposals are put forward that they are often, as has been raised already, the middle of the wheel and a lot of people I have spoken to about this are I think delighted to see the city centre ward not being split in this case. My colleague Councillor Joanna Mowat who represents the City Centre ward unfortunately cannot be here today because of council business but I know that she will be submitting a written submission to the Commission. The City Centre ward already includes parts of Tollcross and this will only increase when the new local government wards are enacted next year so it makes sense to take these together.

To conclude, I recognise the challenges faced by the Boundary Commission in applying their roles to different areas when the number of constituencies in Scotland overall is being reduced. I believe these proposals are good and straightforward for electors to understand, and I believe they are also fair, workable and merit support. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you. Are there any questions for Mr Briggs? Mr West.

MR WEST: As someone who lives in the southern part of the focal area on the map I have to say that I do not feel that as communities we have a particularly close association with the most northerly part of what is now ward number 11. It seems to me that the natural community affinities in that area, and I speak as someone who has lived in Fairmilehead for nearly 30 years, they tend to extend wards in an east-west and north-south direction, broadly speaking, and I cannot help feeling that this rather elongated shape does seem to me to be rather unnatural.

MR BRIGGS: In terms of the local government boundary which you fall into as a resident in Fairmilehead, from people I have spoken to they are delighted that actually the ward is coming back together having been split and I think that is a positive which the Boundary Commission have taken into account. I accept and I think everyone who has spoken does that it is incredibly difficult when

you are trying to draw these boundaries to take into account every single community but I think from looking at the proposals the A702, which is obviously an actual road heading out, has acted as a natural boundary in the past in terms of the Edinburgh southern Scottish parliament constituency linking Morningside and Craiglockhart again. This is obviously what the Westminster proposal has and I think that is a positive. No-one will ever maybe be happy with what is proposed in potentially the revisions but overall looking at Edinburgh City I think it is actually taking into account a lot of these views and I hope for this review it can be accepted on the merit of what that is. Can I also apologise that due to parliamentary business I will have to leave before half past 11.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Of course. Thank you. I wonder, Mr Rust, if you would like to give your presentation now. You are a local councillor representing the Scottish Conservative Party.

MR RUST: Thank you, Sheriff Principal. I welcome the opportunity to speak this morning. My name is Jason Rust and I am one of the three City of Edinburgh councillors for Colinton/Fairmilehead ward. I have been a councillor for the past 12 years, initially from October 2004 for the former Colinton ward which included Swanston village and since 2007 for Colinton/Fairmilehead ward in the newer multi-member ward. I speak in support of the Edinburgh South West & Central seats which the Boundary Commission have proposed in terms of their interim recommendations. I think it is a good and natural fit, especially given the balancing which I appreciate has to be done in terms of legislation and the numerical limitations and I commend the Commission for its work on this. I am afraid my submission compared to some of the previous ones is perhaps rather parochial but I will focus on four areas, one really in terms of the natural division between the Colinton/Fairmilehead ward and Pentland Hills ward which I think has been taken on board in these proposals; also the strength of unity within the Colinton/Fairmilehead ward and the importance of keeping that intact which again has been recognised; thirdly the clear division between Fairmilehead and Liberton; and finally the unity between the Colinton/Fairmilehead ward and the areas further north into town, points which the Boundary Commission have taken on board in their interim proposals.

I think looking firstly at ward 2, which is the Pentland Hills ward on the City of Edinburgh Council, and ward 8, Fairmilehead ward, the distinction between these two wards was recognised earlier this year by the Local Government Boundary Commission of Scotland following representations by myself and my two ward colleagues, local community councils and Colinton amenity association, and I am very pleased that the proposals for the Edinburgh South West & Central seat retain the Hailes and Spylaw areas of Colinton on the one hand within this new proposed Edinburgh South West & Central seat, with Clovenstone, Wester Hailes and the other parts of ward 2 going into the new Edinburgh Pentlands and Livingston seat. It is very clear and I think the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland recognised that residents in Hailes and Spylaw up to that natural boundary of Lanark Road use Colinton post office, Colinton library, Colinton pharmacy, the GP and dental practices, they play at Colinton bowling club, there is direct path access from Pentland Avenue and the Spylaw area over Spylaw Bridge to the parade of shops in Colinton village. In contrast, residents effectively require a vehicle to access the shops at Westside Plaza, Wester Hailes, and to negotiate roundabouts and a dual carriageway which are far less easy to reach.

I welcome the fact that the Boundary Commission see the synergy between Hailes and Spylaw to Lanark Road is towards Colinton and the east, and in my view virtually non-existent towards Wester Hailes and Ratho where there are much poorer links. In terms of issues such as very large

supermarkets residents in Hailes, Spylaw and Colinton are much more likely to go to Colinton Mains Tesco, Morrisons at Hunters Tryst, Waitrose at Morningside than they would to any shopping outlet in ward 2 so I think the key really is that Lanark Road is a natural boundary. In the past number of years the only real overlap of issues at a local level between wards 2 and 8, Pentland Hills ward and Colinton/Fairmilehead ward, has been in relation to the Woodhall Bings area which is much further south and there has been no overlapping interest between Hailes and Spylaw, and the nearer developments of ward 2 so I think there is quite a clear distinction which is recognised in the proposed map between the Edinburgh Pentlands/Livingston seat on the one hand, and the new Edinburgh South West & Central seat. I think they are quite distinct communities and there is green space between Lanark Road and Wester Hailes towards Baberton Mains/Juniper Green.

In relation to Colinton and Fairmilehead and that strength of unity I think Mr Briggs has already alluded to the fact that traditionally Colinton and Fairmilehead communities were in the same seat. We are of course now a single ward since 2007 which also takes in Oxfords, Firhill and Colinton Mains, and in terms of the issue I would say that there is a clear division between Colinton/Fairmilehead ward and the East Liberton/Gilmerton ward which again I am pleased to say has been recognised by the interim proposals of the Boundary Commission. There is, as I think has been mentioned by a few presenters already this morning, the strong clearly defined natural boundary of the Braid Hills and open land which constitutes a substantial geographic barrier between these communities which have relatively little in common, and that is a point which has been made over the years at various hearings.

The whole issue of community linkages between Fairmilehead, Firhill and Colinton was actually examined by one of your predecessors, Sheriff Principal Gordon Nicholson, as far back as 2002. It was stated at that time that there was a compelling case for the link between those communities and indeed a good case for the link with Craiglockhart, and on 3 December 2002 (I am afraid I do not go back to the 1600s) the Assistant Commissioner concluded that Colinton/Firhill should be retained with Fairmilehead and Craiglockhart. From a historic point of view in terms of these matters this has been looked at before so there is a body of evidence from the past as well. I think it is really vital that Colinton/Fairmilehead ward remains intact as the Boundary Commission has done in its interim proposals. Residents are served by the same police station, the libraries at Oxfords, Colinton Mains, Morningside, the churches which I think Mr West mentioned earlier. There is a new GP practice being built, which brings together the existing Oxfords and Craiglockhart surgeries, and Firhill surgeries in one building at Colinton Mains Drive. The residents of Colinton and Fairmilehead use Pentland and Colinton Mains community centres, Oxfords neighbourhood centre, and as mentioned before the local shops. Also the interests in Fairmilehead and Colinton are very much in planning terms both in conservation areas and green belt which is very important to local people.

As I said there is no linkage really with Kaimes, Alnwickhill and Liberton to the east whereas Fairmilehead community council and Morningside community council do have close links and have worked on a number of joint issues or initiatives over the years. Indeed at a local level part of the old Colinton/Fairmilehead ward or the existing Colinton/Fairmilehead ward around Fox Springs and Comiston will in fact with the local changes as of May be going from the Colinton/Fairmilehead ward into the new Morningside ward which I think just goes to show the overlap between Fairmilehead and Morningside. There is also a shared interest, I think it was Mr West who mentioned Braidburn Valley Park, also I would say in terms of Fairmilehead Park. Overall there is a high level of affinity

between Colinton, Fairmilehead, Craiglockhart and Morningside, and a small part of Colinton around Paties Road is actually in the Craiglockhart/Fountainbridge ward, all of which would be within the Edinburgh South West & Central seat. I think the school catchments were also mentioned earlier and of course many children in Fairmilehead attend Boroughmuir High School or independent schools further into town such as George Watson's.

For the reasons I have outlined in terms of the natural affinity between Colinton and Fairmilehead, the importance of keeping that council ward in one parliamentary constituency, the clear distinction to the east and west and the links further into town I would very much welcome the formation of the Edinburgh South West & Central seat. I know the Boundary Commission have a number of challenges but I think it is a good, sensible and workable proposal which has been delivered in these interim measures. Can I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you. Are there any questions for Mr Rust?

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Regarding previous comments, some of the services that you mentioned, Councillor Rust, such as the medical services and the new medical centre, are issues which have entirely devolved to the Scottish parliament and I am not quite clear that they are especially relevant to drawing a Westminster constituency boundary.

MR RUST: I accept your point that at a policy decision making level they are matters for the Scottish parliament but I think although we are looking at Westminster boundaries here they are still very much relevant because I think GP practices are effectively local hubs, if you like, they are places where local people go and they show the sort of links of the actual community, so I think from a wider point of view they are relevant but I do take your point that obviously from a policy making or law making level then that would be for the Scottish parliament.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: This gentleman here. Could you identify yourself for the transcript.

MR TOOLEY: My name is Stuart Tooley. From your argument I take it your central argument is that 8, 9 and 10 should stay together, Craiglockhart, Colinton, Morningside and Fairmilehead. Does that have any bearing if Ian Murray's proposal was to go through on your thoughts about the connections between ward 11 and those wards and do you agree with Ian Murray's proposal that 10 and 15 actually have those same links that you talk about between 8, 9 and 10?

MR RUST: I have to confess I have not actually seen Ian Murray's proposal, I do not know if it has been circulated, but I think from hearing what he was saying, and I am speaking very much from the southern end, if you like, of the proposed Edinburgh South West & Central seat but I would appreciate that there are community issues elsewhere. However, without having actually directly seen it I would not want to comment.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Mr Tosh, you had a question?

MR TOSH: I simply wanted to put the point that since Mr Murray had addressed a lot of devolved issues including education catchment areas, which are within the legislative competence of the City of Edinburgh Council and the legislative competence of the devolved parliament, I wonder if Mr Rust might agree with me that it was equally reasonable for him to deal with similar matters in relation to a Westminster constituency but I suspect the answer will be yes.

MR RUST: Funnily enough I agree.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: "I concur," you were going to say. Are there any further questions? Thank you, then, councillor. I was going to propose that our next speaker will be Mr Lawrie. Mr Lawrie, would you like to come forward?

MR LAWRIE: We really did not have a great deal to say at this stage. We will be making a written submission. We will probably be able to take account of some of the points made both by our Conservative and Labour colleagues – opponents, rather today.

MR TOSH: I prefer colleagues.

MR LAWRIE: There are certain points with which we agree but we will make a written submission and I am quite happy not to speak now.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: So you are going to make a considered written submission?

MR LAWRIE: Yes, and we are happy with that.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you for attending.

MR TOSH: Can I say, Sheriff Principal, that we have had an exchange of notes and I do defer on the earlier point to Mr Lawrie. In my case it is only book learning and I may have been mistaken. Mr Lawrie has lived these events. I am happy to accept his judgment.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: But of course. Thank you, Mr Lawrie. Two further councillors have identified themselves and would like to speak, first of all Councillor Cowan from Perth & Kinross, I believe. You are a councillor who represents a particular constituency for the Scottish Conservatives.

MRS COWAN: That is correct, Sheriff Principal. Thank you very much. My name is Ann Cowan and I represent ward 6, the Strathearn ward in Perth & Kinross Council. What I say is also going to be relevant to ward 7, the Strathallan ward.

I have lived in Perthshire area for most of my life, more than 60 years, and I have been a local councillor in Perth & Kinross since 2003. A number of constituents have approached me about the proposals for the new boundaries and I would like to give the following evidence, please. I do fully understand that boundary changes have to take place because constituencies require to be enlarged but I strongly object to the idea that the South Perthshire & Kinross constituency boundary should be extended to Fife, namely to areas of Burntisland, Cowdenbeath, Kirkcaldy, Kelty and Lochgelly, and so on. There are social reasons for this.

There are absolutely no natural connections between the area in which I have lived for most of my life and those areas of Fife. In fact most of the people in my ward have probably never been to any of those places and actually nor have I. One could get there by car but a bus journey would involve going via Stirling or Perth and changing, and would be very lengthy. A train journey would involve the same sort of circuitous route. Our road transport links are mainly the A9 and A85 both of which run east-west. There is a good bus service to Stirling as well as to Perth and many people in Crieff, Muthill, Comrie and St Fillans choose to do their weekly shop in Stirling rather than Perth but they

would never ever go to Fife to shop so I have to ask what on earth have the rural villages of western Perthshire got in common with the far more densely populated and indeed industrialised areas of Fife which is so far away and so different?

Geographic and historic reasons. The Ochil Hills present a natural boundary on the southern edge of the Strathearn/Strathallan area as do the foothills of the Grampians to the north. My ward stretches up the Sma' Glen as far as Newton Bridge in the foothills of the Grampians. History -- I am sorry, I am going to embrace these ancient dates again -- shows that the villages of the area had strong links largely because it is easy to travel between them across the wide Strathearn valley. In recent years Dunblane was part of Perthshire. History, though, shows that in 1716 six local villages shared a dreadful fate being burned to the ground by disgruntled Jacobites returning home after the tragic battle of Sheriffmuir near Dunblane. The kingdom of Fife was far removed from all of this and always will be. If you look at a map actually you will see that Crieff, Comrie, St Fillans and Muthill are directly north of Dunblane and Stirling. On the most westerly edge of my ward the village of St Fillans is already represented on the board of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park with the national park border being on the northern shore of beautiful Loch Earn where my ward also ends.

Common sense. All the above reasons would seem to me to add up to a very strong case for a boundary change to embrace the landward area towards the west. Until 1983 this was the case in Kinross & West Perthshire. The seat which existed from 1918 to 1983 (I hope those dates are correct) formed a natural community of interest. To stretch over to a whole new area, an industrial area in Fife, would be the worst possible result for the people in Strathearn.

Personal reasons. I would be extremely concerned if my ward was forced to be joined to a Fife constituency so far away and so distant in their way of life as well as in miles. It seems so natural and so obvious for us to be linked with places we know and visit regularly in the northern areas of Stirling Council. I feel the special identity of the Strathearn area is gradually being lost and it would be tragic if this was speeded up by the wrong decisions on our boundaries forcing links that we do not recognise and honestly do not have any wish to adopt. I fully appreciate that the Commission has very strict criteria to stick to but I hope that you can respond to my heartfelt concerns in your deliberations. Thank you very much.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you, councillor. Are there any questions for Councillor Cowan? Mr Lawrie.

MR LAWRIE: Can I ask one question. Would the consequences of what Councillor Cowan is suggesting mean an entirely different linkage of council areas? I think there was a reference that Mr Tosh made earlier on to a linkage of more council areas and it might be five? Would I be right in thinking the fifth would be East Dunbartonshire, is that right? I am not actually expecting you to know the answer.

MRS COWAN: No, we are quite a long way away from East Dunbartonshire. The link would be with areas of Stirling council which we have had before.

MR LAWRIE: Stirling, Falkirk & Clackmannan, is that a possible for the Boundary Commission to consider?

MRS COWAN: I would not know on that one.

MR TOSH: The five councils that I referred to were Fife, Clackmannanshire, Stirling, Falkirk and Perth & Kinross.

MR LAWRIE: Thank you very much.

MR TOSH: Though it is an interesting idea.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: Thank you, councillor. Councillor Sharkey is not here but he has intimated ---

DOUGLAS CAMPBELL: He gave me his name, he may have just been after some materials.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL STEPHEN: I see. He is a councillor in Renfrewshire.

I have come to the end of the list I have but is there anyone else here who would like to say something today because this is your opportunity to do so. (Negative) Silence. In that case I think we can conclude this part of the proceedings and thank you for attending. As I have said, everything will be transcribed and will eventually appear on the Boundary Commission website. You have already been given the route map for further consultation and I would like to thank the Secretary for that, and conclude this part of the day. Thank you.