

THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

PUBLIC HEARING

2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies

Held at:

Royal Concert Hall

220 Buchanan Street

Glasgow

G2 3NY

on

Thursday, 24 November 2016

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL

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Isabel Drummond-Murray (Secretary)

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Daily Transcript by Larking Hodge Pollock (Shorthand Writers)

Suite 6, Legal House, 101 Gorbals Street, Glasgow G5 9DW

DX GW287 Glasgow; T: 0141 248 6211

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Thursday, 24 November 2016

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Can I welcome you all to the first of five public hearings to be held in Scotland in relation to the Boundary Commission for Scotland's 2018 review of UK parliamentary constituencies. I am Craig Turnbull, I am the Sheriff Principal for Glasgow and Strathkelvin. It has become customary that the Sheriff Principal of the sheriffdom within which a public hearing takes place is appointed to chair the hearing. For the avoidance of any doubt, I am independent from the Boundary Commission and other than chairing today's public hearing I play no part whatsoever in the ongoing review.

The current review began in February 2016 and today's hearing forms part of the consultation of the public on the Commission's initial proposals in relation to Scotland's UK parliamentary constituencies. The purpose of a public hearing is to enable representations to be made about any of those proposals. The focus for today's hearing is the proposals for Dumfries & Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. However, it is open to participants to comment on any of the proposals for Scotland but only Scotland.

It is for me to determine the procedure that is to govern today's hearing, subject to certain matters which are laid down by statute. Following these introductory remarks today's hearing will begin with an explanation of the proposals with which the hearing is concerned and how written representations on the proposals can be made. Following that representations will be made. I had a great script, ladies and gentlemen, as to how I was going to manage this and then people actually turned up in a completely different order to my thoughts, so we are going to, in classic legal parlance, play it by ear. We have a running order for those who have indicated they want to speak which blew my great plan out of the water. I am not going to tell you anything about qualifying

parties and allowing them to speak longer than members of the public. I think with those we have here and the time available we should be able to allow people to speak. If somebody drones on for far too long I might cut them off but I am not going to tell anybody when that is and I am not going to put a timer on the table as my initial grand plan had. Bear with me in that regard.

Representations can be made first. The people making representations should do so from the seat to my right hand side there. After the representations have been made questions can be put. I can ask questions. It is hard for lawyers not to ask questions but I will do my best in relation to that. We will allow questions to be put from anyone who is here. I am entitled to regulate the manner of questioning or restrict the number of questions that a person may ask. I am sure it goes without saying we are in Glasgow so everybody will be polite and well behaved but if you are not I will stop you, and I am used to that kind of thing so I do not expect any difficulty whatsoever in that regard.

Beyond that, ladies and gentlemen, it is a question of taking it as it goes. A transcript of today's proceedings will be prepared. It is being recorded. The gentleman immediately to my left is in charge of the recording. If anyone sees him waving desperately and I do not notice it can you wave at me; it is because we might have a problem with the transcription. In due course, as will be explained, the transcript goes on the Boundary Commission's website so anything you say today is going down for posterity. Think carefully what you say before you do so.

As indicated a moment ago, today's hearing begins with an explanation of the proposals with which the hearing is concerned, how written representations on the proposals can be made and to give you that I am delighted to introduce Isabel Drummond-Murray from the Scottish Boundary Commission.

MS DRUMMOND-MURRAY: Thank you very much. I will just take about 10 minutes to read out a statement.

The legislation governing the review is the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. The 1986 Act has been substantially amended by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 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 constituencies 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 electors. There is an exception to this when the constituency's areas 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, and no constituency can exceed 13,000 square kilometres.

In 2011 we commenced our sixth review of the UK parliament constituencies. However, parliament amended the legislation governing the review in January 2013 and as a result we stopped work on the review and did not complete it. 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 states that we may take into account factors other than 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 parliamentary 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. The legislation, however, requires us to have regard to the ward boundaries that were in use at the last local government elections. We cannot therefore take account of new ward boundaries but we can take account of local ties.

When designing constituencies we have aimed to design as many constituencies as practicable that do not cross a council area boundary. We have also endeavoured to avoid breaking local ties. We have taken into consideration local geography, such as transport links, electoral and administrative boundaries, and natural features, and we have taken into consideration special geographic considerations where appropriate.

As part of the review we must also recommend a name for each constituency and designate it as either a county or burgh. The designation affects the expenses allowable at elections. The guidelines we have adopted when proposing names are as follows:

to use an existing constituency name where a successor is recognisably similar;

to prefer short names rather than to 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 the name of a council area or town, such as East Kilbride or East Lothian; and

not to use the same name for a constituency and a council area unless the two are coterminous.

We have published a booklet setting out the policies and procedures for the review which can be found on our website. I think there may be some copies at the back if you want them.

As an independent and politically impartial body we do not take into account patterns of voting or the results of elections when reviewing boundaries, nor do the political, parties' views on where boundaries 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 constituencies for 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 wider area. We have considered whether to design any 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 to any in these initial proposals.

In our 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 containing a number of whole wards and part of one ward, 14 containing parts of two wards, two containing parts of three wards, and one containing 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.

As the Sheriff Principal said, the council areas that form the geographic focus of this public hearing are Dumfries & Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire but, as was said before, you are welcome to comment on any part of our initial proposals today. In our initial proposals this set of council areas is exactly covered by 16 constituencies. Dumfries & Galloway, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire council areas together are exactly covered by eight, Glasgow City Council area is exactly covered by six and East and West Dunbartonshire council areas together are exactly covered by two.

In Dumfries & Galloway, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire the design aims to create constituencies that are based on some of the existing ones. This includes a Dumfries & Galloway constituency that is placed within Dumfries & Galloway council area; an East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow constituency, Rutherglen and Hamilton West constituency within South Lanarkshire council area, and Monklands West constituency within North Lanarkshire council. There are two other constituencies wholly within North Lanarkshire council area. Both Airdrie South and Shotts and Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Monklands East follow ward boundaries in North Lanarkshire council area.

There are two constituencies that include parts of two council areas. Clydesdale and Eskdale partly follows the M74 corridor through Dumfries & Galloway and South Lanarkshire council areas. It follows ward boundaries with two exceptions, ward 9, Lochar, of Dumfries & Galloway where the boundary follows a community council boundary, and ward 4, Clydesdale South, of South Lanarkshire council area where the boundary follows the existing UK parliament constituency boundary and the M74.

The other constituency covering two council areas is Hamilton and Motherwell. It follows ward boundaries in North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire council areas with two exceptions: ward 4, Clydesdale South, where the boundary follows the existing UK parliament constituency boundary and the M74 motorway, and ward 19, Hamilton South, of South Lanarkshire council area where the boundary follows a community council boundary.

In Glasgow City two constituencies are in the south of the city. One constituency combines Govan and the city centre north of the River Clyde and three constituencies are wholly within the north of the city. Five wards are divided between constituencies in Glasgow. They are ward 2, Newlands/Auldburn, where the division follows the White Cart Water and a railway line; ward 6, Pollokshields, where the division follows a railway line; ward 10, Anderson/City, where the division follows the A8 road; ward 12, Partick West, where it follows community council area boundaries; and ward 18, East Centre, where it also follows community council area boundaries.

East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire council areas together are covered by two constituencies, West Dunbartonshire and Bearsden North, comprising all of West Dunbartonshire council area and the western parts of East Dunbartonshire council wards, 1 Milngavie and 2 Bearsden North, and Milngavie and Kirkintilloch which is wholly within East Dunbartonshire council area. The two wards are divided to allow the constituency boundary to align with the A809 road in ward 1 and to avoid the division of a community council area in ward 2.

This public hearing is one of five being held around Scotland where you have an opportunity to voice your opinions and suggest alternative constituency designs. In addition to commenting here at a public hearing you can write or send an email to us with your comment, or you can use the consultation area of our website which includes interactive mapping. Details of how to submit your comments are available on our website or again if you want to ask my colleague he will provide you with all the contact details to take away.

We have arranged for a transcript of today's proceedings and we will publish that on the website. We also request that anyone who wishes 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 minutes and meeting papers from our meetings leading up to the publication of our initial 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 2017 and in early spring 2017 we will publish all the comments we have received and the transcripts from the public hearings. There will then be a scrutiny period of four weeks during which you can scrutinise and remark upon any comments. After the scrutiny period we will then consider all comments and remarks received and where appropriate produce revised proposals later in 2017 for further consultation. We must submit our report containing final recommendations to the Secretary of State before 1 October 2018.

That ends the statement.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Thank you very much, Isabel. We will move now to the representations. Can I ask for anyone who is speaking today at the outset, you should identify yourself, who you represent if you represent an organisation or the like, and if you are speaking to a particular proposal or proposals it would be of assistance if you could indicate what those are. It is really for the benefit of the transcript and somebody reading this in due course that we know at the beginning what if anything in particular you are speaking to. The first person I would like to invite to speak this morning is a member of the public and that is Mrs Jean MacDonald.

MRS MacDONALD: Good morning, everybody. I am here to represent the village of Craigton which you could describe I suppose as a suburb of Milngavie in East Dunbartonshire. I have lived there for over 40 years and I think I have a fairly comprehensive idea of how the people of Craigton are thinking. On the whole in fact unanimously I have encountered outrage at these proposals which include making a new boundary up the middle of the A809, the Stockiemuir Road, for those to whom the name means anything. The number of people involved is approximately 100 in the whole of Craigton of whom about half are affected by this proposal. We put out a letter to all the residents who were interested stating our objections to the proposal and we received 43 letters back, all of them objecting.

The grounds for our objections are covered by what you read out about the things you have taken into account and one of them was splitting up existing what you might call social boundaries, I suppose. For all these years we have been in East Dunbartonshire and very closely associated with Milngavie. To divide the village in half like this is not very sensible, I suggest, and to put us in with West Dunbartonshire, which is a long way away and separated by a range of hills which go back

miles and which make us feel cut off from, for example, Dumbarton, Old Kilpatrick, places like that, if anyone would like to see the letter that we sent round I brought a few copies here today and you are most welcome to see them. May I quote a little bit of the letter? It is very short: "We wish to protest against the proposed splitting of Craigton village along the line of the Stockiemuir Road for electoral purposes. The change would significantly damage the integral nature of this small community, forcing half of us to be transferred to West Dunbartonshire while the other half remain in East Dunbartonshire. The residents of Craigton form a cohesive community with several households on either side of the road sharing a private water supply. Separating council responsibility for this common resource would be administratively complex and costly. We would strongly urge you to reconsider this proposed boundary change". In other words, please let us go back to being with Milngavie. It is the place that we identify with. We shop there, we use the library, the doctor, the police and various other local services. We do not communicate with West Dunbartonshire. I don't mean that we don't speak to them, I mean that we don't deal with them in any matter concerning local government of any sort and we would feel kind of left out in their administration.

I suspect I have been asked to come first because I represent the smallest community here today and I cannot think that the number of votes that West Dunbartonshire would accrue from this change would make the slightest difference to the result anyway, and as far as numbers go, about 100 people, surely it is not worth going to the bother and the expense of transferring us. I hope that will weigh with you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Thank you. Stay there for one second, please. Ladies and gentlemen, as a matter of absolute fairness anyone who is speaking today is perhaps going to be subjected to questioning. I do not know if anyone has any questions for Mrs MacDonald, anything they would like to ask. If you do, if you would raise your hand. Going, going, gone, thank you. Mrs MacDonald, thank you very much for your contribution.

LESLEY COGGINS: Can I ask a question for the Boundary Commission? In that case will they presumably have to have two different polling places in a small village, one for voting in - ?

MS DRUMMOND-MURRAY: That would be a matter for the local government determining polling districts based on ward boundaries rather than on constituency boundaries of the UK parliament so I do not think so.

MR WILSON: No, the Boundary Commission have no responsibility for polling districts, it would be up to a council to design those.

MRS MacDONALD: Could I offer a slight comment on that question, please? Since they closed the school in Craigton village there is no place that could serve as a polling station. We would therefore I suppose have to be instructed to go to Bearsden.

MR TOSH: Can I ask you, Mrs MacDonald, I previously was a sheriff in Dumbarton but Craigton is not going to be, where would you go to vote currently in the current system?

MRS MacDONALD: We go down to Milngavie.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Can I come in on that? I am pretty sure that you would be being sent down to Baljaffray Primary.

MRS MacDONALD: Possibly.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: As I say, I think Mr Wilson has identified that this is not a matter for the Boundary Commission.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: No, it is not.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Obviously it is a matter of great local interest but I think on a practical level, does anyone else have any questions for Mrs MacDonald? Mrs MacDonald, thank you very much. Second on the list this morning is Mr Murray Tosh.

MR TOSH: Sheriff Principal Turnbull, can I thank you for setting the tone of this meeting in such a relaxed and amicable way. These sessions used to be much more controversial than they are nowadays and I think all the participants will be grateful for that. Before I start can I just say I do think to answer the lady's question, I can't speak for any council but we know a little bit about rural areas and usually if a village or a rural community is in two different polling districts what happens is they arrange to put two ballot boxes in the nearest polling station and people go in and put their papers in one box. There is no reason why any returning officer should require people from Craigton or anywhere else to go any further away than the nearest polling station. I can't guarantee that, although I was once a parliamentary candidate in Dumbarton I could never ever claim to speak for Dumbarton District Council or West Dunbartonshire Council but that is what they should do.

My name is Murray Tosh and I represent the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party in this hearing. My background is, I served for two terms in the Scottish parliament, firstly for the South of Scotland region including Dumfries & Galloway and the Clydesdale constituency of South Lanarkshire, and secondly for the West of Scotland including West Dunbartonshire and the greater part of East Dunbartonshire. This is my party's interim response to the proposed constituencies which are the focus of today's hearing. We are still consulting on the initial proposals and we will want to assess the reaction from the public, local authorities and other political parties before lodging a final formal response which we will do by the 11 January deadline for responses.

As this is the first of the five hearings I want to commend the Commission and its staff for the vast amount of complex work carried out on this review and also for having been so open about its process, publishing on its website the issues papers and maps before it as well as the minutes of its meetings. We hope it might still be able to post papers and maps from its meeting of 19 May -- this is not on the website, we think it must have been an informal seminar of some kind -- when it decided how it would group the councils to form new constituencies so that all parties and individuals might see what options the Commission considered for groupings, understanding its rationale and considering whether and where the Commission might be willing to consider alternative groupings.

We are considering counter-proposals which would mean alternative groupings in some parts of Scotland but we acknowledge that the Commission's proposals for the 16 proposed constituencies before this hearing do conform with Schedule 2 of the 1986 Act which lays down the rules for distribution of seats. The rules require the Commission take into account local government

boundaries and we agree that that imperative has been satisfied by allocating six seats to the City of Glasgow, two to a grouping of East and West Dunbartonshire and eight to a grouping of North and South Lanarkshire, and Dumfries & Galloway.

Turning to West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow I propose to deal with these councils together as the Commissions did in its issues papers for its September and October meetings. This is the fifth review of Westminster boundaries in which I have given evidence, I have been doing this for far too long. In every review the Commission has applied the rule requiring it to take into account all the government boundaries to mean that a local authority with sufficient electors for a whole number of constituencies should stand-alone and should not be grouped with other councils. In this current review only East Lothian, the City of Aberdeen and the City of Glasgow appear to meet this criterion and we agree with the Commission that these councils should not be grouped with other councils.

When Glasgow qualified to be allocated six constituencies we note that the Commission did consider grouping Glasgow with West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire. Clearly West Dunbartonshire has too few electors to form its own constituency and in this grouping it can only be expanded into Glasgow or into East Dunbartonshire. Other things being equal a stateable case could be made for adding to it the 10,000 or so electors near it from either Glasgow or East Dunbartonshire.

Other things, however, are not equal because Glasgow has enough electors to be entitled to six constituencies without being grouped whereas East Dunbartonshire has too many electors to form a single constituency and must be grouped.

The fifth review grouped East Dunbartonshire with North Lanarkshire and the recent sixth review, which was not concluded, as was stated earlier, also proposed to group East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire with North Lanarkshire but in the current review the number of electors make such a grouping impossible whereas two constituencies within a quota can be created from a grouping of the two adjoining Dunbartonshire councils.

There is a further consideration. I do not want here to argue either that Clydebank has a stronger affinity with Bearsden than it has with Yoker in Glasgow or Drumchapel in Glasgow nor that there are any particularly strong links between Clydebank on the one hand and Bearsden or Milngavie on the other. However, it is the case that Bearsden and Milngavie were placed in the same constituency as Clydebank in the first, second and third reviews of parliamentary boundaries but Milngavie was linked with Clydebank in the fourth review and in the first review of Scottish parliamentary constituencies, and while the fifth review did separate East and West Dunbartonshire for the first time the constituencies proposed in the unconcluded sixth review would again have linked Bearsden with West Dunbartonshire. So what the Commission is proposing in this review is amply precedented. It will not be welcomed in Bearsden, we know that from the postcards which are circulating, but taking the equivalent number of electors from Yoker instead is likely to be just as unpopular there, especially as that is wholly unprecedented.

Of course Glasgow could be grouped with neighbouring councils if its own electorate were too small or too large to form a whole number of constituencies or if a neighbouring council had a surplus of electors which could not be accommodated anywhere else but neither of these circumstances applies in this review. So we think that the Commission's initial proposals to allocate six

constituencies wholly within Glasgow are appropriate. We also consider that the six constituencies proposed have generally strong and identifiable boundaries although we recognise that elected representatives, community groups and individuals might suggest re-drawing some boundaries inside Glasgow and to achieve constituencies which reflect more accurately their own communities. We are confident that the Commission will look at these on their merits and give due consideration.

I want to move on to North and South Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway. We know from previous reviews that forming constituencies in Lanarkshire can be challenging. We note in this review that the Commission has proposed three constituencies which correspond quite closely to the existing ones and we expect that East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow, Monklands West and Rutherglen and Hamilton West might be broadly acceptable, but the change in groupings from previous reviews requires the Commission to propose radical changes around Hamilton, Motherwell and Airdrie and we anticipate some of its proposals might be controversial. At this stage and until we have heard representations for Lanarkshire, we do not have any counterproposals to put forward for the six constituencies proposed wholly within Lanarkshire.

The introduction of a uniform quota number of electors in the fifth review led to radical changes in Dumfries and Galloway, which had qualified for two constituencies in all previous reviews. Since the fifth review Dumfries and Galloway has had too few electors for two constituencies and has had to be put with at least one neighbouring council.

We understand that Dumfries and Galloway Council may ask the Commission to look again at the sixth review solution of a grouping between Dumfries and Galloway and South and East Ayrshire Councils. The sixth review would have created a constituency which united all of Dumfriesshire for the first time since 1983. It was unanimously supported in all the representations in the sixth review and at the new Lanark hearing and we would consider the council's proposal an acceptable alternative to the counterproposal which I am just about to make.

We are aware, however, that the grouping proposed in the sixth review for Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire no longer has enough electors to meet the quota for four constituencies and that the proposal by Dumfries and Galloway Council would, therefore, require the Commission to rework its initial proposals very extensively. Our concern is that other councils might resist such a reworking but the Commission might be unable to identify revised proposals which satisfied everyone and that might proceed with the groupings and the constituencies currently proposed when it comes to the revised proposal stage.

So, our priority in this hearing is to address two serious anomalies in the Commission's proposed constituencies within Dumfries and Galloway. An options paper considered at the Commission's meeting of 18th July and available on the Commission website states that the option which was selected as the initial proposal for Dumfries and Galloway constituency united the town of Dumfries but, in fact, none of the options in that paper united the town of Dumfries in one constituency. The initial proposals instead revisit proposals made in the fifth review to use the A75 trunk road as a boundary to separate Locharbriggs and Heathhall from the rest of Dumfries town. This was strongly opposed in the fifth review by residents in Locharbriggs and Heathhall and in Dumfries as a whole. After a very heated local hearing in Dumfries, Sheriff Principal Bowen (sheriffs could do that in those days) recommended that the Commission should include Locharbriggs and Heathhall with most of

Dumfries town in the new Dumfries and Galloway constituency and the Commission accepted his recommendation.

In that fifth review the Commission's discretion was limited by its policy of not dividing what were then very much smaller council wards and the consequence of the revised proposals in that review was that two other wards containing parts of Dumfries town, the areas known as Noblehill, Castledykes and Kingholm Quay were removed from the proposed Dumfries and Galloway constituency and placed instead in Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale but in this review now it is possible to bring the whole of Dumfries town together because the Commission has accepted that the current much larger wards can be divided in order to achieve quota or to improve the links between communities.

So, we ask the Commission to recognise the strong local desire which we are detecting to place all of Dumfries town in one constituency and also to contain the town of Annan in Annandale and my colleagues, Oliver Mundell MSP and David Mundell MP, will address these cases in greater detail. The Dumfriesshire constituency proposed by the council would achieve both of our principal objectives but in case the Commission does not agree to re-use the sixth review groupings, I want to spell out how it can preserve the community links in the area by amending the initial proposals within the groupings proposed currently.

The paper considered by the Commission at this meeting of 18th July included two options to retain the existing boundary of Dumfries and Galloway constituency and we proposed that that existing boundary should be retained from the East Ayrshire Council boundary generally south-eastwards to the point where that boundary crosses the A75 trunk road (there are maps which show this for those who are interested) at its junction with the A709 and that from there it should follow the eastern boundary of Loreburn Community Council exactly as in the initial proposals as far as the boundary of Nith ward and then it should run from there along the eastern boundary of Nith ward to the Solway.

This proposal will still divide ward nine but in a different way from the way the Commission proposes and, in addition, by retaining the current boundary north of Dumfries it would divide ward eight (Mid and Upper Nithsdale) but the division of ward eight follows the boundary of former wards which no longer exist but the old boundaries were never arbitrary boundaries. These are long-established boundaries, which are preserved today in Dumfries and Galloway Council's Scheme of Community Councils.

There are complexities with the mapping. We realise that the former ward and, therefore, the existing constituency boundaries might have been drawn up without the benefit of modern GIS technology but we believe that GIS technology was used by the council in mapping the community council boundaries and we would be content for the Commission to use the current and more precise GIS derived boundaries if they accept our proposal.

There is very little material difference between the current boundary and a GIS related boundary (a computer generated one, if you like) that we are suggesting except for two minor variations. Keir Community Council's area now takes in some properties which are currently in Dumfries and Galloway constituency and the Commission will spot this by looking for Barndennoch and Glenmidgie on its maps and a small number of electors would be moved into the proposed Clydesdale

constituency. Also, a community council's area has been extended to include a small number of properties currently in ward 12 (Annandale North) and we suggest, therefore, that the small community of Ae might be placed more appropriately in the proposed Clydesdale constituency.

Transferring fewer than 200 electors in Ae between the proposed constituencies will avoid dividing a further ward, it will achieve a better shaped Dumfries and Galloway constituency and it would recognise that most of Ae village's road links are, in fact, to the proposed Clydesdale and Eskdale constituency.

I have attached maps of this to the paper, which I have given to the Commission, which can be taken by other interested parties from this hearing. They were drawn up using postcode data provided in the licensed software issued by the Commission. They are as accurate as we could make them within the postcode areas because the post office does not follow ward or community council boundaries and we will cooperate fully with the Commission staff in clarifying inconsistencies in the mapping but for clarity I want to describe exactly what the proposed boundary would cover.

We are proposing that the boundary should run from the East Ayrshire Council boundary along the existing constituency boundary between ward 5 (Castle Douglas and Glenkens) and ward 8 (Mid and Upper Nithsdale) and then should divide wards 8 (Mid and Upper Nithsdale) and 9 (Lochar) along the northern and eastern boundaries of the following community councils: Glencairn, Dunscore, Auldgirth and District, Kirkmahoe, Heathhall and Loreburn to the boundary of Nith ward and should then generally run southward along the eastern boundary of Nith ward.

The total electorate of the two proposed constituencies as closely as we can calculate them is unchanged at a total of 153,183. There would, we think, be something like 74,944 electors in Dumfries and Galloway and 78,239 electors in the proposed Clydesdale and Eskdale constituency, which we suggest should be re-named Dumfriesshire and Clydesdale. We note that the latter constituency is close to the top of the allowable range but it does have a smaller electorate than several constituencies proposed elsewhere in Scotland. Although the final count may show some minor variations, the adjustments which need to be made to the postcode boundaries appear to us to affect very few electors indeed.

A counter proposal would move around 200 electors in Ae and Keir from Dumfries and Galloway to the proposed Clydesdale constituency. There is, therefore, no significant impact on existing community ties. Over 72,000 electors currently living in Dumfries and Galloway constituency will remain in it. We will bring into Dumfries and Galloway electors in Dumfries town, Noblehill, Castledykes and Kingholm Quay who feel that they should have been in Dumfries all along and whose local ties have been re-created, as well as electors in the Caerlaverock rural area immediately south of Dumfries town whose only real connectivity is with Dumfries itself. Around 38,000 electors in the small towns and rural areas of Dumfriesshire currently in Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency can remain in the successor constituency. We have tried to maximise continuity and avoid more extensive population exchanges which the Commission has proposed.

So, to conclude, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party at this stage accepts that the two constituencies can be formed from East and West Dunbartonshire, accepts that six constituencies can be formed from the City of Glasgow, supports the proposed constituencies of East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow, Monklands West and Rutherglen and Hamilton West and accepting

that Dumfries and Galloway Council's counterproposal would achieve an optimal constituency in Dumfriesshire for Dumfriesshire proposes the constituencies of Dumfries and Galloway and Dumfriesshire and Clydesdale as I have described them. Thank you for your forbearance, sir. That was quite a long statement.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Thank you, Mr Tosh. Does anyone have any questions for Mr Tosh? Yes, sir.

MRS ACKLAND: Yes. On the East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire and Glasgow being a unit of six and a unit of two or a unit of eight, I am sure you're aware that the boundary between Clydebank and Glasgow and even more the boundary between East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow are very much an urban interweave where people live next door, literally next door, to people who are in the other council area, whereas as the lady from Craigton pointed out earlier on, the boundary between West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire actually runs through hills and open country and you have to travel by car or hike quite a long way to get from Milngavie or Bearsden over to Duntocher or Hardgate. Basically, the Romans when they came up in that area took geography very seriously and where they put their frontiers. Do you not think the Boundary Commissioners should be allowed the same freedom?

MR TOSH: That raises a number of very interesting issues. Can I deal with the Craigton point first of all, since you brought it up?

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Yes.

MR TOSH: As I understand it, the Boundary Commissioners propose that that little slice at the west end of the Milngavie ward should be put with its proposed West Dunbartonshire constituency to achieve a better shape and I understand that but I actually do not think that a better shape weighs as heavily as the disruption to the community and I do not think it is necessary to move those electors and whatever they do, I do think the Commission should hear what is said from local people and should put the whole Milngavie ward together.

Your other point I understand entirely. You will of course be aware that the Milngavie ward and the Bearsden North ward are both within the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency for the Scottish Parliament, so the link is there already. I am not unsympathetic to the postcode campaign which the Liberal Democrats are organising in Bearsden, which I am sure will bring in thousands of responses to the Commission because when we approach these things we don't like to see small towns divided. Sometimes you have to divide a town. We prefer if that happens that we divide a big town and you do it in a kind of chunky way, the way it was done in the last review with the last review of Scottish Parliament here with Dumfries and Perth. To take a small town and divide it is always very unfortunate. The problem that the Commission has with East Dunbartonshire and I've seen fresh reports that East Dunbartonshire wants a constituency for East Dunbartonshire and a self-contained constituency. This always happens because there are always councils that are near the upper limit and they always want this extra degree of latitude. The Commission cannot do that because East Dunbartonshire has more electors than the Commission can put in a single constituency, so it has to take some part of East Dunbartonshire. Now, if I've understood your question correctly and correct me if I'm wrong, I think you're saying that you could get better arrangements if you merged East and West Dunbartonshire and Glasgow and treated them as a whole unit.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Yes.

MR TOSH: We didn't think that would be possible because, as I said, in all these previous reviews it has always treated a big place like Glasgow as a single entity because it has always been divisible by a whole number. It has never to my knowledge in 80 years of boundary division taken any single local authority, a county council, a city council, a region, a unitary authority, which is entitled to a whole number of constituencies and merged it with a neighbouring council, but the papers that the Commission put to the Commission, sorry the Secretariat had discussed by the Commission at the meetings which looked at Glasgow and the Dunbartonshires and also incidentally at Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City did suggest that, in fact, they did think in the current context that they could merge Aberdeen and Glasgow with the surrounding areas. We think maybe they should be consistent and not do so and they didn't recommend that but they did look at it and they may well look at it again if they are persuaded by the representations that come in. Whatever the Commission decides to do though, East Dunbartonshire as a community I think has to decide what has to be linked with Glasgow or somewhere else because there are too many electors and if your cases don't split Bearsden, which I understand, I don't think the Commission will be very impressed if you say, "Split Bishopbriggs instead," or, "Separate Lenzie from Kirkintilloch." You know, that's a debate for you locally. I don't want to get involved in that. If you can't split any of those towns, then you are looking at Milngavie again and I don't know the answer to that. If I had the wisdom of Solomon, I am sure I wouldn't be here. I'd be doing something much more significant. It is a very difficult question and I can understand why people in Bearsden say it's not fair. I agree, from their point of view it's not. If I lived in Bearsden I'd say exactly the same, but you have to tell the Commission that and you have to tell the Commission in such a way that they will see it not just as, "Don't do it to us, do it to them," but, "Do it in this way because that is actually a better solution and a fairer solution for everybody," and remember the Commission is not political and if you say, "Do this to Bearsden," they'll treat the Bearsden electors as having the same value as the electors in Bishopbriggs or wherever. So, you have to help them get a better solution.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Are there any other questions? Mr Tosh, thank you very much for your contribution.

MR TOSH: Thank you. That is the easiest hearing I've ever been to.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Next we will have David Mundell, please.

MR D MUNDELL: Thank you, Sheriff Principal. I just want it to be absolutely clear for the record that I am giving evidence in my capacity as member of parliament for the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency and in no other capacity, although I think it is relevant to the comments that I make that I confirm that I am a former member of the Scottish Parliament for the South of Scotland region. I have also been a member of Annandale and Eskdale District Council and Dumfries and Galloway then regional council and I am chairman of the Corridor Regeneration Steering Group, which works to achieve the regeneration of the Gretna, Lockerbie and Annan corridor following the decommissioning of the Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station near Annan.

I intend to concentrate my remarks on the issues around the proposed new Dumfries and Galloway and Clydesdale and Eskdale constituencies. However, I think it would be appropriate for me to put on record that I am disappointed that my own current Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale

constituency will cease to exist if the Boundary Commission's proposals are implemented. The constituency was at the time a novel creation because, in fact, it covered three local authority areas but brought together communities with a common interest and although it was controversial at the time and Mr Tosh alluded to a very heated hearing which took place in Dumfries at the time, I believe the constituency has, in fact, worked well, bringing together a large number of small communities across the south of Scotland with a common interest and, indeed, if electoral turnout is a criterion to be assessed, it has always been one of the constituencies which has had the highest electoral turnout in Scotland and recent elections. I am trying to conclude those remarks. I do understand that the complexities of the groupings and the numbers required make it very difficult to see how a grouping could be re-created which would include the Scottish Borders Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council and, therefore, the retention of the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency would be a very significant challenge for the Commission, even if they were minded to take such a route. Therefore, I want to concentrate my remarks on their proposals and, indeed, the counter-suggestion by Dumfries and Galloway Council.

As I said, my current constituency was created during the fifth review and, as Mr Tosh made clear, during that review a significant focus of the hearings and the representations made in the Dumfries area were around the proposals to separate Heathhall and Locharbriggs from Dumfries. This was a very controversial proposal and, indeed, the soundings I have taken indicate that it remains so to break up Dumfries in this way. I am surprised that that is a proposal that the Commission has put forward given the previous controversy but also an indication in the papers that they wanted to keep Dumfries together because I am very clear, as I think everyone in and around Dumfries would be, that Heathhall and Locharbriggs are part of Dumfries. They are as part of Dumfries as areas like Georgetown or Lochside Lincluden and I don't think anyone locally would accept that the A75 is the northern boundary of Dumfries town for these purposes. Indeed, anyone entering Dumfries along the A701 will find the "Welcome to Dumfries" sign is immediately before entering Locharbriggs. So, Locharbriggs and Heathhall are communities that are integral to the town of Dumfries and I don't think local residents would probably be as grand as to describe themselves as living in a suburb of Dumfries but they would regard themselves as living very much within Dumfries. The entire social and economic focus of these areas is as part of Dumfries town.

When the previous proposals were discussed, the strength of feeling was taken into feeling and changes were made and the changes were that the communities of Heathhall and Locharbriggs were kept with the town of Dumfries in the Dumfries and Galloway constituency and, as Mr Tosh said, various other changes were made, although the Boundary Commission's flexibility was limited at that point because it had to move wards and two wards which contained parts of Dumfries, although much smaller perhaps than Heathhall and Locharbriggs, were moved into the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituencies along with surrounding rural communities.

Therefore, on this occasion when the Commission has much greater flexibility to include communities rather than wards, I would urge that the Commission take heed not just of previous representations but representations that I know will be made by Dumfries and Galloway Council and representations that I am very sure will be made by the communities before the conclusion of this process that Heathhall and Locharbriggs be kept as part of Dumfries and, actually, that the Commission achieve their objective of not splitting Dumfries for the purposes of this review because, let's be absolutely clear, the proposals that are put forward split Dumfries and they don't split it in

what I would regard and many local people would regard as a coherent way and do sever local ties if that, as is stated, is one of the important criteria which the Commission use.

Just as concerning for me though is the decision to split Annan and Lower Annandale from the rest of Annandale and Eskdale and I find that to be, I would have to admit, an illogical proposal. Annandale and Eskdale is a defined and recognised administrative area for council and health, for purposes and for many other local organisations. Although Annan may be situated at the bottom of the Annan Valley, Annan is at the very heart of Annandale and its links are just as much to the north as it is to the east and west along the A75 corridor. As I said in my opening words, one of my duties as local MP is to chair a group called the CoRES, as it's called, which is about a corridor regeneration strategy group which was focused on achieving economic regeneration in Annandale following the closure of the Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station or the decommissioning of the station, which was I think the most significant employer in the area and the initial work which was carried out around that workplace, which would be in the Dumfries and Galloway constituency on the basis of what is proposed indicated that the pattern of the workforce and the economic impact of the decommissioning of that station was on a triangle between Annan, Gretna and Lockerbie and that was the footprint of the workforce. A significant amount of the workforce, for example, lived in Gretna or in Lockerbie and a very significant amount of work has been done by the council, Scottish Enterprise and others which demonstrate the economic connection between Annan and what is Annandale South ward and, indeed, the other parts of Annandale and Eskdale as they come down the motorway corridor and it is identified that for Annan the significant thing in terms of improving economic activity would be to have an improved link between Annan and the M74 corridor and with the creation of a major business park around the Chapelcross site. So, I hope that that and I am sure other evidence that will be produced in the course of this consultation demonstrates the economic connectivity between these communities.

There is then the administrative connectivity, which I indicated, with a health, the Dumfries and Galloway Health Board organises itself in terms of there being a distinct Annandale and Eskdale grouping for primary care. There is also the way in which the local authority works with its own area committee with one of its offices being in Annan and, of course, lots of other groups do the same. So, there is a really coherent, well-established, dating back over 40 years to district council days entity of Annandale and Eskdale and I find it surprising that there should be a suggestion that that be broken up. Some of the links obviously go back even longer. The Communities of Eastriggs and Gretna, which have been very much in focus in recent times because of the hundredth anniversary of the First World War, were twin communities that were created when the massive munitions factory that was HM Factory, Gretna, was constructed about a hundred years ago, and they are communities that have got very, very strong and close link because we have such a similar and deep common heritage. Of course the local secondary school, Annan Academy, has a catchment area which includes the Gretna area.

So I think that such a split would be unwise, unwelcome and not in the best interests of the representation of people living in either Annandale South or indeed the rest of Annandale and Eskdale. I don't believe that split is necessary because the Commission has greater flexibility now in terms of how it can divide wards and it can, by amending the existing proposals, bring about a solution that would meet both of these concerns, because Annandale and Eskdale could be kept together by the Annandale South ward becoming part of the currently named Clydesdale and

Eskdale constituency, and Heathhall and Locharbriggs could be accommodated in the Dumfries and Galloway constituencies. That could be further achieved by just simply retaining the existing boundaries between the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency and the Dumfries and Galloway constituency in Nithsdale, subject to the changes in Dumfries and the other modifications which Mr Tosh outlined.

I think the division between the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency and the Dumfries and Galloway constituency in Mid and Upper Nithsdale has worked perfectly satisfactorily for eleven years between what are distinct or small communities are well known and well established and I think there is no momentum for change, and I see no compelling reason to change them.

Of course if the Commission were minded to accept the suggestion from Dumfries and Galloway Council to revisit the groupings of local authorities and that led to the creation of a Dumfriesshire constituency in the form proposed in the sixth review and which existed pre-1983 then obviously I would fully support such an outcome, but I recognise the complexity of achieving such an outcome.

Finally, Sheriff Principal, I would just remark on the proposed name of the constituency. Eskdale is a very distinct part of my current constituency and the residents are very proud of their local traditions, but it does account for a small proportion of the geography and small proportion of the electors within this new constituency, whereas the name Dumfriesshire does, I think, more accurately reflect the area from Dumfries and Galloway to be in the proposed constituency with Clydesdale and therefore I would respectfully suggest that the name of such a constituency, if it were to proceed or proceed as amended, should be called the Dumfriesshire and Clydesdale constituency.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Mr Mundell, thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, are there any questions for Mr Mundell? (Pause)

MR DAVID MUNDELL: This is easier than being in the House of Commons.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Mr Mundell, thank you very much.

MR DAVID MUNDELL: Thank you very much indeed.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Next this morning, if we may, could we have Mr Brian Roy, please?

Mr Brian Roy.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Mr Roy, good morning.

MR ROY: Good morning, everyone. Brian Roy, and I am giving this evidence on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party. The Labour Party welcomes the initial proposals of the Commission and the clear and comprehensive way in which they have been set out. The Labour Party believes that there are shortcomings in the process as set out in the legislation and there is particular concern about apparent under-registration at the review start date. We are confident that the Commission proposals are based upon a thorough and comprehensive consideration of the options open to them.

We are currently consulting with all the public representatives in key sections of parties alternative proposals as we determine our view on them and all our written and oral representations to the Commission will be informed by that consultation. These submissions therefore represent our interim position. We also welcome the Commission's efforts to stimulate and encourage public participation in this process and to consult with political parties on their policies and procedures. We are grateful in particular for the opportunity in this hearing and at others to state the views of the party on the Commission's initial proposals.

We know that under the terms of the Act the Commission may, in choosing between different schemes, take into account special geographical circumstances, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, local government boundaries, the boundaries of existing constituencies and any local ties that will be broken by changes to constituencies. We acknowledge the electoral quota of 74,769 and all the seats in Scotland with the exception of Western Isles and Orkney and Shetland must therefore have electorates between 71,031 and 78,507. We note splitting bits of wards and some local authorities mean that in those areas it is not possible to create constituencies wholly comprised of whole wards. We recognise the efforts which the Commission have made to minimise the number of wards which are divided between constituencies and where it is necessary to use community councils boundaries and other recognisable boundaries as the means of that division.

We also note that the clear preference for using whole wards during the initial proposal stage may become problematic during the secondary consultation period in spring and autumn 2017 when the new distribution of local government ward boundaries will be in use. The Labour Party will, where it makes counter proposals, seek to adopt the same methodologies employed by the Commission.

We know and support the Commission's policy on the names of constituencies. We are aware of a tendency for the names of constituencies to become more complex and unwieldy and where there is a matter of principle resist that. Also where a constituency is largely unchanged we would normally support the retention of the existing name. We would also tend to support a policy of minimising any duplication with the names of Scottish parliamentary constituencies. We will though consider all proposals on their merits and take into account local opinion.

Now to the representations. The Labour Party will in its written and oral representations indicate where we support the initial proposals of the Commission, where we believe that alternatives may be advantageous and where we ourselves are wishing to make a counter proposal. Any counter proposal we make will be set out clearly in respect of wards and where appropriate communities and will include electorates and map boundaries. Labour Party representatives and other supporting Labour's counter proposals will make representations setting out in detail where appropriate issues of local ties. We will consider all counter proposals that may be made by others and comment in more detail on them during the secondary consultation period.

Initial comments that I give today will be based on the proposed local authority groupings as outlined in the 19 October press release by the Commission.

We know that the Commission has adopted an approach that has sought to minimise the number of seats containing parts of more than one local authority by using council areas as groupings. To the extent that this is likely to encourage adherence to local authority boundaries, we accept this is a

sensible policy. However, we believe that in some cases or in some areas the choice of combinations of local authority may prevent more logical boundaries that can better maintain local ties from being considered, for example between Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway.

Specifically on Glasgow, we accept the allocation of six seats for the City of Glasgow and will comment on further counter proposal that may be submitted during the secondary consultation period.

We note that the proposed Dumfries and Galloway constituency fails to contain the town of Dumfries in one constituency by virtue of the fact that Dumfries and Galloway Council area has been split in the Dumfries which have been outlined earlier are contained within the proposed Clydesdale and Eskdale constituency rather than the proposed Dumfries and Galloway constituency.

We also note that the proposal for Clydesdale and Eskdale constituency breaks up the established district of Annandale and Eskdale by virtue of the fact that Annandale South ward is contained within the proposed Dumfries and Galloway constituency whereas the rest of Annandale and Eskdale is contained within the proposed Clydesdale and Eskdale constituency. Both these break up long established historical ties.

We would reserve, however, our position and any counter proposals at this stage during the sixth periodical review the proposal for a Carrick and Ayr South constituency and Dumfries constituency received widespread support as we previously outlined. This proposal ensured that the boundaries were contained within two local authority areas but better recognised and more significant local ties exist between Galloway and South Ayrshire than exist between Dumfriesshire and Clydesdale.

We do have concerns, significant disruption to communities presently connected within the current configuration of seats pticly within the proposed constituencies of Airdrie South and Shotts and Hamilton and Motherwell. In Airdrie South and Shotts the town of Airdrie is split, creating a constituency containing Airdrie and Cumbernauld with few, if any, historical or current connections. This is the same situation for Airdrie and Kilsyth. There has never before been any constituency containing both Airdrie and Cumbernauld or Kilsyth that we are aware of. Political culture and representation is completely separate and it would be extremely difficult to re-establish these connections in the proposed constituency.

With regard to South Lanarkshire, we are supportive of the proposed boundary for the Rutherglen and Hamilton West parliamentary seat. The proposed seat is reasonable and recognises the importance of local ties, it protects natural community areas and keeps the seat within a single local authority area with the majority of local residents depending on South Lanarkshire Council for their professional home services. Many residents have built up strong ties with South Lanarkshire Council and the services it provides, and the current proposal will enable the continuation of effective and convenient local government of that area. Furthermore, the proposed seat retains Rutherglen and Cambuslang in the one constituency, which is consistent with the different version of the seat over many generations.

In terms of East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire, we support the allocation of two constituencies within this grouping and believe the current configuration best achieves the divisions of these council areas and retaining local ties. However, we will continue to consult internally and

take into account the local views made at this hearing and beyond, as we will do over here this morning.

Finally we will comment on any counter proposal that may be submitted during the secondary consultation period.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Mr Roy, thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, are there any questions for Mr Roy? Mr Tosh?

Questioned by Mr Tosh

MR TOSH: Just one for information. I was interested in what you said about Rutherglen and its connectivity with Cambuslang. We agree on that. It seems to us that if you support that constituency you probably also are sympathetic about the East Kilbride constituency, which I do not think you mentioned. I just wondered if you were able to give us a view on the East Kilbride constituency.

MR ROY: Yes. I would agree with that, Mr Tosh, we would support the composition of the proposals for East Kilbride by the Commission.

MR TOSH: Excellent.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Thank you. Are there any other questions for Mr Roy? Thank you very much. In the spirit of diversity, could we have Audrey Ritchie, please. Thank you.

Ms Audrey Ritchie.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Good morning.

MS RITCHIE: Good morning. My name is Audrey Ritchie, I am here today, I am an officer of Dumfries and Galloway Council. The Council's Policy and Resources Committee met on 22 November. This is the committee which has delegated powers to deal with boundary review matters. It was decided, given the strength of opinion about the proposals, that it would be appropriate to have a presence here today to make a statement. This is a very brief statement. The Council full written representations will be lodged in due course. So I have been asked to make the following points on behalf of the Council.

Firstly, there is widespread concern – I think it has been spoken to about already – that the communities of Locharbriggs and Heathhall, that is Lochar Ward 9, not being part of the Dumfries and Galloway constituency and being placed within the Clydesdale and Eskdale constituency. These communities are considered to be very much part of and connected to the town of Dumfries itself and should remain in the same constituency represented by the same MP at Westminster.

Secondly, by contrast, the Annandale South Ward 11 has been included in the Dumfries and Galloway constituency and its interests are very much aligned to neighbouring towns and villages, such as, as already been mentioned, Gretna. These villages have been placed within the Clydesdale and Eskdale county constituency.

Thirdly, as a solution to both issues it would seem to make sense instead to place Annandale South in Clydesdale and Eskdale and the local ward, that is Locharbriggs and Heathhall, in the Dumfries and Galloway constituency. It is appreciated that this swap would mean that the numbers would be slightly above the target but changes further north in other council areas which may be suggested by others may result in offsetting that difficulty.

Finally, the Council would like to point out the very close connections and common issues in North Dumfries and also in Galloway with the west of the region with the Ayrshires and we would ask the Commission to consider options which strengthen those ties where appropriate. The Council do not have any detailed proposals to offer since these constituencies will no doubt be the topic of debate in other council areas, but we wish to put this forward as an opportunity should the Commission need to develop other options as a result of the public consultation process.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Thank you very much.

MS RITCHIE: Short and to the point, I hope.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Are there any questions? Thank you very much for your contribution. Can I have Mr Oliver Mundell next please.

Mr Oliver MUNDELL

MR OLIVER MUNDELL: Thank you, Sheriff Principal. My name is Oliver Mundell and I represent the Dumfriesshire constituency in the Scottish Parliament and I speak today at this hearing on behalf of both my constituents and the local Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the challenging task the Commission has been set. As we saw at the Fifth Review, it is never easy to reduce the number of constituencies because to do so requires significant and far reaching changes. I do, however, think the lesson from that review is that such changes are rarely apocalyptic and that we have seen through the creation of the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency that communities are successfully able to create new links where the right balance is found and pre-existing commonalities such as rurality exist.

My experience locally is that people are willing to accept and embrace such changes provided that they do not override or disregard the basic or natural communities in which they live. Hybrid seats like Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale have worked not because they are perfect but because the constituent communities that they are made up of were sufficiently strong and identifiable to exist both within and outwith the larger whole.

Of course I recognise there is a natural parliamentary constituency around the town of Dumfries following roughly the boundaries of the old Dumfriesshire county constituency which I understand the Commission has set out as part of the uncompleted Sixth Review. Representing the majority of that area at Holyrood, I see the continued relevance and its distinctive and natural boundaries remain very strong, and they have not been broken by successive boundary changes at either Holyrood or Westminster. However, it would be remiss of me not to highlight that those links have been affected and that those bonds continue to weaken as a result of the current boundaries, with a clear delineation between the Dumfries borough and the rural shire.

I am aware, having heard the comments from Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Scottish Labour Party, that there is suggestions coming forward to look again at the groupings that might allow a Dumfriesshire constituency to be recreated and I think that local people would gladly accept that and that a Dumfriesshire Westminster constituency would clearly be the first choice locally. However, I also recognise that unlike me, the Commission are not solely interested in the representation of the people of Dumfriesshire and they may decide that it is too disruptive to change the groupings at this stage, given the impact this might have on other areas.

I therefore want to focus the bulk of my submissions on the core building blocks that create successful communities and have allowed the existing Westminster and Holyrood boundaries to function relatively well in Dumfriesshire. In doing so, I hope the Commission will be able to address what I consider to be two overriding objectives, namely keeping Annandale together and unifying the county town of Dumfries.

The problem and what makes the current proposals so unpalatable locally is that they cut across the primary communities and where people live their life, and more importantly in the context of this current exercise they appear to do so unnecessarily and seem to make no consideration of local residents as expressed in previous reviews.

It will probably surprise no-one to know that I spent a fair amount of time reading through past hearings, both to get an idea of how they work and also to gain a better understanding of the arguments that have been made previously. I therefore hope I will be forgiven for saying that this feels a bit like Groundhog Day – we are back to the very same arguments and the initial proposals which have been published take us right back to the fundamental points which arise every time we go through this process: firstly, whether or not Heathhall and Locharbriggs remain part of Dumfries town; and secondly, whether or not the burgh of Dumfriesshire is an identifiable and meaningful community in its own right.

With the gift of hindsight I now think it is now possible to say that all parties made valid points in the highly charged Fifth Review hearings which were held in Dumfries and attracted a significant number of local contributions independent of political parties. Contrary to some of the views expressed at the time, as I have previously mentioned, the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency has proved successful in creating new lives and bringing together common rural interests whilst retaining the integrity of the constituent communities of which it is formed. I also believe that despite the controversy the correct decision was made at that time, Heathhall and Locharbriggs with Dumfries town, which remains a far more logical and coherent fit. However, it is still the case that the necessary numerical compromise that saw Noblehill and other areas of Dumfries town swapped back into the Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale constituency from the Dumfries and Galloway constituency was far from ideal.

The difference this time is that whether through creation of a Dumfriesshire constituency or through the available council areas as they are currently grouped, there is no need or logical argument to divide the town. It seems self-evident but it is nonetheless important to clarify that the suburbs of Dumfries have far more in common with Dumfries town and arguably they form part of that. The relevant section of the A75, known locally as the bypass, is not, nor has it ever been, the boundary of the town as communities on the north-west side of Dumfries such as Lochside and Lincluden show.

Furthermore, as has been previously mentioned, on the southern entrance to the town the first sign welcoming you to Dumfries is just outside Heathhall and Locharbriggs on the A701. Both Heathhall and Locharbriggs are also an integral part of whole town festivities like Guid Nychburriss celebrations, and both are covered by the Dumfries Courier which is delivered free of charge to all properties in the town. They are predominantly home to large, urban residential developments, both socially and privately owned, and are on a scale and of a character not seen elsewhere in Dumfriesshire.

Outside of that, they are also home to a number of car dealerships, factories and industrial sites which one would normally associate with the outer boundaries of a large town. They are by no means standalone communities, and by way of illustration they are currently unable to sustain a supermarket and lack the other core facilities like a police station, fire station and secondary school that one sees elsewhere in Dumfriesshire in communities of a similar size. Indeed, at the very basic level, if you ask anyone who lives in those communities where they live they will tell you resoundingly that they are from Dumfries. What is more, the areas in question are predominantly served by the Dumfries town bus service which is operated commercially by Stagecoach, and the pressure on council and other services means that most, if not all, local services and amenities are concentrated in the town centre.

Looking at the situation we have on the current boundaries, it seems a shame to split the town when the numbers require it. However, to do so when the numbers do not require it seems illogical and is almost universally objectionable as far as my constituents are concerned.

For me, the fundamental issue here is the breaking of existing bonds and ties, not the impossibility of creating new links, but it does seem very difficult to see how meaningful links can be created when an area is so different in character and is so intrinsically linked to another community of which they form an integral part.

That takes me neatly on to the proposed changes in Annandale and Eskdale which I would argue are equally unacceptable. Looking back ahead of today's hearing, I have genuinely struggled to find a time where Annandale and Eskdale have been separated. Indeed, both Annan and the town of Langholm are steeped in the historical links that go back to the border reserves(?). They share common traditions like Common Riding and Riding of the Marches.

Both Annandale and Eskdale, as has previously been mentioned, were combined under the old district council system and still form an administrative grouping within the current Dumfries and Galloway Council, both in terms of service delivery and its community structure. So too it is a recognised division within NHS Dumfries and Galloway from many, if not the majority, of local services. Furthermore, for example, if you live in Gretna or Langholm then your nearest job centre is in Annan. Hundreds of pupils from Gretna and the surrounding area attend Annan Academy, and the Church of Scotland recognises Annandale and Eskdale as a distinct presbytery. Further numerous charities and organisations have been set up to cover the area, whether the Annandale Transport Initiative which is based in Lockerbie or the Food Train which covers the whole area out of a van. They are also both covered by the same independent local newspaper, the Annandale Observer.

Both, in contrast to Dumfries town and communities further west, also tend to see a higher number of residents who have moved to the area from across the border in England and who continue to

cross the border on a daily basis for work and leisure. Even the Dumfries and Galloway Solicitors' Property Centre recognises Annandale and Eskdale as a distinct grouping within the region, and the Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership, the main social housing provider in the region, do the same.

But on a more fundamental level, this is not just about dividing Annandale and Eskdale, it is about dividing Annandale itself. That means leaving communities like Moffat, Lockerbie and Lochmaben in North Annandale in a different constituency to those in Southern Annandale. The historic and current links between those constituencies will be very negatively affected.

Most notably, I believe it would cut across much of the economic regeneration work undertaken by Dumfries and Galloway Council which has been focused on the former nuclear power site at Chapelcross which sits between Annan and the motorway, and the Council's plans to develop opportunities along the wider M74 corridor. These projects form two of the four main planks of the economic strategy for Dumfries and Galloway and understandably too, given their geographical proximity, are intrinsically linked. They are also largely supported by the Corridor Regeneration Strategy Group of which I am the vice-chairperson, which as we have heard today, groups together communities around Annan, Gretna and Lockerbie.

In essence, I would argue that the pattern of life and the very existence of these settlements is not explained simply by the M74 corridor or the A75 alone, important though they are, but in tandem with the topography created by the River Esk and the River Annan which leave in the Solway Firth and along which the vast majority of these communities run.

On a more general note, I am also concerned that the decision to follow existing boundaries in larger multi-member local government wards has compounded the problem and led to some anomalies. There are a number of communities within the local government ward boundaries that could have gone into at least one, if not two other wards. Therefore I would ask the Commission to take a more nuanced approach to dividing those wards, which I think they have expressed some willingness to do elsewhere.

Indeed, that point can be very clearly seen in Eastriggs in the Annandale South ward, which sits almost halfway between Gretna and Annan and has strong social and economic ties with both towns but is probably most strongly associated with Gretna, although being in a different ward, through its First World War heritage, with both settlements being built to support a munitions factory. The nature of the housing stock, all built around the same time, and the provision of local services in those communities is still largely a product of those foundational links.

Finally I would quite like my own personal view that where possible any required changes should retain as much continuity as possible so as not to disrupt the delicate equilibrium that many smaller communities have reached following substantive changes in 2005. I therefore believe that as a strong argument the Commission should focus on retaining the existing Westminster boundaries in Dumfries & Galloway so far as numbers allow. This is particularly the case in the Upper Nithsdale of my constituency where there is a detectably strong feeling that voters there are always the ones who end up switching backwards and forwards between various constituencies in order to make the maths add up. It seems a shame to do so again if that can be avoided. For clarity, I just look around to the communities of Moniaive, Dunscore, Holywood and Volegar(?) which are currently in the

Dumfries & Galloway Westminster constituency. These communities both as a result of previous boundaries and their geographical location sit right on the cusp between Dumfries and Thornhill with a bus service, road network, social economic connections and educational links to both. They also uniquely sit right on the cusp of Galloway and were previously part of the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Scottish parliament constituency. Arguably they have a clear link to both proposed constituencies but the feeling is very much that the current Westminster boundaries have found the correct balance and after 10 years are now well understood. I hope that the Commission will take note of this seemingly minor matter and try if possible to find some continuity.

In conclusion I have no doubt that the real rather than administrative links that I have been talking about are so strong that even these proposed changes will not break them. However, that is the fundamental point that I would like to leave the Commission with. If the links between these communities are so strong and the numbers do not require them to be divided then should the Commission not be doing everything in its gift to protect them? Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Mr Mundell, thank you. Does anyone have any questions for Mr Mundell? Mr Tosh.

MR TOSH: Just one very small point. Could you confirm -- you and I use different terms -- that when I said the community council of Glencairn and you said the community of Moniaive we are talking about the same place?

MR MUNDELL: Yes, we are. It is the largest community within the community council ward.

MR TOSH: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Are there any more questions? Mr Mundell, thank you very much for your contribution. Can I have Rod Ackland next, please.

MR ACKLAND: Good morning. My name is Rod Ackland. I am here speaking on behalf of East Dunbartonshire Liberal Democrats where I am the vice-convenor, also with the full support of the Dunbarton Liberal Democrats, they are quite happy to agree that we are saying on behalf of the whole of Dunbartonshire, and unless my colleague over there leaps to her feet and says otherwise I believe we have the support of the west of Scotland Liberal Democrats as well. She is nodding.

I think if we get the easy bits out of the way first, basically this is going to be a run-through where some of the references may not quite make sense unless you have read all the minutes but it does not matter at the end of the day. We agree that the lack of a road link makes option 1, West Dunbartonshire and Milngavie constituency, unrealistic. We totally reject option 3 which they consider, which broke East Dunbartonshire into two parts, the same two parts that were joined together to make it in 1995. We find the argument for option 4 very strange. As I have in my notes, option 4 is the rip Craigton apart and because we care deeply about the look of an area wherever sheep may graze, but what I said in the end in my notes is that we feel that as so few people are affected their views should be the prime factor here. Having heard one of them speaking I am quite happy to go with that and I think as other speakers have already mentioned we believe in trying to make the public aware of what is going on, and then abide by what they say. So Craigton has spoken and we are totally behind them.

Option 5, which was frankly brought in only to allow option 4, we feel is a somewhat ludicrous sledgehammer to crack a nut. You find for some geographic reason that you want to move a small crowd of people one way; you then discover you cannot do it because you are sailing so close to the wind that they were taken over the boundary so you then find another area elsewhere of several hundred people and move them the other way to make way for the first move. Again this is for the Craigton people really but I would have thought the other option of taking the entire community of Baljaffray immediately to the south of Craigton in the opposite direction would have been a much better solution. But option 5, I do not want to leave it because although we do not really see the idea we like it because it opened the door to using sub ward level movements, a door which as you will see we would like to see opened much wider.

Also we note the constituency names are provisional and we would like to propose that any constituency that this process creates that lies only within East Dunbartonshire's council area should be called East Dunbartonshire. I noted earlier on that there was some suggestion that you should not do that unless it is coterminous but to be honest I thought that ship had already sailed. We had an East Dunbartonshire constituency that was actually much smaller than any of the proposed ones did have for several years. Back in the mists of time we had a Dunbartonshire East constituency. The name is natural, it is in the record books if you look up but for all sorts of reasons and we would like to keep the name. We accept that a small bit has got to be taken out of East Dunbartonshire but we think the rest of East Dunbartonshire deserves to be called East Dunbartonshire.

Now going into the heart of it, our views on the process through what they call options 2 to 4 to 5 that created the proposed Milngavie and Kirkintilloch constituency, East Dunbartonshire Council has existed for 20 years. For the first two years we had a Westminster constituency boundary running through the centre of our youngest town, Lenzie. That problem got solved with the last boundary review but got replaced immediately for the next 10 years with a constituency boundary running through the centre of our oldest town, Kirkintilloch. The proposal this time solves that problem but immediately replaces it with a constituency boundary running through the centre of our largest town, Bearsden. You cannot really blame the citizens of East Dunbartonshire for getting the feeling that they are living in a recurring nightmare based on the judgment of Solomon where they come back every 10 years to find out which of their babies have been put to the sword this time.

As has already been mentioned by other speakers, we have for the last two weeks been delivering postcards informing the residents in Bearsden what is proposed. I understand that 5,000 of them have now gone out and it takes several days to think it out and to post them back, it also does not help if they are going to our party office in Edinburgh and most of the staff seem to have quietly departed to another more interesting event somewhere down in London. But we are getting the feedback and it is coming back at our expense. The return sample so far is a bit too small to be significant but, frankly, we have yet to find anyone coming back who thinks splitting Bearsden in half is a good idea. We simply add at this point that our past experience is that any proposal that splits any of our towns in two is unacceptable and that while it is perfectly true that the towns and villages of East Dunbartonshire normally spend their time in the council chamber fighting each other they tend to come together very effectively when threatened from outside. So what can be done?

First I suppose is what cannot be done. We accept, reluctantly but we accept that the requirement that all proposed constituencies are within plus or minus 5 per cent of the national average on quota

means that the solution that is the clear favourite locally, and East Dunbartonshire seems coterminous with the council area, is in Rosshall. We agree with the Commission if we read them right that trying to create a new constituency that takes in as much of the council area as possible is the right approach but we feel, moving my metaphor from Brecht to Shakespeare, that they might perhaps have taken more notice of Portia's advice to cut neither more nor less than what the law requires. They were frankly lucky that the only ward that could be taken from East Dunbartonshire, Bearsden North, and added to West Dunbartonshire was just small enough to convert a starting situation of an East Dunbartonshire over 105 per cent and a West Dunbartonshire under 95 per cent into a viable pair of seats, a proposed East Dunbartonshire based seat just over 95 per cent and a proposed West Dunbartonshire seat just under 105 per cent. Option 2 just makes it under the bar but it was a markedly close run thing and as the Commission in its report reveal their luck ran out when they got to option A, the Craighton attempt, and then tried to make a very small adjustment in Milngavie affecting only a few voters. That put the West Dunbartonshire seat over the limit, there was not any wriggle room. Their solution to that was their option 5, find another much larger slice of Bearsden North round about Hillfoot station and take that back into the East Dunbartonshire seat to allow room for them to take this tiny slice of Milngavie into the West Dunbartonshire plan.

We think that having now twice accepted that units less than a ward could be traded provided they had some logical community integrity they should have gone right back and re-thought their initial strategy. I think it should have been obvious by how that while wards may be viable building blocks within a large council such as Glasgow they are not within small councils. They were not really viable at the last review when we had single member wards and there were 24 of them. This time with only eight multi-member wards, much larger, once they decided not to cross the Glasgow border, which you may have gathered is something we think was a mistake, there was only one option open to them. If anybody had built one very small housing development in Bearsden North there would not have been any room at all, they would not have had a ward that they could move around. We think they should have stopped and reconsidered two rules of the game, set by themselves, really, not by the law: not crossing the Glasgow border and using wards as building blocks. We would suggest that there are better basic building blocks available, polling districts or, if you want to move up from that, you can put the polling districts together and you have used the single member wards. They were logical areas and they are still available. That gives you a lot more scope.

I was given by the council in connection with this, as a party agent in the Brexit memorandum, a full list of polling districts that are called East Dunbartonshire and there are over 40 of them. Once you move to that level you have a lot more scope for what you are doing. Also polling districts are normally based around polling stations sited in primary schools, church halls or community halls, so they tend to reflect local communities. Not all polling districts are like that, I must admit. We have one of 10 houses with a river on one side and a river on the other side, and boundaries changing, but most of them are good, there are certainly enough of them to make the process viable, whereas the wards we have now are only community based by accident. I am not sure if different Boundary Commissions talk to each other but I hope this one is aware that the Commission team that designed the multi-member electoral wards for East Dunbartonshire decided according to their report to stop using roads as ward boundaries and instead to use natural boundaries because of open space. This worked well in the east of the council area. I am not sure if the main railway line, the Glasgow-Edinburgh, the Forth & Clyde Canal or the River Kelvin are actually visible from space but they certainly show up well from a small plane, I have been up there and it works, but in Bearsden

geography failed them. The best natural boundary they could find was a small burn that may appear on maps but has hardly been seen above ground since Victoria reigned. Never mind space, it is not visible from our party office window right above where it allegedly runs and this, unfortunately, is the boundary that this inquiry has chosen to split Bearsden along. It does not define their community, it splits it, and lest anyone be in doubt we think that electing councillors by single transferable voting in multi-member wards is a great step forward to democracy and we look forward to the day because it is thought to use it for Westminster elections as well, and those constituencies also get scaled up. But until then we think the Commission should accept that multi-member council wards are too big to be used to design constituencies in small councils like ours and they should also accept that using polling districts, all the old wards, that do reflect natural communities will make their task much easier and minimise community disruption the threat of which is causing such concern in Bearsden at present just as, I can assure you, it did in Kirkintilloch 10 years ago.

That decision would immediately allow them to take only a part of Bearsden North rather than all of it into partnership with West Dunbartonshire. That is not, I argue, an ideal solution but it is better than the one currently proposed. We would plead with them to go a step further and reopen the option of crossing the Glasgow border that they flirted with in option 3. The fact that option 3 is there indicates that it is not a hard and fast rule. We would not want them as in that option to rip East Dunbartonshire in half but, rather, to look for a polling district or other small logical area adjacent to Glasgow, along the large urban border that we have with Glasgow, so that taking that away would leave an East Dunbartonshire seat under 5 per cent, and then you take a chunk of Glasgow adjacent to West Dunbartonshire, to Clydebank essentially, that can be given to East so you get over 95 per cent, and they will adjust the Glasgow seat boundaries as necessary to make all the constituencies viable. We think that is possible if they have the will.

We stopped at that point. I am not putting forward a detailed solution of our own because as has been hinted earlier on we are well aware that our knowledge of past voting patterns might just be seen to influence our judgment on which bit gets taken away and where. We think decisions at that level are far better left to disinterested Solomons and Portias, and hopefully to wiser merciful ones. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Mr Ackland, thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, are there any questions for Mr Ackland? Mr Ackland, you have got off lightly, I think. The last name I have on my list this morning is David Meikle.

MR MEIKLE: Good morning, Sheriff Principal, Commissioners. My name is David Meikle. I am a councillor for Pollokshields Ward in Glasgow. The subject I want to speak about is the proposals for Glasgow South West and South East. I wish to propose to the Commission that they keep the whole of Pollokshields Ward in one constituency and allow what I see as a viable proposal to do that. I would like the Commission to look at the possibility of transferring three polling districts in the Pollokshields ward which the Commission are proposing to put into the Glasgow South East constituency into the proposed Glasgow South West constituency. These three polling districts are SSO906, SS1106 and SS1206, and if those polling districts are meaningless to you they are basically Waverley Park, Shawlands and Strathmore areas. There are clear community ties between those areas and the remainder of the Pollokshields ward. To keep the electorates within the legal range

this would necessitate a compensating transfer from the proposed South West constituency to the proposed South East constituency. An obvious one for the Commission to look at would be the Muirend, Newlands and Mansewood areas, these are polling districts CC3302, 3102, 3002 and perhaps part of polling district CC3202 which is bound by the White Cart River, the Auldhouse Burn and the railway line. In fact the Commission is already proposing to put parts of CC3302 and CC3102 into the proposed South East constituency thus splitting the Newlands Auldburn ward. These areas were part of the Cathcart Westminster parliamentary constituency since it was formed in 1918 and the Cathcart Scottish parliamentary constituency since it was formed in 1999. The electors in these polling districts will therefore identify much more readily with the rest of the Glasgow South East constituency than the South West constituency which the Commission proposes to put those areas into.

To sum up, the situation would mean that the Pollokshields ward was in one Westminster constituency and it would also ensure that those areas of Muirend, Newlands and Mansewood were in a constituency with those greater community ties and greater historical links. It would also reduce the splitting of wards within Glasgow City Council area, I therefore hope the Commission will seriously consider what I see as a viable and workable solution to achieve this. Finally, I would say that I submit this in writing just so that you have got it. You will note I have listed a number of the polling districts in different areas but I hope you do consider it.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, are there any questions for Mr Meikle? That is the list, ladies and gentlemen, that I have of people who wished to speak. Is there anyone else here who has not spoken so far who would like to contribute to today's public meeting? Silence. Is there anyone who has spoken already that would like to say something further in the light of what they have heard subsequently and have not asked a question? Silence again. I think what I will do at this stage, then, is I will adjourn the meeting at this point in time. We have said that we have the day. We will have to work out what we will do if anyone turns up later on, the way to deal with that. Can I commend to you all again what Isabel said at the beginning in relation to the other ways you can contribute to this; this is only one part of it. I thank everybody for their contributions today and for the polite manner in which it has been conducted, for which I am very grateful. Mr Tosh.

MR TOSH: Could I ask when you will reconvene in case there are further parties who come back this afternoon?

MS DRUMMOND-MURRAY: We will probably check with the office to see if anybody has been in touch to indicate they are coming along.

MR TOSH: It is just if I have to come back this afternoon I would like to know.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL TURNBULL: Let us say this now, we will not reconvene before 2 o'clock and I think if you leave a number we can tell you whether you need to come back. So, ladies and gentlemen, 2 o'clock, it will be no sooner than that if we indeed reconvene. Can I just make it very clear, we will not reconvene unless somebody wishes to come along and make a contribution, we will not just be here for the sake of sitting around. Thank you all very much.