

BOUNDARIES SCOTLAND

LOCAL INQUIRY

Second Review of Scottish Parliamentary Boundaries

Held at :

Whitburn

on

Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL NIGEL ROSS

(Afternoon and evening sessions combined)

Daily Transcript by **Larking Hodge Pollock (Shorthandwriters)**
Suite 3F, Gordon Street, Glasgow, G1 3PU

DAY 2

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(The afternoon session commenced at 2.05 p.m.)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Boundaries Scotland Whitburn local inquiry. My name is Nigel Ross, I am the Sheriff Principal for Lothian and Borders. We are here for the purposes of taking evidence from members of the public (that is you) and others who wish to comment on the proposed changes to boundaries for elections to the Scottish Parliament. I am not part of the Commission and I have accepted appointment only on a temporary basis to advise and assist Boundaries Scotland. My assistance is limited to conducting the local inquiries for the review of Scottish Parliament constituencies and my function here is not to represent anybody but simply as a neutral party who will take evidence and comments and prepare a report afterwards which summarises all the points that are raised today. That report will be submitted to Boundaries Scotland afterwards and will be made publicly available on a website. For today's purposes I will take a few minutes to explain the purpose of this inquiry, the purpose of the review and how Boundaries Scotland has gone about the whole thing. This local inquiry provides you with an opportunity to make further comments or suggestions on the Commission's provisional proposals for the Central Scotland and Lothian regions and its further proposals for the Airdrie constituency. A transcript of today's proceedings is being made and that will be published also on the Boundaries Scotland website along with my report.

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

The population and the electorate of each constituency and therefore each region 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 the level of representations are one of the reasons that the Commission carry out regular reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries to ensure electoral fairness.

Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998 requires Boundaries Scotland to conduct reviews of the Scottish Parliament boundaries for constituencies and regions at intervals of every eight to 12 years.

The existing boundaries of 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 Parliamentary elections.

The Second Review (this one) must be completed by the 1st of May 2025 when the legislation requires that the Commission submits its final recommendations to Scottish Ministers.

In formulating its proposals the Commission has a statutory duty to apply Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act 1998. That Schedule sets out a set of Rules to be applied when

designing constituencies and regions.

Those Rules can be summarised as follows. There are overall to be 73 constituencies. Three of these are protected, so not under review. That is the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands and the Western Isles. The remaining 70 mainland constituencies must meet a set of requirements and they must do so in a way which, as far as practicable, is consistent throughout the whole of Scotland.

Rule 1. So far as 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 for the three preserved island constituencies, by 70. So, the electoral quota remains fixed throughout the period of review and at the moment is 59,902 electors for this review. Best practice from the Venice Commission (Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters) and previous reviews suggest an electorate within plus or minus 10% of that electoral quota (59,902) is acceptable. The Commission may depart from Rule 1 if it thinks 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 a 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, makes a departure desirable.

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

And the Region Rules can be summarised as follows.

Rule 1. A constituency must fall wholly within a region; and

Rule 2. The regional electorate of a region must be as near the regional electorate of each of the other regions as practicable having regard, where appropriate, to special geographical considerations.

These Rules provide a lot of flexibility. Rules 1 and 2 highlight the importance of identifying practicable solutions and to anticipate departures in light of other considerations. Sometimes these Rules can be seen as conflicting with each other, and the Commission must exercise its discretion in deciding the appropriate weight of each in any given constituency or region. It is important to remember that the solution must work for Scotland as a whole. An ideal solution for one constituency might lead to very problematic solutions in other areas. So, the task is to balance the different options to arrive at a solution that works for as many as possible.

The Commission recognises that changes to boundaries are often unwelcome. However,

the legislation requires that Parliamentary boundaries are regularly reviewed and places a duty on the Commission to do that. 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. They do not affect the provision of health services. They do not affect 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. So, none of these things are affected. Electoral boundaries are purely for the purposes of identifying constituencies or regions for elections.

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

The Commission consulted on Provisional Proposals for constituencies between May and June 2023. There was strong opposition to an Edinburgh Forth and Linlithgow constituency on the basis that there were few ties between Linlithgow and the more urban areas to the west of Edinburgh such as Muirhouse. Therefore, the Commission agreed to hold a local inquiry in the northwest of Edinburgh and a transcript and the Assistant Commissioner's report (that is me) from that inquiry is available on the Commission's website.

The Revised Proposals for constituencies were then published and consulted on between April and May 2024. They addressed the concerns of the earlier consultation and linked West Lothian with Falkirk rather than with Edinburgh, proposing: Livingston and Breich Valley; Bathgate; Linlithgow; and Falkirk South constituencies. Falkirk Council objected to the proposals, mainly because Falkirk was divided between three constituencies, the existing constituencies were within the electoral quota and they wished to retain them. There were several other responses opposing the proposals in Falkirk because they broke local ties between Banknock, Higgs and Longcroft.

The Commission held a local inquiry in Falkirk in August. The transcript and Assistant Commissioner's report from that inquiry is available on the Commission's website.

Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions were published for consultation in September 2024 for one month.

They proposed an Airdrie constituency which included Fauldhouse and Whitburn from West Lothian. The boundary was also amended to the north of Airdrie by Caldercruix. The proposals also placed West Lothian in a Central Scotland region. West Lothian was previously in the Lothian region. The Lothian region now includes East Lothian, which until now has been in the South of Scotland region.

West Lothian Council objected to the Further Proposals for an Airdrie constituency on the basis that it disregarded the council area boundaries and the strong existing local ties between Fauldhouse and Whitburn with the rest of West Lothian.

West Lothian Council also objected to West Lothian in a Central Scotland region on the basis that West Lothian had stronger links with the wider Lothian region.

There were over 50 further responses opposing both the Airdrie constituency and the Central Scotland regional boundary. Some of those responses believed the council area, rather than the constituency boundary was changing and raised a number of issues regarding access to schools or health care. As already stated, these are not issues covered by this Review. Other responses raised similar concerns to West Lothian Council. There was also strong opposition to the proposed Airdrie constituency from those in North Lanarkshire. That included a petition with 200 signatures opposing the breaking of local ties of Airdrie by Caldercruix, opposing a constituency crossing two local authorities and stating there was little to connect West Lothian with North Lanarkshire.

Since the last review of Scottish Parliament boundaries, West Lothian has seen some of the greatest growth in electorate in Scotland. Edinburgh Forth, East Lothian and Midlothian have also experienced similar levels of growth, while neighbouring areas such as Falkirk and North Lanarkshire have witnessed a less dramatic change in their electorates. However, the Commission must consider changes to the electorate across the whole of Scotland. So, even areas with less electorate change than others may find that their constituency alter as a result of change required elsewhere to ensure that all constituencies and regions across Scotland are of a similar electoral size.

The Commission welcomes all comments and alternative suggestions to its Provisional Proposals for regions (that is Central Scotland Lothian) and Further Proposals for constituencies (that is Airdrie in this case), 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.

At the end of this inquiry I will draft a report for the Commission with my comments and recommendations from today's proceedings. A transcript of today's inquiry will also be published on the Commission's website. The Commission will then consider my report, all of the responses to the public consultations on its Proposals, the constituencies and regions and the transcript of today's inquiry, when it agrees either further Proposals for consultation or its Final Recommendations for constituencies and regions.

And with that I will now welcome the first speaker. I have been provided with a list very helpfully and the first speaker is please Cameron Greig from Morton Fraser MacRoberts, representing West Lothian Council.

MR GREIG: Good afternoon, sir. My name is Cameron Creig, I am a senior associate at Morton Fraser MacRoberts. And I appear on behalf of West Lothian Council today. I'm joined by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Fitzpatrick, and by the elections and emergency planning officer, Miss Caroline Burton. If it's acceptable to you, sir, I propose to pass over to Councillor Fitzpatrick to speak once I have summarised the Council's position on this matter and both Councillor Fitzpatrick and Miss Burton will be available

to answer any questions that you may have on the Council's position.

So, the Council object to the Further Constituency Proposals and to the Provisional Proposals for regions. You will have seen the terms of the Council's consultation response. There is a real strength of feeling at the Council against these proposals, with the Council's decision to object being unanimous amongst the councillors that were at the relevant meeting of the Council's Executive. With regard to the Airdrie constituency proposals, the Council's primary concerns are that this proposal disregards the boundaries of West Lothian Council, contrary to Rule 1, and disregards the local identities, links and ties of the communities of Fauldhouse and Whitburn, contrary to Rule 4. The Council is concerned that the proposals will ultimately be detrimental to the people of Whitburn and Fauldhouse.

As detailed in the Council's consultation response, Fauldhouse and Whitburn have strong links to the rest of West Lothian and to the wider Lothian's areas. People in Fauldhouse and Whitburn have much closer links to the communities to their east for work, education, leisure and health due to longstanding geographical, transport, employment and community links. For example, they are more likely to commute to and work for major employers in and around Livingston, Bathgate and Edinburgh, to shop, go out to eat or go to the cinema or theatre in Livingston, Bathgate or Edinburgh and to go to the St John's Hospital or the Western General or Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh. There are also strong links in education, with children from Longridge and Torryburn going to Whitburn Academy and with the denominational secondary school for children in Whitburn and Fauldhouse being St Kentigern's Academy in Blackburn. Fauldhouse and Whitburn also sit with a different Health Board area, a different police division and different fire and rescue service areas from the rest of the proposed Airdrie constituency.

The present proposal appears to be a consequence of objections from other local authorities to previous constituency proposals, which has led to this proposal to split West Lothian in what the Council consider to be an unsatisfactory way.

I think it is notable that a similar proposal to a greater constituency comprised of Whitburn, Fauldhouse and parts of Lanarkshire was considered during the First Review of Scottish Parliamentary constituencies back in 2008 and that proposal was rejected due to there being a lack of historical social or community links between the areas and with the view to keeping intact the boundary between Lanarkshire and West Lothian. The Council considers that these same factors apply with the same force today and the present proposal also falls to be rejected for that reason.

It is also notable that the Provisional Proposals had West Lothian sharing a constituency with the City of Edinburgh Council, and the Revised Proposals had West Lothian sharing a constituency with Falkirk Council. The Council consider that those previous proposals were more cognisant of historical and existing community links than the present proposal under consideration today, and it is notable, of course, that the Council did not object to the previous proposals that were put forward.

So, in the circumstances, the Council's position is that the status quo should be maintained, with two constituencies remaining wholly in West Lothian.

With regards to the proposals for regions, West Lothian Council objects to the proposal to place West Lothian's constituencies in the Central Scotland region rather than the Lothian region. West Lothian has strong historic, community, transport, employment and geographical links with the wider Lothian area, it sits within the same Health Board, the police division, as other parts of the Lothians, and the ties between West Lothian and the wider Lothian area are simply much stronger than with the communities to the west. And for that reason the Council's position is that these links and ties should be respected by maintaining the West Lothian constituencies within the Lothian region. So, hopefully that's a helpful summary, sir, of the Council's position and I can pass over to Councillor Fitzpatrick if that would be of assistance.

COUNCILLOR FITZPATRICK: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Lawrence Fitzpatrick, I am Leader of West Lothian Council. I have given a lot of thought to this. I speak with several hats on. One, as Leader of the Council, two, as a Downdie - I was born and bred in Whitburn - and if you look at the various historic things back there, you will see that this was a weaving town and that's where the nickname Downdie comes from. I'm a holder of a season ticket for Whitburn Junior Football Club, and I'm glad to say we won the Cup on Saturday down at Rosewell. Leaving all that aside, there are huge community links between Fauldhouse and Whitburn and Greenrigg and Longridge as well; bus routes, connection to pleasure, cinema, theatre, employment, very importantly. And there is a very strong sense of belonging. People like to know where they belong to and Whitburn always has been part of West Lothian, as has Fauldhouse been part of West Lothian. I was talking about football earlier on. I was down at the Rosewell in Midlothian for the Cup Final. The number of people that came up to me, both men and women, "What's this? We're getting moved out to Airdrie? We're getting moved to Central Region? What's going on?" And I just said, "It's the Boundaries Commission." Memory is a great thing and I dug back - and I leave this for you, sir - way back at the time of regionalisation, when the intent at that time was to split the coterminous villages of Harthill and Greenrigg; so, Harthill would remain in North Lanarkshire but Greenrigg would go into North Lanarkshire. And there was Granny Kelly with a roadblock, 600 people and went out and blocked the road. The M8 was closed for resurfacing and she blocked the A8. So, there's an article from The Daily Record, there's one from the Lothian Courier and there's one from The Scotsman newspaper. And it's quite interesting because what you see here is a continuation of the very, very strong sense of connection and of belonging. There's also a very strong culture, and I don't mean to differentiate in any way but West Lothian has its own distinct culture, whereas, once you move into North Lanarkshire, etc, it's a different culture, a different dialect even. And when you look at relationships, marriages, etc., especially from Breich Valley, Whitburn, etc., there's a huge, huge link. So, I think I speak without doubt for all parties on the Council, and indeed everyone I've spoken to - and my phone's never stopped ringing, "What's happening? What's happening? What's happening?": people don't want to be there. There's a long, long tradition of both Whitburn and Fauldhouse being part of West Lothian and being part of Lothian, and to move us into Central Region - now, let's take it at the moment, if you have an MSP for this region or any of the two constituencies, you can nip along to a local office. Does that mean someone would have to travel from Fauldhouse to Airdrie, or Whitburn to Airdrie to see their MSP? There are no transport links. To go from Fauldhouse, you get the train to Glasgow and you can get the train back on another line to Airdrie. You know, a big, big disconnect. So, what I would ask you, sir, and I'll leave these for you, your officer can take these for you at the end, that very, very heavy weight

is given to local connection and local sense of belonging and culture as well. Thank you very much. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you very much. Next I will ask John Erskine from the office of Gregor Poynton, MP.

MR ERSKINE: Good afternoon and thank you. My name is John Erskine and I'm here today on behalf of Gregor Poynton, the MP for the Livingston constituency, who is unfortunately unable to attend today due to business in the Commons.

Gregor has asked me to express his strong opposition to the proposed boundary changes that would see Fauldhouse moved out of the constituency alongside other West Lothian communities and placed within a constituency with communities for North Lanarkshire. These changes, if implemented, would have a significant detrimental impact on the community of Fauldhouse and the surrounding areas.

Fauldhouse has always been an integral part of West Lothian, serving as a vital hub for nearby villages and playing a key role in the social, economic and cultural fabric of the area. The proposal to move Fauldhouse into a different region and align it more closely with North Lanarkshire entirely disregards these deep rooted connections and threatens to cause considerable disruption for residents.

As the Commission is already aware, Gregor has raised a number of key concerns in his previous letters to the Commission. First and foremost, Fauldhouse is part of NHS Lothian, which ensures that health services for the village are seamlessly integrated within West Lothian broader health and social care framework. Changing these boundaries would risk introducing inconsistencies in health provision, policy and funding. These are not just administrative details; they are decisions that could directly affect the quality of care received by residents of Fauldhouse.

Similarly, Fauldhouse is deeply embedded in West Lothian's transport network. The village benefits from the Lothian Company bus services, which connects it to the wider areas for work, education and community activities. Disrupting these links could jeopardise that continuity of a transport system that has been designed specifically with the needs of West Lothian residents in mind.

Another critical point which relates to community safety. Fauldhouse is served by local police officers operating within Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley area as part of West Lothian's police arrangements. The proposed boundary changes would disrupt these established relationships, which are crucial for effective community policing tailored to the specific needs of Fauldhouse.

Beyond these practical considerations, the proposal also disregards the historical and cultural ties that connect Fauldhouse to West Lothian. For generations residents of Fauldhouse have shared a strong sense of identity and belonging with West Lothian, and these ties go beyond administrative boundaries; they represent the lived experiences of people who call Fauldhouse home. Realigning the village with North Lanarkshire risks eroding this shared identity, replacing it with a fragmented sense of community, disconnected from its historical roots, as the Leader of the Council has highlighted

previously.

Gregor is also keen that I emphasise the confusion that these changes would create regarding political representation. Moving Fauldhouse into a different Scottish Parliament region will leave residents facing a fragmented system across the local authority, region and national levels. Constituents could find themselves unclear about which representatives are responsible when addressing their concerns and this lack of clarity Gregor believes is unfair to the residents and unnecessary when the current system aligns so naturally with their needs.

The Boundaries Commission's own criteria stresses the importance of respecting local ties, yet this proposal does the opposite. It disrupts the established relationships in health care, transport, policing, community identity and it produces unnecessary complexity to political representation.

For these reasons Gregor strongly supports the unanimous decision of West Lothian Council Executive to oppose these proposals. West Lothian Council rightly has highlighted that these changes fail to reflect the historical, social and geographical links that bind our communities together.

So, Gregor believes that there is a clear alternative. Fauldhouse should be included in Almond Valley (constituency). This would preserve those strong connections to West Lothian, maintain continuity of service and protect the identity of the local community.

Finally, I want to reiterate Gregor's commitment to standing with the residents of Fauldhouse in opposing these disruptive and unnecessary changes, and he urges the Boundaries Commission to reconsider the proposal and instead adopt the solution that respects the longstanding ties that make Fauldhouse an integral part of West Lothian.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, sir, and allowing me to share these concerns on behalf of Gregor Poynton, MP. I hope that the Boundaries Commission will take these comments into account when making its final decision. Thank you so much. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Next I have Allistair Tatton. from SNP Linlithgow Constituency Association. Mr Tatton.

MR TATTON: So, yes, I'm Allistair Tatton, I'm the Secretary of the Linlithgow Constituency Association SNP, I'm also a Whitburn resident and I also work for the local MSP, Fiona Hyslop, who will be speaking in this evening's session. We have made several representations at each stage of consultation, and I obviously attended all the local inquiries, the first one in Edinburgh, and I also attended the local inquiry in Falkirk and then, of course, today as well. We have been clear that our preference was for the second round of proposals that were put forward, for the main reasons that many have already discussed. The historical links that were there - we didn't feel as though the initial proposals for the Seat, we thought maybe stretched a little bit too far into Edinburgh. And actually we had made a number of suggestions in our submission where we thought that there was closer historical links with Falkirk. As I say, I attended the Falkirk local inquiry and I would say that the number of issues that were raised there, which has led to these proposals, actually direct relate to here as well. The only thing I would add is that,

West Lothian, in terms of running elections, already has a relationship with Falkirk Council, we already have the Westminster Seat, which is the current Seat which already goes across those boundaries, and my understanding from being there is that actually Falkirk were more opposed to the proposals on the Seat on the west-hand side or the west rather than necessarily more towards Linlithgow. So, our preference is actually for the previous proposals that were put forward. As the gentleman who went before me talked about, if we look at it, and I don't want to just rehash what other people have said, but if we look at it from a place of belonging and political engagement, then the current proposals: essentially for a West Lothian election, you would have Greenrigg and Whitburn in the Whitburn and Blackburn ward area, for a Scottish Parliament election you would have that same ward area then split over two different constituencies, and then the Westminster election as well, you would then have again a different area. So, we recently had a by-election here where the turn out was 20%, so we were looking for people to actually be politically engaged, and it needs to come back to then that sense of belonging and ownership, and we believe that the current proposals just create this greater division of, "Where am I? What do I belong to? And who represents me?"

And, again, if we look back at the - and Councillor Fitzpatrick went a bit further back in terms of the historical links - but if we look at the links to the Scottish Parliament elections, our constituency MSP's office has been based in Whitburn since 2011, before that it was the regional, the Lothian Regional office in 2007, so there are already strong links in Whitburn to the Scottish Parliament both as a constituency wholly within West Lothian and also as a Lothian Regional office as well.

So, I'm not going to waffle on, so our strong preference would be to go back to the proposals that were previously there at the second, or the second round of proposals that were put forward and not this iteration which I think West Lothian Council's submission touches on, it just seems to be formed upon the objections of elsewhere, and I think I wrote down something that you said at the beginning, that, you know, the solution must work for all of Scotland as a whole. And this solution appears as though it's more just what other areas don't want rather than what we do. And, as I said, I have attended all of the local inquiries, I spoke at the first one, I listened at the second one and I'm speaking here, and this is the most well attended out of all of them. So, you know, I hope that that kind of conveys the strength of feeling and the strength of belonging that people have in Whitburn, Greenrigg and Fauldhouse to each other and to West Lothian. Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you, Mr Tatton. The next name I have down who might want to make a contribution is Robert Cook. Mr Cook, are you here and do you want to contribute? Robert Cook, yes. Do you want to come down to the front or are you happy standing where you are? You can do either, I do not mind.

MR COOK: Do you want me to sit down or stand?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: You can stand or sit.

MR COOK: I represent three organisations: the Answer Project, which is a day care centre in Whitburn. Sorry, I'll use the mike.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: The microphone is just for recording, it does not actually amplify your voice. You are going to have to bellow, I am afraid.

MR COOK: Okay. I represent three organisations in Whitburn: the Answer Project, which is a day care centre which cares for over 40 people four days a week, it keeps people out of hospital and out of homes; the football club, which Lawrence has already spoken about, which I've been involved with and watching for over 70 years now; and, thirdly, the Whitburn Pentecostal Church, and the pastor has asked me to come and represent him as well today.

So, I think some of the concerns have been answered, in that the local authority would still be West Lothian Council. If that wasn't the case, we would be very concerned because we have a good relationship with all the councillors, MSPs and all these political parties, and we have had for years now and they've been very supportive of us in grant making and other things we've gone for advice. So, I'd be very, very much against us moving to another area if that was the case because we wouldn't know what we would be faced with. We wouldn't know if the football club would be playing on the East of Scotland, we wouldn't know if the funding was going to be available for the various organisations - the Answer Project, which is subsidised by West Lothian Council, we wouldn't know if we'd get that in Lanarkshire. So, I'm hoping that's not the case, that we're not moving out of West Lothian.

Politically, I don't know, again, if we have new elections in the coming years, who the councillors, who the representatives for Westminster and for Holyrood would be. They might have no connections to Whitburn. Who knows who they are going to be? They might not know anything about Whitburn at all. I've been in Whitburn, other than a few years away I went to the West of Scotland, and I know there is no links there. I had sports shops in Lanarkshire, five sports shops at one time, and there was no transport. If you hadn't got a car, forget it. So, I want to continue to be politically involved with West Lothian and also as voluntary organisations. I think that's all I have to say. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Next we have Donna Rigby. Is Miss Rigby here and do you want to make a contribution? No. And the last I have on my list is Louise Davidson. Miss Davidson, are you here? All right. Okay, well, that brings me to the end of the list that I have, but we are here to take soundings from members of the public, that is you, so if anybody else wants to make a contribution along the lines that we have heard, if you can raise your hand. Sir, you can either speak where you are or you can come to the front, I will leave it up to you.

MR HUDDLESTONE: I'm Dave Huddleston, I'm from ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, Dave?

MR HUDDLESTONE: Dave Huddleston - HUDDLESTONE.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you.

MR HUDDLESTONE: I'm on various committees. I'm on the IJB, for a start, and I'm the Vice-Chair of the Young Offenders' Group that was set up, and I'm on the Regional bag

for all these other things that we do. So, I'm involved with the community.

Two or three things bother me about this proposal. One, as soon as you change a boundary and move us to North Lanarkshire, that's Fauldhouse and Whitburn, who, who is in charge of the services? For example, I'm on the IJB. If Fauldhouse are in an electoral situation with North Lanarkshire, then I've got to withdraw from West Lothian. Okay? That's a detriment to our area. We already have enough trouble with getting doctors' services, etc., especially at Stoneyburn and so on. They don't have a doctor, they've got to come to Fauldhouse. The links are there. That's my issue.

What concerns me is windfarms. Windfarms, the majority of windfarms, at Tormywheel, Blackhill, etc., and Harthill, are North Lanarkshire, and that money that they collect in community benefit is handled by West Lothian Council Developments Trust. If we are no longer part of West Lothian, we're part of North Lanarkshire, that money, that windfarm money community benefit has to transfer to North Lanarkshire because it's inside the geographical boundary. Windfarms are already there. We only get that money from Tormywheel and Blackhill, etc. because we're within three miles of a windfarm. If you change the boundary, if you change the geographical boundary then West Lothian isn't within three miles, so you lose that money, it goes to North Lanarkshire. They could get round that, I suppose, but I'm concerned that that is the case. Because the whole of the Lothians, West Lothian particularly, benefit from windfarm community benefits. There's an excellent chance you're going to lose a serious amount of money coming from Blackhill and Tormywheel, etc. because Fauldhouse will no longer be in West Lothian, it will be in North Lanarkshire, and so it doesn't qualify. And that money is handled by West Lothian Development Trust and it's dished out for the benefit of the whole of the West Lothian area. Many of the charities round about are nowhere near a windfarm but they get the benefit from that community benefit because it's part of the West Lothian community, but we'll lose that or West Lothian will lose that if we are moved to, if Fauldhouse is moved to North Lanarkshire, there's a financial situation there that's got to be resolved. And I haven't heard anything yet from any of these boundary changes that says, "That will be okay" or we're not - I think you said it's in the rules, that there's got to be no detriment to the area. That's a major detriment, a financial detriment. And the same with the hospitals. Which hospital do we use if we're in North Lanarkshire?

Now, we all use Livingston because that's where the bus route goes. Try and get a bus to Wishaw which is in North Lanarkshire, because you can't get one. How are you going to see it? And the ludicrous situation arises where you've got an MP in Airdrie taking West Lothian council to task if a constituent asks for it. So, if I want to complain about St John's or any other capital service that's within West Lothian, I can't do it. I can only complain about anything with North Lanarkshire. It's ludicrous. How can that be? How can somebody in Airdrie represent me in Fauldhouse to West Lothian if the council boundaries stay the same? It's not logical and it's a detriment to me and to the people in Fauldhouse, and I'm sure the same applies to Whitburn as well, and I don't want to sound completely biased, but I am, but that's the point I'm trying to make. These proposals have hidden consequences that aren't, that don't seem to be taking them into account. The transport links that I've already mentioned and all these other things. I agree totally with the people that put the objections up, but these ones are separate and they're financial and they will have an immediate impact, and if I was a resident of North Lanarkshire, I'd want it changed because I'm going to win here, we're going to lose.

People in West Lothian are going to lose and that's not what these boundary changes are supposed to be about. Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you, Mr Huddlestone. Would anyone else like to contribute? Yes, sir.

MR WELSH: Thank you. Robert Welsh. I, too, like Lawrence is a Downdie, and I appreciate him coming along today again to reiterate the situation that Whitburn and its town faces. It's a ridiculous proposal. It's politically motivated. Now, I'm glad that Lawrence came up here and his colleague to explain the situation, and it went down very well and it was unanimously passed at council level. For me, this is not a devolved issue. This is an issue which has been instigated for Whitburn and putting Whitburn into a community and then to come back out again when the election comes. There's no benefits for Whitburn or its people in what this proposal is doing and I would say it should have ended when the Whitburn County Council went against it unanimously - as I say, it's not a devolved issue - and that's what should happen. The council has spoken, we are the members of Whitburn Council, all the public of Whitburn are members of it and so we must appreciate that and end this silly, silly proposal. (Loud applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you, Mr Welsh. Sir.

MR LYNCH: Hi, I'm Tam Lynch, I'm on a number of committees for Whitburn, I also stood at the last by-election as a councillor, as an independent. I'm going to be a bit of a devil's advocate here. Most of the people talking to me in the street and people I know from the town, their biggest concern here was that their bins were going to be collected by North Lanarkshire, the streets were going to be gritted by North Lanarkshire. The Boundaries Commission is totally unparliamentary. They are here to try and be fair with everyone and that's how the Boundaries Commission looks at it.

A lot of valid points have been made but, again, I think it's a bit of smoke and daggers here. It's convenient that West Lothian Council come along and talk about the transport links for Fauldhouse and Whitburn - fantastic - but you can't get a bus from Fauldhouse store up to the train station, but they complain that you can't get a bus for these new boundaries. What are they doing just now about West Lothian? So, let's talk about Boundaries Commissions because that's not going to change anything. West Lothian Council aren't providing Whitburn and Fauldhouse with the support they need. Affordable houses? Fauldhouse is priority 3. Priority 3 in West Lothian Council's affordable home list. Whitburn, who has the housing councillor, George Paul, as priority 2 along with Blackburn. Who do you think is priority 1? Winchburgh, Livingston East, Linlithgow. So, don't please, West Lothian Council, come here and say you're concerned about the people in Whitburn and Fauldhouse when the facts speak differently. But the furthest west in West Lothian, for years we've been forgotten about, and people have got fed up. Don't jump on the bandwagon here and start saying, "Oh, we don't want this, we've got loads of ties with you." Actions speak louder than words. So, let's get a bus link up the whole length of Fauldhouse, let's move the West of the Council into priority 1 of housing affordability and no have us at the back end of it. Those actions speak louder than standing here and trying to criticise a Boundaries Commission. It's laughable. But, again, it's up to the people to put their voices across. That's what I'm putting across, that I'm passionate about this area and I think it's a smokescreen that the Council come here

and talk about all these great things they're going to do and nothing happens about it. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thanks very much. Does anyone else want to speak? Yes, sir.

MR LAMONT: I'm Rab Lamont representing Greenrigg.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Can you speak up please?

MR LAMONT: That is me speaking up. So, I totally disagree with the boundary changes. We're trying our best to keep it in West Lothian. We'd be all right with West Lothian and we've had good relationships with the councils and we're quite happy, but to go to Airdrie, I would say that people are not interested in going to Airdrie. So, we're totally against it. I'm the Vice-Chair of the Greenrigg Community Council, so that's our view, that we don't want it. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thanks, Mr Lamont. Would anyone else like to cover stuff we have not dealt with?

MS TRAYNOR: Hi, I'm Longridge.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Could you maybe stand up so that people can see you and hear you?

MS TRAYNOR: I'd prefer not. I'm Longridge. We don't have a shop.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, who are you?

MS TRAYNOR: Sandra Traynor from Longridge.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Right, got you.

MS TRAYNOR: We don't have a shop in Longridge, we don't have a pub, the transport links are terrible. They're talking about boundaries. If I got you correctly, it's only for elections, is that right? It's nothing else but elections?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes.

MS TRAYNOR: We'll always have the Edinburgh Royal and the Western and St John's?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Well ...

MS TRAYNOR: I just want to clarify that.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Perhaps I can just clarify it? I will read out what I read before. "Parliamentary boundaries ..." - which is why we are here - " ... do not affect the provision of council services, health services, council tax, nor do they signal a desire to change any other boundaries, including school catchment areas or local authority boundaries, the remit of community councils ..." - or indeed where funds go from windfarms." This will

affect none of those things.

MS LONGRIDGE: But the hospitals?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is medical care. This will not affect it. The only thing that this Boundaries Commission will affect is which MSP you vote for.

MS LONGRIDGE: Can I ask, if Longridge isn't included in this, we'll still be in West Lothian?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes is the answer.

MS LONGRIDGE: What I can't understand is, okay, West Lothian must have more population, a higher population than the Lanarkshire that they're trying to move, so why don't you put another MSP in West Lothian and take one out of Airdrie because there's no the same amount? And that way you don't need to change the boundary.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Can I ask a question?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, sir ...

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Would the postcode change?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: No.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: We'll still be EH47?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Will we still be West Lothian.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes. Sorry, sir.

MR FORD: You're confusing the issue here. If you're changing the boundary to make us in North Lanarkshire, right? But the alternative is West Lothian, so when we vote for an MSP or an MP or that, we're voting for North Lanarkshire. We're not putting a vote into the area where you're getting all the services. So, if we vote for an MSP or an MP for North Lanarkshire, who don't know our area or their circumstances because all this goes back to fourteen hundred and West Lothian. So, why should we be shifting North Lanarkshire, to vote for an MSP and MP who have no ties whatsoever with us? We want the services that's in West Lothian, to be represented by us. So, why should we vote for somebody in North Lanarkshire? (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sir, can I take your name for the transcript please?

MR FORD: James Ford.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Sorry, madam, I think this gentleman wants to go first.

MR HARLEY: Brian Harley from Fauldhouse. All I want to say is that we want the Boundaries Commission to listen to the people, not all the officials, etc. We know what they're saying, you know, about, "We want to see this ..." The people in Fauldhouse have quite clearly said to a man, "We do not want to move into North Lanarkshire boundary." We have no connections whatsoever with North Lanarkshire and we never will have, no doubt. So, the Boundaries Commission need to listen to the people, and the people, as I say, of Fauldhouse to a man do not want to move boundaries. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, madam.

MS CLOSE: June Close from Fauldhouse and I'm on a number of local organisations in Fauldhouse and I'm also the secretary of Fauldhouse Community Council. I'd just like it logged here today that the Fauldhouse Community Council are totally opposed to your recommendations that you've discussed here - your proposals, sorry, that you've discussed here today, and we fully support West Lothian Council's stance on it. It's totally outrageous. We have absolutely no affinity with Lanarkshire, or Airdrie for that matter, and, as Brian said, I hope you listen to the people and take cognisance of that. Okay, thank you. (Applause) The other thing I want to say today is, it's very disappointing that people in Fauldhouse have to come to Whitburn - that's just how we're treated up there, on the outskirts here. We have a partnership centre and meetings should be held here rather than us having to travel to here. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Sir?

MR FENTON: Yes, my name is Alistair Fenton. I'm trying to get a feel for the kind of folk we're up against. So, everybody's spoken very clearly in the case against, but when it comes to the Boundary Scotland people, the Commission, making their considerations, what are they considering on the other side? Because it's been described as what appears to be - was it a "silly, silly" proposal? And on the face of it, it does look silly, silly. So, I'm trying to understand, and if you can enlighten us as an independent representative, of what a Boundaries Commissioner will be considering when they sit down surveying all the evidence that has been gathered over the past? Why - what were the pros in the first place to even present the proposal? Was it based purely on the numbers of people, for example?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is what I set out at the start, and I will not go through it again, but it will be available on the website for you to read how it works, but, in very short compass, the starting point is basically to divide the Scottish population into 70, find what that number is and make sure that every constituency has that same number, and that number at the moment is 59,902.

MR FENTON: So, it's purely on the electorate?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: No, not purely. Not purely.

MR FENTON: Largely?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: No, that is the starting point. There are thereafter matters of geography, about various other things that are factored in. So, that is the overall attempt, and it is politically neutral, it pays no attention to who the MSPs are or anything else, it is simply a way of making sure that each MSP, wherever they are, represents roughly the same amount of people. I cannot remember who had their hands up.

MR DICKSON: I'm Jim Dickson and I'm a local councillor for Whitburn and Blackburn, and my wife Mary is also a local councillor. I've been a councillor for 37 years, I've also been a sponsor for Whitburn Juniors for years, when they won the Scottish Cup, and we're very proud of that, and Whitburn has a great affinity with their people, and all my career in industry has been involved in West Lothian and I'm very proud that we have no connection with Airdrie. In saying that, over at Harthill there's a higher education at the Harthill Academy, but we don't have any association at all with that or that area. We are West Lothian and we are Lothian, so everyone here, they're supporters of staying within West Lothian and the Lothians, and I can only say that very strongly. That's the recommendation of the people of Whitburn.(inaudible)

MRS DICKSON: Well, I would want to reiterate that and I think by the volume of people here ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, you are, madam?

MRS DICKSON: Mary Dickson.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you.

MRS DICKSON: By the volume of people that's here today, I think we understand that it's not something that we want. What I would like to know is: what would happen if we reject it and we don't want it? How does it revert back or what happens to us if we object?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: You get a chance to comment on the recommendations, which has already happened a couple of times; things have been presented and altered and then presented again.

MRS DICKSON: Yes, and I get that and there's a lots of consultations out there at the moment that don't agree with this as well. So, can we generally speak into this or is your voice, has your mind been made up that this is what's going to happen? Because sometimes you get a sense that, you know, it's going to happen irrespective of how many people voice an opinion that they don't want it.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, you can make written submissions. Many people have, and I think it is not too late to do that now. You can send an email to the Boundaries Commission and it will - I think it will actually be published on the website.

MRS DICKSON: And how would that then work? Is somebody going to be taking notes of the people that are objecting?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Everything will be considered. So, that is where it comes from.

MRS DICKSON: So, can I ask if anybody here today is supportive of the boundary change?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Madam, fun though that may be, this is a Boundaries Commission meeting. I cannot let you have a private hearing. I hope you understand. I mean that with respect, yes, I have to achieve certain things. That is fine. Madam.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Do you not think that a people's vote from the people in Fauldhouse and Whitburn - why could there not be a vote on it?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Well, voting will not help anything. What I need is reasons. So, if you want to give me your position and your reasons for it, I am happy to take that down. What would you like to say? Sir.

MR KENDRICK: Yes, my name's Josh Kendrick. I have a Facebook group basically set up purely for Whitburn and Fauldhouse called Whitburn past and present. We have thousands, about 5,000 members at present and I haven't saw one comment made that's in favour of the idea of what seems like just a name change, right? I mean, I hear the presentation and it seems to be saying, "We're going to move a line, you're going to be in a different area for elections and it's going to be Lanarkshire." We are Blackburn and West Lothian. I mean, in history that's where we've been and we are Lothians, the centric-Lothian region, Midlothian, I think was a previous designation before West Lothian. But I hear everybody talking about - it's worrying when you hear the councillors informing you that services may change, like hospitals or the council services maybe at threat. That's how it's felt today, but for me it is just about a name, it's just about having our place in Scotland, being Whitburn, West Lothian - I don't mind East Lothian, but we're at the West of the Lothian region, so why we can't keep that, I just don't understand, and I know it is - somebody said it's silly, and it just seems like a silly idea to put is in a Lanarkshire area for elections only. I mean, when our services are going to be coming from West Lothian. So, just that, yes. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you very much. We have a certain number of points and I think the same point has arisen quite a lot, so I think we have that. So, if anyone has any new points to make please? Sir.

MR McEWAN: James McEwan, and we moved here from Glasgow and, as far as I'm concerned, it's Blackburn, so it kind of sticks with me that we've got to go back West under that scrutiny. But this is to go back to what this gentleman said here about areas and numbers. On your list you have Airdrie, 63,563. Put in Blackburn and Fauldhouse and Greenrigg and Longridge, on your equation, does that bring their numbers up to 63,000 or are they at 56,000 and we're only at 7,000? Is there a big number difference? Because looking at all the other numbers, 58,000 and 56,000 to connect Airdrie with them, we've got about a third of everybody else's areas.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: What is it you are proposing?

MR McEWAN: The numbers.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, I know but what about them?

MR McEWAN: Why do we need to go and support them?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Why does this area need to be hived off to go to North Lanarkshire?

MR McEWAN: Yes, if we've got 10,000 in Whitburn and Fauldhouse, that brings them up to 73, and they're only 53. Is it a numbers game to bring them in? To bring us into them, is it a numbers game?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: It starts out as a numbers game, certainly, yes.

MR McEWAN: So, it's a numbers game, so if it's 63,000 just now, how many of us in this area come into that? Or have our numbers already been included to your document?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I cannot really crunch arithmetic for you on the spot, but ...

MR McEWAN: 63,000?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, I cannot really answer these questions because you would need to look into the extreme detail of the numbers, but the short answer is: look at where the boundary, the proposed boundary is drafted, is drawn, and that will be your answer.

MR McEWAN: But if we're not included in their numbers at the moment, we bring them up to 70 odd, to 80,000, which is more than all the other areas. So, why would we need to go into them? We can stay where we are. If it's a numbers game, that's the numbers we're playing with. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I am sure those in the room who are dealing with the numbers have noted that. I cannot calculate that. I do not know if I am missing anybody? Madam, what is it you want to say? Your name is?

MS SHAW: My name is Alison Shaw and I live in Fauldhouse. I'm not making a pro or anti nationalist statement, I'm just wondering: how will this affect Westminster elections? Will we still be ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Not one little bit.

MS SHAW: Not one little bit? I just wanted to - so, it just seems odd then that the Scottish Parliament ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: This is only the Scottish Parliament.

MS SHAW: But another year ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That will be a different Boundaries Commission in a different year.

MS SHAW: Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, madam, can you give me your name please?

MS WADDELL: Sorry, yes, Agnes Waddell. So, I'm shouting and I hope that people hear. So, I've maybe missed something and I just want to say, on an historical note, and further back than what Mr Fitzpatrick said, the lands of Fauldhouse belonged to the Monks at Torphichen, so for those interested in history, that's the case, and also I note that we went into Lothian once and a great amount of time and money was expended on becoming a region for some reason, and a great amount of money coming back for West Lothian. So, I'm not really in favour a lot, of boundary changes. The other thing that happened, we were always West Lothian. We are famous for the West Lothian question in and that's because of Tam Dalyell. Now, the boundary was put on again when Livingston came, and now we have an MP in Livingston where we tend to gravitate to you anyway, Gregor Poynton. And so, what I'm asking is: if this is a numbers game as well, and PR is what it seems to be, I don't know why we need to keep changing if it's proportional representation for some votes. The other thing is, if there is an influx of people into any one area soon, are they going to be changed again? The man from Glasgow asked about numbers. So, if it's about numbers, are we about to be changed again if a lot of people move into an area?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: No. As I said at the start, these reviews by a statute happen between every eight and 12 years. So, this will be carved in stone for another at least eight years and probably longer.

MS WADDELL: And the other thing on the back of Mary Dickson's question, I do wonder about the consultations. I know it's not something that we can vote for, but again on a few consultations, you don't amount to much. So, all these people here from Fauldhouse and Whitburn and wherever else, they will possibly ask a lot of questions and get a lot of answers, but I do wonder what that difference will make? (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, sorry.

MR DEVLIN: My name's Andrew Devlin. I'm concerned about the MSPs and the local community. The area has been neglected for years. The grass isn't getting cut, the streets are a mess, it's overgrown. I think we'd be better changing the structure that's in West Lothian rather than getting put into North Lanarkshire. My main reason for coming here today was the changing of the district and I still think that this is a backdoor move and it will not work down the line, and I'm worried about the expense and stuff that that's going to bring to people in Blackburn. If you then change all the postcodes, when you move those areas, our driving licenses are invalid and we'll need to pay money to get that done. All our insurances are invalid so we need to pay money to get them changed. We've got mortgage issues because our mortgages are registered with the postcodes, and the future changes that could come out of it would be very detrimental to the local area. As far as people obsessed with the bins - there is people that is getting obsessed with the bins, but there is also ramifications to what happens with that as well, because the bins are owned by West Lothian Council, and if there's a development, it's the development that pays for the bins that you get, and if we get moved ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Can I just bring you to an end there? I understand what you are going to say and I am sure ...

MR DEVLIN: Yes, but in West Lothian ... (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: The Boundaries Commission do not have that power. So, as I have repeatedly said, the Boundaries Commission have nothing to do with changing districts. It is only the MSP.

MR DEVLIN: There's a lot stuff involved, but I think it's going to be more down a couple of years down the line.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I understand your concerns, but I cannot address those. I cannot deal with it.

MR DEVLIN: And we should remain within the boundaries of West Lothian. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Any final remarks? Sorry, madam, I think I passed over you several times. You are?

MS FORD: Suzanne Ford. So, I understand the concept of boundary changes. However, my question is: you're moving the rest of West Lothian into the Central Belt or Central Scotland: why is it any different for Fauldhouse and Whitburn? Why can't we move with them? So, for instance, we've got Heartlands that's getting built, that's going to go from Whitburn up to Longridge at some point in the next 15 to 20 years, so what I ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Which districts are you putting together? Fauldhouse and?

MS FORD: So, Fauldhouse and Whitburn, why can't we move with ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Together into North Lanarkshire?

MS FORD: No, why can't we move with West Lothian into the Central Belt?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: The Central Belt is not a region, though. The Central Region for Scotland. So, you are proposing that Whitburn ...

MS FORD: Why can't we move with the rest of West Lothian is what I'm asking?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Keep the whole lot together and move the whole lot?

MS FORD: Yes.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, I understand.

MS FORD: So, I understand that we will have to move and it's not going to be a question of: can we not move? Looking at the figures and everything else, we will move, but my question is: why can't we all move together? Because Fauldhouse, Whitburn and

Longridge are all growing, so we'll be back here in eight to 10 years asking the same question when you decide that we're no longer North Lanarkshire because that's too big, because Airdrie has expanded, and we're going to be moved back to West Lothian then, and it seems a bit counterproductive not just to move us altogether.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you.

MS FORD: Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is a lot for the Boundaries Commission to scratch their heads over. Are there any new points that anybody would like to make? No? Oh, sorry, there is a gentleman at the back that I passed over. I will get you to you in a moment. Sir.

MR DEVLIN: I'm a resident of Whitburn. Is there anybody actually here from Boundary Scotland today?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Me.

MR DEVLIN: So, you're representing them? I thought you were just neutral.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I am an Assistant Commissioner for today's purposes, so, yes. There are some people around, yes.

MR DEVLIN: That's all I wanted to ask.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, and, of course, a transcript will be made of every word that everyone has spoken today, so that will be available to anyone to look at, so we have that. I will get to you, sir, but this lady just wanted to speak.

MS HENDRY: I just wanted to finish on a note. Why are we changing something that's not broken? It's not broken.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is right, it is not broken, but it does need to change, is the answer.

MS HENDRY: And as the girl said, there'll be new communities coming in and then there's too many people in Airdrie. So, it's not broken, so don't change it. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Can I just take your name, madam?

MS HENDRY: Margaret Hendry.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. All right.

COUNCILLOR CLARK: My name is Councillor Pauline Clark, I'm one of the Councillors for Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley. One of my concerns is that, if this were to happen, the Health Boards that would be in the Central Region would include, as far as I'm aware, I think it would be Lanarkshire, the other one I think is Forth Valley and also Lothian, so

there would be three Health Boards within the one region, and I'm not sure how often that's replicated throughout Scotland. And I also work for an MSP, who is the constituency MSP for Almond Valley at the minute, and I know that when I'm making representations on behalf of her to Lothian Health Board, it's quite difficult, and I'm just trying to imagine how an MSP's office would manage three different Health Boards in making representations across three different Health Boards? And I think just to add on to a lot of the excellent words that were said today, I think it's really quite important that we look at the role of the MSP within what would be that Central Region, taking on board really what is part of West Lothian, and I absolutely understand that West Lothian Council will remain our bin people and remain our gritting people and all the rest of it, but there are concerns that the representation will not be as strong as it would be if it were wholly within the region that we're representing. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: You mean because the MSP is spread over several Health Boards?

COUNCILLOR CLARK: Yes, absolutely. It would be spreading the work very thin.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Any other new points that want to be made? No takers. Well, at that point then I can now bring this session to an end. Thank you very much for your contributions. Just to reiterate what I said before, my job is now to write a report really trying to summarise. It will be difficult to summarise everything but there are several themes that are coming out. I have to just report that without any comment whatsoever, I am just reporting and doing nothing else, and that will be for the Boundaries Commission to take and consider and all of your written and verbal and oral representations will be considered. So, thank you very much for your attendance and you are now free to go. Thank you. (Applause)

(The afternoon session concluded at 3.23 p.m.)

(The evening session commenced at 6.01 p.m.)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: All right, ladies and gentlemen, shall we kick off? Good evening. Thank you for coming out to the Boundaries Commission local inquiry for the Airdrie constituency. Just to explain who I am, my name is Nigel Ross, I am the Sheriff Principal for Lothian and Borders. You cannot hear? Do you want to come a bit further forward? Apologies, I am just getting over a cold. Apologies, I have got a slight throat thing, so I will bellow and hopefully get past it.

All right, my name is Nigel Ross, I am the Sheriff Principal for Lothian and Borders, and we are here for the purposes of taking evidence from members of the public and others who wish to comment on the proposed changes to the boundaries for elections to the Scottish Parliament. I am not part of the Commission and I have accepted appointment only on a temporary basis to advise and to assist Boundaries Scotland. So, my assistance is limited to conducting the local inquiries for the review of the Scottish Parliament constituencies. My function here is not to represent anybody but simply as a neutral party who will take evidence and comments and afterwards prepare a report which summarises the points which are raised today. That report will be submitted to Boundaries Scotland and will be made publicly available. For today's purposes I will take

a few minutes to explain the purpose of this inquiry, the purpose of the review and how Boundaries Scotland has gone about the whole exercise.

This local inquiry provides you with the opportunity to make further comments or suggestions to the Commission's Provisional Proposals for the Central Scotland and Lothian regions and its further Proposals for the Airdrie constituency. A transcript of today's proceedings will also be is being made and that will be published on the Boundaries Scotland website along with my report.

Local inquiries are held by the Commission in areas where a local authority has objected to their proposals, or where there has been a strong local response and where the Commission feels that it requires 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 Parliamentary boundaries. The Commission also welcomes the opportunity to explain the legislative provisions and the procedures that it must follow.

The population and the electorate of each constituency and therefore each region 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 carry out regular reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries to ensure electoral fairness.

Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act requires Boundaries Scotland to conduct reviews every eight to 12 years.

The existing boundaries 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 (this one) must be completed by the 1st of May 2025 when the legislation requires that the Commission submit its final recommendations to Scottish Ministers.

In formulating its proposals the Commission has a statutory duty to apply Schedule 1 of the Scotland Act which sets out a set of Rules to be applied when designing constituencies and regions.

These Rules can be summarised as follows. There are to be 73 constituencies. Three of these are protected, so they are not under review. That is the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands and the Western Isles. The remaining 70 mainland constituencies must meet a set of requirements and do so in a way which is consistent throughout the whole of Scotland.

Rule 1. So far as 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 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 for the three preserved island constituencies, by 70. The electoral quota remains fixed throughout the period of review and at the moment is 59,902 electors per constituency. Best practice from the Venice Commission and previous reviews suggest an electorate within plus or minus 10% of the electoral quota (59,902) is acceptable. The Commission may depart from Rule 1 if it thinks 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.

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, makes a departure desirable.

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

So, the Region Rules can be summarised as follows.

Rule 1. A constituency must fall wholly within a region; and

Rule 2. The regional electorate of a region must be as near the regional electorate of each of the other regions as practicable having regard, where appropriate, to special geographical considerations.

So, those Rules provide a lot of flexibility. Rules 1 and 2 highlight the importance of identifying practicable solutions and to anticipate departures in light of other considerations. Sometimes these Rules can be seen as conflicting and the Commission must exercise its discretion in deciding the appropriate weight of each in any constituency or region. It is important to remember that the solution must work for Scotland as a whole. An ideal solution for one constituency might lead to very problematic solutions in others. The task is to balance the different options to arrive at a solution that works for as many as possible.

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

The Commission wishes to emphasise that its Review relates solely only to boundaries for the Scottish Parliament. It does not affect the structure or arrangements of local government areas or the services that they provide (gritting, bins, transport, any of that), it does not affect that. 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, or postcodes or anything else. Electoral boundaries are purely for the purposes of identifying constituencies or regions for Scottish elections.

The Commission also wishes to emphasise that for the purpose of formulating its proposals the results of previous elections have not entered into its consideration and it is not for the Commission to speculate upon the effect which its recommendations may have on future voting patterns. The Commission is completely politically neutral.

The Commission have already consulted on Provisional Proposals for constituencies between May and June 2023. There was strong opposition to an Edinburgh Forth and Glasgow constituency on the basis that there were few ties between Linlithgow and the more urban areas to the west of Edinburgh. Therefore, the Commission agreed to hold a local inquiry in the northwest of Edinburgh and a transcript and report are available to read if you wish.

The Revised Proposals for constituencies were published and consulted on between April and May 2024. They addressed the concerns from earlier consultation and linked West Lothian with Falkirk rather than Edinburgh, proposing a Livingston and Breich Valley, Bathgate, Linlithgow and Falkirk South constituencies. Falkirk Council objected to the proposals, mainly because Falkirk was divided between three constituencies, the existing constituencies were within the electoral quota and they wished to retain them. There were several other responses opposing the proposals in Falkirk because they broke local ties between Banknock, Haggs and Longcroft.

The Commission held a local inquiry in Falkirk in August. The transcript and the report again are available.

Further Proposals for constituencies and Provisional Proposals for regions were published for consultation in September 2024.

They proposed an Airdrie constituency which included Fauldhouse and Whitburn from West Lothian. The boundary was also amended to the north of Airdrie by Caldercruix. The proposals also placed West Lothian in a Central Scotland region. West Lothian was previously in the Lothian region. The Lothian region now includes East Lothian, which until now has been in the South of Scotland region.

West Lothian Council objected to the Further Proposals for an Airdrie constituency on the basis that it disregarded council area boundaries and the strong existing local ties between Fauldhouse and Whitburn with the rest of West Lothian.

West Lothian Council also objected to West Lothian in a Central Scotland region on the basis that West Lothian had stronger links with the wider Lothian region.

There were over 50 responses opposing both the proposed Airdrie constituency and the Central Scotland regional boundary. Some of those responses believed the council area, rather than the constituency boundary were changing and raised a number of issues regarding access to school and health care and so forth. As already stated, these are not relevant issues in this Review. It will not affect those things. Other responses raised similar concerns to West Lothian Council. There was also strong opposition to the proposed Airdrie constituency from those in North Lanarkshire. This included a petition with 200 signatures opposing the breaking of local ties north of Airdrie by Caldercruix,

opposing a constituency crossing two local authorities and stating there was little to connect West Lothian with North Lanarkshire.

Since the last review of Scottish Parliament boundaries, West Lothian has seen some of the greatest growth in electorate in Scotland. Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian have also experienced similar levels of growth, while neighbouring areas such as Falkirk and North Lanarkshire have witnessed a less dramatic change in their electorates. However, the Commission must consider changes to the electorate across the whole of Scotland. So, even areas with less electorate change than others may find that their constituency alter as a result of change required elsewhere to ensure, again, that all constituencies and regions across Scotland are of a similar electoral size.

The Commission welcomes all comments and alternative suggestions to its Provisional Proposals for regions (that is Central Scotland Lothian) and Further Proposals for constituencies (that is Airdrie), 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.

At the end of this local inquiry I will draft a report that will go to the Commission with my comments and recommendations from today's proceedings. A transcript of today's proceedings (in other words, every word that is said) will also be published on the Commission's website. The Commission will then consider my report, all of the responses to the public consultations on its Proposals for constituencies and regions and the transcript of today's inquiry, when it agrees either Further Proposals for consultation or its Final Recommendations for constituencies and regions.

And with that I can now welcome the first speaker. I have a short list here and the first on my list is Fiona Hyslop, MSP. If you just want to take your seat there please.

MS HYSLOP: So, good evening and I think you can tell by the attendance at this session, and I think there were over 70 earlier on today, that this issue matters to the people of Whitburn.

MR ANDERSON: Is she not ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sir, we have to take things in turn, okay? So, what will happen is, the speakers will all get their chance to say whatever and then I will throw it open to the floor and I will take a comment from you then. Thank you. Ms Hyslop.

MS HYSLOP: Thank you. I have now been an MSP since 1999, I have been a regional MSP and when I was a regional MSP that was for the whole of the Lothian region, and instead of having an office in Edinburgh, I had an office in the main street here. And as an MSP, I'm very conscious that when people stop you on the street to ask you something, it really means it matters to them, and the number of people in recent times since this latest iteration of the Boundaries Commission that have asked me, "Is it true that we're joining North Lanarkshire?" has been considerable.

Now, this boundary review is effectively to look at the current constituency that I represent currently. It is the biggest in the whole of Scotland. We heard that 59,000 is

the quota. We are currently about 76,000 and growing. I've engaged directly with the Boundaries Commission's inquiry because I know it matters, not just to Whitburn but to the rest of West Lothian as well and the rest of my constituency since June 2023. So, we have the issue in terms of the numbers of people that we've got here in West Lothian, that the Boundaries Commission is trying to resolve for the rest of Scotland. Originally, they wanted a third of my constituency, Linlithgow, etc. to join in with - right through to Muirhouse in Edinburgh, which has no connection to West Lothian, and we objected to that. I gave evidence, just as I'm doing now, to the same inquiry as it sat in Edinburgh. I am associated with the SNP Linlithgow Constituency Association's submissions. There are three of them that have been submitted at different points in this process. After the first inquiry there was a second proposal which I still think would meet the needs of my constituents, and it's got to be about constituents and communities. West Lothian is so big and also the neighbouring Seat is one of the biggest in Scotland, but instead of just having two Seats in West Lothian we should have three Seats. Now, that would mean that we would have Seats that would be - Whitburn would stay in West Lothian, it would be with Bathgate and Armadale, and also Broxburn, that part, that area. Livingston would remain as it is and then there would be a new Seat, which we know - you've got Linlithgow and the association with Bo'ness, that is actually one of the communities where there has been long historical connections. Similarly with Queensferry and Kirkliston. And that still to me is - and I think the question is: "What is the solution which works for as many as possible?" That solution would certainly help the communities and the constituents in West Lothian but it also wouldn't tread on the toes of our friends over in Lanarkshire because we wouldn't then start to be interfering with Seats there. So, in trying to be constructive: the reason we're here today and the reason we've ended up here, for two reasons: because Falkirk Council objected and so there was an inquiry in Falkirk because they were concerned particularly around the areas about Denny, I think it was Banknock and Longcroft. And then with Airdrie, when they had to try and then adjust Airdrie - so, it's a bit like having a balloon, every time you push it, the air comes out somewhere else. So, I don't envy what the Boundaries Commission is having to do to try and fit this in.

So, I think there's a number of things that we need to think about on associations, and Whitburn is not connected to Airdrie in any shape or form in terms of my experience, which has been a long experience, 25 years as an MSP and since 2011 in this constituency. I know that from my case work, etc. So, I think the balance that the inquiry is going to have to work out is: how do we make sure that the constituents are supported well and that communities are connected? And also then we have to work out the numbers issue. And what are the compromises that may have to be sought? And I know that having a big constituency in terms of numbers of people, it's a third more people to represent, that's a third more caseload for my staff to look at in terms of issues with the council, issues with the Health Board, etc. I think if you start bringing Whitburn into North Lanarkshire, whoever represents that constituency, their staff are going to have to deal with two sets of Health Boards, two sets of councils, etc. And however good you are as a constituency staff member or as an MSP, your attention is going to have to be in different directions. So, is the trade-off, therefore - I'm thinking very carefully about this - is the trade-off then to say: okay, if Falkirk are really keen to have those villages that they want to continue to be in the Falkirk Westside, could they do that? Could you then allow Airdrie for its numbers to keep the villages it currently has? And then, is the price worth paying, that this constituency still remains the biggest? And I think you can still

represent the constituency such as this and this size. In the 2021 elections I got the third biggest vote in the whole of Scotland, so that's a lot of people to try and represent and to get elected on. Can you represent them? I think you can, but it was a challenge. So, I think the solution really, if we are trying to make sure that we suit as many people as possible, is to find a solution that may see a trade-off between having one remaining large constituency which includes Whitburn still in the West Lothian Seat that I currently represent, allow Airdrie to stay the way it is, allow Cumbernauld to stay the way it is, but that would result in one very small constituency, which I think would be the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth one, and we would end up being really big? So, I'm trying to be positive here.

We are here because the two councils have objected because they want things to stay the way they are, and I appreciate that, but you've also got to come up with solutions, and the best solution is the one that the Boundaries Commission came up with last time, which actually allows West Lothian not just to have two MSPs talking for them in Parliament but to have three, because I think our numbers deserve that we have those three. And that will, I still reiterate, that is the strongest one.

The other points I want to raise are in terms of the identity, and again I don't understand why the Boundaries Commission at least hasn't recognised the issue around names. The name of my current constituency that I represent is Linlithgow. Now, they probably meant Linlithgowshire when they first set it because it was to be about the County, but anybody would know that Linlithgow is one town out of six in my current constituency. It is one of the smallest, it probably is now one of the smallest in terms of electorate. Whitburn is far bigger than the town of Linlithgow. Bathgate is. And I think it's important that any Seat that comes out of this process, you know, reflects where we are. I recommend that if we had three constituencies, there would be the current one, Livingston, which is recognised, there would be a Central one that could be Bathgate or West Lothian Central and then you could have West Lothian North. That's not an unusual naming because you have Midlothian South that has already existed for some time as well. But I think in terms of identity and community, we have challenges, not just here in West Lothian - we just had the local by-election here with a very low turn-out, you're seeing that happening elsewhere and in other parts of the world as well. People want to identify that they're being represented by people who represent their communities, and I think the community part of it really matters in democracy, and I think that sense of genuine outrage that people had when they realised that somehow Whitburn was meant to be moved - now, it's not going to be moved for council services, the inquiry is just about the Parliamentary side of things, but even that was enough to get people really, really concerned because people's identity in West Lothian is really strong and Whitburn is very much facing into West Lothian itself. So, we're trying within the SNP to engage not just at the last minute but actually right through the process, to try and come up with solutions. So, I'm hoping that perhaps the people, the communities should have the main say. I know that councils are important and I know that Falkirk Council will have made very good representation about their communities, but I do think that there has to be a trade-off and that communities really matter in this, and the fact that so many people have been here tonight and also this afternoon I think reflects that.

And finally on the region, and I think that's really the basis of West Lothian Council's objection, which is why we've got the inquiry today, in terms of the size, I think it's generally recognised that the Lothians are growing in population and Glasgow isn't. So,

you know, the population of Scotland is moving over to the east. (Sound of telephone ringing) That's probably Falkirk Council phoning. But in terms of the issues there, we are very much a part of the Lothian region. You know, I think that history is there. The police configuration is very similar in terms of the geographical area. The Health Board most definitely, and I think in terms of historical ties - you know, people might recall this, Greenrigg, when subjected with concerns about the postcode, and I think Greenrigg has been forgotten about in this inquiry, and they were concerned about being part of Lanarkshire, the postcodes, etc. And I actually remember helping save the local GP from being privatized way back when, and that was obviously dealing with NHS Lothian. So, it was faced in that direction, so Greenrigg matters as well within all of this. So, there is something about: how does the Boundaries Commission square the circle of the enormous constituency currently called Linlithgow that is way over-quota? Could we survive being a big constituency to enable Airdrie to have its own community, Cumbernauld to have its area, even if it was very small? And I think on balance, to make sure we have the solution we needed, I would much prefer that we argue the case for Whitburn to stay part of West Lothian, even if it was a massive, big Seat, and even if it meant it was to represent a third more people than your average MSP did. But the real solution is to give West Lothian its place, give it an extra seat in the Parliament for people, and that's a voting Seat, and probably what's best here is actually what this means is that West Lothian would actually have three MSPs to vote for it instead of two, and I think that would be the strongest democratic and community-minded response to this inquiry. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you, Ms Hyslop. Next on my list is Neil Gray MSP.

MR GRAY: Thank you very much indeed. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and Sheriff Principal and members of the Boundaries Commission. First of all, may I say that my name is Neil Gray, I am the Member of the Scottish Parliament for Airdrie and Shotts and I'm here in my constituency capacity, representing my constituents, particularly in the Airdrie North Ward of North Lanarkshire Council.

It is a pleasure to follow my colleague, Fiona Hyslop, and she speaks very powerfully and well regarding the issues pertaining to her constituents and the impact that the proposed boundary change for the removal of Whitburn and Fauldhouse from the West Lothian area into a North Lanarkshire constituency would have on her constituents, and I will say more about that in a second.

But can I say, as the only, I believe the only representative from my constituency this evening, that I am disappointed and actually the very fact that none of my constituents, including the 200 that signed the petition, are able to be here tonight. It serves to illustrate the issue that is before us around the proposals that have been set out because on a night like this it would be incredibly challenging for constituents to travel to parts of Central Scotland that there are no common transport links available so those in the Airdrie North Ward that are seeking to get access to Whitburn for an event like this, clearly it's a challenge, but indeed for constituents here this evening in Whitburn, that would ordinarily be to go to a centre of population within a new constituency, that would be Airdrie, there would be similar challenges. And so, for all the reasons that Fiona has set out, I am in support of her case.

But it is disappointing that the Boundaries Commission has not held a session like this within the Airdrie North locality so that my constituents, who are just as concerned and upset as colleagues are here this evening, have not been able to have their say for themselves and are relying on me as their Parliamentary representative to do so, which I will.

I wish to refer the Boundaries Commission and the Sheriff Principal, to my written submission and those of my constituents, including a 200 strong petition that I believe should have merited a local inquiry taking place within the Airdrie area. My comments within those written submissions set out the challenges of the proposal as they stand. Like Fiona, I recognise the quandary that the Boundaries Commission is in to resolve what is a growing population within West Lothian and the need to balance that with the legislative requirements on reviewing boundaries. I understand the challenge. However, like Fiona, I believe that the best solution at the moment would be to find a compromise which means that we might keep the constituencies as they stand, and that would be common with the opportunities that are available to the Boundaries Commission to do so. And I say that for a number of reasons. The first is in regards to people's identity and their local ties. The Sheriff Principal in setting out in his introductions was absolutely right, that these proposals do not change the delivery of public services, neither for the Health Service nor for the local authorities. I recognise that. I agree. But they do have a profound impact on people's and communities' identities, and that is why I believe there will be so many people here this evening from West Lothian that are concerned about a move both of their region and their constituency to another part of the country. And that is also true of my constituents in Airdrie North, where part of the Ward, not the entirety of the Ward, which I think is concerning in and of itself, part of the Ward is being proposed to be moved into the new Cumbernauld constituency. For decades, for generations the people of Airdrie North have orientated towards Airdrie, these are villages with very close proximity to Airdrie, they have orientated towards Airdrie for their schools, for their public services, for picking up their messages, for the various ways in which you would expect communities to orientate towards each other that are closely aligned, and that is true of their political representation as well. For as long as I think that there has been a Parliamentary constituency, certainly in the Scottish Parliament, and longer, before that, predecessors of mine that served in Westminster Parliaments, have represented Airdrie and its surrounding villages in its entirety, and it's an important principle that people recognise who and how they are represented. And this proposal for part of Airdrie North would be changed and that is an important issue for which my constituents have expressed their very strong opposition, which has manifested itself in a 200 strong petition from the people of Plains and other parts of the Airdrie North area.

I also recognise that the people of Plains, Longriggend, Upperton and so on have transport links into Airdrie that are not available to get access to Cumbernauld. Fiona Hyslop has set out her decisions around basing her constituency office and before that her regional office where she has chosen to do so. In my time, and indeed Jamie Hepburn's representation of Cumbernauld, we had chosen to do so in the centres of population where they are most accessible to the most constituents. That is in Airdrie and in Cumbernauld. At the moment my constituents in Airdrie North, such as those that reside in the village of Plains, need to take an eight minute bus journey in order to access my constituency office, if they have a need for an emergency appointment with me or if they need to come in to drop something off into my constituency office. To presume that

the next MSP for the Cumbernauld constituency would maintain a constituency office in the Cumbernauld area, that would result, if the proposal was to go ahead, with a bus journey, having to take a number of changes but a bus journey of an hour and 12 minutes and £15 one way. There simply is not the direct public transport links between the villages surrounding Airdrie and Cumbernauld. Similarly, to speak in addition to the points that Fiona made very well, those currently residing in Whitburn, if the proposal was to go ahead, to access Airdrie, it would take a number of bus changes and a two hour journey to access what we would assume would be the constituency office in the redrawn Airdrie boundary. I do not believe that that is a good way to seek to represent your constituents.

I believe very firmly that the boundaries should remain the same. I think that that would be consistent with many of the terms within the Scotland Act that the Boundaries Commission has due regard to, that being that regard must be had to the boundaries of local authorities. Clearly, in both elements of this proposal for the new Airdrie constituency, that has not been considered. We have got the people of Whitburn and Fauldhouse moving into the North Lanarkshire area. Similarly, we also have a situation where part of the Airdrie North Ward would be moving to a different Parliamentary constituency. I think, in terms of consistency of representation, that is problematic for, again, the reasons that Fiona Hyslop set out. I think you would also have a discretion to come forward with a consistent position of maintaining the current boundaries through section 12, Rule 3, and section 12, Rule 4, where special geographical considerations can be given. I have already set out the difficulties that there are with accessibility between different parts of this proposed new constituency, but also local ties, and that is where, colleagues, I will rest: the most important consideration here is what people feel, it is what people identify with and how they see themselves being represented. And that is the most troubling part of this proposal, that the views of my constituents, particularly those in Airdrie North but also the views of Fiona's constituents in Whitburn and Fauldhouse, appear not to have been considered up until now around where they identify with and what their local and community identity is, and the additional confusion that will arise from this shift I believe is problematic. So, for those reasons, and as I say again on behalf of a large number of my constituents who believe very strongly that this is the wrong thing to do, I believe that we should be maintaining the boundaries of the constituencies in question going forward, but doing so recognising, as Fiona said, that this would be a compromise where we would have one smaller constituency by number and two larger constituencies by number but that it would allow people to have comfort in understanding who and how they are being represented. Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you, Mr Gray. The next on my list is Leslie Garvey. Miss Garvey, are you here?

MR GRAY: She has been unable to attend. She is unwell.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Next would be Stacey Johnstone. Miss Johnstone, are you here and do you want to say anything? Last call for Miss Johnstone. All right. The next is Eleanor Bowden. Miss Bowden, are you here? That is you but you are quite happy. That is fair enough.

MS BOWDEN: I think I am, yes.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I can live with that. If you wish to speak you can, if you do not, you do not have to.

MS BOWDEN: I think communities are at the heart of this.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Can I get you maybe to come up here and speak? It is just that everyone has to hear you and it will be a bit hard from there. You are Eleanor Bowden. Do you represent anybody or are you just here as a resident?

MS BOWDEN: Just as a resident, yes.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: So, what would you like to say?

MS BOWDEN: Right, as I say, I haven't prepared anything, but I'm here because I feel very strongly about it. Fiona mentioned Greenrigg, and I was born and brought up in Greenrigg, and I can remember a time when they tried to move Greenrigg into Lanarkshire - maybe somebody here will remember that - and we had a local councillor called Nanny Kelly, who actually led a revolt and organised the people, lying on the A8 - this was before the M8 was built - and they blocked the road and they wouldn't get up, and that showed the strength of feeling. And I think today people have lost that and they just give in. They give in because politics seems very remote and there's a lack of trust, and I think that this potential move will exacerbate that. Having grown up in West Lothian all my life, despite the fact that I was born on the border with Lanarkshire, there are no links, there are no links at all. I went to school in West Lothian, I went to university and all the business that we do as a family is in West Lothian. I can't get my head around the fact that we will have another two authorities that we are part of, when what we really need is local representation like we have just now. Do I want to say anything else?

MR ANDERSON: About the decision and whether local people should be involved? And we are being ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I will allow you to speak separately if you wish, but I will just get to the end of Ms Bowden. You have done very well from no notes. Is there anything else you want to say?

MS BOWDEN: Just on the question of transport links, we actually live in East Whitburn, so if we want to go to Harthill, we have to get a bus or walk from East Whitburn to the other side of the cross in Whitburn to get a bus there to go to Harthill. There isn't even a bus to take us to Harthill. The local transport links are bad enough without involving two other authorities, and well it's a very poor road to Falkirk because Falkirk Council have done the bypass all those years ago. So, again, I think it needs to be much closer, much more local. The Scottish Parliament is supposed to be that, but this makes it not for us. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you very much. That brings me to the end of my short list, at which point I can ask for contributions. I think, sir, earlier on you wished to contribute. Do you still wish to say something?

MR ANDERSON: Well, I ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: First of all, can I get your name please just for the transcript?

MR ANDERSON: Andy Anderson.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thanks, and do you represent anybody or are you just here yourself?

MR ANDERSON: Myself.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is fine.

MR ANDERSON: I don't think between the now and the one we had a couple of hours ago, I don't think it's a great turn out from Whitburn, because I don't think it was advertised enough. (Applause) Honest, I don't think it was advertised enough. And if it was advertised enough, they would be here and there would be a turn out.

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: It's on social media, which is ridiculous.

MS BOWDEN: It is actually, yes, agreed.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Is that all you wish to say, Mr Anderson?

MR ANDERSON: Aye, that's it.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is fine. Thank you. Sir, you have your hand up. Can I ask your name first?

MR EVANS: I'm Geraint Evans from Fauldhouse, and just to follow up on the comment, I don't think it was advertised enough, until today's meeting here. There's nothing happening as far as I'm aware in Fauldhouse and we found out about this on Facebook.

MS BOWDEN: We went all round ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, one at a time. I have to write this down. You are saying about advertising, and it was not advertised widely enough?

MR EVANS: Correct, and you're supposed to be canvassing opinion of the locals. I'd also like to say it was very nice of Fiona to wax lyrical about her feelings for Whitburn, but she failed to mention that Fauldhouse is also part of her remit, and I would like you to ask: so, who is representing us, then? Who is representing Fauldhouse, then, here tonight? Is there anybody?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Well, I do not think anyone is representing communities, it is just for individuals to come along and give their views. So, anyway, you are here, I am here. Do you want to tell me anything about what you think about the boundary change?

MR EVANS: Well, I'm very comforted by the fact that this is about representation and it's

not affecting postcodes, provision of services, where we pay our council tax, it's where we've always paid it, and the same bin men will pick up our rubbish, and fund our schools, etc., etc. So, that's a weight off my mind. However, I would say that for my own purposes, whenever I leave Fauldhouse, 99.9% of the time I go east, and that's just a function of, you know, the fact that ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Is that a transport link thing or ...

MR EVANS: It's just where I go. To Bathgate, to Linlithgow, Edinburgh, and now and again I go into Glasgow, but I rarely go to Shotts, Motherwell, Airdrie, and I don't know if I'm representative but that's just my route. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you very much. Madam, I think you might have been first.

MS HARVEY: Jan Harvey. West Lothian has always been a large County, it's one of the largest Counties in Scotland - you're trying now to cut it back. Now, we were originally in Linlithgowshire, which changed when the Lothian region came about, they changed it to West Lothian, they changed the boundaries then and they put, there's still people who - they changed the boundaries but they still had a West Lothian postcode, and they haven't changed anything. But the people in Lanarkshire, it's fine for them as they're still in Lanarkshire and they're still part of the County that originally was there. We are now being put into a County that has had no connection whatsoever with West Lothian, and Neil Gray has just come along and spoke to us. He is a Lanarkshire person. We are West Lothian and that's where we are staying, and there's a little village between Fauldhouse and Whitburn in West Lothian. Now, it's bad enough just now going from Whitburn to Harthill, but if you go from Whitburn to Harthill and you go in about four different speed limits. That's just an instance, and if you come into Lanarkshire, they're talking about changing their speed limits, and there will be five different speed limits compared to Harthill. But the thing is, we are Whitburn people - I'm not a Whitburn person, sorry, I'm an incomer, but the community here is part of West Lothian, it's not part of Lanarkshire. Airdrie and places like that, they've always been part of Lanarkshire. It was just split into two different sides. So, somebody in your office is sitting there thinking, "Oh, we'll just do this because ..." - but the building that they're doing in West Lothian is horrendous. You've got Winchburgh, which is a new town, you're bringing Winchburgh over to Broxburn, so therefore the community is going to increase all the time, and people are coming out from Edinburgh because it's a cheaper rates area and things like that, and it's a commuter area, but we're still treated as part of West Lothian, not part of Lanarkshire, which has no bus connections. As Eleanor said, she's going from East Whitburn to Harthill ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: So, your point really is both transport ties and community ties or historic ties?

MS HARVEY: The community of West Lothian, as it has always been, and Whitburn has always been, since fifteen hundred, so why are you changing it now? (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Sir.

MR ROWDEN: My name is Alan Rowden. Fiona mentioned there's going to be a small boundary, a small County and one large one in Whitburn, and Kilysth in Cumbernauld. I don't know what the boundaries are but, as far as this small unit, what's wrong with putting them back to the historical parishes that they were once in which was, Cumbernauld was part of Dumbartonshire and Kilysth was part of Stirlingshire?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I suppose the short answer is that, if you change that, then you are changing two other constituencies.

MR ROWDEN: Yes, if you change that, you're losing the small one.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: So, your proposal is to put Cumbernauld back to Dumbartonshire?

MR ROWDEN: That's where it was initially.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, I just wondered which one it was, and Kilsyth back to?

MR ROWDEN: Stirlingshire.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Sir.

MR KERR: So, my name is William Kerr. First of all, I would like to say that Boundaries Scotland has had a difficult go at this because West Lothian is, of course, a growing population area. That's been known for years, decades now, and I think one of the things that people say is that there is Winchburgh's expansion, Whitburn's expansion - how long before we're back to the boundaries? Because West Lothian is going to continue to be a growing population area. So, that isn't going to change. The other thing that I do want to highlight as well is what some of the other people have been saying, which is that West Lothian has strong ties to the Lothians region, and that isn't going to change. I've lived in West Lothian all my life, in Whitburn, Armadale and Blackburn. I went to university at Edinburgh and I worked in Edinburgh. The bus services for a long time now have been moving to Lothian Buses, so that's another aspect, and I think it's fair to say that this change doesn't affect things like transport and health, because that's what the Scottish Parliament isn't able to do in some ways, so if I've got a problem with NHS Lothian, I wouldn't go to West Lothian Council for that, I'd go to my Member of Parliament for that. So, I would expect a central list MSP to speak to NHS Lothian or Lothian Buses because of this area. I think the other point was on communication about these meetings, and I agree, I found this on a local Facebook page that was out there, and just to tie in also with the things said about the council, changing the council area: I think it's come from the media in some ways. So, I think it was something the West Lothian Courier and Daily Record put out - there was no mention about the fact that this was to do with the Scottish Parliament boundary, but it was a change of council area that was first put up. So, I think that's worth mentioning. And, finally, I'll round off by saying in many ways West Lothian has stronger ties with Falkirk than what it does with Airdrie and the Lanarkshire districts. For a long time in the Westminster elections, at UK level, it was Linlithgow and East Falkirk, and there's been proposals for Linlithgow and Grangemouth which have been rejected, but I think that is something that we need to look at. And the fact that we're represented by eight MSPs, both regional and constituency, so I actually agree with Fiona

Hyslop and Neil when they were saying let's leave the boundaries as they are for now because there is continuing growing population and we can have a large constituency in the West Lothian area, with the MSPs, and eight representatives - and you're telling us that that isn't sufficient to cover the area and the constituency as is? Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Just to answer your first point, the population is always changing. So, you need to put your foot on the ball and select a date, that date is at September 2022 when this exercise started, and therefore the electoral quota, the number of people per constituency, was as at September 2022. And the whole exercise will not be repeated until between eight and 12 years. I hope that helps with just the structure of things. Sir.

MR KENDRICK: Hi, my name is George Kendrick. I'm not only representing myself here, I'm representing a group on Facebook. I was here this afternoon and I went away from here a little bit wiser and educated. I wasn't sure of the actual facts, of what was going to happen. I wonder if Fiona has been reading my notes because I'm going to repeat her. The point made was this: for me the boundary changes seem to be getting suggested due to the fact that certain areas of Scotland's population are increasing beyond the electoral guidelines. It would appear that the Boundaries Commission are trying to obtain a level of electorate in each of the various constituencies of around, between 60 and 66,000 people.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: 59,902.

MR KENDRICK: Give or take, but on the proposal it's going to take us up to about 66, I think. So, that's where I got that from, the information sheet that was lying on the desk. The problem really being, trying to keep the 73 constituencies with 3 protected. The important boundary proposals, the areas for this are Linlithgow, Almond Valley and Airdrie, because they're sort of adjacent to where these proposals are all going to change. Within the proposed changes all three seem to be getting taken to the limit with regards numbers of constituents. Is it maybe not time, because of the ever increasing population size and house building proposals, for a new constituency to be named, most suitably to satisfy the people's concerns about historic links and local pride that we all have as being part of Lothian, rather than designation that will be Lanarkshire? Might I suggest we keep Almond Valley as it is, keep Linlithgow, divide maybe some of the electorate from Linlithgow and Almond Valley into a new constituency and call it West Lothian? Airdrie could be kept as it is, thus leaving Airdrie, Linlithgow, Almond Valley and a new West Lothian for the electoral expansion. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Madam.

MS KERWIN: I'm Lorna Kerwin and I'm just representing myself. I've got two points, I have two questions to ask. You're saying this is only for the Boundaries Commission just now for the Scottish Parliament elections. What happens 10 years down the line when the council becomes, it will become part of the North Lanarkshire Council? Is that a possibility? It's just the boundary changes just now, but say in a few years time we just get shifted into the council of North Lanarkshire? What's the chances of that happening?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I cannot answer that, I am afraid, because all that this is doing is affecting the electoral areas. The council areas are just not affected by this exercise at all. What happens in the future I am afraid I know about as much as you do.

MS KERWIN: That's what you're saying at the moment, so I'm questioning: what's the chance of, a few years down the line, we're taken into North Lanarkshire Council when we want to remain with West Lothian Council?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, I am afraid I simply cannot answer that.

MS KERWIN: And what's the chance of the Commission just disregarding the opinion here?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Well, the Commission does not disregard anyone. That is the whole point. The whole point of having everyone turn up and me here and others listening, and recording everything, is to make sure that we get all of your views. So, I am quite happy to take your views if you want to give them.

MS KERWIN: Well, I'm just concerned because it seems to me part of the problem is that we've got continual house building here in West Lothian and I know at least three in West Lothian, that the council threw out when the planning application came in, and it was taken to the Scottish Parliament, who turned it around and gave the planning permission when the council was against it, and for good reason. So, the Scottish Parliament has disregarded the council's opinion on several occasions. What's to stop them doing the same thing this time?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Well, that is a matter for the council and for MSPs. That is why we elect them, they make decisions.

MS KERWIN: No, I know that, but I'm just putting these points forward.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, but the point is that we cannot deal with them because all we are doing is changing the boundaries in which to elect the MSPs. You vote for whatever MSP you want to. I am sure that Miss Hyslop will be delighted to persuade you.

MS KERWIN: Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes.

MS CHERRY: Hi, my name's Dawn Cherry. I'm a staff nurse with NHS Lothian and I work in the children's community nursing service, and at the moment to use our services a child has to be between the ages of zero and 16 and reside in West Lothian to receive our care, and that's not Lothian, that is NHS Lothian, and West Lothian is obviously included in that at the moment. My concern is that having worked in my current post within the community for the past four years, I think we all get to see people and children falling through the net with the problem of Harthill falling under North Lanarkshire, and they then go to North Lanarkshire community nursing services, despite the fact that a lot of those children most likely will be from the area because it is closer for them. And I think by changing the boundaries of this, although NHS Lothian will still stay the same, our

service would not be going out to do care in the community.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I think that is a local authority service, though, that is the interaction between the NHS and the local authority.

MS CHERRY: Yes, but if you're then saying we fall under North Lanarkshire ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, but not for local authority services. What you are describing is a local authority taking on children and the interaction with the NHS, which I understand is a difficult problem, but is not affected by this. All that this is about is which MSP you will go to. So, you might want to go, you might have a difficulty with which MSP you go to, but that is all that is affected. It will not affect the local authority services. Thank you. Madam.

MS SUMMERVILLE: Hi, my name is Sue Summerville. I wanted to pick up on a point made about how Boundary Scotland have given this opportunity for us to come here tonight to voice our concerns. I was under the impression the only reason we're here is because West Lothian Council objected to this and that was why you were bound to give us our say.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: That is right.

MS SUMMERVILLE: So, you're making out that you've opened the doors here and let us all have our say here, but you are duty-bound to do that because West Lothian Council objected to this.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, like I said in my introductory remarks.

MS SUMMERVILLE: Yes, you actually alluded to that to the lady and made out that, "Boundary Scotland are here and we're giving you the opportunity to speak" but you didn't say it was because West Lothian Council rejected it. You did at the start but you're trying to make out that you're very open and honest in telling us about this. Another point as well. I think - Dawn was talking - they were talking about the boundaries already and it was causing confusion.

MS CHERRY: Yes.

MS SUMMERVILLE: So, going forward, if this goes through, you are going to have problems with education, with your NHS - "Oh, wait a minute, you're in West Lothian but, no, you actually come under North Lanarkshire." That is going to cause a lot of confusion in your local authorities and it's going to cause a lot of problems, and I don't think Boundaries Scotland have actually thought about this. And another point I have as well: why was Whitburn and Fauldhouse picked? (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sorry, I missed what you said. Why was what picked?

MS SUMMERVILLE: Why was Whitburn and Fauldhouse picked? Because, basically, I know what you're talking about, we have eight years review, etc. and there is legislation, I understand that.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Why were they picked?

MS SUMMERVILLE: Yes, why specifically were Whitburn and Fauldhouse picked? Is there a criteria? Is there a list for this? To find out why. Will we ever know that or is it confidential?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: It is back to the exercise. This is an exercise of trying to ...

MS SUMMERVILLE: Yes, but ...

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Let me answer your question. You asked me a question, let me answer it. This whole thing is about trying to fit 70 constituencies of roughly the same amount of people and therefore that involves, if the population shifts to one side or the other side, or wherever, it involves moving some communities from one to the other. That's it.

MS SUMMERVILLE: So, really I don't think a lot of thought has went into this because I agree with the other people that talked about that there has not been a lot of events. I keep a close eye on social media, and it was just by chance I happened to see there was something happening. This is the first time I've ever heard of the boundaries change like this. For such a large topic, there has not really not been a lot of consideration at all. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you. Any other points? Sir.

MR EVANS: Just to go back to this lady over here, she was worried about a political change leading to a council boundary change, and you said, well, you can't forecast the future. Can I ask you, then: has it ever happened before, that historically a political change, has that ever precipitated a change, a move to a council area?

MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Bo'ness has been shifted.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I am afraid I cannot answer that. What I want is your views on the current changes.

MR EVANS: You know, a concern of mine is that this is just the start of it.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Let me be clear, the Boundaries Commission does not have any power to shift local authority services. It is way beyond its remit. So, these are things that I cannot answer, and I cannot even cover in my report. My report is just to get your views on the existing boundary change.

MR EVANS: Yes, I suppose it's a concern of ours that you can change it on one basis and then it becomes the norm and people are then considering North Lanarkshire and then somebody comes up with a wise idea, "Oh, why don't we move the council area as well?" It's just a concern as to what might happen down the line. But you are not aware yourself that it has happened?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I cannot give any guarantees. I am just performing ...

MR EVANS: No, but you are telling me what you know or do not know right now. Thank you.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Madam, do you want to say something else?

MS CHERRY: Yes, just on the back of that with the changes - so, like I said, I work in NHS Lothian and I live in West Lothian, so therefore when I vote every year it's for a West Lothian MP.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: MSP.

MS CHERRY: Yes, MSP, so I would be voting to a MSP who doesn't have any connection in that area. I don't get a say in my child's health care, so to speak, or my MSP isn't going to be representing me, and if a child is three months premature, he will spend time in different places and the communication will be going through Falkirk, but I don't know how that will affect the boundaries. I'm voting for someone to then represent me and to represent my son, but not in North Lanarkshire. That doesn't impact on the health care for me and my child? So, you then have children and families from Whitburn and Fauldhouse that are hoping to have somebody to represent them, and someone will be here when they have their concerns. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Sir.

MR GRAY: Yes, just to come back in again and I appreciate the opportunity to do so. I just wanted to follow on what Mrs Sutherland, I think it was, around the notification that's been available for here and for the ability of residents of Whitburn and also of Fauldhouse to be able to make representations here today. At least within this locality there has been a session, but my question to you is: what bearing and how will you give due locus to the representations that have been made on behalf of and by residents of Airdrie North where they haven't had the same ability to be able to come, never mind those that feel that it could have been advertised for areas in West Lothian? But other than a communication that was put out there, I don't believe there was any communication gone out within the Airdrie locality as to this session being put on, and they have not had the same ability to represent their own views or to have their views represented by the Boundaries Commission because the petition that was put in apparently wasn't sufficient enough to merit a representation within an inquiry held within their community? So, I wonder in your report how you will make sure, short of another session happening in Airdrie, how you will ensure that those representations are given due weight in the recommendation that you make? (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I cannot really field questions because I am not really here for that purpose, but in overall terms my report is not a proactive thing about the process itself necessarily. What I am doing is taking the views that I get. I would remind you - well, that is the fact - I would remind you that written representations are also looked at. Anybody can make them at any time and that does not need personal communication. I know that there is a folder of a lot of written representations. So, if you have any constituents or anybody in your area who wishes to make their own voices heard, they

can just send an email to the Boundaries Commission. It will be taken into account. It will actually be added, I think, as an annex to the report, most likely, and therefore the point about this is not to leave anybody out or anybody out. So, we are quite happy to take any representations. And I am sure your points about advertising have been noted. I will make reference to that in my report and that can be taken forward by yourself or anybody else once the report is available. Madam.

MS BOWDEN: We heard a lot of stuff from you at the beginning when you set out what the Boundaries Commission - on what basis they will make their decision or how they make their decisions, but I haven't seen that before, any of it. So, I think, you know, we've come here kind of blind, just with a kind of gut feeling, without actually being able to formulate an opinion based upon what we are looking for, if you understand what I'm saying. Yes? Do you?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes. Thank you. Madam, at the back. Can I ask your name please?

MS BLAIR: Ruth Blair.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you.

MS BLAIR: So, I'd just like to say something about the NHS and also education as well and that is going to affect where boundaries are, where the children go to school and where the adults work, and you're changing it all.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: No.

MS BLAIR: It was what you said about the NHS and education.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I will just remind you what I said at the start, that this is about the Scottish Parliamentary constituencies. Local authority services are not affected. They do not change, the medical facilities do not change.

MS BLAIR: But it's about the NHS and education for adults who work in Mid and West Lothian, and their children go to school in West Lothian and then you separate that, with the adults working outwith and voting as well for people that are not helping their own children.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: So, it is like voting for an MSP who covers the services that you are talking about.

MS BLAIR: Yes, the same as health care.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I have got that. Thank you. So, we have covered quite a lot of the same ground. I have noted everything that you have said. It has all been recorded. So, I think I understand the points that have been made. Does anyone have any new points to be made? Sir, at the back.

MR McCARR: Yes, just to follow on, as we have been looking at the boundaries and that's

what we are all here for today, but I would just like to ask: so, all these meetings we have and you have a review again and you potentially draw the boundaries, and there's no changes to the decision on areas of Whitburn and Fauldhouse: what's the deal then for us if we're still not sufficiently happy about that? Basically, your next review and that's it, and there are no further political routes for objecting to your further proposals?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: What the Boundaries Commission do is make recommendations, they make final recommendations, so that is what they have to do. I think after that it is a political process and that is where your remedy would lie, if anything.

MR McCARR: So, there is a route forward if the proposals are made and there are changes to this area, that we still have a right to object? Because one of the things that we are concerned with in this hall is the fact that these Boundaries Commission plans have been drawn up but it doesn't really feel like there's been a pre-consultation on it. It's been closed consultation. So, I think that's our concern.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Noted. Thank you. Yes, sir.

MR ANDERSON: Good evening. My name is Kenny Anderson and I am here representing Linlithgow Constituency Association and the Scottish National Party and we have made three recommendations to the Boundaries Commission about this aspect because it has concerned us so much, and I gave evidence in the January submission and I think our points are about solutions, and at each stage we have within our proposals tried to give solutions to the Boundaries Commission on this in an objective way, looking particularly at the historic links that there are with the County, with the community in South Queensferry and particularly Bo'ness, and I would highlight the point that my friend here behind me made about where there has been these issues happening in the past, and Bo'ness is obviously the one that you're very conscious of in terms of it being moved despite having the postcode. And whilst we appreciate that the Boundaries Commission are always going to have these concerns and difficulties, I think there is a sense tonight that perhaps Falkirk Council have been listened to a little bit more, purely unconsciously, rather than the solutions that we've been putting forward to the Boundaries Commission over this period of time, and I hope that's something that is reflected not just tonight but in the written submissions that we have given all the way through this process. And we are reassured by the point made that you will take into account our written submissions throughout this whole process and not just this evening. Thank you. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Ok I have that. Sir, you have not spoken before.

MR DEVLIN: Yes, I'm John Devlin, I'm Chairperson and part of the board of directors of the community of the Whitburn Community Development Trust. It's quite annoying sitting here and listening to local people who are tested to put their point of view. I know for a fact that this partnership centre was asked last week, on the reception desk, when these meetings were going to take place, and they knew nothing about it. I'm afraid I'm putting it down to what we have to deal with in the community bodies in Whitburn, the councillors in Whitburn. If they are desperate to give the people of Whitburn a vote, why weren't they out canvassing this was coming? I don't understand where they can sit back - thank you to Fiona for taking the time to come to two of the meetings, when her local

councillors couldn't be bothered to do that for us. (Applause)

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: You will understand ...

MR DEVLIN: The community is there to be represented, and they haven't taken the time to bother to come here.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I am sure that is noted and heard. You will understand that I cannot deal with that in the report which deals with boundaries, but the point is made. Thank you.

MR DEVLIN: You hear people saying it wasn't advertised. It's not all down to the Boundaries Commission. If the councillors here were desperate for us to attend this and put our view, where are they now? Where were they a month ago when advertising that this was coming up?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Thank you, I hear the point. Yes.

MR KENDRICK: It's just a question I hope you can answer.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: I do not know.

MR KENDRICK: Who requests this to happen?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Who?

MR KENDRICK: Who requests this? Which Parliament is it? Holyrood or is it Westminster?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Holyrood.

MR KENDRICK: It's Holyrood. Because I keep hearing all the names, but I just wanted to get that clarified if it was Holyrood or Westminster.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: It happens in both, but, yes. All right, thank you for that. I have a variety of points and unless anybody wants to raise any new points that we have not already been over, then we can maybe call it a day there. Madam.

MS KERWIN: Again, a question here. Won't it cause confusion if there's a different boundary for the Holyrood Parliament than the Westminster Parliament? If there's two different boundaries for voting for the Holyrood Parliament, will that not be confusing when it comes to the Westminster Parliament?

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: If you are asking, can we make them exactly the same? There are different populations with different numbers, so the answer, I am afraid, is No. I am sure people would if they could but they cannot.

MS KERWIN: I had the experience of having to vote in another village at one point, only in our street, and for some reason I was lumped in another village, and I could see how it would impact actually the number of people who would bother to go to another village to

vote.

SHERIFF PRINCIPAL ROSS: Yes, this is the structure, I am afraid. We have to deal with Scotland and Scotland's population and Scotland's constituencies, so that's the way it works. All right, well, if everyone is happy enough that they have raised the points that need to be raised, what happens next is that I have to go away and try and summarise it. I do not know quite how I summarise everything that has been said, but I will certainly find the main strands. My point is to summarise and send that to the Boundaries Commission and they will make final Recommendations to Scottish Ministers. So, you will find out what my report looks like eventually when I write it, hopefully it is not too long, and that will be on the website eventually along with a transcript of everything that has been said, so every word that has been said will be on the website, and so hopefully we have full transparency, and also the written responses will be on the website, so everything is there for you to see. There is a specialist Boundaries Commission website, it will be a couple of months from now, and the whole process comes to an end in May 2025 when the whole thing for the whole of Scotland is submitted. So, with that, thank you very much for attending, thank you for your views and I think we can wrap it up there. (Applause)

(The evening session concluded at 7.21 p.m.)
