

BOUNDARIES SCOTLAND

LOCAL INQUIRY

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Constituencies

Held at:

The Ballroom
Lynnhurst Hotel
Park Road
Johnstone
PA5 8LS

on

Thursday, 14 December 2023

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY

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AFTERNOON SESSION:

(2.00 p.m.)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for coming along to this consultation exercise and inquiry by the Boundaries Commission.

My name is Sean Murphy. I am the Sheriff Principal of North Strathclyde and, as such, an *ex officio* Assistant Commissioner charged with chairing these meetings around the area.

The format I will follow this afternoon is, first of all, I will read out, on behalf of the Boundaries Scotland, an initial statement about the position in this area.

Thereafter, we will invite various people to speak. Now, a number of parties already indicated that they wished to speak, so I will call them in the order in which they have registered this afternoon on arrival.

Could I ask anyone who is coming forward to make a presentation to sit at the table over here, because we have a recording gadget set up in the corner. The two young people just off to my left are stenographers who will be recording, and a transcript of this and the other Inquiry meetings will be available in January, along with my report in due course. So, could I ask anyone, please, who is speaking, to begin by stating their name and, if they are appearing in anything other than a personal capacity, to indicate what their role is, or which council or other organisation they are representing. Could I ask people, please, to speak fairly slowly so that the stenographers can follow. We have had one or two meetings where people have been quite excited, understandably, about things, and it makes it more difficult to follow.

Once each speaker has made their initial presentation, I will invite questions from the floor, if anyone wishes to clarify or to ask any point of the speaker, and once we have gone through the list - it is about half a dozen people who have asked to speak - I will invite anyone else who wishes to make a contribution to do so this afternoon. So, thank you for that.

So, I will begin with the opening statement on behalf of the Commission for Johnstone.

This Local Inquiry is one of - oh, sorry, can I check, can you hear me at the back? Yes? Good. Thank you.

This Local Inquiry is one of six being held around Scotland where you have an opportunity to make further comments or suggestions on the Commission's provisional proposals for constituencies. A transcript of today's proceedings is being made, and that will be published on the Boundaries Scotland website along with my own Report at a later date.

Local Inquiries are held by the Commission in areas where a local authority has objected to their proposals, where there has been a strong local response or where they feel they want additional information. The Commission welcomes this Inquiry which provides an opportunity for local views to be heard as part of the process of reviewing Scottish Parliament boundaries. The Commission also welcomes the opportunity to explain the legislative provisions and procedures it must follow.

The population, and therefore the electorate, of each constituency is constantly changing, with people moving into or out of areas as well as within the same area. As a result of these changes, some MSPs may represent considerably more or fewer electors than others. These variations in levels of representation, are one of the reasons

that the Commission carries out regular reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries, in order to ensure electoral fairness.

Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act requires Boundaries Scotland to conduct reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries for constituencies and regions at intervals of every 8 to 12 years.

The existing constituencies for the Scottish Parliament were defined following the First Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries, completed in 2010. Those boundaries have been used in the 2011, 2016 and 2021 Scottish Parliament elections.

The Second Review must be completed by 1 May 2025 when the legislation requires that the

Commission submit its final recommendations to Scottish Ministers.

In formulating its provisional proposals for constituencies, the Commission has a statutory duty to apply Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998 as amended. That Schedule sets out a set of rules to be applied when designing constituencies.

These rules may be summarised as follows:

There are to be 73 constituencies. Three of those are protected so not under review, and those are the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar (the Western isles). The remaining 70 constituencies must meet a set of requirements and must do so in a way which, so far as practicable, is consistent throughout the whole of Scotland.

Rule 1 - So far as is practicable, regard must be had to the boundaries of local authority areas.

Rule 2 - The electorate of each constituency is to be as near the electoral quota as is practicable, while having regard to Rule 1. The electoral quota is determined by dividing the total number of local government electors on the September 2022 electoral registers for all of Scotland, except the three preserved island constituencies, by 70. The electoral quota remains fixed throughout the period of a review, and is 59,902 electors for this review. Best practice from the Venice Commission (Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters) and previous reviews suggests an electorate within plus or minus 10% of the electoral quota is acceptable.

The Commission may depart from Rule 1 if it thinks that it is desirable to do so to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of a constituency and the electoral quota, or between the electorate of a constituency and that of its neighbouring constituencies.

Rule 3 - The Commission may depart from the strict application of the preceding rules if it considers that special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, make a departure desirable.

Rule 4 - The Commission must take account, so far as it reasonably can, of inconveniences attendant on altering constituencies and of any local ties which would be broken up by doing so.

Sometimes these rules can be seen as conflicting and the Commission must exercise its discretion in deciding the appropriate weight of each in any given constituency.

The Commission recognises that changes to constituencies are often unwelcome. However, the legislation requires that Parliamentary boundaries are regularly reviewed and places a duty to do so upon the Commission. As in previous reviews, the main concerns have generally arisen from the need to take account of the movement of electorate within Scotland.

The Commission wishes to emphasise that its review relates solely to boundaries for the Scottish Parliament and does not affect the structure or arrangements of local government areas or the services they provide. Parliamentary boundaries do not affect the provision of council services, health services, or council tax, nor do they signal a desire to change any other boundaries, including school catchments or local authority boundaries or the remit of community councils. Electoral boundaries are purely for the purposes of identifying constituencies for elections.

The Commission also wishes to emphasise that, for the purpose of formulating proposals for revised constituencies, the results of previous elections have not entered into its consideration. Similarly, it is not for the Commission to speculate upon the effects which its recommendations may have on future voting patterns or the partisan composition of the Parliament.

The Commission developed its provisional proposals in council area groupings and decided that the combined grouping of Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde council areas should be represented by 12 constituencies. There are currently 13 constituencies within these areas but ten of these were significantly below the electoral quota for this review.

The Commission considered a range of options for this grouping of council areas, including models with either seven or eight constituencies wholly within Glasgow City Council area; a single East Renfrewshire constituency; and two Renfrewshire constituencies. The Commission agreed upon an arrangement that divided only five Glasgow City wards between constituencies and only seven wards were divided overall across the four council areas. The Commission proposed a Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock constituency that included parts of East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Council areas and a further seven Glasgow constituencies. The Commission also proposed: a Renfrewshire South constituency that included parts of East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council areas; a Paisley and Renfrew constituency; a Renfrewshire West constituency; and an Inverclyde constituency that followed the Inverclyde Council area boundary. All the proposed constituencies were within the 10% variation from the electoral quota.

During the one-month public consultation, held between May and June 2023, the Commission received approximately 2,300 responses for the constituencies covering Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Council areas.

In their responses to the consultation, both East Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Council requested a local inquiry and objected to, or opposed, the provisional proposals for the constituencies in their areas, which included Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock, Paisley and Renfrew, Renfrewshire South and Renfrewshire West constituencies. A further 2,000 responses from individuals or other bodies opposed the proposals in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Council areas.

Most of the comments received during the initial consultation focussed on the proposals in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Council areas where there was strong opposition to dividing both Johnstone and Paisley between constituencies.

Comments also cited a lack of local ties in the proposed Renfrewshire South constituency, and opposed the proposed Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock constituency which combines parts of Glasgow and East Renfrewshire.

The Commission welcomes all comments and alternative suggestions to its provisional proposals in this area, not just on those issues raised in my statement today, noting, again, that the alternative constituency designs must meet the legislative requirements for this review as set out in the rules that I said at the start.

Now, having read that initial statement to summarise the position, the first person who has asked to speak this afternoon is Councillor Andy Doig of Renfrewshire Council.

Could I ask those who are speaking, if you have a copy of your text, could we have it for the team who are making up the record, when you finish, please, thank you. We would appreciate that. Thank you. Councillor Doig?

COUNCILLOR DOIG: I need to get a bit of light here for the eyesight.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Oh, can that be - we will have a look at that.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: That is better. Thank you, Sheriff. My name is Councillor Andy Doig. I am an independent elected member on Renfrewshire Council and I represent the ward of Johnstone North.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Could I, sorry, interrupt for a second. The lighting is better at my table. Would you like to swap?

COUNCILLOR DOIG: I can manage here, no, thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay, thank you. My apologies.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: I represent the ward of Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch, and I am an independent elected Member, so I am non-aligned. In a personal capacity, I very much object to these proposals in terms of what it is doing to the areas and communities within my ward. And I would like to say, I have been 11 years an elected member, Sheriff, and I have got 34 years of experience in political life across different parties of Scotland, and I wish to object to the Boundaries Scotland provisional proposals for Renfrewshire in the strongest terms, primarily because the new proposals breach many of the core principles Boundaries Scotland has publicly set out - namely, the new constituency arrangements for Renfrewshire take little account of local authority areas - they would break established community and administrative ties; they would create new constituencies with no cohesion in transport terms. This will lead to and increase voter apathy and encourage voter confusion.

Now, the block which Boundary Scotland has chosen as a template for this area, is Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and the City of Glasgow. Now, in general terms, I have got no issue with this as it is, essentially, the Greater Glasgow area south of the Clyde, but established communities in Renfrewshire should not be balkanized simply because Glasgow has got a declining population.

Now, in principle, Sheriff, I object - and I have raised this in the Council Chamber numerous times - the constant reviews at local Scottish and UK levels, unless there are major changes in population over a relatively short period - for example, the

post-war decline in the population in Glasgow, or the post-millennium increase in the population of Inverness. These changes only create voter confusion and, therefore, increase the likelihood of more voter turnout. Now, this is a dangerous and it is a negative trend in any functioning democracy which, in the current international time, I think we will agree, democracy is a delicate flower to be encouraged at all costs.

From a voter point of view, building a bond with elected representatives is crucial. Also, they feel their voice is heard, but also allowing elected representatives to do their job without the added whirlpool of constant boundary change.

I accept, Sheriff, the law as it stands in terms of the Scotland Act, but I believe there is an element of the Scotland Act which seems to be bad legislation. I think it should be optional, rather than mandatory. So, I will finish my comments on that. The proposals to create a new Paisley and Renfrew seat, a new Renfrewshire South seat and a new Renfrewshire West seat, are flawed for the following reasons.

There are compelling historic, economic and administrative factors which are, in effect, special geographical circumstances which mitigate against the provisional proposals. These plans would see the conflation of two of the major historic towns of Renfrewshire - that is, Paisley and Renfrew - in a single seat, and also partition the town of Johnstone into various parts. But what is worse concerning the latter error, is that the existing local authority wards, which are meant to be the essential building blocks which Boundary Scotland use, are themselves dissected in a most fundamental and unsatisfactory way by the Boundary Scotland provisional proposals. Renfrew and Paisley are great historic communities within the County of Renfrew that have existed for nigh on a thousand years. They both deserve, in their own right and in their own terms, to have representation at Holyrood Parliament level.

Now, what concerns me most about the partition of Johnstone, is it would find itself broken into several pieces, and along with the three villages in my ward, which is Lochwinnoch, Kilbarchan and Howwood, find themselves in a new Renfrewshire South which stretches to the South Lanarkshire border at Eaglesham. The demographics of that new seat, Sheriff, would inevitably mean that the concerns of my ward, my constituents, would be lost amongst the pressing concerns of areas, such as Clarkston, Eaglesham and Newton Mearns, who will form the majority of this new proposed Renfrewshire South constituency.

I object to the partition of Johnstone in the strongest terms. History, local ties and the way local services are delivered demands that Johnstone, Linwood, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch should all be in the same constituency. As an example, Renfrewshire Council has got five local area partnership which are established for the purposes of delivering local grant funding. Johnstone and Linwood has its own partnership, and the villages have their own partnership. So, the local authority in this area recognises the strong ties that exist, the community ties that exist here.

For decades Johnstone, Linwood and the three villages in my ward above, were part of the traditional Renfrewshire West seat, and Linwood, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch have, and still do, look to Johnstone for essential local government services before they would look to Paisley. Since 2005, Linwood has been part of the Paisley and Renfrewshire North Westminster seat, whilst Johnstone and the villages above have always been in the Paisley and Renfrewshire South Westminster seat. Now, this is an anomaly which the UK Boundaries Commission, your partner organisation, seeks to address and is now proposing that Linwood be transferred to Paisley and Renfrewshire South. Therefore, it seems to me, Sheriff, a bit perverse

that Boundaries Scotland want to rip Linwood out of the existing Renfrewshire South and put it in a new seat called Renfrewshire West. Now, this would cause substantial voter confusion and apathy amongst the population of Linwood, whose numbers are nearly 10,000 electors.

The transport links are also key in establishing local constituencies which cohere together and, in this respect, I think the Boundary Scotland plans are radically deficient. There is no clear and direct route for constituents in any of the areas in my ward to access the eastern part of the East Renfrewshire Council area without travelling by bus or rail into Glasgow City Centre. We have to build constituencies, Sheriff, which work with the existing historic, cultural and economic ties, and not work against them.

Now, in terms of effective representation, the new Renfrewshire South seat is like a patchwork quilt of disparate interests. Now, for example, all the constituents in the existing Renfrewshire South, which we have at the present time, are zoned for health and social security purposes to the RA in Paisley. By contrast, residents in Clarkston and Newton Mearns are zoned to the Queen Elizabeth and to Langside in Glasgow, whilst Eaglesham residents are zoned to Hairmyres in East Kilbride. Now, many areas of East Renfrewshire - like Thornliebank, Giffnock and Clarkston - were historically part of the pre-1974 Glasgow Corporation, and I would think that some constituency configuration with Glasgow would be more workable for most parts of the East Renfrewshire Council area.

Now, similarly, the Barrhead and Neilston areas were part of the former Renfrew District Council between 1974 to 1994, but this underpins the case for the retention of the existing Renfrewshire South boundaries with Wards 1 and 2 of East Renfrewshire Council retained within the existing Renfrewshire South seat.

Now, in terms of a new Renfrewshire North and West seat, the communities of Erskine, Bishopton and similarly, Langbank and Bridge of Weir, would look to the town of Renfrew for essential local government services before they would look to Paisley. Now, therefore, I think it is crucial to maintain the integrity of the economic link by keeping the town of Renfrew together with these villages, and not to be put into a new constituency with Paisley.

Now, in terms of a new Paisley constituency, it is notable, I think, that the Boundary Commission has proposed that the new Paisley and Renfrewshire North Westminster seat take in part of the Cardonald ward of Glasgow, and these changes, if they are not already approved, are likely to be, in my understanding.

Now, in historic terms, the village of Cardonald was one of the later additions to the former Glasgow Corporation from Renfrewshire in 1926. Furthermore, transport and economic links between the Ralston district of Paisley and Cardonald are strong; therefore, for the sake of continuity and consistency, it would make sense to me that Ward 4 of Glasgow City Council, Cardonald ward, be contained in the new Paisley constituency.

Now, based on all of the above, my counterproposal to the Boundary Scotland provisional proposals for Renfrewshire are as follows, and are appended at the end of this submission, which I will give to you and to your staff, Sheriff.

Whilst all of the proposed changes that I would like to see are above the quota of 59,902, I believe this is acceptable as the primacy of Rule 1. The primacy of Rule 1,

which is the Boundary Scotland new guidance, means that my counterproposals maintain the integrity of council area boundaries better than the Boundary Scotland proposals do.

So, under my own counter-proposals, Sheriff, this means you would have a new constituency of Renfrewshire South and East, which would be East Renfrewshire Council's Ward 1 and 2, which is Barrhead, Liboside, Uplawmoor, Newton Mearns North and Neilston wards, and Wards 8, 9, and 10 from Renfrewshire Council, which would be Johnstone South and Elderslie, Johnstone North, Kilbarchan, Howwood and Lochwinnoch, and Ward 10, which is Linwood, Houston and Crosslee.

The Renfrewshire North and West constituency would be Wards 1, 2 and 4, Renfrew North and Braehead, Renfrew South and Gallowhill, and Paisley Northwest, along with Ward 11, which is Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank, and Ward 12, which is Erskine and Inchinnan.

The proposed Paisley and Cardonald constituency which I would like to see, is Ward 4 of Glasgow City Council, Cardonald, Wards 3, 5, 6 and 7 of Renfrewshire Council, which is Paisley Northeast and Ralston, Paisley East and Central, Paisley Southeast and Paisley Southwest.

Now, the numbers for these constituencies would be as follows. The Renfrewshire South and East constituency would be 65,865; Renfrewshire North and West constituency would be 63,204; and the Paisley and Cardonald constituency would be 63,259.

Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Can I just clarify: so, your proposal does not touch any of the other Glasgow areas?

COUNCILLOR DOIG: No, it does not, no; definitely.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Yes, that is what I thought. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Because I do not think, Sheriff - I think the issue - I do not know what the current position is, but, historically, Glasgow, as I alluded, has had a decline in population. The population of Renfrewshire is actually rising at the present time, and I think it is wrong that because Glasgow City likely has a decline in population, that areas like Renfrewshire, which have got an increasing population, should be made to pay the price for that, quite frankly. For the reasons I outlined, I think there are areas within East Renfrewshire that would more satisfactorily cohere with the City of Glasgow. If it means Glasgow has far less constituency than it does at the moment, that is just something, I think, we would need to live with, but I do not think that we should pay the price for that.

Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you. Can I just ask from the floor, does anyone wish to raise any points for clarification? Mr Cook.

MR COOK: My name is Greg Cook. I am representing the Scottish Labour Party. I did not quite manage to get the details of your counterproposal down, but I think you are proposing that one of the Newton Mearns wards should be included in Renfrewshire South and East set and not the other, is that correct?

COUNCILLOR DOIG: It would be -- what I am proposing for the Renfrewshire South seat under my own schemata, is really the status quo. What you have at the moment is East Renfrewshire Council's Wards 1 and 2. Ward 1 is Barrhead, Liboside and Uplawmoor. Ward 2 is Newton Mearns North and Neilston. This is the status quo.

MR COOK: Well, Neilston is in that constituency, but Newton Mearns North is not at the moment, and I just wanted to check --

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Newton Mearns is split. My understanding - as I work up in Newton Mearns - my understanding is that Newton Mearns ward is split. Part of it will be in East Renfrewshire constituency. Part of it is definitely in Renfrewshire South. Parliamentarians here could confirm if I am correct or wrong, you know.

NEIL BIBBY MSP: Newton Mearns is currently in the Eastwood constituency, all of it. Neilston, as Mr Cook has said, is in Renfrewshire South, so that would be a proposed change.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Okay. Right, sorry. Okay. Thanks very much.

MR COOK: I do not think you have allocated the other Newton Means ward, Newton Mearns South and Eaglesham, to any constituency, because currently it is proposed to go into this Renfrewshire South --

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Well, no, I have not. I mean -- because I do not think it is my job to do that.

MR COOK: Yes.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: That is Boundary Scotland's job. I think that -- I mean, a constituency that stretches all the way to Eaglesham and takes in all Johnstone, is phenomenally large, and I really do question how that would affect the ability of MSPs to actually represent a ward of that size.

MR COOK: Yes, I think we will, you know, we will come to give our evidence later and we have agreed with you on many of those arguments, but obviously the Boundary Scotland has to accommodate that ward somewhere and it will be too big for it to go into Giffnock and --

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Well, I would need to then look at the South Lanarkshire situation and maybe come to a solution there.

MR COOK: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you. Any other questions for Mr Doig? Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Okay, thank you, Sheriff. Thanks.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: (Hushed aside conversation) Sorry, we are just going to rearrange the table slightly so that we are more directly under the overhead light.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Now, the next person who asked to speak is Thomas Wallace of the Johnstone Community Council. Mr Wallace.

THOMAS WALLACE: Thank you. It does not really matter too much for me the light, it is the eyes that are bad. Thank you Sheriff. I am Thomas Wallace, I am the chairman of Johnstone Community Council, and the views I will be giving today are not just my own, they are those of members of the community council and a percentage of the people in the town who I have personally spoken to in this matter. The general feeling, within people in Johnstone, is that this is not a good proposal. I ought to let you know what is actually being put forward, to start with, and when they found out what was contained in it I would not like to use the language in here that was put to me, I will put it that way. The problems are, and a lot of these were covered by Councillor Doig himself, there is a marked consideration within the proposal for the historic, economical and geographic circumstances. Transport links, well I would say they are non-existent, because I would not say a transport link of maybe taking four buses or two trains to get to the other part of your ward is a very good example of any transport link. At the moment you have parts of Johnstone where you have got to take three buses to get to our local hospital, so that is one aspect of it. The administrative services of Johnstone, like Linwood, Howwood, Lochwinnoch, going towards Paisley, if these were governed by Renfrewshire Council, its MSPs. Johnstone has no links, historically, with either Newton Mearns or Eaglesham that any of us can find. In fact, many good folk in Johnstone said to me that they had never been to either. But we are not here... as a community council, we do not see it as our place to put up counterproposals, but purely put forward the voice of Johnstone. Now as I mentioned, the local area, which does include villages, would possibly be better served if rather than moving us in with Newton Mearns and Barrhead and so on, there is parts of Northern Paisley that would probably fit in better with those, than there would be part of Johnstone. To give you an example of what is going to happen in Johnstone with these proposals, there is a family that I know, an extended family, and the daughter stays roughly a hundred yards from her parents. They would be in two different wards, two different MSPs, and again this was touched on by Councillor Doig, where we all want to see in Johnstone folk now can express their democratic right, no matter what party or political decision that is. If this was taken to on Johnstone against its will, I think a lot of people would say 'Well if they are not going to listen to us about that, what are they going to listen to us about?' It is really one of those things where it could, as Councillor Doig said, create quite a bit of voter apathy, and we do not want that; we want a strong Johnstone voice, and we want a united Johnstone voice. We do not want it split in two. Now as far as I understand rules three and four of what was proposed, the metric that it is judged, this does not take into account the geographic considerations. Gleniffer Braes, which is quite a large area, would be quite a barrier between Johnstone and East Renfrewshire. It does not seem to me that rule four, which is the local ties by splitting communities, well their local ties are the villages and Paisley. My father is from Paisley, my mother is from Elderslie, and myself and my siblings are proud Johnstonians. The part of Johnstone in which I stay, which is Corseford, would no longer be in with the rest of Johnstone but would be partnered up with Newton Mearns, part of Barrhead I believe it was, and Eaglesham. We have no tangible links as it is to these areas, it would be really wrong for this to be pushed onto Johnstone. As I say, Boundaries Scotland are probably a lot wiser than we are as a community council about boundaries, but what should not happen is, we should not be treated as a makeweight, where you will take a couple of constituencies that have either too much or too little. And it is like a butcher

making up packs of bacon: he has got two packs of bacon, one is too much, one is too little, he'd chop a bit off one of the rashers, problem solved. Well, Johnstone is not a slice of meat, and the people in Johnstone are not just statistics in a spreadsheet. There was a TV programme back when I was a kid called The Prisoner, I think it was, Patrick McGoochan, that said 'I am not a number, I am an individual.' Well, the people of Johnstone are not just figures in a spreadsheet to balance out constituencies, we are living human beings, we should be treated with respect as that. And it is not really my job to say what other boundary changes within Scotland should happen; I am a community councillor, I represent Johnstone. Unlike the elected councillors, who have two wards within Johnstone, the community council covers the whole of the town, and I have spoken to people from all over Johnstone, and this is not a welcome proposal. So we would ask that it is rethought, keep Johnstone together, preferably with Paisley because that is where our administrative capital is. But to put us in with part of East Renfrewshire, no, no. You are creating a system where folk will start to get confused about 'Who is my councillor?', well, most wards will be full of them already, a lot of folk do not even know there are four of them already. You could, within two streets, have two MSPs. Now, sooner or later somebody will come along and say 'Well, we are going to have to change the boundaries for Westminster elections.', and are we going to find ourselves sitting in who is who, what is what. It should not be that difficult. The figures do not fit, re- work the way you generate the figures, that is the easiest thing to do. We are not a huge country, we do not have a massive population, when you consider Scotland you could put Scotland inside Canada and nobody would see it on a map. But we are still proud of our town, we fight fiercely for our town, and the local councillors know that because they usually get it in the ear when things are not going right, but this proposal just does not float with the people of Johnstone... and if it was to be forced on us, I am sorry but that would be just plain wrong. As I say, as a community council we do not feel it is right for us to give proposals about how you people do your job, or the politicians do their job; we deal with the local things. But at the end of the day this is about who you will be voting for, I am not talking about party politics here but moreso, if you took Johnstone as a part of this new constituency, there are a lot less Johnstonians in there than there are folk from East Renfrewshire, and birds of a feather flock together, that is the twit of it, so we could be very disadvantaged when it comes to electing our representatives, no matter which flag they fly. Really that is all the community council has to say: it is not a popular move in Johnstone. I have not met one Johnstonian yet that said 'Yeah, let us go in with East Renfrewshire.', and as I say I have spoken to folk from every part of Johnstone. So, on behalf of Johnstone Community Council I would ask them to take this back, bin it and to come up with something else. Think again. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you, Mr Wallace. Could you just wait for a second, please?

THOMAS WALLACE: Yes.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Does anyone wish to ask Mr Wallace any questions, or raise any points of clarification with him? Okay, thank you sir. Now next could I call upon, please, Councillor Janis McDonald from Renfrewshire Coucil.

COUNCILLOR JANIS McDONALD: I just wanted to say that maybe I have misunderstood the process, but I do not have a presentation formally organised.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: You do not have to, you just have to say what your views are, thank you.

COUNCILLOR JANIS McDONALD: I thought I was just to speak from the floor, so I do not have a presentation formally organised, and I do not really want to speak in my role as a councillor; I am here because I am a local resident in Linwood, and I am particularly concerned about the idea of fractionalising and 'partitioning', I think was the word Councillor Doig used in relation to the relationship between Linwood and Johnstone, particularly. I moved to the area quite a few years ago now, over 25 years, and my family relate to the shops in Johnstone, the bank in Johnstone and various activities that go on. I feel that Linwood was disadvantaged with the last boundary change, and I feel it would be quite important to be consistent with what we are trying to do. So, I am pleading much more on a personal basis about the consistency for Linwood itself, and also for a huge consideration around Johnstone and the implications, because if Johnstone is partitioned there are implications that are quite different if it is held more contained.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR JANIS McDONALD: I agree with several of the points that Councillor Doig made around the consequences of partitioning, and my preference on a personal basis would be to see Linwood and Johnstone held contained, and some of the boundary issues around Cardonald and other aspects of the proposal at the moment being considered. And I pretty much agree with Andy's proposals. And I will maybe shut up there.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Yes. So you are supporting Councillor Doig's counterproposal?

COUNCILLOR JANIS McDONALD: Sorry?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: You are supporting Councillor Doig's counterproposal?

COUNCILLOR JANIS McDONALD: Yes, I think there has been a lot of thought and a lot of merit put into his proposals, and I think he has also listened to quite a lot of people in the various localities.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Thank you sheriff, can I just ask Janis a question? Thank you Janis for what you have said there latterly, because the position of Linwood, as somebody who lived in the town for ten years, really jumped out at me. The fact that really a lot of its ties are with Johnstone, and yet there is this anomaly, sheriff, that the Westminster boundary changes wanted to take Linwood out of the Paisley and Renfrewshire North seat, put it into the South, and yet under the Boundaries Scotland proposal Linwood would be taken elsewhere. Now, this is where the voter confusion and apathy comes in; we need to try and get consistency, whatever community we are talking about, whether it is Linwood or Cardonald. Now Cardonald is another example: the reason why I chose Cardonald was that the Boundary Commission want to put Cardonald ward into the new Paisley and Renfrewshire North seat, so for the sake of the people in Cardonald you need to

have consistency and more cooperation I would say, between the two boundary commissions in terms of the changes they want to make.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: So you are advocating consistency between different sets of boundaries?

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Yes, that is really important; that is really what Councillor McDonald was saying in relation to Linwood as well. Some voter confusion will arise, simply because voters will not know from one year to the next, one month to the next, one set of elections to the next, who their councillor is, who their MSP is, who their MP is. People who have struggled to get by and deal with the cost of living crisis, who do not have the time and the interest to be involved in the minutia of current affairs will not necessarily be au fait with where they are on a political map. The boundary commissions, Boundaries Scotland and The Boundary Commission for Scotland, have got a responsibility I think, a very important responsibility, to make sure these things cohere in the public mind.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you, thank you. Are there any other questions or comments or points to raise with Ms McDonald? Thank you very much. Now, we had intimation from Mark Conaghan of Renfrewshire Council that he might want to speak, but I do not think he was here at the start. Is Mark Conaghan here now? No. Okay, thank you. Could I pass on then to Councillor Andy Steel of Renfrewshire Council. Mr Steel.

COUNCILLOR ANDY STEEL: Alright to stand?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: As you prefer, please do.

COUNCILLOR ANDY STEEL: I would have preferred if it was darker to do this. My name is Andy Steel, I am a councillor of Renfrewshire. I am speaking in a personal capacity, and I would like to highlight some concerns regarding loss of local ties, and I suggest two alternatives which address that loss of local ties without impacting sorely on the numbers put forward. These are narrowly to deal with the partition of Johnstone, which has been touched on by all speakers so far. The primary objection I have is that the proposal would weaken local ties and fail to take into account the size, shape and accessibility of the constituency, 'accessibility' referring to the transport links Mr Wallace referred to earlier. This is largely a result of dividing Johnstone into two, and the apportioning some villages on what I would argue is a weak basis of locality into the new constituency. On the division of Johnstone, this is as clear a weakening of local ties, I would argue, as could be wished for. The constituency as proposed contains Johnstone town centre, but not other areas of the town which are nevertheless far closer to the remainder of the constituency than some of the areas have been added. Now, I appreciate the difficulties the review must have in coming to decisions, but surely it is the case that one part of a town has more in town with another part of the same town than one village, X, has in common with another village, Y. The split of Johnstone, I would argue, is impossible to justify. Are there options to remedy this? I believe there are; the proposal could be modified to be more in line with local ties. The remainder of Johnstone town centre, and I am glad Councillor Doig is not here to hear this, could be exchanged with Kilbarchan for a minor net change in total electorate numbers; I made this change circa 150 based on the 2021 figures. Alternatively, the remainder of Johnstone together with Elderslie south of the railway line could be exchanged for Howwood, Kilbarchan and Lochwinnoch with a

net exchange in numbers of fourteen voters, so more negligible. And while that would be far from ideal in my mind, this would at least leave Johnstone as a coherent whole, and maintain the ties between these villages, which while they are without question discrete settlements operate on occasion together, as in the example Councillor Doig gave us earlier: the local council partnership in which Howwood, Kilbarchan and Lochwinnoch operate as a whole. Furthermore, the second suggestion would keep Elderslie and the Renfrewshire South constituency of similar size and nature, rather than part of a prospective city, Paisley. Elderslie, along with Johnstone, Barrhead and Newton Mearns, is of a similar urban and dormitory style, rather than being chiefly rural, and was in fact governed between 1923 and 1927 along with Houston, so there again, local historic ties. There is a downside to that proposal, in that the countryside connecting Johnstone to East Renfrewshire would be narrowed, but this land is virtually uninhabited so it should not be an insurmountable issue. In common with many speakers, in fact all speakers so far, I would like to emphasise that I do not consider this an ephemeral exercise in map drawing or number crunching. I believe, again, this rates as a crucial aspect of democracy, and at a time when disillusionment with the political process is high it is even more important not to create another reason for people to switch off from that process. Johnstone is a town big enough to have its own identity, but I would argue it is not a big enough town to be split into separate areas the way cities can be. I am a local councillor, I dislike Johnstone being split into two. I am also a Johnstone man, I dislike Johnstone being split into two at a local level for that reason, but this is not me trying to protect an area from narrow self interest. The Boundaries Scotland advice I have read repeatedly points to local ties being a driver in the work they do in coming to their conclusions, and I would argue that the suggestions I put forward strengthen current and historic local ties without adversely affecting the numbers, and would encourage rather than weaken democratic participation. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you. That is a very detailed proposal, can I have a copy of it please?

COUNCILLOR ANDY STEEL: You absolutely can.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR ANDY STEEL: No problem.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Does anyone wish to raise any points or ask any questions of Mr Steel? Thank you sir. Next could I call upon, please, Councillor Iain McMillan of Renfrewshire Council.

COUNCILLOR IAIN McMILLAN: Thanks very much, Sheriff. Iain McMillan, councillor for Johnstone South, and one of the councillors for Johnstone South and Elderslee, and also leader of the Labour group on Renfrewshire Council. I cannot really kid on I am not here speaking in a personal capacity, because I am a councillor and I cannot deny that, but before I was a councillor, and still am, I am a Johnstone man, a Johnstone boy and very proud of it. And I do not have an alternative proposal because I will leave that to others who have got more time and energy to do these things, but I am very, very upset at any mention of Johnstone being split in two. I just think it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Councillor Steel mentioned that Johnstone is big enough to have its own identity, and it certainly has its own identity, but certainly not big enough to be split. And certainly, I deal with a lot of

tenants' associations and community councils, and when you mention this proposal they are aghast. They really are, they just cannot quite believe it, that our beloved town would be split in two. One side of the constituency, if it were to go ahead, would be sitting here, and virtually a free kick along the road would be another constituency altogether, and certainly people in Johnstone do not want to see that happen. We have historical ties with the villages, in fact two Johnstone wards contain villages: Johnstone South has Elderslie and Johnstone North has Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch and Howwood. People from the villages tend to come into Johnstone to conduct their business, and are very, very closely aligned to Johnstone, and we all have friends and families in the other towns and villages. There are transport links there, there are historic links there, there are cultural links. There are the old industrial links as well, sadly not much of it going but it is still very important to people in the area. I would like to think that any constituency is relevant to the local people, and I do not think dividing Johnstone in two would help with that. We also have voter apathy; we know that particularly in Scottish elections you are doing well if you get over sixty percent in some places, and if people are disillusioned that part of their town is away in another area and connected to somewhere that most of us have never ever been to, they are just places that you hear about in the news or you see on a map, I just think people would become even more disillusioned and not bother. It just seems crazy to me that one side of a street can have one MSP and the other side have another. As I say, I do not have any counterproposals; I have not looked into that deeply, and as I say others will come up with the numbers and all the rest of it, but having spoken to the Johnstone Community Council and various tenants' associations within my ward and outwith my ward, I have yet to hear anybody say 'Oh, that sounds a really good idea.', and if people are saying that that generally means it is a bad idea. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you sir. Does anyone wish to raise any points of clarification, or to ask anything of Councillor McMillan? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR IAIN McMILLAN: Sure.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Next, please could I call upon Councillor Chris Gilmour of Renfrewshire Council.

COUNCILLOR CHRIS GILMOUR: Thank you, Sheriff Murphy. I will say that, like most comments that have gone before, I can empathise and agree with some of them, and like my colleagues Councillor McMillan, Councillor Doig and Councillor Steel I am a Johnstone man as well, and very proud of my background being in Johnstone. I feel that principally, before I give my reasons why, we should never, where we can, split the communities. And 'partitioning', the word we use, is a strong word, but it has implications that are very strong for the community of Johnstone. Although we are fairly large town of some 19,000 people we still in some ways have quite a small town mentality. Example of that, come and walk down Johnstone town centre, we still think we can park where we want, we still think we can stand in the middle of the street and have a conversation with our friends. So although we are for all intents and purposes numerically a large town, we are really a large village, which does not lightly split up with everyone else. So with that preamble I should go on with my statement. We are a proud town that should not be split. Johnstone, Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch and Howwood have very strong historical community links to Elderslie and Paisley, but remain part of Renfrewshire Council. The creation of a Central Renfrewshire seat would recognise this, would run alongside the main arterial routes for travel to work and social areas, essentially a central Renfrewshire

corridor. The railway line runs from Lochwinnoch to Paisley Gilmour Street station via Howwood, Milliken Park and Johnstone.

The A737 again runs from Lochwinnoch via Howwood, Kilbarchan, Johnstone, and into Paisley. Bus travel also connects Lochwinnoch to Johnstone, the 38 service from McGills links Kilbarchan station with Elderslie and the north of Paisley.

Therefore, it makes sense to combine the two Johnstone wards along with Paisley Northwest, Paisley East and Central, Paisley Northeast and Ralston wards, to create a central constituency. We have familiar, transportation and historic industrial links with Paisley. I believe that it makes sense, it is a good fit, nothing will be perfect in this world, nothing can be, because when people are building houses and moving communities they do not think about voting, they think about where is the best place to live. And by keeping it in a central location, and having this central ward, Sheriff Murphy, I believe it is a good fit. Certainly, I attend four community councils, and the first intimation of surprise when they heard about the new proposals were 'What have we got in common with Eaglesham? It is a long way to go there, we have nothing in common.' So, I will just conclude by saying community is everything, and a central ward would make sure those communities bind, it makes sense, in a linear sense it is through the middle, and it would not split up the villages and Johnstone, and would tie in with our historic links with Paisley. Thank you very much.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you sir. Now I will just ask you to pause for a second, did anyone wish to ask anything of COUNCILLOR Gilmour before he runs off back to his seat, although he is not disappearing... Yes, Mr Doig.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: What would be the number, the numbers are important.

COUNCILLOR CHRIS GILMOUR: Around sixty, just over 61,000 --

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Right, okay.

COUNCILLOR CHRIS GILMOUR: -- for that, should be about 61,050, around that.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Okay, thanks.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you very much. Now, could I call upon Mr Bibby, the local MSP.

NEIL BIBBY MSP: Thank you very much Sheriff Murphy, and thank you to all the staff as well, the Boundaries Commission, for all the work they have done in this process and putting on the local inquiry events as well. My name is Neil Bibby, I am member of the Scottish Parliament for the West of Scotland region, and a resident of Renfrewshire all my life. The first thing I would like to talk about with the proposal is obviously the wider groupings, which has been touched on more generally. I think the proposal around Inverclyde makes eminently reasonable sense, and the Commission I think rightly recognises so far the historic nature of the county of Renfrewshire, as Mr Doig has said, being distinct and separate from Glasgow and dating back centuries rather than just decades, and I would be concerned about some unintended consequences that potentially could change that, from some of the proposals that have been mentioned. Obviously, I think the biggest issue for the boundary changes locally is the splitting of the town of Johnstone, hence why we are here and we have heard a unanimous, I think so far, view that Johnstone as a town is a proud town and should be kept together, and that is certainly something

that has been articulated by local residents, local businesses and organisations before today, and today as well. I think it is worth, when you look at the proposals for the groupings, there is not a single town or village in East Renfrewshire that is being proposed to be split, but Johnstone is, and Paisley is. And I am not suggesting that any other towns or villages should be split, but I do think that certainly all the towns and villages outside of Paisley, including Johnstone, should be kept together for the very strong community links that there are. And I think smaller towns would certainly be more adversely affected by those splits than a larger town like Paisley, which is the biggest town in Scotland and is already split along parliamentary constituencies. Johnstone has been mentioned as a proud town.

It has never been split in terms of any parliamentary constituencies that I recall in history and I have received many representations for the constituent businesses and organisations on this. It has been mentioned earlier about, you know, the stones throw and the free kick away from different constituencies. You know currently we are in the Renfrew West Constituency but if you, it has been mentioned if you head a couple of hundred yards north you would be in a different constituency. You would actually be in the South constituency. So you would be heading north to go south as it were and there have been many important points made about family links as well. I think also I want to reiterate what's been said about Johnstone being a proud town and should be kept together but it is always a proud Renfrewshire town and it has a great deal of ties and connections with Paisley and the rest of Renfrewshire. Despite Johnstone, Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch, Howwood forming part of a Scottish Parliament Constituency of Renfrewshire South, that includes Barrhead in Neilston in it since 2011 there is little direct community links between Johnstone and East Renfrewshire and that's before you get to the proposals round Newton Mearns and Eaglesham and we have heard what people have had to say around that and I think that is very true. In fact, I want to reiterate there are no direct transport links whatsoever between Johnstone, Kilbarchan and Lochwinnoch and East Renfrewshire and even the vast majority of road travel between this area and East Renfrewshire because of the physical border of the Gleniffer Braes and the hills at the back of Johnstone is done via the south of Paisley and I would say if there is no transport links it is very difficult to see how there is community links alongside that in order to facilitate those communities, and indeed when people travel from those areas they will, as I said earlier, go via the south of Paisley. And in fact I think when the commission moves from here in one part of Renfrewshire South Constituency to another part of Renfrewshire South Constituency in Newton Mearns will actually be travelling via the south of Paisley. So I think it has been a unanimous agreement in the need for Johnstone to be kept together. I think there is always a unanimous agreement that Johnstone should stay in a Renfrewshire only seat. To address these obviously we need to just not talk about the problems but also the potential solutions and I do think a Renfrewshire North constituency should be created that would include the town of Linwood which would broadly be the same as the current Renfrewshire North and West constituency including Linwood and Houston and then a central Renfrewshire a Paisley North and Johnstone constituency which would take into account the very strong links that there are between Johnstone and the villages surrounding it and central and north Paisley and we have heard from Councillor Gilmour about the main arterial routes in Renfrewshire running through the central Renfrewshire corridor the A737 that goes from Lochwinnoch, Howwood, Kilbarchan, Johnstone into Paisley. We have got the train links, the train line linking those communities and we have got bus services as well as well as community links and links through the council as well. So that would recognise those strong links and

those strong transport links and strong community links. The Commission has already suggested splitting the constituency of Paisley and Paisley has had a north and south seat combined with other parts of Renfrewshire and greater Paisley area before in the Scottish Parliament and for decades at Westminster and that does look avoidable, unavoidable sorry, to happen again in those circumstances and I would say if any part of Renfrewshire, and it is around approximately 16,000 voters, are required to be part of a seat with Barrhead, Neilston, Newton Mearns part of East Renfrewshire, it would make more sense for that to be the southern part of Paisley. The reason for that is it is much closer. It would make a better shaped constituency. There is better transport community links. People, for example, Barrhead and Neilston which are a part of that, you know, greater Paisley area, the same as here, you know, work and attend at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley, for example, and also people from the south of Paisley use the leisure centre in Barrhead and the train station and other facilities. So, I would in closing Sheriff Murphy ask that the Commission reconsider the proposals and the strong arguments that have been put forward to keep Johnstone together, to keep Johnstone together in a Renfrewshire constituency so that the only town that needs to be split under the commission rules would be the town of Paisley and it takes into account the great historic and current constituency ties within them. Thank you.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Now, any questions from the floor? Yes, Councillor Doig.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Yes, thank you. Neil, Chris has already given us the figures for the central Renfrewshire constituency that you are proposing. What would be the figure for the other one?

NEIL BIBBY MSP: Approximately, Renfrewshire North would be approximately 62,000 and the Renfrewshire South seat of Paisley South and East Renfrewshire would be circa 64,000. But obviously if you are splitting the town of Paisley the benefit of doing that is you can do that in a different, you could potentially do that in a number of different ways but the proposal I would be putting forward would be Paisley Southwest and Paisley Southeast Wards minus two polling districts.

COUNCILLOR DOIG: Is that necessarily fair to the people of Paisley to split Paisley up in that way?

NEIL BIBBY MSP: The current proposals are to split Paisley Northwest from the rest of Paisley. There is currently a Paisley Renfrewshire North Westminster seat and a Paisley and Renfrewshire South Westminster seat and previously before the last boundary changes there was a Paisley North Scottish Parliament seat and a Paisley South Scottish Parliament seat and I would contend very much in agreement with you Andy that currently we have got a splitting of Paisley and a splitting of Johnstone and I very much agree, I think we unanimously agree that we need to keep Johnstone together ...

COUNCILLOR DOIG: It is only I know through talking to a Paisley colleagues and the Council of various parties it was a hard one fight for them to have Paisley in a single constituency. I don't know how that would meet, what further opinion would Paisley to say about that.

NEIL BIBBY MSP: As I say, well, as I say there is precedent for ... Paisley is the largest town in Scotland. There is precedent for that. Westminster there is precedent for,

in the Scottish Parliament as well and I think if any part of the area, any town needs to be split I think it would make sense for it to be Paisley rather than Johnstone which I think is the primary issue we are trying to deal with this afternoon.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Why don't you raise that Mr Doig, maybe for another day depending on whatever may be decided. Yes, yes, thank you. Any other questions for Mr Bibby? No, once again can I ask you to pass on a copy of the presentation. The staff can take it electronically. Thank you. Thank you very much. Finally, from the list of registered speakers I would call upon lastly for the moment Mr Cook of the Scottish Labour Party.

MR COOK: I have got copies of my statements. I have a few here as well. If I could start by introducing myself. My name is Greg Cook and for some years I worked as an official of the Labour Party in the London head office and part of my responsibility was dealing with organising the parties representations to boundary reviews in all parts of the country. I stopped working for the party as an employee in 2019 but I am working as an advisor to the Scottish party to present their representations to this series of inquiries. So, the nature of this representation, obviously I don't live in the area and so I am not qualified to speak personally in respect of all the community ties and so on which we rely on the evidence of Mr Bibby and others. So the nature of this representation will be much more to do with the technical aspects of the proposals the relationship to the rules and to outline the party's agreed counterproposal. So the submission is made on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party and it follows consultations with the parties elected representatives, with voluntary officials and local parties in the areas concerned and we welcome the proposals of the provisional proposals of Boundary Scotland for the parliamentary constituencies. We have carefully considered those proposals and we made a representation during the initial consultation period which was number 25785556 where we set out our overall views, some objections to those proposals and we specified the areas, including this area, where we believed there would be a benefit to holding a public inquiry and in respect of the areas under consideration in this inquiry we set out our concerns in that representation but owing to the short duration of the consultation period we were unable to finalise the counter proposal. Our submissions to this inquiry does set out such a formal counter proposal. I trust that will be helpful to the assisting commission and to Boundaries Scotland in addressing some of the concerns which have been raised and objections made to the provisional proposals. Starting with the issue of the Council areas and the Council groupings. We note that three Councils of East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire have a combined electorate of 277,905 and when you divide that by the electoral quota of 59,902 that gives a theoretical entitlement to 4.64 constituencies. In the city of Glasgow has an electorate of 460,012 and that has a theoretical entitlement to 7.68 constituencies and added together that is an electorate of 737,917 and overall gives a theoretical entitlement to 12.32 constituencies which if we round it down to 12, which I would assume that's what the commission would do, would be a reduction of one overall. Now we support the grouping proposed by Boundaries Scotland. We agree with linking Glasgow with East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire is the best way of addressing the shortfall in the entitlement which means that as the Commission outlined at the start that currently most of the seats have electorates below the electoral significantly below in some case the electoral quota and with the marginal entitlements the partial seat 0.68 in Glasgow and 0.64 in the grouping of East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire there obviously needs to be at least one constituency which contains parts of the city of Glasgow, parts of one of the other authorities. Within that we

note the electorate of Inverclyde council area is 60,794. It is just 892 which is 1.5 per cent above the electoral quota and with the average electorate of the council grouping as a whole being above the electoral quota we believe there is no reason to retain the lower electorate of the current Greenock and Inverclyde constituency and therefore it should become coterminous with its local authority. So to deal with the issue of the seat to be shared between Glasgow and parts of Renfrewshire or East Renfrewshire. We do not wish to make any objection to the provisional proposals that would include two wards of East Renfrewshire Council in a Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock constituency. Others obviously we are aware that there have been a significant number of objections to that constituency which I assume will be set out in more detail in the second part of this inquiry this evening. We do regret the changes, that the changes entail the abolition of the Eastwood constituency but we also recognise that with the reduction of one seat overall there are major alterations to most of the seats in this council grouping. We believe that in respect of Glasgow, Priesthill and Giffnock that there are ties between the two areas which make for coherent constituency. Much of the local authority boundary is made up of continuous residential development. We believe there are strong transportation links within the proposed constituency. The rail route to East Kilbride runs from Pollokshaws through Giffnock and Clarkston where the Barrhead line runs through the Glasgow part of the constituency and we believe that the boundary of that constituency of Newton Mearns is reasonably well defined given that this is a mainly urban area. We do accept that there are longstanding ties within the Eastwood constituency which would be broken by the provisional proposals. We do not accept the argument that is necessarily better for a medium sized local authority to be divided so that it contained one whole constituency and one smaller part which is a small minority of another constituency. This is some of the arguments that are to be made in support of counterproposals which have been made for East Renfrewshire. We believe that there may be equally valid arguments for a relatively even division between the two parts of the council area with each part contributing either the majority or a large minority of its electorate, the electorate of its seat has Boundary Scotland has proposed. So East Renfrewshire would contribute around about 45 per cent of the electorate of the Glasgow, Priesthill, Giffnock and something over 60 per cent of the electorate of the Renfrewshire South seat which has been proposed. We also note the suggestion has been made that it is preferable for the shared seat to link Glasgow and Renfrewshire in the same place as would be the case for the Westminster constituencies as from the next election whereas Councillor Doig has outlined the Cardonald Ward is included in the Paisley and Renfrewshire North seat and we do accept there may be some logic to this but we would also argue that the circumstances which Boundary Scotland face with the Scottish Parliamentary Review are very different and specifically the Westminster Review which has a higher electorate quota operates in a different franchise so there are fewer electors which doesn't include 16 and 17 years old. It is possible in the Westminster respect for the East Renfrewshire seat to remain unchanged in coterminous with its local authority which is obviously sensible in its own terms and it is also compliant with the rule that existing council constituency boundaries should be respected. It is not possible for the whole of East Renfrewshire to comprise a Scottish Parliamentary constituency without a very extreme divergence from the electorate quota and nor in their respective Scottish Boundary Reviews is respect for existing constituencies specifically mandated in the rules, it is for Westminster. So we believe the circumstances are different. Councillor Doig has obviously set out a counter proposal which we hadn't had sight of before and I think you know just listening to it there are clearly a number of strengths within that counterproposal which I think deserves consideration by the Boundary

Commission but just having listened to it I do think the issue would need to be resolved about the split in the town of Newton Mearns which would seem to create and the fact that if you are including the Newton Mearns South and Eaglesham ward in the Priesthill and Giffnock seat then a large part of Glasgow would have to, the Glasgow part of that seat would have to move into a different seat. It would create knock on effects throughout Glasgow which would need obviously to be set out. I appreciate obviously that is beyond the remit of Councillor Doig and it is a complicated process. Our objection as to the provisional proposals centre on many of the points which have been made this afternoon about the Renfrewshire South constituency which we believe to be unwieldy, to have poor internal transportation links, comprises disparate parts which straddle three different road and rail corridors, radiating out from Glasgow and that point's amply made by what Mr Bibby said about this particular inquiry because obviously there is a second part of this inquiry taking place in Newton Mearns this evening which I am hoping to attend for at least part of. That would be in the same constituency as at least part of Johnstone under this proposal but travelling by public transport between them as I have discovered is quite an arduous task and lengthy task, which does, you know, it involves into Glasgow and out again and it includes at least one bus because apparently Newton Mearns itself doesn't have a station, so, that seems to me likely to create a real difficulty because that is the largest town by itself within this proposed constituency and if there were constituency events which were taking place there it would be virtually impossible in practical terms for residents from this part of the constituency to get there and that's really not acceptable in what is a relatively small unit such as the Scottish Parliamentary constituency. The proposal also breaks ties as we have heard by dividing the town of Johnstone.

We also believe the Renfrewshire West constituency is awkward. It divides Renfrew from Erskine and Inchinnan but also includes one ward of Paisley which does comprise part of the town centre as well as part of the town of Johnstone. So, our counterproposal seeks to address that and we believe that seeking to place all or nearly all of the town of Paisley in one constituency may be to the detriment of other towns in Renfrewshire. The existing Paisley constituency which is in place at the moment, is quite considerably undersized, about 55,000 electors, so in order to bring it up nearer to the quota it would need to take in part of the surrounding area, almost certainly. Now, as Mr Bibby said, Paisley itself has a long history of being divided between two different seats. The former seats, the Westminster seats of Paisley North and Paisley South, were created in 1983. They persisted as Scottish Parliamentary seats until 2011 and the existing Westminster seats of Paisley and Renfrewshire North and Paisley and Renfrewshire South again contain roughly equal numbers of Paisley voters. They are being retained with relatively little change under the latest proposals. The current arrangement whereby one constituency comprises effectively the whole of the town of Paisley has only been in place since the first review of Scottish Parliamentary boundaries.

We believe towns such as Linwood, Renfrew and Johnstone have at different times been parts of Paisley seats and we believe that the town of Barrhead also has much stronger ties to Paisley than it has to Johnstone and that it may make more sense to treat Paisley as the centre of a much larger urban area, all of which has mutual ties and which is too large to form one whole seat.

We would therefore argue that the Barrhead and the Newton Mearns wards should be linked in a constituency with the south of Paisley. The remainder of the town of Paisley should be in a seat with the whole of the town of Johnstone – that is the

Johnstone wards, so including the villages – and that Renfrew should remain in a Renfrewshire North and West constituency. We believe a seat containing part of Paisley with Barrhead and Newton Mearns would be much better balanced than the provisional proposal for Renfrewshire South. It would be more compact and would respect the ties which Barrhead has with Paisley as well as those that Barrhead has with Newton Mearns as being part of the same local authority.

So, just to explain in detail for those who do not have the written paper in front of them, the electorates of the counterproposal would be firstly the seat which we call Paisley North and Johnstone – obviously, the names could be discussed separately, but just to explain what the nature of the seat is, that would comprise the centre and north east of Ralston, the north west wards of Paisley along with the two Johnstone wards, and two polling districts, one each from Paisley South East, SP17, and one from Paisley South West, SP18, which helps to bring the electorates across the board closer to the electoral quota but also, we believe, improves the shapes of those constituencies, and we believe there are community ties which make it better to place those polling districts into that constituency.

The electorate of that seat would be 61,041. I just say that that is an estimate at the margins because we do not have the precise 2022 polling district electorates; we have estimates which were provided, I think, on current electorate figures.

The Paisley South and East Renfrewshire seats will be made up of the Barrhead, Newton Mearns North and Newton Mearns South wards of East Renfrewshire, plus the remainder of the Paisley South East and Paisley South West wards, not including those two polling districts. The electorate of that seat would be 64,260, and the Renfrewshire North and West seat would be made up of the whole of the Renfrew North, Renfrew South, Houston, Crosslee and Linwood, Bishopton, Bridge of Weir and Langbank, and Erskine and Inchinnan wards, and the electorate of those would be 62,211. As I say, our estimate of the electorate of Renfrewshire polling district SP17 is 1,373 and that of polling district SP18 is 1,349, so those figures have been deducted from the electorates which Boundaries Scotland provided for the south east and south west wards in respect of the Paisley South and East Renfrewshire constituency. We do not believe that any uncertainty there may be over those precise electorates affects the overall viability of the proposed scheme.

So, we hope the Assistant Commissioner and Boundaries Scotland will consider this as a reasonable balance of the rules which will address what we believe to be the weaknesses of the provisional proposals. A map of the counterproposal for the four constituencies within East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire, those which are wholly within those council areas is shown on the written document. Just to explain, that map shows the whole of the south east and south west wards in the Paisley South and Renfrewshire East seat, simply because the website which we used for those purposes does not have the capacity to break up the polling districts, but obviously, as we explained, those wards will both be split.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you, Mr Cook. Now, does anyone wish to raise any point of clarification or to ask any questions of Mr Cook?

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Yes. I think I am correct in saying, Mr Cook, that prior to the creation of the existing Renfrewshire South seat in 2010/2011, I am sure that the Boundary Commission at that time came up with provisional plans putting Barrhead and Paisley in a single seat. They were very much resisted, I think, by

both people in Barrhead and in Paisley. So, I take your point, the south side of Paisley and Barrhead do have a lot of ties, but am I correct in saying that in your proposal both towns in their entirety would be in a single seat there?

GREG COOK: Which, I am sorry?

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Barrhead and Paisley would both be in a single seat?

GREG COOK: No. What we are proposing is identical to what Mr Bibby proposed in terms of that central seat. So it would be the three wards from East Renfrewshire where they make up about 45,000 electors and then there is roundabout 16,000 electors from those two wards in the south of Paisley and then the rest of Paisley will be in a seat with Johnstone and the villages.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Right. Paisley would be split again then?

GREG COOK: It would be split again, yes.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: The north/south bit of Paisley as we discussed earlier?

GREG COOK: Yes.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Yes, okay.

MARK CONAGHAN: Sorry, which two wards at the south of Paisley?

GREG COOK: It is the south east and the south west wards and as I explained, one polling district of each of them for electoral and community reasons we would propose to put in the Paisley North and Johnstone seat, so the wards would be split but the vast majority of them would be in that south divide, the South and East Renfrewshire seat.

MARK CONAGHAN: Yes, I am trying to place where the administrative centre of Paisley being the HQ of Renfrewshire Council lies in relation to those particular wards.

GREG COOK: I do not know if Mr Bibby may be able to help.

NEIL BIBBY MSP: Yes, well Renfrewshire Council is in Paisley's east and central ward, which would be in the Paisley North and Johnstone constituency, as proposed. Essentially, if I may, the current proposals have 16,000 voters going into Barrhead, Neilston and Newton Mearns and Eaglesham seat from half of Johnstone and Kilbarchan. So, the 16,000 alternative voters come from Paisley South West and South East. That is the difference.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: So, in simple terms, you will be replacing the Johnstone element with the two Paisley wards?

NEIL BIBBY MSP: Yes, essentially.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Yes. We have the advantage of the map. Perhaps when we break shortly you could have a look at that and raise any proposals either with us or with Mr Cook? That would be helpful.

MARK CONAGHAN: Yes. I think it will likely make observations on behalf of the council.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Yes.

MARK CONAGHAN: ... I am the returning officer for Renfrewshire Council. In respect of that proposal, it strikes me that you are taking what are fairly central areas of Paisley and lumping them into a seat with Newton Mearns and then the voting arrangements for those people who are very close to the administrative centre of Renfrewshire Council would provide an entirely different council, and the returning officer for that council if you were regrouping, would be the returning officer for East Renfrewshire and much as he is a former director of Renfrewshire Council, I don't think that the voters would be particularly happy about that. I will have a look at the map.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you.

GREG COOK: I think that any questions there may be about the detail of that proposal would probably be better addressed by Mr Bibby.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Yes, in due course. Thank you very much, Mr Cook.

GREG COOK: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: So, as we have gathered, Mr Conaghan is now with us, so we would like you to come forward, sir, to speak on behalf of Renfrewshire Council. We have asked everybody to introduce themselves and to indicate whether they speak in a personal capacity or on behalf of a council or other organisation at the start, Mr Conaghan, and also if it is possible, if you have a copy of your presentation that could be given to the staff here who are going to prepare the transcript in due course, that would be helpful.

MARK CONAGHAN: Okay.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you.

MARK CONAGHAN: Thank you, Mr Assistant Commissioner. I am Mark Conaghan. I am the head of Corporate Governance at Renfrewshire Council. I am also deputy returning officer for the Renfrewshire Council area, which under the existing arrangements would be the deputy returning officer for three of the existing Scottish Parliamentary seats.

In terms of my appearance here, I am wearing two hats, effectively. I am representing the response which was submitted initially on behalf of the returning officer for the Renfrewshire Council area, but then was our response which was adopted by the council itself in terms of its submission, although at that point there was one additional comment made in the covering letter which was sent to the Commission which I will perhaps pick up.

There are a number of points which I want to make today. I am not in a position necessarily of making any ultimate proposals because of the difficulty that I do have in terms of representing the council. The council has not adopted any formal

alternative proposals to submit. I think it would be fair to say that the unanimous view of the elected members of Renfrewshire Council when this matter was considered was that they did not support the proposals which were being made by the Commission in respect of these seats and it was very much in respect of how the proposals suggested dividing up the Renfrewshire Council area.

I think the first comment I have to make is that unlike the previous speaker, the council does not accept the approach which has been taken by the Commission to group four council areas together. When having regard to the legislation and the rules, it is difficult to understand the approach which has been taken by the Commission in choosing to group Glasgow City Council with Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and East Renfrewshire, and the logic of it, I have to say, escapes myself and many other people within the council on the basis that to do so immediately ignores all of the neighbouring authorities which bound Glasgow. There is no consideration of the constituency and local ties that exist between West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire with Glasgow City Council as soon as you put them in a grouping with East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire.

Now, I say personally I live in West Dunbartonshire. I am very well aware of the close connections between areas such as Yoker and Clydebank. There are clear connections between the southern parts of East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow. I would make the point that in relation to South Lanarkshire Council, the boundary of South Lanarkshire Council part of it falls within the jurisdiction of Glasgow Sheriff Court. North Lanarkshire, again, there are very close connections between Glasgow and that area, so to exclude all considerations of those boundaries to make the numbers work in respect of the population undermines the very fundamental rules that the Commission are supposed to apply in these cases and it is because of that approach it is my view that the Commission has ended up with the proposals which have been made, particularly with regards to Renfrewshire South which are wholly illogical.

So, that is the primary part of the response which was submitted on behalf of the council. Then moving on to the specific rules which were required to be considered by the Commission: rule

1: regard is to be had to local government boundaries. Now, I would recognise under the existing arrangements for the constituencies which I have a particular interest in that we have taken in a small part of Inverclyde historically in terms of Quarrier's Village and Kilmacolm, and we have also taken in parts of East Renfrewshire in terms of Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor, so to that extent there was crossed boundaries. However, those two other council areas were otherwise not affected and there was no interaction between East Renfrewshire and Glasgow.

The current proposals now see a seat which straddles Glasgow and East Renfrewshire, a huge part of Renfrewshire, moving into East Renfrewshire, and parts of Renfrewshire moving into Inverclyde. It actually makes the cross-boundary cross-council area issues worse than the current arrangements and again for that reason I would submit that the current proposals do not meet the terms of rule 1 that the Commission is required to apply. And these appear to be driven entirely by the quota issues.

Moving on to rule 2 which is the electoral quota, again I have to say that on the analysis that we have looked at, it appears that it is Glasgow that is driving the changes and it is seriously to the detriment of electors in the Renfrewshire area and

I have to say that again, like the previous speaker, I did not have access at the time of the submission to the September 2022 figures. However, looking at the electorate for those five constituencies as at the last Scottish parliamentary elections, those amounted to 279,012 and that gave a constituency average of 55,802, and that figure is significantly above the electorate figures which are proposed for a number of the new constituencies under the existing review. So, in other words, changes are being suggested for the Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and East Renfrewshire areas to get them closer to the quota when the existing electorate or the electorate at the last elections were actually above the quota that has been suggested for a number of seats in Scotland. So, again, I think that undermines any argument in respect of that.

The other observation I will make without having direct access to the 2022 figures is that Renfrewshire's population has grown. East Renfrewshire's population is growing. I believe Inverclyde's is static or may have reduced slightly but Renfrewshire's population growth has been such that it has just moved on the basis of the last census from being the tenth largest council in Scotland to the ninth. It is therefore difficult to understand why quota issues for those three council areas would result in areas of Glasgow having to be taken into this consideration. My view is that what has happened here is that areas of East Renfrewshire have been taken into Glasgow to try and make Glasgow numbers look greater.

And then again it is the grouping with Glasgow which is driving the failure to observe, in my submission, rules 3 and 4. There is no reason for Glasgow to be grouped with these three councils and indeed it could easily be grouped with any other council in the West Scotland region that bounds it. I would suggest the more appropriate approach would be to look at the boundaries at each of the Glasgow seats as they interact with all of the council areas that surround Glasgow. But by taking this approach the Commission has tied its hands and reached the illogical suggestion that it has. Even if there were quota issues in Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and East Renfrewshire which, obviously, based on the earlier comments, I would not accept, the approach taken by the Commission has entirely ignored and excluded possible solutions including other neighbouring local authority areas, and when I say that I mean, if one were to look at Skelmorlie, I think you could easily argue that Skelmorlie from North Ayrshire has a close relationship with Inverclyde. There is a real consistency there with the issues that a coastal community would experience. There is a connection between Skelmorlie and areas such as Gourock and Greenock itself, so why should that be excluded from consideration? Similarly, Beith with Renfrewshire. There is considerably more interaction and connection in the community issues and community boundaries and indeed transportation links between an area like Beith and Lochwinnoch than there is between Lochwinnoch and Newton Mearns. So, by excluding the possibility of looking at the wider areas that bound on to Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and indeed East Renfrewshire for that matter, the Commission has tied its hands and avoided considering what could be simply more logical suggestions.

So, moving on to consideration of the seats themselves, at the moment the proposal is the creation of a new Paisley and Renfrew seat, which of itself could be seen as being logical. However, the largest Paisley Council ward, ward 4, Paisley North West, is the only ward in the Paisley seat that is then proposed to be excluded from this constituency. Now, that appears to me to be very much at odds with both the special geographical circumstances and the maintenance of local ties. That ward extends to the very centre of Paisley. And the observation I would make is

that Paisley's Royal Alexandra Hospital lies in ward 4. The idea that the hospital which services the whole of the area sits in a different seat from the rest of Paisley is somewhat surprising, if I can put it mildly.

In relation to the Renfrewshire West constituency, it is noted that the constituency has both a new name and new boundaries. The figures proposed for that seat take it to 61,690, which is well over the quota figure of 59,992. I should have perhaps added that in relation to the Paisley and Renfrew seat, that that is even worse. The quota figure there is 59,900. That has been taken up to almost 64,000.

Whilst the majority of the town of Johnstone has been included in this constituency, a large part to the west of the town has been included in the proposed Renfrewshire South constituency, splitting ward 8, and I have to say that that suggests to me that very little consideration has been given to retaining local ties in the Johnstone area. Again, this appears to be driven by the numbers rather than consideration of the local ties.

Then moving on to perhaps what I would suggest is the most fundamental of issues, that is the Renfrewshire South constituency, again, the quota here is taking it up to 61,996, well over the quota figure of 59,900. Now, it is recognised that Renfrewshire South has always included an element of East Renfrewshire, namely wards 1 and 2. However, I think as others have said, there is an understandable geographical link between Barrhead and Paisley. Indeed, housing developments are proposed for Paisley that will take the housing elements of Paisley going out in that direction in fact right out to the boundary with Barrhead. You will literally cross the road from one house in Paisley to another house in Barrhead. So, there is a clear connection there and, by extension, Neilston has a connection with Barrhead. I think that those who lives in that constituency absolutely understand the existing boundaries and can see the justification for it.

However, what is now proposed is to extend and put a new constituency from Lochwinnoch in the west to Newton Mearns and Eaglesham in the east. This results in a long narrow corridor with little regard to local areas, the maintenance of local ties or the inconvenience caused by the alteration of the existing boundaries. My submission, is quite simple. There is no local connection whatsoever between Newton Mearns and any of the areas that are within the western part of Renfrewshire, simply none. Any perfunctory look at the map for that constituency, you can effectively see that there is a point after, I think, Neilston, where there just isn't any towns. There is just a large geographical area that nobody lives in, although other than a few farmers. To suggest that these areas are in some way connected makes little or no sense.

When we submitted the response on behalf of the returning officer, it was noted that the shape and accessibility of the constituency had been entirely ignored and that can be demonstrated by the fact that a journey by car from Eaglesham to Lochwinnoch would cross at least five of other proposed constituency boundaries, namely: Glasgow, Priesthill and Giffnock, Glasgow, Cardonald and Pollock, Glasgow Central and Govan, Paisley and Renfrew, and Renfrewshire West. That would be the journey from one end to the other. By public transport, the situation would be just as bad. It would involve going into Glasgow City Centre and coming back out again. It is difficult to imagine that this would be the situation anywhere else in Scotland under an existing review, that you would travel through five constituencies to make the journey from one end of the constituency to the other.

The change or the additional observation that was made following the council meeting when that response was submitted was on the basis that when we made that response on behalf of the returning officer, we were operating under the assumption that the returning officer would retain – the returning officer from Renfrewshire, I should say – responsibility for the electoral arrangements within that new Renfrewshire South seat. As it currently sits, that lies with the returning officer in Renfrewshire. He is responsible for Paisley and Renfrewshire North and West and Renfrewshire South under the existing arrangements.

In discussions with our colleagues in East Renfrewshire, they pointed out that they thought that is the seat that their returning officer would be responsible for because they do not think that they would be responsible for the new Priesthill seat, so they think they would be the returning officer for that seat.

So, going back to my point about journeys, when the polls close at 10 o'clock in Lochwinnoch in the next Scottish Parliamentary election, the ballot box will be put in the back of a vehicle and driven through five other constituencies to get to the counter. That cannot possibly be a sensible suggestion. I don't think I have anything to add to that.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you. Are there any questions? Yes, Mr Doig?

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Thank you, chair. Mark, I think your point is very well made about certain connections between Kilbirnie and Lochwinnoch, both historical, social and economic and that applies also to other areas. I think you have solid logic behind you as well when you said that you want to look at the councils that border Glasgow.

MARK CONAGHAN: Yes.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: And to add to the North and South Lanarkshire and East and West Dunbartonshire, you could actually even add, I would say, Stirling Council because you have Balmaha and Drymen where there are quite a lot of connections between that area and the City of Glasgow. So, the possibilities, I would say, Sheriff, in terms of what Mark has suggested are much more fluid and much more potentially achievable than what Boundary Scotland has come up with.

MARK CONAGHAN: Yes. It is not a matter for consideration for the Assistant Commissioner but I have to say that in my capacity in corporate governance, I am required to provide legal advice to local councillors. I will not disclose who has sought advice from me but questions have been asked of me about the potential for judicially reviewing this approach when it has no apparent basis in the legislation and the rules that are there. The observation I have made in response to that is I think that is not the position that a council would wish to find itself in. However, it is difficult to understand why the Commission has chose to tie its hands by not looking at these other areas and simply decided to start from a position of saying, "We are grouping these and then they are losing one seat", because that is not the approach that has been taken across the country as a whole, and if you start from a position of excluding potentially perfectly logical considerations, then it is difficult to understand how that is justified.

COUNCILLOR ANDY DOIG: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Any other questions or points that anyone would like to raise with Mr Conaghan? Thank you very much.

MR CONAGHAN: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Well, that is the end of the list of people who have formally registered to speak. Is there anyone from the floor who wishes to raise any points at this stage? If anyone else wishes to say anything at all, please raise your hand if you would like to do so. Nobody at the moment. Well, can I thank everyone for their attendance this afternoon, and thank you for your participation. This is a vitally important democratic exercise and you have all played a major part in it, even simply by being here today and I thank you very much for that. Certainly, some water is still available. The tea and coffee is probably cold by now but you are welcome to have a drop before you leave if you wish and thank you very much for your attendance and assistance and participation this afternoon. And I just remind everyone the report and the transcript will be available sometime around mid-January of the new year. Thank you.

(The hearing concluded)

(15.48)

BOUNDARIES SCOTLAND

LOCAL INQUIRY

Second Review of Scottish Parliament Constituencies

Held at:

Sandringham Suite
Parklands Hotel & Country Club
196 Ary Rd
Crookfur Rd
Newton Mearns
Glasgow
G77 6DT

on

Thursday, 14 December 2023

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY

Daily Transcript by **Larking Hodge Pollock (Shorthand Writers)**
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(Thursday, 14 December 2023)
EVENING SESSION:

(18.03)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Well, good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Can I draw this evening's proceedings to a start. My name is Sean Murphy, I am an Eastwood resident, but I am also the Sheriff Principal of North Strathclyde and in that capacity I have an ex officio role as Assistant Commissioner to chair the various inquiries that take place in connection with the Scottish parliamentary boundaries review. I will just pause for a second; there are some people just arriving.

The format this evening is that I will begin by reading out an opening statement on behalf of the Commission, which they prepared on the local issues. Thereafter I will invite various people to come to speak. A number of people have registered or indicated they would like to speak this evening, so I will go through that as a formality at the start, go through those people in sequence. Then if anyone else wishes to say something, then please, you are very welcome to do so. For those who are making a presentation or an address to the meeting I will invite the floor to ask any points of clarification or any questions for each speaker when they have concluded.

Now, the young people sitting across from me are in charge of preparing a transcript and a record of the proceedings. So, could I ask anyone who is speaking, please, to take their time. We have had one or two people who got quite excited at some of these meetings earlier on. So, please - they will be recording for transcription purposes what is being said by various people who make any presentations or comments to the meeting.

Once everyone who has indicated a desire to speak has had an opportunity to speak, I will then open it to the floor in case anyone wants to make any further comments towards the end.

Now, both the transcription and my report of each of the six meetings around the country will be available sometime around mid-January on the Boundaries Scotland website for you to have a look at. So, can I just ask: unusually for these meetings that we have had in various meeting places, it is quite warm in here. Is everybody comfortable with the temperature?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay, good. Can you hear me at the back?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay, thank you. At the point when people are asked to make comments or if they wish to make comments or seek clarification, Dougie at the back there will have a roaming microphone and will come round so that the speaker can hear you. Can I ask anyone who wishes to speak to the meeting as a whole to come forward to the table opposite, because that allows us the opportunity to record carefully what is being said for the transcription purposes, but also for everyone else in the room to be able to hear you, because you will be facing towards them.

So, with that general introduction, let me turn now to the Boundaries Scotland's opening statement in relation to this inquiry. Sorry, I beg your pardon, before I do that can everyone, please make sure their mobile phones are on silent or airport or whatever you do with them at these points. Thank you.

So, this local inquiry is one of six being held around Scotland where you have an opportunity to make further comments or suggestions on the Commission's provisional proposals for constituencies. A transcript of today's proceedings is being made, and that will be published on the Boundaries Scotland website along with my report at a later date.

Local inquiries are held by the Commission in areas where a local authority has objected to their proposals, where there has been a strong local response or where they feel they want additional information. The Commission welcomes this inquiry which provides an opportunity for local views to be heard as part of the process of reviewing Scottish Parliament boundaries. The Commission also welcomes the opportunity to explain the legislative provisions and procedures it must follow.

The population, and therefore the electorate, of each constituency is constantly changing, with people moving into or out of areas as well as within the same area. As a result of these changes, some MSPs may represent considerably more or fewer electors than others. These variations in levels of representation are one of the reasons that the Commission carries out regular reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries, in order to ensure electoral fairness.

Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act requires Boundaries Scotland to conduct reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries for constituencies and regions at intervals of every 8 to 12 years.

The existing constituencies for the Scottish Parliament were defined following the First Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries, completed in 2010. Those boundaries have been used in the 2011, 2016 and 2021 Scottish Parliament elections.

The Second Review must be completed by 1 May 2025 when the legislation requires that the Commission submit its final recommendations to Scottish Ministers. In formulating its provisional proposals for constituencies, the Commission has a statutory duty to apply Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998 as amended. That Schedule sets out a set of rules to be applied when designing constituencies. The rules can be summarised as follows:

Rule 1. There are to be 73 constituencies. Three of these are protected so not under review: Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western isles). The remaining 70 constituencies must meet a set of requirements and must do so in a way which, so far as practicable, is consistent throughout the whole of Scotland.

So far as is practicable, according to Rule 1, regard must be had to the boundaries of local authority areas.

Rule 2 - The electorate of each constituency is to be as near the electoral quota as is practicable, while having regard to Rule 1. The electoral quota is determined by dividing the total number of local government electors on the September 2022 electoral registers for all of Scotland, except the three preserved island constituencies I've just mentioned. by 70. The electoral quota remains fixed

throughout the period of a review, and for the present review is 59,902 electors. Best practice from the Venice Commission (Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters) and previous reviews suggests an electorate within $\pm 10\%$ of the electoral quota is acceptable.

The Commission may depart from Rule 1 - that is the one relating to the boundaries of local authority areas, if it thinks that it is desirable to do so to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of a constituency and the electoral quota or between the electorate of a constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies.

Under rule 3 the Commission may depart from the strict application of the preceding rules if it considers that special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, make a departure desirable.

Rule 4 - The Commission must take account, so far as it reasonably can, of inconveniences attendant on altering constituencies and of any local ties which would be broken by doing so.

Sometimes these rules can be seen as conflicting, and the Commission must exercise its discretion in deciding the appropriate weight of each in any given constituency.

The Commission recognises that changes to constituencies are often unwelcome. However, the legislation requires that parliamentary boundaries are regularly reviewed and places a duty to do so upon the Commission. As in previous reviews, the main concerns have generally arisen from the need to take account of the movement of electorate within Scotland.

The Commission wishes to emphasise that its review relates solely to boundaries for the Scottish Parliament and does not affect the structure or arrangements of local government areas or the services which they provide. Parliamentary boundaries do not affect the provision of council services, health services, or council tax, nor do they signal a desire to change any other boundaries, including school catchment areas or local authority boundaries or the remit of community councils. Electoral boundaries are purely for the purposes of identifying constituencies for elections.

The Commission also wishes to emphasise that, for the purpose of formulating proposals for revised constituencies, the results of previous elections have not entered into its consideration. Similarly, it is not for the Commission to speculate upon the effects which its recommendations may have on future voting patterns or the partisan composition of the Parliament.

The Commission developed its provisional proposals in council area groupings and decided that the combined grouping of Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde council areas should be represented by 12 constituencies. There are currently 13 constituencies within these areas but 10 of these were significantly below the electoral quota for this review.

The Commission considered a range of options for this grouping of council areas, including models with either seven or eight constituencies wholly within Glasgow City Council area; a single East Renfrewshire constituency; and two Renfrewshire constituencies. The Commission agreed upon an arrangement that divided only five Glasgow City wards between constituencies and only seven wards were divided overall across the four council areas. The Commission proposed a Glasgow Priesthill

and Giffnock constituency that included parts of East Renfrewshire and of Glasgow City Council areas and a further seven Glasgow constituencies. The Commission also proposed: a Renfrewshire South constituency that included parts of East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council areas; a Paisley and Renfrew constituency; a Renfrewshire West constituency; and an Inverclyde constituency that followed the Inverclyde Council area boundary. All the proposed constituencies were within 10% variation from the electoral quota.

During the one-month public consultation, held between May and June 2023 the Commission received approximately 2,300 responses for the constituencies covering Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Council areas.

In their responses to the consultation both East Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Council requested a local inquiry and objected to or opposed the provisional proposals for the constituencies in their areas which included Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock, Paisley and Renfrew, Renfrewshire South and Renfrewshire West constituencies. A further 2,000 responses from individuals or other bodies opposed the proposals in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Council areas.

Most of the comments received during the initial consultation focused on the proposals in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Council areas where there was strong opposition to dividing both Johnstone and Paisley between constituencies. Comments also cited a lack of local ties in the proposed Renfrewshire South constituency and opposed the proposed Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock constituency which combines parts of Glasgow and of East Renfrewshire.

The Commission welcomes all comments and alternative suggestions to its provisional proposals in this area, not just on those issues raised in my statement today, noting again that the alternative constituency designs must meet the legislative requirements for this review.

Now, against that background, I turn now to invite various parties to speak, but I am going to begin, actually, by calling for Gerry Mahon of East Renfrewshire Council because I understand the council actually has a slide presentation and I think it would be useful if we started with that. Mr Mahon.

MR MAHON: Thank you. Good evening, my Lord. As you stated, my name is Gerry Mahon. I am a representative of East Renfrewshire Council, here to provide the council's submission to the inquiry.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: I am sorry, I am having difficulty hearing. Can we give Mr Mahon a microphone, just so you do not have to shout.

MR MAHON: No problem. Thank you. My name is Gerry Mahon, I am the council representative, here to provide the submission of East Renfrewshire Council in respect of the inquiry. In the first instance I would highlight that East Renfrewshire Council recognises that the electoral population within its boundaries is too high to constitute one constituency, but too small to permit two from within its own boundaries. And in that sense, we accept that a constituency will necessarily have to overlap with an adjacent authority. However, East Renfrewshire Council believes that the current proposals effectively throw the baby out with the bath water inasmuch as there is a pre-existing constituency, namely Eastwood, which meets all the criteria of which the Boundaries Scotland suggest are relevant in setting

constituencies and which will effectively be carved into two alternatives neither of which meet those criteria to the same degree.

It appears to the council that as regards the west of Scotland more generally, this exercise has been primarily based on a numerical model with Glasgow City as a predominant population centre effectively forming the hub of an expanding wheel. As constituencies are generated at the Glasgow boundaries the balance of populations to make up the electoral quota have been drawn from neighbouring authorities, East Renfrewshire, without what appears to be due regard to the pre-existing merits of long and well-established constituencies within our area. This council believes that there are preferable options available which better serve the electorate within East Renfrewshire, which better serve the MSPs ultimately voted to serve that electorate, and which better assist in the smooth running of the election process. East Renfrewshire Council believes that the retention of an Eastwood constituency and a variation to the proposed Renfrewshire South, achieves these ambitions. The current proposals do not, to our mind, adequately take account of the other criteria relevant to the exercise: local authority areas, the maintenance of local ties, geographical considerations and inconvenience caused by alteration of existing arrangements. Our view as expressed in the slides, our overview, is that boundaries in this proposal are fundamentally driven by numbers to the detriment of these other factors. In fact, we would go further and suggest that we are not sure they have been meaningfully considered at all. We believe that the proposed constituencies are not convenient, are not practical and are not efficient to administer. We believe that they have no easily identifiable boundaries and they do not have regard to established and historical local ties between communities, whether those ties be social, cultural or geographical. Fundamentally, as we will go on to explain, East Renfrewshire Council's position is that the Eastwood constituency should be maintained and that Lavern Valley or part of it should be included in a revised Renfrewshire South.

Moving on, the preferred option of East Renfrewshire Council, as I have mentioned, is to retain the current Eastwood constituency. One aspect which might debatably be argued as sounding against Eastwood as a constituency in its own right is its electoral size in comparison to the electoral quota which has been established. At present, Eastwood has by Boundaries Scotland own assessment an electorate of 58,258 individuals, which is 3,644 short of the electoral quota of 59,902. Even at this figure, the current electorate still stands at 93 per cent of the quota within the 10 per cent margins expressed by Boundaries Scotland as acceptable. And the disparity is of a level lower than that of 28 of the other constituencies proposed. Even taking that aside this also disregards the fact that East Renfrewshire area has in terms of figures produced by the national records of Scotland in 2018, the fourth highest projected population growth in Scotland, with a rate of 6.4 per cent for the period 2018 to 2028. In essence, the population of this area is growing at half a per cent per year and from 2020 onwards we understand that growth to rank at 0.4 of a per cent. We are a growing population and by implication we believe we have a growing electorate.

This is an area where schooling is a significant drop. This is an area where, as properties are vacated by the older population, families with children are moving in. This is an area where, given the electorate for a Scottish Parliamentary electorate includes 16-year-olds, properties with one member of the electorate very quickly turn into two, very quickly turn into three, turn into four. We believe the electorate within our council area is on the rise and will continue to rise.

And fundamentally we believe that Boundaries Scotland have effectively projected for the future using today's statistics and by implication the results of that exercise will not adequately meet the criteria that they have set going forward. It is estimated that within the lifetime of this review that growth within East Renfrewshire will see the electorate rise to a figure, certainly between 57,000 and 58,000 and closer to quota over time again. It seems logical to East Renfrewshire Council that Boundaries Scotland should cater for these population changes within this current exercise, as to neglect these projections will in our eyes undermine the rationale underpinning their very proposals. And as a general rule we would suggest that constituency proposals should recognise these projections across the board and skew below quota in areas of expected growth and skew above quota in those of expected decline.

As regards the other relevant criteria for consideration, Eastwood also has the benefit of being a long-established constituency with recognised boundaries and existing public awareness. The process being undertaken just now should in no way detract from the willingness or the preparedness of individuals to vote at an election. When people are used to a system, when people know where to poll, when people know how the election is going to operate, there is an encouragement to participate. These changes in our eyes will actually impact upon that preparedness, understanding and participation in elections. The boundaries of Eastwood, in general terms, reflect the old Eastwood district and in terms of the administration of the election process, provide a well-rehearsed machine with established practice, established venues and transport links to ensure a smooth and efficient process under the auspices of a returning officer with intimate and well gained knowledge of the whole area.

Electoral communities within the area are easily accessible with convenient travel links aiding ongoing representation of local communities by ultimately elected representatives. The area obviously falls within one local authority area and maintains strong historical ties between the various communities within it. And as you can see from the slide, it is very much a ready-to-go constituency. It meets all the criteria set out by Boundaries Scotland in determining appropriate constituencies going forward and, in our eyes, it provides a better option than a significant number of the other constituency proposals that have been made. I mentioned at the start there that one potential argument that might be made against it is the fact that at the moment it lies a certain number below the electoral quota, even though it does fall within the 10 per cent and even though it is not by any manner or means one of the lowest population to quotas within the proposals, but even taking that at face value and even if we recognise that the electoral quota is the ultimate objective and we disregard the other relevant factors and we take the view that this moment in time calculation, this moment in time recovery of statistics to form the basis for such a calculation is appropriate, which as I have just mentioned we obviously disagree with, it is still our position that there are actually better options out there, even based on the criteria that Boundaries Scotland are using.

This slide reflects such a potential alternative and for the avoidance of doubt, I would highlight that this is not the council's preferred option. This is just an illustration, an example to show what could otherwise have been done to closer attain the electoral quota even using Boundaries Scotland's practice and requirements. And we believe that this would have given them greater cognisance

of the other relevant factors like local authority areas or lack of interruption, etc, and so on.

So, this alternative essentially takes four of the existing council wards and combines them into a Parliamentary constituency. It increases the numbers of the Eastwood model that we have just spoken about by the inclusion of the Neilston area, which is in itself part of East Renfrewshire Council's area, and it has the effect of bringing the electorate to a figure of 60,536. Now, this is above the electoral quota, but it is less than the electorate within both of the two currently proposed constituencies affecting the East Renfrewshire area. This would have had the benefit of maintaining a constituency with one local authority area, it retains local established ties, and it covers the geography with reasonable communication and travel channels. As I say, this is not our preferred option, but it is another alternative that even if my initial arguments do not hold sway, could have been used and would still be better than the proposals that are in front of us.

Looking at the proposals that are in front of us, the council has a number of comments to make. First of all, and bearing in mind what I have already said about projections in terms of population, both of these proposals already sit above the electoral quota in terms of numbers and that is before any of the projected population growth within East Renfrewshire Council area takes effect. We would, therefore, expect to see a further rise in the electorate numbers increasing the initial disparity between the quota and the actual electorate in these areas. As regards Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock, the council would suggest that there is no historical or established link between these communities across the Glasgow/East Renfrewshire boundary. And the local ties which are in existence as regards the position of the constituency within East Renfrewshire are in fact, lost, for example, the links between Newton Mearns, Eaglesham and so on. Beyond that, the constituency obviously straddles local authority areas. Although that could be argued to be a physical proximity between the communities involved, public transport channels within this proposed constituency demonstrate a lack of social connectivity between communities. The average time to travel from Busby in the east, Priesthill in the west being approximately one hour on public transport and bearing in mind what I have already said about projections in terms of population, both of these proposals already sit above the electoral quota in terms of numbers, and that is before any of the projected population growth within East Renfrewshire council area takes effect. We would therefore expect to see a further rise in the electorate numbers, increasing the disparity between the quota and the actual electorate in these areas. As regards Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock, the council would suggest that there is no historical or established link between these communities across the Glasgow - East Renfrewshire boundary. And the local ties which are in existence, as regards the position of the constituency within East Renfrewshire, are in fact lost. For example, the links between Newton Mearns, Eaglesham and so on. Beyond that, the constituency obviously straddles local authority areas. Although there could be argued to be a physical proximity between the communities involved, public transport channels within this proposed constituency demonstrate a lack of social connectivity between communities, the average time to travel from Busby in the east to Priesthill in the west being approximately one hour by public transport for a five mile journey. That in itself suggests that there is no real connection between these areas, and to bring them together into a constituency disregards the consideration of local ties. As regards Renfrewshire South, as I have mentioned already we as a council recognise the need to share a constituency across a boundary with one of our neighbouring authorities,

and we recognise that certain practical and historical links exist between the East Renfrewshire communities in the Leven Valley and the Paisley area which falls within Renfrewshire council boundaries. We are therefore generally supportive of a Renfrewshire South constituency, but we believe that the proposed composition of the constituency as suggested by Boundaries Scotland is impractical and inefficient, linking as it does areas which have no cultural, historical or geographical connections. More appropriate linkage could in our eyes be made with areas in and around the Paisley locale. We understand from communication with Renfrewshire Council that they hold a similar view on this matter. The geography of the proposed Renfrewshire South area raises a number of issues. There is no main road route from one end of the constituency to the other, and travel within the constituency would in fact involve use of minor roads, in some cases single-track country roads, with journey times of hours rather than minutes, and we have gauged this is approximately two to three hours by public transport to get from one end of that particular constituency to the other. Transport links are minimal if in existence at all, with impact on the ability of representatives to attend local surgeries and attend to the needs of all constituents within the area. While the majority of the population is geographically within the East Renfrewshire area, the majority of the landmass is found within Renfrewshire, and as such the returning officer duty falls to East Renfrewshire officers. The existing East Renfrewshire Council arrangements for elections use premises situated at the eastern extremity of the local authority area for count purposes, and the practical transportation issues posed would likely necessitate a change in these arrangements, with new facilities having to be identified at a more suitable location to aid the efficiency of the count. And in the council's submission, the travel limitations outlines not only have this practical effect on the efficacy of the election, and the subsequent process and subsequent representation, but in itself it is also indicative that there are no pre-existing community links between the communities falling within this proposed constituency, such as have warranted or necessitated any physical connections of that sort. And these slides here are basically just exemplars, to provide you with an indication of the kind of transportation routes that are required to get from one part of this particular proposed constituency to another. That shows main road routes which actually require you to traverse outside of the constituency for the quickest possible transportation to various locations, and that slide is actually some of the roads if you wanted to stay within the constituency, which would actually have to be traversed in order to move from one area to another; there is no main route linkage across this constituency as a whole.

So to conclude and in summary, I will just reiterate very quickly the salient points of the council's position. We do recognise the importance of equal representation in elections, we do recognise the need for constituency boundaries to be altered under these reviews, we just believe that this one could be done better for the East Renfrewshire area. We note that we are too large to be one constituency and too small to be two. We note, however, that in addition to the concept of equal representation boundaries should be identified taking account of various other factors, including effective and convenient local government, easily identifiable boundaries and recognition of local ties. We do not believe that the proposed constituencies put forward by Boundaries Scotland meet these criteria, in fact we believe they fail on all of these criteria. The boundaries identified appear to be driven by numbers and only numbers, with no consideration given to the other criteria cited above, and no suggestion that they have been meaningfully considered. The proposed constituencies are by no means convenient, practical or efficient to administer, particularly Renfrewshire South; and the boundaries are not

easily identifiable, and indeed people with a lot of local knowledge have struggled just to work out where some of those boundaries actually are in terms of the land; and the boundaries do not have any regard for established and historical local ties, be they social, familial or cultural. So as I have said, and as I will reiterate, our council's position is that the Eastwood constituency should be retained, and that Leven Valley or a part of it should be included in a revised Renfrewshire South. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you Mr Mahon. Now does anyone wish to ask any questions, either for clarification or any other matter, of Mr Mahon? Thank you.

MR MAHON: Thank you very much.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: I express no views at all on these matters, I simply chair the meeting, but I feel I have to comment on the fact that under the present rules Boundaries Scotland are bound to follow the existing electoral figures for quota, they cannot take account of the directions however sensible that might seem looking at it outside, but the rules do not permit that at present. I simply make that as a neutral comment. Thank you Mr Mahon for your presentation. Now there are a couple of other members of East Renfrewshire Council who have indicated a possible desire to speak, and I do not know whether they wish to continue in the light of the presentation that has been made. But could I ask first of all Colin Sweeney, is Colin Sweeney present?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, Colin Sweeney is not present.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: No, okay. And the other person from the council was Louise Pringle, is Louise Pringle Present?

LOUISE PRINGLE: I am here [inaudible]...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: I am sorry, I cannot...

LOUISE PRINGLE: No, I am here but we are part of the same group, thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: So you do not wish to add any further comment?

LOUISE PRINGLE: No, no.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay, thank you. Does anyone else from East Renfrewshire Council wish to add anything at this point?

MR MAHON: No we do not.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay. Thank you, I appreciate that; it is very helpful to us to have such a well laid out presentation for the purposes of recording, thank you. So therefore I will return to the list of other speakers, and I will call first of all the MSP Jackson Carlaw.

JACKSON CARLAW MSP: I can normally be heard without the microphone because my wife normally says I cannot say anything discreetly, it is heard the other side of the constituency. Sheriff Murphy, thank you very much, and welcome to my parliamentary constituency of Eastwood, which I have proudly represented since

2016. Indeed, I used to play as a child on the very spot that we sit in here, and over the years I think it is true that East Renfrewshire is an unusual constituency in that it has no physical town centre as such; it is a collection of villages. It is a collection of farms, which gradually expanded in the 19th, and principally in the 20th century, into the community of Eastwood and East Renfrewshire, although references to Eastwood can be found on the map of Scotland several hundred years before references to Glasgow, so it is a constituency and a community that has been established, and is of long standing. It is also a constituency rich in its own history: this is the birthplace of the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, it is where Rudolf Hess landed in the Second World War and was taken to Giffnock Scout Hall; it is the home of Rouken Glen Park, voted the finest park in the whole of the United Kingdom, with a waterfall that regularly is the fifth best waterfall anywhere in the United Kingdom as well. And people understand that, and throughout my lifetime it has been represented in a single entity of East Renfrewshire, particularly of Eastwood, by Sir Guy Lloyd, by Betty Anderson, by Allan Stewart, by Jim Murphy, by Paul Masterton, by Kirsten Oswald, by Ken Macintosh and by myself. And in a sort of interesting way, I believe it is the architecture of democracy in the Eastwood community, which is understood by the people who work, and play, and have been a part of it, which has seen the extraordinarily high levels of turnout and democratic participation, which stand the equal of almost anywhere in the United Kingdom. The highest turnout anywhere in the United Kingdom in the 2011 referendum on proportional representation, a turnout of over 90 percent in the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, and in general elections and in Scottish elections, and in elections to the council, regularly either among the top ten within the UK or among the top two or three within Scotland. So the democratic architecture which is the representation that people here have, I think is part of what makes the Eastwood community an entity that people recognise and wish to support. And I, as the representative of Eastwood, believe that I speak on behalf of this community and am its voice in the Scottish Parliament, and I look at the proposals that have been made by the commission, and let me say that I am only adding to, because I wish to fully endorse the comments that have been made, and the presentation that has been made, by East Renfrewshire Council, which I think very much represents a view that is shared across all the parties, all of the parties who have represented this constituency, so it is of no particular political colour or stripe. As somebody who has lived here, I look at the proposals and I am concerned. What does Glasgow Priesthill have in common with Waterfoot Road, which is the extremity of the constituency it would seek to represent. I at the age of 64 have been in Johnstone four times in my life, and each occasion was as a representative for the West of Scotland region for the Scottish Parliament, which I was from 2007 to 2016. I have been in Paisley maybe two or three dozen times, either to attend a service at the abbey at the representative of the West of Scotland, or more commonly not to get out of my car but to drive through it to get to the airport. A gentleman who contacted me who lives in Eaglesham said, 'Mr Carlaw, I think I am the only connection between Eaglesham and Howwood, and that is because before I got married that is where I lived.' He said 'I don't know anybody else who has been there', and I think that the presentation by East Renfrewshire council, which set out the complete absence of any traffic, or roads, or infrastructure, or community engagement between the two constituencies as proposed was absolutely correct. People here travel south to Ayr and travel north into the city of Glasgow; they live, and work, and play on that basis. I was born in Clarkston, next door to the author Alistair MacLean of *Where Eagles Dare* and *Ice Station Zebra* fame, another of our famous alumni here. I have lived in Newton Mearns, I have lived in Giffnock, I have lived in Clarkston, and I live in Waterfoot. That is the pattern of so many of the

people who live here, and who have family ties, and who socialise, who shop, and who believe themselves to be a community based around that architecture. And as their representative they know that they have somebody whose single concern is to promote the interests of Eastwood in the Scottish Parliament. In both the constituencies that I have seen the Eastwood representation would be the minority within the much larger constituency, and I cannot see how as the minority within a much larger constituency with other priorities and pressures Eastwood would have the same effective voice, and Eastwood constituents would have the same effective voice in the Scottish Parliament acting on their behalf. And as has been illustrated, simply for the elected representative of the seat including Newton Mearns and the south of Renfrew to communicate between the different parts of this constituency would take hours, when at the moment it takes minutes to cover the basic territorial groundwork of the constituency. I make a particular plea, too, on behalf of the Jewish community. The Jewish community, in large part, lives in East Renfrewshire within Eastwood, some 50 to 60 percent of Scotland's Jewish community. They like me have family that live in Giffnock, in Newton Mearns, in Clarkston, in Eaglesham; they live, and they work, and they operate together, but they now worship together too because the two synagogues have merged into one, and the community would be divided. At the moment in a community, in a constituency, where they are able to live and worship together in one parliamentary constituency, and to know that they have in their elected representative a single voice in the Scottish Parliament who will speak up and act on their behalf. And in a very personal and direct way, let me say that in recent weeks, when we have seen the death of a former constituent whose family live in one part of the constituency, they would have been mourning in another constituency if these proposals were to be given effect. So while I understand the numbers, albeit as has been demonstrated Eastwood is not somehow uniquely currently adrift of the quota, the proposal for Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock is actually more out of quota in the other direction than Eastwood is currently in the present direction. So nothing in these proposals is unique to Eastwood; there are many other constituencies with populations that are significantly out of quota. I believe, even if you do not take into account future population growth, that Eastwood stands perfectly respectably within the quota that has been determined by the Boundaries Commission. It has been said that future election results are of no consequence, but some have uncharitably said that 'Well you would be in favour of all this wouldn't you, because otherwise you're out of a job.' Well let me tackle that head on and say that by the time of the elections when these boundaries will apply in 2026 I will be 67 years of age, and unlike other politicians I have no intentions of going on, and on, and on. But I do hope, and very much believe, that this community will be best served in the future by having a successor to me as the MSP for the Eastwood constituency, irrespective of the political party that they may represent. That has served the interests of this community well for generations; it is what I know, speaking to and from the representations I have received from the community here, that they wish to see continue. It is what they understand, and while yes I understand that local authority boundaries are not a factor here, one can only say that there is no current guidance, and we can only say 'yet', but I do find it passing strange that the headquarters of East Renfrewshire Council would be in the city authority of another parliamentary region, which I think would be quite extraordinary in the circumstances. So I believe that people here want to see the Eastwood constituency continue; I support the proposals that have been put to the commission by East Renfrewshire Council, I think they sum up the technical response; but emotionally let me say finally that people in this area believe they are part of something distinct from Glasgow, something distinct from Paisley and Renfrew, they recognise and understand

despite the absence of a town centre that Eastwood is an entity which has existed for generations, and is one which they wish to see continue.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you. Are there any questions on the floor for Mr Carlaw?

JACKSON CARLAW MSP: Okay

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: If it is possible, could my assistants have a copy of your speaking notes, sir?

JACKSON CARLAW MSP: Well they were not actually speaking notes, I did not refer to them, but I mean...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Alright.

JACKSON CARLAW MSP: I do not know how helpful they would be.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Alright, thank you.

JACKSON CARLAW MSP: Would you like a copy of it? I mean, I did not speak to these.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Now, could I next call upon Mr Jim Swift, a member of the public who has asked to speak. Mr Swift.

JIM SWIFT: Thank you. You were very good, Mr Mahon, as ever. Thank you. I suppose I really do not want to travel over ground that has already been well trodden, and articulated very clearly by the two previous speakers. I suppose I would like to elaborate a little bit on the history of Eastwood; it is, as Mr Carlaw said, small communities. And you know, you have got Giffnock, and Thornliebank, and Stamperland, and Williamwood, and Clarkston, and Newton Mearns which is no longer a particularly small community. And I think the thing that is really important to try and grip here is the cultural ties. There are three schools, for example: there is the primary school for Jewish kids, Calderwood Lodge; there is the school Isobel Mair for people with difficulties, and there is St Ninian's High School. All three of those schools are constituency-wide schools: they take children from across the whole of Eastwood, as is now. And I think it is really, really important to understand that relationships are built on a series of social, cultural and educational institutions and organisations. And if you consider the sporting clubs, because we had and still have lots of small communities, the important thing is to understand the likes of Giffnock North is an enormous athletics club, St Cadoc's has over a thousand kids going to play football every week. So you have got these large organisations that are born out of people travelling within the constituency, and frankly if you consider that these micro-communities are communities, well yes but they are part of something much bigger, and they are part of something much bigger because from those micro-communities the people join organisations, they coalesce together because they kind of have to, in many respects. And if you look at, Mr Carlaw referred to the Jewish population of East Renfrewshire, well there are two different flavours if you like of Judaism: there is reform Judaism, who have a synagogue in Newton Mearns, and there are the traditional Jewish population who have a synagogue now in Giffnock only. And so people from one constituency would have to go and worship in the Reform synagogue and vice versa, I think to

travel across constituencies to meet with people that you would traditionally meet with anyway. The reason I bring up the schools is that schools are where many of us make our first friends, and our parents make good friends when they go to those schools, because people make relationships and build relationships with people who are like-minded, and people who share similar values and similar interests, and being at those schools together. So it is not unsurprising that you should not consider Thornliebank, or Giffnock or Newton Mearns in isolation, but you should consider them as part of a broader collective. When I was a kid I was born and raised in Newton Mearns, and I have lived almost my entire life here apart from a spell in Waterfoot, I got that far, it gave me a bloody nose. But you get the point, there are a lot of people who are raised here who come back here to raise their own children, and it is important that they do because that is part of that wider fabric of our constituency. If you look at religious organisations, another set of organisations where people generally coalesce together because they have shared values, they have shared interests. And if you look at... I have talked about the Jewish ones, but there are quite clearly... the Episcopalians have only one church here; the Free Presbyterians have a new church here, they are the only Free Presbyterian church in Eastwood. And so you have got lots of organisations, the Baptist church is a thriving church, and again people who go to that church, they come from all across the constituency. And so, I think I would like to play that message to you, and appeal to you on that Eastwood is not a series of micro-communities, it is a large community where people access their social networks, and their sporting and educational opportunities, across the whole of Eastwood. The other thing I would say is, I am quite a keen cyclist, and it takes me five minutes to get to Giffnock from Newton Mearns, it takes me less to get to Clarkston; I can get to any part of Eastwood in under ten minutes. Now I cycle quite regularly, and across the country etc, it will take me almost two hours on a bicycle going at a decent lick to get to Lochwinnoch, which I do a couple of times a year, and it is the only times I have ever been in Lochwinnoch because it has not got anything that I particularly want to... I do not have any friends there, I do not know anybody there. I am not saying that they are not nice people, I am sure they are, it is just that I do not know any of them. And I think they do not know me, and vice versa. So what I would try to say is that the distance, and not just the distance as the crow flies but as the car goes, I mean I have to go into Glasgow to get to Lochwinnoch, and I have to go through Paisley as well; it is not exactly handy. And I think it would be hard for our representatives to represent us effectively, and if this is about anything it is about making sure our politicians are able to represent us as effectively as possible, and this will make it that much harder. One of the other things about having schools that I talked about, the three schools that were particularly. And you can partially include Eastwood and you can partially include Mearns Castle, Mearns Castle for example is the designated school for the kids from the Jewish primary school to go to, that is where they go. Anyway, my point is that I think it is much easier for one representative to deal with all of the issues across these schools. The theatre, and Owen the leader of the council will correct me if I am wrong, but I am sure the theatre and the leisure centre are up for grabs right now, and there is talk of... not up for grabs, but there is talk about developing those areas. How they are developed might not be as advantageous for people like me from Newton Mearns should things change, because representation changes and I might not be as eloquently represented as I currently am. So I think those are probably the key things I would like to say, and I would like to thank everybody here for listening to me, or avoiding listening to me.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: I think we all appreciate you mentioning the theatre without putting on the pantomime which is just about to start.

JIM SWIFT: It's behind you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Would anyone like, hold on a second --

JIM SWIFT: Oh, sorry.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Would anyone like to ask any questions or points of clarification of Mr Swift? Thank you.

JIM SWIFT: Thank you, thank you all.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Next can I invite Alison McGown, who is the chair of Thornliebank Community Council, to come forward please.

ALISON MCGOWAN: Good evening everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Alison McGowan, and I am the chair of Thornliebank Community Council, quite a new community council. I asked to speak this evening with that in mind; it would be remiss of me if I did not put forward some salient points and concerns from Thornliebank community, in particular. Thornliebank has a surprisingly rich history, tied to the print industry and the textile industry, and in particular to the Crum family. Thornliebank Printworks is one of the longest serving printworks in the whole of Scotland; it was one of the most innovative printworks in the country, producing some of the finest textiles in all of Europe. My great-great-grandfather was brought down from Perth to be the head block printer within those works; five generations of my family still live, work, learn and do business in Thornliebank. My interest in and passion for my community run deep. I am the lead volunteer with Thornliebank History Group. I am the chair of another volunteer-led community group called Thornliebank Together, we deliver a food-share initiative delivering food parcels to those in our community most in need. We deliver grant making and participatory budgeting on behalf of East Renfrewshire Council, in addition to supporting other local groups to develop their local offer: the Guides, the Scouts, the seniors group. We, Thornliebank Together, coordinate our own programme of activities to bring accessible and affordable opportunities to our local residents: yoga, line-dancing, all sorts of different things. Moving forward, we have some very lofty and ambitious plans for our community. I think it is fair to say I am actively involved in my community, and it has been said on many occasions that you cannot buy what I know about my community, and what my fellow volunteers know about the community of Thornliebank. With that in mind, I would like to share some of our particular concerns with you. Thornliebank has a population of just over 4,000, yet across the two GP practices operating from our local health centre we have a patient roll of some 15,000.

If you live in Giffnock, G46 6 post code, you cannot register at Thornliebank practice. If you live in Nitshill, or as far away as Crookston, you can register. Operationally, this is a nightmare for those staff. Glasgow City Council offer a hospital at home service. East Renfrewshire do not. Glasgow City Council, although they are under threat at the moment, offer community linked practitioners to support local residents through their health practice. East Renfrewshire Council do not.

It goes without saying that when almost 10,000 people are journeying to a health centre, that traffic is clearly an issue. The volume of traffic heading into Thornliebank to access GP services is absolutely horrific.

In 2027, Thornliebank Primary School will celebrate its 150th anniversary. There are currently more pupils attending Thornliebank Primary School on a placing request from Glasgow than there are Thornliebank and East Renfrewshire pupils. Again, more traffic hitting my small community.

Unlike other areas of Eastwood, there are no opportunities to build houses in Thornliebank. We are surrounded on all sides. The Scottish Government's housing allocation policies do nothing to support communities like mine. We are not a growing community. We are stagnant. There is no opportunity for development. I think I would be correct in saying that should this boundary change proceed, Thornliebank will hold the most social housing of all Eastwood areas moving into that new constituency. I find it very unlikely that a resident from Eastwood is ever going to look to their MSP for support when securing a placing request to a Glasgow school. I find it very unlikely that a resident of Eastwood is ever going to look for support from their MSP to access social housing outwith East Renfrewshire or the traditional Eastwood area. You have alluded to that yourself. I would further suggest that the creation of a cross-boundary MSP and the strengthening of those links and ties to Glasgow, will only exacerbate the unique issue that Thornliebank faces and put additional pressures on already stretched services. Housing, education and health will suffer, undoubtedly.

According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, Thornliebank is now classed as an area of deprivation, albeit a small pocket of mild deprivation, but deprivation, nonetheless. Thornliebank Together receive exceptional support from East Renfrewshire Council in alleviating the impact of that poverty within their community. I alluded to some of the activities of Thornliebank Together. Those are funded by East Renfrewshire Council, run by me and my fellow volunteers, but funded wholly by East Renfrewshire Council.

Thornliebank shares a huge boundary with Glasgow and, sadly, my mammy was born in Carnwadric, but, sadly, Carnwadric and Arden sit in the lowest 50 percentile in that SIMD. There is real serious poverty in Glasgow and the Glasgow area that they are looking to bring in to the revised Priesthill and Giffnock constituency. We fear, I fear, that should an MSP be given the opportunity to directly lobby in the Scottish Parliament for investment or for funding, that Eastwood will be lost; that it will be sidelined and overlooked by the sheer level of need and poverty in those Glasgow areas. My community is lost. It is 'I am no longer a well kent face'. My statement tonight is clearly deeply personal. These are the ramblings of one woman worried for the future of her community, and I implore you to revisit your proposals with a view to respecting the needs of a small community who is in need of support, and the families and the neighbours and the people I talk to on the street, all feel the same. We live in East Renfrewshire; we live in Eastwood and we want to be part and remain part of that community very strongly. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Would anyone like to ask any questions of Ms McGowan?

MS MCGOWAN: Thank you, Sheriff.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you.

MS MCGOWAN: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Now, next there are some representatives from Glasgow City Council who have asked to speak. So, I call, first of all, Saqib Ahmed from Greater Pollok. Mr Ahmed.

CLLR AHMED: Thank you. Can everyone hear me? Thank you. I do not have a lot to say, but what I would like to say is I am an elected representative of very diverse community of Greater Pollok. I represent the people of Priesthill, Nitshill. I represent the people of Crookston and Deaconsbank, a very, very diverse community, and I personally believe that the proposed constituency of Scottish Parliament which covers Priesthill and Giffnock, is - I personally believe it is just boundaries. It will actually, you know, be really good for our democracy, and it will give us a chance to represent communities, as somebody said, like, you know, that are not very well off. We heard earlier on from the representative of East Renfrew that East Renfrewshire itself is not big enough to be two constituencies, and it is small enough, or not too small, to be, you know, one - I believe you said? Is that right? Sorry, sir.

UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER: Too big for one.

CLLR AHMED: Too big for one, or small for two. So, I think it is fair to say that we should have East Renfrew divided and have Priesthill and, you know, Giffnock going into one constituency. As someone already said, these boundaries are not affecting schools, health boards or council boundaries, community councils, so I do not see any reason why we should not have Priesthill and Giffnock as one constituency. Trains and buses are well connected with - I mean, taking a bus to some of the parts of East Renfrewshire going through to Newton Mearns, you have to go through Glasgow, and buses are well connected with East Renfrew and Glasgow, and the trains as well. Geographically, both, I mean, from -- if you come from Giffnock to Priesthill, you have to cover the areas which are - like, literally, I take one step and I am into East Renfrewshire, and if I take one step this side, I am in Glasgow. So, I do not see a difference between, you know - trust me, sir, it will not take you 10-minutes, you know, from one place to another. It will still take you 10-minutes. You will not need to get a visa going from one part of the constituency to another. People would like to worship. They do not need a visa. People are working in Glasgow, even in Ayrshire, they can regularly commute to Glasgow without any problem or without any hindrance. So, I do not see a reason why someone would have a difficulty going from one part of the constituency, or one part of East Renfrewshire to another part of East Renfrewshire which will not be the same constituency.

So, I mean, I live in, you know, at the moment, Glasgow Pollok, but if I have to go to a place of worship in southside of Glasgow, I have absolutely no problem travelling from one place to another.

So, I would endorse your proposed boundaries, and that is all I would have to say.

If there is any question, I am more than happy to answer, if I can.

Yes, sir?

JIM SWIFT: Whilst I fully accept that if you stand on the boundary between two places, you can put one foot in one and one foot in the other, that they are next to each other, that applies --

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Can I ask you to speak into the microphone so the transcribers can hear you.

JIM SWIFT: Okay. Yes, of course.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: It is alright, we will bring it to you. Sorry, no, I was going to get it for you. Thank you.

JIM SWIFT: I would fully accept that on a boundary that you can put one foot either side. That is absolutely fair and reasonable. I think the point I was trying to make, because I live in the other constituency, is that it would be 2-hours by public transport - or 2 to 3-hours by public transport to get from one side of the constituency to the other. I do it in about 2-hours on my bicycle. I go through Glasgow and Paisley. Do you think that is reasonable? That is my question.

CLLR AHMED: No, I do not believe, or I do not find that is reasonable, but at the same time, I think people, you know, living in Priesthill, are well connected to the people in Giffnock, and they can travel very, very easily, you know, between these two very diverse communities by buses or by trains. So, I think we cannot just, like, ignore one and accept the other. I think we need to have a balance and the current proposed boundaries, I think it is well balanced.

JIM SWIFT: I think you will find it is a package.

CLLR AHMED: Everyone has their views, isn't it, sir.

JIM SWIFT: And that is what we are here to talk about.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Can I ask, how many local authorities are you dealing with when you are representing your constituents?

CLLR AHMED: How many local authorities I deal with?

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Yes.

CLLR AHMED: I deal with only one, which is Glasgow City Council.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Sorry, exactly --

CLLR AHMED: The, the --

SUZANNE WILDMAN: -- so, clearly, we would then be represented by someone who would have to deal with two local authorities, and how effective would that representation be under those circumstances? Now, as an ordinary lay person here, I do not know if I am the only one, but that is my concern, is about effective representation. I take the point. I go into Glasgow City Centre. I go up to Newton Mearns. I go to Paisley. I go to all of these places fairly regularly. I have got family in Barrhead. But what concerns me is effective representation and if you, as a representative, are having to deal with two local authorities for any issue that arises, how effective will you be; how effective will your team be in dealing with any enquires? You are not dealing with one set of roads department. You are dealing with two. You are dealing with two education departments. I just cannot see how it

can work effectively for the people that you are representing, and that is my concern as an ordinary voter.

CLLR AHMED: A very good question. Now, Glasgow is part of --Glasgow takes in a part of Rutherglen as a -- on the list, the regional list, and there is absolutely no issue for the people or the elected members who have been elected in Glasgow representing someone who does not live in Glasgow, but they live in South Lanarkshire Council, and obviously that formalised working there, and it will work in Glasgow as well - and, sorry, Giffnock and Priesthill. There will not be an issue. As the gentleman already said, the education department, health and community council, then the council boundaries will not be affected, so if somebody is----

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Well, I understand that, but I am not talking about that. I am talking about, today, concerns that people raise with their representative and how effectively that will be handled when they are dealing with two sets of --

CLLR AHMED: That, that -- you are 100 per cent right. This one already works with the regional list, so the constituency MSP will not, or should not, have any issue when it comes to representing the people from two different local authorities. Say, for example, that somebody is in Glasgow, they want to be represented, that is okay, and if - for somebody who is in East Renfrewshire, that is also okay because these regional lists - I mean, we have a MSP sitting there. He will tell you he should be able to represent people from Paisley, people from Renfrew, or people from East Renfrewshire without any hesitation, without any hindrance. I am pretty sure he probably will already be representing them, and I am pretty sure those elected in the future, they will be able to do it without any issue or without any problem.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Could I ask for the record, I note that you are obviously an electorate representative in relation to one of the parts of Glasgow that is affected by these changes.

CLLR AHMED: That is correct, sir.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Are your views your own, or are these the general views of Glasgow City Council? Can I ask that simply for the record?

CLLR AHMED: They are my own views, not the Glasgow City Council's views.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Thank you. Any other questions from the floor? Oh, yes, sorry.

MAIRI BEERS: Can I ask, what is the local transport that goes from Silverburn to Giffnock? It is one bus an hour. So, what is the connection of transport that is not bus -- that is not car that you are talking about?

CLLR AHMED: I am talking about the buses, ma'am. I mean, you can easily take No. 59 going into Thornliebank. You can easily take----

MAIRI BEERS: But I am not going to Thornliebank.

CLLR AHMED: But Thornliebank is part of East Renfrewshire that is in question.

MAIRI BEERS: (Inaudible - over-speaking) bus to Giffnock. I walk half an hour. There is no local -- there is only one bus an hour that goes from the Silverburn area to Giffnock to Clarkston, and it is on from 07.30 in the morning, one an hour, until 6 o'clock. After that, if you are in the Silverburn area, you get two buses, or three buses, to get you from that area to Giffnock area. So, there is no public transport connection. There has been no public transport connection from Giffnock to Paisley without going from - you know, like, you can get a train into town and then get another train out, but there is no direct route and no direct bus to Paisley.

CLLR AHMED: I absolutely appreciate your concerns and I can assure you there is - I could be wrong, so please do correct me if there is a direct public transport link between Barrhead and Giffnock, ma'am. They probably will be more closer from Priesthill going into Giffnock than Barrhead to Giffnock.

MAIRI BEERS: So, I think from Barrhead, you would have to get the train to Pollokshaws East and then another train out to Giffnock.

CLLR AHMED: Yes.

MAIRI BEERS: Yes, that is --

CLLR AHMED: So, it is still going back into Glasgow.

MAIRI BEERS: Right, so, there is a huge public transport problem. There is no connection, or very, very little.

CLLR AHMED: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: So, I think - did you want to ask something, Mr Carlaw?

JACKSON CARLOW, MSP: No, I think my point was also on the actual reality of the public transport links, which I am finding difficult to recognise from the description of the gentleman concerned, because they fly on the face of anything constituents have represented to me.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay. Thank you.

CLLR AHMED: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Next, can I call upon, please, Bailie Rashid Hussain, also from Greater Glasgow Council.

CLLR HUSSAIN: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I am going to follow on from Councillor Saqib Ahmed and contradict what he said in terms of Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock. We do not have any local ties. There is no real connection between these communities. When it comes to transport, yes, from the City Centre to these directly, yes, there is transport links, there is good train links, but if you are going across, there is nothing. The woman who alluded to it, Silverburn is a town centre for Greater Pollok, and it has town centre status; however, there is nothing that goes from those areas after 6.00 p.m. It is a nightmare trying to get to any hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital. You cannot get to it. Getting into Paisley, you cannot get to it. Trying to get to any other area, it is impossible.

Obviously, the MSP spoke about -- the only connection between these two areas, in my opinion, is the M77 corridor, because I am one of these guys that I live in a ward, in Greater Pollok, and I drive to Prestwick every day for work and I also work in the City Centre and it is just that motorway connection which is helping that community grow, and that is why it is growing. That is the only reason. But, personally, the electorate - EQ is 61,996. It is growing due to people moving in with families from other areas, due to these transport links, but for no other reason. But the presentation given by East Renfrewshire Council, I think I would support as well. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Are there any questions? No? Thank you, sir.

CLLR HUSSAIN: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY:

Next, can I call upon, please, Stephen Curran from Glasgow City Council Newlands ward.

CLLR CURRAN: Thank you, my Lord.

I am Stephen Curran. I represent the Newlands/Auldburn Ward, which is, basically, to the north of the proposed Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock boundary. I have represented that area for the past 20-years on Glasgow City Council, and I think it is important for us to recognise the importance of communities. I think that the maps that have been shown here today are really helpful. There are three over there. The one on the left shows the current Westminster constituencies with the new proposed constituency boundaries. The one on the right shows the current Scottish Parliament constituencies with the new proposed boundaries. The one in the middle is the most important one. That is the Community Council boundaries in relation to the proposed constituency boundaries, and those are boundaries that have largely been based around real communities, not artificial numbers or artificial creation of parliament in terms of, perhaps you could argue, the local authorities in 1995 were, to some extent, and the councils have made a good fist of that since then. But in the 50 years since those Community Councils have been created, those communities are based on real areas that people feel are genuine communities, and that is what I think is the most important thing. When you ask any constituent where do they live, they do not tell you that they live in the constituency. They tell you their street, the community they live in and, by a follow on from that, who represents them and the communities that they are part of.

So, I find sometimes, those of us who are elected, can be a bit over-egging the importance of the constituency boundary when, as you have already alluded, my Lord, in terms of the work that has been done by the Commission. There has to be a parity and a sense of fairness in representation for the constituency representatives, but also what comes together as the new regions for the list MSPs of which there will be - I think it is seven or eight - will cover the same area in a much larger sense, and a multitude, potentially, of local authorities as well.

The historical links that were mentioned, the historical link for the area I represent, certainly, is really important. The original Eastwood is an area I represent. The original Eastwood Parish is an area I represent. History with the Maxwell Family is well known by people across the local authority boundaries. There are areas that call themselves Eastwood in Glasgow, where people live, and areas that call themselves Eastwood on the East Renfrewshire boundary, in the same way there is a Merrylee in the Glasgow area I represent, there is a Merrylee in the East Renfrewshire side of the boundary as well. People who live in Arden, Carnwadric,

Kennishead and Regents Park and my own area where I represent, have the same postcode as Thornliebank. They have to put Thornliebank as their correct address in the G46 postcode for any mail.

The importance of looking at those transport connections cannot be understated. The 374 bus, which I think was alluded to, the McGill's bus, takes you around, basically, the whole constituency proposal on an hourly basis, but it is an existing transport connection. It does get people across. And, frankly, the MSP who is elected, is probably the only person who has to rely on getting across that boundary. They should be accessible to everybody regardless of where they live in the communities that they represent. There is also the 38 -- variations of the 38 bus that go through most of that particular proposed constituency. The 57 bus as well. And there is also the 29 subsidised SPT route which goes through most of my own area and takes in a bit of Giffnock as it comes back towards Glasgow. So, the transport connections are clear. The two rail links, one of which has been recently electrified, that take you through most of the boundary for the Glasgow Priesthill and Giffnock towards Barrhead and East Kilbride, are very important connections that connect, again, the communities in the proposed constituency.

There are no, I would suggest, easily identifiable boundaries in terms of the current East Renfrewshire, Eastwood and Glasgow Cathcart constituencies, as I would know it at present, because a lot of that is continuous residential development if you live in the Muirend area, which is the other side of the local authority boundary. If you are in one of the Merrylees and Newlands where particular boundary is, there is a very small burn. It is very difficult probably to tell where it is, but it is a path between housing. So, I think there is something that has to be said, and obviously Thornliebank, Carnwadric, Lochiel Road etc, it is very difficult if people do not know the boundary where that particular boundary sits in relation to that. So, it is not an easily identifiable boundary at present, and it is more of a coterminus community, I would argue, in terms of, particularly, importantly, Thornliebank, as a town centre.

The same effective voice - and minority - I really want to address that. Anybody who is elected, as the fundamental principle of elected representation, you represent everybody regardless of where they stay in your constituency or ward. So, the idea that the minority are not getting their voice heard, they are not being represented, I find an odd concept because, certainly, I would assume everybody elected has the same commitment to everybody in the area, regardless of whether they vote, how they vote, where they stay, or who they vote for.

The diverse communities point is really important, and the faith community which has been emphasised here is really significant. There are already established connections across the area in terms of, for example - well, I represented Calderwood Lodge when it was based in Glasgow, in the Newlands area, until its recent move to a fantastic new campus further up the hill here. Also, the Church of Scotland Presbytery covers this area, in the same way it covers the Glasgow area, as in the wider Glasgow area. The Glasgow Representative Council for the Jewish Community covers the wider area. The Scottish Episcopal Church's Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway obviously already covers the wider area. But very locally, for example, Thornliebank Parish and Eastwood Parish in my own area, come together as a Church of Scotland, and St Vincent De Paul's Parish in the Thornliebank area covers Carnwadric and Arden, Kennishead as well as the Thornliebank area for the Catholic community there. So, the faith communities are already active across what

is an artificial boundary, to some extent, because they are recognising real communities in the way that people in faith communities engage.

The final point I would add is, I think that there are established links already. What struck me tonight with coming here is, I had previously been here with my kids, who are now adults, for swimming lessons. So, I think the idea of it being, to some extent, distinct communities, is one which does not seem to chime with my own experience, but also I think for people who see the closeness between a lot of these communities, sometimes sharing the same names, sometimes sharing the same interest and obviously sharing the same transport connections.

So, thank you, all. Thanks to everybody for the concern and interest that is shown in this issue. It is really important how we represent people, but, ultimately, we represent real people in real communities, and the lines on a map are more important for those of us who are elected, but they are less important for those who are looking for support as individuals and constituents.
Thank you very much.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Any questions anyone would like to put now to Mr Curran?

SUZANNE WILDMAN: I am completely confused. Apologies. Was that a yes or a no for the boundaries, then, and you were waffling along in a different direction. I apologise. Were you a yes or a no for staying in East Renfrewshire?

CLLR CURRAN: Sorry, I was speaking on behalf of the people who live in the area I represent in terms of the connections they have, and saying that I am relaxed about proposals that identify with the communities being represented, and I was pointing to the Community Council map in the centre. So, if you stay in Pollokshaws, Eastwood, Arden, Carnwadric, Kennishead, Merrylee, Newlands, all the areas that I represent, I am comfortable that the proposal does not put them in jeopardy of not being represented properly, nor does it mean they will be disadvantages in any way. But I am relaxed about a proposal that allows them to be represented, whatever the Boundary Commission present in that --

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Are you sitting on the fence?

CLLR CURRAN: Sorry?

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Are you sitting on the fence?

CLLR CURRAN: No, I am not sitting on the fence. I am quite happy with the proposal as its put forward. I am not suggesting anything different because the communities that I represent, I do not see them being put to any disadvantage by a change in the boundary by sharing the representation the good people in the Eastwood area.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: But why bother? Just stay where you are.

CLLR CURRAN: Sorry, could you say that again.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Just stay - just let East Ren stay East Ren and you just stay.

CLLR CURRAN: Ah, right, right. I suppose I understand the complexity of the numbers means that the communities that I represent have to go somewhere. The current proposals do not have them in the current constituency they are in because that has changed. They do not have them in a neighbouring constituency because they are changing. So, there is a counterproposal that is putting them anywhere else, and that is the (inaudible) area has 18,000, roughly, electors in it who have to go somewhere. The Greater Pollok area is much larger. 24,000, I think, electors. They have got to go somewhere as well. So, I am not coming forward with a proposal. What I am saying is I am comfortable with what has been put forward based on the criteria that has already been explained by the Sheriff Principal. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL MURPHY: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions? Yes?

SHERIFF MURPHY: Any other questions?

CLLR HUSSAIN: Yes. Yes, not a question to you but just to say my views are mine and not Glasgow City Council's and I am happy to quote obviously as a summary that what was proposed.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you. Now, is there anything else anyone else would like to contribute from before. Anyone else who has not had the opportunity? Yes, sir. Please tell us your name and your interest.

CLLR O'DONNELL Thank you. Can I start?

SHERIFF MURPHY: Yes.

CLLR O'DONNELL: Thank you. My name is Owen O'Donnell I am the leader of East Renfrewshire Council. I hadn't intended to speak at this inquiry but I just want to make clear to everyone in terms of the presentation that was put forward by East Renfrewshire Council. It has full support of all Council members. This was reviewed way back when the review started was it August, whenever it was. There was unanimous support for East Renfrewshire's submission and objections to the boundary commission's proposals. That has not changed. All group leaders, three political group leaders, Conservative, Labour and SNP reviewed the presentation again which is completely based on that original submission. Views have not changed and we continue to support that wholeheartedly for all the reasons that was outlined in the presentation at the start of this meeting. So, that's all I would like to say on this issue.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you. Is there anything anyone would like to raise with Mr O'Donnell while he is has the floor? Thank you sir. Would anyone else like to offer a contribution at this stage? Yes.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: I would just like to ask yourself, actually, as part of the representative of Boundary Scotland.

SP MURPHY: Yes. I am not but yes.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: We started off here you were saying there was 56,258 electors on the voting roll here in East Renfrewshire and I can't remember who said it was 2,000 replies back to the Boundary Scotland. I take on Boundary Scotland has been

no advertising and there has been absolutely no advertising whatsoever. I take that ... there is only three people, I think, who are just common people off the street. The job I am in I work for the estate agents ...

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: And that was thanks to you having it on Facebook.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: And that's also ... I work for an estate agents and I have also through just through Facebook heard about this, ehm, and I say to people, oh did you hear about the Boundary Scotland. Not one person who phones up knows about it. I can categorically say in East Ren any person who goes to the shopping centre never heard of it. Oh it's okay it will not happen. You go to the (inaudible) shops, you go locally. I think Boundary Scotland have a major, major issue. They should have done 100 per cent of advertising. We know nothing about this here if it hadn't been for Mr Carlaw.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Can I just ask you your name?

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Suzanne Wildman. And also just by the by thank you very much to the Council who replied back. I phoned down to Eastwood Council yesterday to find out because I had heard about today ...

SHERIFF MURPHY: Today's meeting, yeah.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: I heard about the meeting and I phoned down and I had a very helpful reception, I have to say, she was extremely helpful and she phoned and the gentlemen who spoke latterly he phoned me back. The lady at East Renfrewshire Council knew nothing about the meeting tonight. She had to go to the councillor to find out. It's scandalous. In here in East Renfrew the council don't notify. There should be billboards. We have got billboards all round East Renfrewshire. We should be paid Boundary Scotland who should be doing the advertising to tell the people here what's happening and we know nothing about it.

SHERIFF MURPHY: It has been advertised as it traditionally is in the national newspapers and ...

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Well, that's bad, who reads the newspapers.

SHERIFF MURPHY: It is also in the modern world also put out in social media. Full details of that you could obtain if you asked some of the representatives of Boundaries Scotland.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: It is only through Mr Carlaw on his Facebook that we know about it. It is an absolute scandal. And can we take this forward with the Boundary Scotland.

SHERIFF MURPHY: You most certainly can. It is a point that is actually raised at some of the other meetings. We have got someone finding out about the situation and details so that is a point that has been put to the test.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: And so for us to take it further how do we do that? How do we get the council or the council representatives to do that?

SHERIFF MURPHY: You could do that, you could simply write to Boundaries Scotland or email them.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Could you give us the address or could somebody give us the address?

SHERIFF MURPHY: Yes, we can get that this evening, yes, certainly.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: And then do we have a budget, a budget whereby we can ask for billboards to be put up.

SHERIFF MURPHY: There is a budget in relation to advertising. Specifics on billboards I can't answer that, I simply don't know.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Let's be honest how many people here read the newspaper. It is all through social media.

FEMALE SPEAKER 1: Can I also just add about the change of venue as well could have hindered things because again because I have been on your page things that you put on then show up on mine so not everyone can see that but I had it in my diary from the first thing that we put on it being in Busby and it was just a fluke that I was on Facebook this week and saw that you had something else on saying about a change of venue otherwise I would have been up at the Busby Hotel tonight.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Just adding to that, bizarrely we are actually sitting ... we are here representing Giffnock, we are actually sitting in a property, a hotel in Newton Mearns which even adds insult to injury.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you. Any other comments or points anyone would like to raise? Yes, sir.

STEVEN QUINN: Thank you. If everyone can hear me I will say it from here. I am Steven Quinn the Chief Executive of East Renfrewshire Council and if I can my Lord just make maybe two points. One is more pertinent perhaps to the future and that is thank you earlier on for your clarification around the fact that Boundaries Scotland do not take into consideration projected growth and decline and I accept that point.

MALE SPEAKER 1: They can't as part of the rules that they have to operate by.

STEVEN QUINN: I suppose all I would ask is in doing so they almost certainly leave themselves in a position of detriment before the new boundaries will even come into effect and perhaps it might be good practice for them to revisit this for the future. So I accept it can't be done at the moment but perhaps revisit that for the future might be something that they would consider. Just one final summary point if I can around this evening and East Renfrewshire's presentation. I absolutely accept and we understand and again I would just reiterate that the area is too big for one constituency and too small for two. We accept that. And as such we have always recognised that the split is necessary but this proposal and these proposals essentially splits up East Renfrewshire Council in its entirety. Our communities would no longer have a constituency in East Renfrewshire Council area because what the proposal is suggesting is that one area gets hived off to Renfrewshire and one goes to Glasgow. There would be no East Renfrewshire constituency and is that really in the best interest of our communities. Thank you, sir.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Can I add to that please as with my estate agency hat on.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Yes.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: People that phone into, I mean people phone in ... people aspire to live in East Renfrewshire and Eastwood. People who are coming in from different countries, coming in from down south, either want to live in East Renfrewshire through and through for schools, the whole social aspects of living in East, people aspire to that and if not the other place they want to live in is Milngavie and Bearsden. Apart from that nobody else ask to live in any other areas. People aspire to live in East Renfrew. Why is there a need to split up something that works.

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: Yes, well said.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you. Does anyone else wish to raise anything? Yes.

GORDON WALLACE-BROWN: Yes, sorry, very, very quickly.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Yes.

GORDON WALLACE-BROWN: There was a point made by one of the gentlemen from Glasgow City Council talking about transport facilities from Priesthill to Giffnock. I would go so far as to say I think people in Priesthill would probably head to Silverburn to do their shopping. I don't think they are travelling up and down the Fenwick Road doing their weekly shop. So it is quite a ridiculous argument. With the greatest respect I think it is a, it is a personal opinion, I think it is a very poor argument to make. They are going to Silverburn, they are not coming to the Fenwick Road, or they are not going to Glasgow, sorry Newton Mearns Cross to do their shopping.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Once again could I ask your name for the record, sir, please.

GORDON WALLACE-BROWN: Sorry?

SHERIFF MURPHY: Could I ask your name for the record.

GORDON WALLACE-BROWN: Gordon Wallace-Brown.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you, Mr Brown. Yes.

CLLR AHMED: Yes, I would like to respond to the gentlemen regards I do my shop in Lidl and Aldi, you know but I can assure you that there are people who live in East Renfrewshire they go to Glasgow to do shopping and I am not only suggesting to you sir that the people are coming from Priesthill, you know, into Giffnock to do their regular shopping but what I am suggesting is these two communities can be absolutely brilliant for democratically electing the representative and the person concerned will serve the democracy. That is all I would like to say, sir.

GORDON WALLACE-BROWN: I would say in reply to that if I may. I respect that is your opinion. I don't see where democracy comes into it in particular because I am talking about people. You are talking about people going to traverse across Priesthill to

Giffnock ... I have in all fairness used Lidl down in Priesthill or Nitshill, I am not quite sure which area it actually sits in.

MALE SPEAKER 3: Nitshill Road, sir.

GORDON WALLACE-BROWN: Well it is very occasionally and it is only because I am on route to Paisley to visit friends but for you to say, you said you come to Aldi, you are talking about you but that is not the point I am trying to make. You are talking about vast numbers it just doesn't happen. I mean I am sorry I live here and my family have lived here since 1901. I know this area and please I do fully understand that there has to be some form of change and the change has to be minimal. If it has to be made at all it has to be minimal and for you to suggest that there is any commonality between, it is not a word I like using, as it is a lazy word, it is a commonality between you are representing in Giffnock, I am afraid it doesn't happen. And that's not out of disrespect I say it, it just doesn't happen.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Mr Curran. Just a very very quick answer in terms of. What we were suggesting there are transport connections. We mentioned the 374 bus.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Sorry, my Lord.

CLLR CURRAN: Apologies, my Lord. I think it is an important question. It was really in relation to the transport connection. We have mentioned the 374 bus which runs around this proposed constituency, Glasgow, Priesthill and Giffnock. Checking on the Scotrail app. It is a 40 minute one change to get from Busby train station to Priesthill and Darnley station changing at Pollokshaws West or it's an hour. Now I am just suggesting that there are transport connections that can be made, which are far better than other parts of the country and that's obviously an issue which should be important for a member of the Scottish Parliament. If there was a need to do that and as I said earlier the one person who needs to make that journey is the MSP. It is not a journey we are expecting 60 odd thousand people ...

SHERIFF MURPHY: Representative we ought to go to the people rather than the other way about. Yes, madam.

SUZANNE WILDMAN: Isn't that marvellous we are trying to get cars off the road, let's just put more cars on the road so we can't stay within our own constituency. I mean that is ... I mean why don't we put in more cycle lanes. We have got more cycle lanes down all the way through down Ayr Road, all the way through Giffnock, let's just add in more cycle lanes all the way to Priesthill.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Well now that we have got electric bikes it might be a better proposition. Yes, madam. Sorry, can you pass the microphone forward, please.

MAIRI BEERS: The 374 bus is one an hour. It is about a 16 or an 18 seater. I have been on it when somebody from Thornliebank with a wheelchair has wanted to go to Silverburn. They've got on. Got further round the road and another wheelchair is waiting and had been waiting for a while and they cannot get on. So how does that work with the local transport strategy when they are talking about reducing cars on the road and they are talking about increasing stuff for vulnerable people? They also mentioned the 38 buses. 38s run every 10 minutes and they are big buses. The 374 goes from Giffnock to Thornliebank to Silverburn on a country road. It is not, it does

not serve. It needs to be at least every 15 minutes if it is going to serve that community.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Thank you.

MAIRI BEERS: My name is MAIRI BEERS, if you wanted.

SHERIFF MURPHY: Yes, thank you. Is there anything else anyone would like to raise? Okay, well I think we have had a very broad range of discussion tonight on a number of points. I think it was helped by the presentation and the way in which we set out to start with. That was useful for starting discussion, so thank you very much who contributed this evening and thank you for everyone who attended in what I said and is a vital exercise in the development of local democracy. I hope you have a pleasant evening and you will see, as I say, my report and the transcript of this evening's events will be on the Boundaries Scotland website round about the middle of January in the New Year. Thank you.

(19.45)

(The Evening Session Adjourned at 20.00)