

Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland

Transcript Details					
		Assistant Commissioner		Sarah Havlin	
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**Assistant
Commissioner**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I now formally open this second day of the public hearing into the proposed local government district of Belfast City. My name is Sarah Havlin, and I have been appointed by the Minister of the Environment to conduct this hearing. Firstly, I should stress that I am independent of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner Dick Mackenzie, and it is not my function to defend his recommendations. My job is to listen to you and consider the evidence that you put forward at this hearing, and to report my findings and my recommendations to the Commissioner. My recommendations are to be made within four weeks of the close of this hearing. I just want to let you all know that copies of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations are available for inspection here, as are copies of the Procedure Guide which governs the conduct of this hearing. There are also copies of the written representations, relating to this district, which have been made to the Commissioner's Secretariat during the eight week consultation period, which ended on 12 November 2008.

I should also point out that this hearing will be recorded and that a transcript will be made available on the Commissioner's website in due course. If anyone cannot access the website and wishes to receive a printed copy of the transcript, please leave your name and contact details with a member of my support staff.

There are maps on display at the back of the room showing the eleven council model, the boundary proposals for the local government district and the adjacent districts. Staff from Land and Property Services are also on hand to advise me on the detail of any boundary proposals brought forward at the hearing, and to assist any person making representations with mapping matters.

The purpose of this public hearing is to consider oral representations concerning the Provisional Recommendations of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, for the local government district of Belfast City. If you have a view on the Commissioner's recommendations, this is your opportunity to be heard.

I should, however, emphasise that you cannot reserve your position to await my report. It will not be possible for you to make any written or oral submissions to me after this hearing has concluded. Some of you may already have made written representations and I have studied those carefully as part of

my preparation for this hearing, and I will be taking those into account in my report to the Commissioner.

Those of you who have already made written representations may wish to elaborate on those representations today; however, I will not be assisted by merely repeating your written submissions. If you have already made your points fully in writing, you may simply wish to state for the record that you support or oppose a particular recommendation for the reasons that you have already stated in your written representation. I can assure you that full account will be taken of all written representations regardless of whether or not they are referred to during the course of this hearing.

I should also be grateful if other speakers would try not to repeat points that have already been put to the hearing but rather simply tell me to record their support for views expressed previously.

On the other hand, if you wish to present substantial proposals that you have not already made, it would be helpful if you could inform the staff at some point and we can facilitate you with a short adjournment.

Above all, it is important that you try to back up your proposals with evidence, where possible, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence or unsubstantiated statements. Bear in mind that in making his recommendations, the Commissioner was constrained by the rules which are set out in the relevant legislation and replicated at the back of the Procedure Guide, which you should have a copy of.

There are a number of issues that are outside the scope of this hearing, either because they have already been agreed by Government or because they are matters for the new councils, the Department of the Environment or the Secretary of State to address. These issues include: the number of new district councils to be delineated; the groupings of current councils from which they will be constituted; the location of the headquarters of the new councils; the financial consequences of boundary changes; the District Electoral Areas into which proposed wards will be combined; and the city or borough status of new councils.

The city or borough status of councils is a matter for the Department of the Environment to address in bringing forward the legislation for the reorganisation of local government. I

would therefore ask you to try and not raise these issues in your representations.

I want to explain the procedure that we will follow in relation to your oral submissions. In making your submission could you please start by stating your name clearly for the record and tell us whether you are speaking in a personal capacity or in a representative capacity and, if so, who you are representing. Please speak clearly and try not to use abbreviations as they may cause difficulties for the transcribers, and please state whether you have already made a written submission. If you have a summary or a note of your submission, it would be very helpful if you could provide me or my staff with a copy. If you do not have copies of your submission with you, please approach a member of the staff and we will be happy to arrange for copies to be made for you.

Your oral submission will be of particular assistance to me if you are able to explain the reasons why you have taken a particular position, any counter-proposals which you may wish to make to the Commissioner's recommendations, and the reasons for those counter-proposals. When you have finished your submission, other people may wish to put questions to you and I may also have some questions for you or points of clarification.

I would like to emphasise that I intend the hearing to be conducted in an informal manner that is conducive to all those who wish to contribute. Formal cross-examination is not appropriate at a hearing of this nature, but I am very happy for people to put questions to the speaker through myself and, similarly, I will facilitate the person answering the question in the best way possible.

The most important thing today is to hear any relevant information available in respect of the Commissioner's proposals, hear your counter-proposals, and to conduct the hearing and use the time as efficiently and affectively as possible. Full details of the procedures are in the Procedure Guide.

I also want to touch very briefly on site visits. After this hearing is over, I may go to view some areas under consideration. If there is a particular boundary or feature that you want me to look at, then please mention it during the course of your submission. I will note it and I will try to go and see it.

I will be assisted in the running of the hearing by a team composed of staff from the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's Office, the Land and Property Service, and Morrow Communications, and I also have an interpreter available for those of you who wish to make your submissions in the Irish language. All of the staff will be pleased to help you so please feel free to approach them.

[Housekeeping Announcement]

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I am going to call the first speakers on the list and they are Paul Butler MLA and Councillor Sam Baker, please.

Paul Butler

My name is Paul Butler. I am a councillor in Lisburn Council and an MLA in Lagan Valley representing Sinn Fein. In relation to the recommendations made by the Boundary Commissioner for parts of Lisburn, for the Collin Glen area in Dunmurry transferring into Belfast City Council, I want to broadly welcome and support the Commissioner's recommendations. We broadly support the reform of local government and the reduction in number of councils from 26 to 11. For those 11 councils to work and be viable and functional, and for Belfast, which is the main city in the North of Ireland, we agree with those wards of Twinbrook, Poleglass and Dunmurry moving into Belfast to make Belfast viable, as the Commissioner says, to bring it up to 60 councillors and 60 wards. There is concern around the whole issue of the Dunmurry Ward, in particular, as opposed to the Collin area which makes up Twinbrook, Poleglass moving in. I think the argument has been put forward that Dunmurry, for example, somehow should be left in Lisburn, which does not stand up and hold water. A lot of people in Dunmurry, demographically for example over the last 20/30 years, many of the people in Dunmurry ward consider themselves as being from Belfast, they have moved there. It is a suburb, if you like, of Belfast. The argument that, for example, there is some sort of natural boundary where I think reference has been made in the Lisburn Council's submission of Creightons Road, Old Golf Course Road, that they are somehow natural - we would contend that they are not, that these were developments of this Creightons Road, a four lane road and Old Golf Course Road, to cater for commuter traffic coming from Lisburn into Belfast. They are not considered any sort of boundary or anything locally by people. They were there just to facilitate traffic coming into Belfast and workers. So, we would very much support the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations in that all of Dunmurry should move into Belfast. As I say, many people living there, and I understand

there may be areas in it too, people feel that they have more affinity with Lisburn rather than Belfast, but I think overall you probably find this right across the North in all of these recommendations, that people feel that they do not want to move into a new council area. But to make these councils viable and which are going to function, places like Dunmurry are going to have to move, in our view. So, I think overall we would support what the Recommendations are saying.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Have you anything else you want to add to your submission? No? I have your written submission as well, which I have read as well. Before I move on, would anyone have any questions for this speaker on the issues raised? Yes.

Karen Blair

Karen Blair, Cleaver, Fulton and Rankin, solicitor for Lisburn City Council. It was just really a point of clarification and certainly the Assistant Commissioner has heard the submissions on behalf of the Council yesterday. Councillor Butler is here in a personal capacity, I appreciate.

**Michael
Gordon**

Michael Gordon, Turley Associates on behalf of Lisburn City Council. I was just going to say we touched on the boundary of Creightons Road yesterday, and I understand you plan to go out and see it.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I do.

**Michael
Gordon**

So I do not think we need to say anything more than that. There are quite a number of Dunmurry representations which will be dealt with on Monday and Tuesday next week and that have already been made in written form so I do not think we need to say anything more than that.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Okay, thank you. Does anyone else have any further questions or points they would like to make on this particular issue?

**Michael
Gordon**

Apologies, Assistant Commissioner, we consider that the 60 wards in Belfast would still work without Dunmurry.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

So our next speaker is Councillor Sam Baker, yes?

Sam Baker Thank you. I am Sam Baker. I am a councillor in Lisburn City Council for Sinn Fein but represent Dunmurry Cross. I would just like to concur with my fellow colleague in the issue that we broadly welcome the Boundary Commission decision to place Poleglass, Twinbrook, Lagmore and the Dunmurry Wards into Belfast, and if it was looked at that the overwhelming majority of people in those wards will also agree with our position. My other point is to get into my written submission if you think it is needed.

Assistant Commissioner I have your written submission and I note the changes you have suggested. Those are issues that I am going to be looking at in detail and testing on our GIS system in terms of working those around. I do not really need any further clarification on that. I would just ask you, you mentioned there that the overwhelming majority of the residents would agree with your position. Is that something that you have any evidence to support?

Sam Baker Well, since yesterday, because a lot of people, in particular we are talking about the Dunmurry area, not so much the other three wards, that residents have been in contact with myself.

Assistant Commissioner From Dunmurry?

Sam Baker Yes, we were not aware that this position was being put forward to take some parts of Dunmurry out and keep in Lisburn, so I am sure people will, residents will make their own recommendations on that, but I have evidence in terms of people coming to me as constituents voicing their concern about staying in Lisburn and Castlereagh.

Assistant Commissioner Would you know how many roughly? No, okay, thank you. Would anyone have any questions for this speaker? No. Okay, thank you very much gentlemen. The next speaker on my list is Councillor Alex Maskey, please.

Alex Maskey I will actually be very, very brief. My name is Alex Maskey, I am a Sinn Fein elected representative in South Belfast, and I just want to state that I personally have not made a written submission prior to this but I know my party has made a number of submissions. I want to follow on from the previous speaker, just in general terms, in endorsing the current recommendations from the Commissioner in respect of the City of Belfast, but actually point out that there are a number of

other submissions from a number of other parties which would seek to include a number of other areas, whether it's Cairnshill, Dundonald or Rathcoole. I would suggest that on scrutiny of all of those submissions, that they are all actually self-contradictory, even from within their own parties. So these recommendations are by and large designed to serve narrow electoral interests and should not be counted in the Commissioner's considerations, in my view. It would be no secret, my own position and my party position would have been for a smaller number of District Councils in total but notwithstanding that, in the interests of political accommodations and so on, we now have, as you know, 11. But the City of Belfast within that context would remain largely the same and I think it is very, very important to say that, particularly in the light of the history of whether it is Lisburn Council, I know the representatives here today, and the Castlereagh Borough Council's and the history of Belfast City itself, it is actually absolutely essential that the balance which has been struck in terms of the community balance in the City of Belfast is maintained. I believe that the current Recommendations provide for that in so far as, yes, of course, the Boundary Commissioner has to remain within statutory and legislative guidelines and an electoral legislative framework, has to deal with their boundaries and so on, so the Commissioner is subjected to a legislative framework. I believe that within that, the recommendations for the 60 wards that we have in front of us are appropriate and any further tinkering with either including, as I said earlier, for narrower interests either Dundonald or Rathcoole or Cairnshill and other parts of South Belfast are, in my view, very much in danger of upsetting the balance. If you bring one in from one part of the city, you are going to have to bring another from somewhere else to achieve the type of balance we have. I think anybody, any observer, would clearly objectively say that what has brought Belfast to the position where it has been in the last number of years has been some greater sense of community balance, which I think has brought forward tremendous progress for the way in which Belfast City Council has had to conduct its business and the impact that that has had not only on the city, of course, but the wider region. So I do believe that the current submission, the current recommendations are very appropriate for the city and endorse those recommendations. I know there are submissions in terms of the use of the Irish language in place names and ward names, and I would simply argue on a couple of points to support those submissions in that there are quite a lot of people in the city who actually do use the Irish language on a day-to-day basis, and there are a lot more who wish to if given the opportunity and all of the evidence is there

to back that up. I would also say that many of the names that we already have are actually a version of Irish or an Anglicised version of the Irish language anyhow, so I just wanted to lend my own personal support to those submissions. I do not have much else to say, other than I believe that to concede to some of the recommendations from some of the other parties, which as I have said even from within the parties they are actually contradictory, would perhaps seriously skew the balance of the city of Belfast away from where it is now, the city on a much more community balanced basis, which has been good for the city and good for the region. Could I just make one final point? In previous boundary commissions, I mean it is just in response to a question to the previous speakers, the previous boundary commissioners would have held evidence sessions which would have been overwhelmingly from the people in Dunmurry wanting to be within the Belfast electoral boundaries, and that was overwhelmingly stated on an evidence-based approach to previous boundary commissioners.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much. The next person on the list then is Kate Mullan.

Kate Mullan

My name is Kate Mullan and I am a resident of Belfast and a member of the SDLP. I would like to endorse what Dr Alasdair McDonnell, the MP for South Belfast, has stated in his written response to the Proposed Recommendations by the local government Boundary Commissioner. I would also like to support the oral submissions by my colleagues, Brian Hanvey and Ray Kennedy, made yesterday. I will not repeat what has already been said but would like to add that in relation to the five proposed wards of Beechill, Cairnshill, Galwally, Knockbracken and Newtownbreda, it is my contention that these wards should be included as part of the city of Belfast. They qualify, as there is a natural boundary of open space to the south east of the Cairnshill Road through to Primrose Hill and to the south west of Purdysburn down to Hydebank at the end of the Milltown Road. They qualify also as they are part of a continuous development of both residential and commercial buildings from Belfast. There is absolutely no link with Lisburn. Yesterday, Lisburn City Council commenced their oral submission by talking about the boundary from a Lisburn and a Belfast perspective, thus admitting that there would be no Castlereagh identity and no place for it within the new council area. While some might argue that there is a connection with Castlereagh, no one can argue that this area is in any way linked or even close to Lisburn. It is so far from Lisburn that it becomes a ludicrous suggestion to argue that it should be part

of Lisburn and not Belfast. There may be other reasons why this area is a contentious one and I would suggest that the motivations from some submissions, I believe, are more to do with rates revenue. Belfast already has a high concentration of areas of significant social need and with few areas of shared space. These wards should be part of Belfast to ensure that we expand the shared space and help the balance with the level of areas of social need. This area is a natural expansion of the city to the south. When one looks at identity, and I refer to what my colleagues have already submitted, I would like to add that schools are a part of a community, often at its heart, they define the identity and the community aspect of the neighbourhood. In this whole area when children of primary school move to secondary school sector they don't go to Lisburn, to Friends or to Wallace or to any other schools in Lisburn. Why? Because they have no link whatsoever with the city of Lisburn. These children go to Newtownbreda and Knockbreda. They go to St Joseph's, Aquinas, Methody, Victoria, Inst. Why? It is not just because there are no transport links to Lisburn or because they are outside the 3 mile area for funded transport but because it is natural for them. It is because they are part of the city of Belfast. If I can refer to the survey carried out in this area and which people continue to respond to, they remain almost totally in support of being part of Belfast. This is not about political balance. The survey provides overwhelming evidence of what the people want, that is, being part of Belfast and not part of some political interference. While I appreciate that there are some tenuous arguments about the Lagan Valley, or the hills around Castlereagh being a natural boundary, I would contend that from a geographical perspective, the natural boundary is the open space, the fields and the build line, which are all to the south of Cairnshill and Purdysburn. And from a community or neighbourhood perspective, the very close family ties, the close parish and church connections and the community identity must make this the strongest argument of all, that these wards should be part of Belfast. Finally, I believe in the need for Belfast to grow in status not to be diluted. It is the shop window of Northern Ireland, the capital city, and should be treated as such. Thank you for your time.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you. Would anyone have any questions or comments on the issues raised by this speaker? Yes, Dr Gordon.

**Michael
Gordon**

Thank you. I do not want to repeat the bulk of yesterday's submission, but I suppose in summary this issue has been considered before at the last review, and that is the first point.

The second point is that there is not the sense of separation between Cairnshill and Carryduff that the submission suggests. Indeed, that was contradicted by the planning evidence that was given yesterday by the representative from Ostick & Williams. I suppose the central part of our argument is about 'major part' and the interpretation of that in the legislation. I think you have our points in that from yesterday. The argument for Cairnshill, Four Winds, those wards, that area, was made at the last review and while the Assistant Commissioner accepted the submissions that were put forward at that time, the Commissioner disagreed and took an alternative view, which was the argument for continuous built up development was not one which could be attached determining weight.

Ray Kennedy If I could just respond ... sorry, my name is Ray Kennedy. I am here as a representative of the SDLP. If I can just respond, there was a difference of opinion between two Assistant Commissioners and on balance the Commissioner, through his own admission, in his report weighed down on the side of the Belfast Assistant Commissioner, Roisin McGlone, and it was mainly for the purpose of a balance and this was in relation to a seven council model. We are not taking about a seven council model here. We are talking an eleven council model and the criteria, whilst the definition of boundaries may remain the same - what we are looking for is a different output.

Assistant Commissioner Okay, thank you. Would anyone else have a comment on this issue? Yes, Miss Blair.

Karen Blair It was just to respond to the point that was made about us referring to Lisburn and Belfast boundary, that certainly I had hoped I had made it clear yesterday with an express point that we had been concerned that references throughout the morning had failed to refer to Castlereagh and that we were looking at a new council area of Lisburn & Castlereagh. That is just a point for the record. Thank you.

Assistant Commissioner Yes, thank you. Yes, Mr Kennedy.

Ray Kennedy The last speaker was the very person that the opening remarks of their presentation referred to boundaries between Lisburn and Belfast, and Castlereagh only came in much later on in their presentation, but their initial response was purely this is the boundary from Lisburn and the Belfast perspective. Okay, and that is why it was stated here again. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Alright. Thank you very much indeed. Eammon Cunningham.

**Eammon
Cunningham** Hello. My name is Eammon Cunningham. I am a resident of Dunmurry Lane.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Sorry, have you made a written submission in advance?

**Eammon
Cunningham** I have not. No. Unfortunately, as when I speak here, you will understand why I have not because I am not long after finding out about the proposed changes to the already made proposals. I also represent the Safer Neighbourhood project in the Colin area and represent the Dunmurry area for it. I would just like to say, I had heard about these proposals a while back and I was fully supportive of, you know, the Boundaries Commission changing to Belfast City Council as opposed to Lisburn City Council. I have been a resident up in Dunmurry for about 11 years, my wife has been a resident there for about 35 years. Immediate family – we have about 30 members who would be directly affected by this, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sisters-in-law, you know, are all within what the proposed changes are to the boundary. And basically I would like to say I would like it to go ahead as was stated firstly. I do not see any reason why not. My work with the Safer Neighbourhood project, I would sort of be representative for a number of areas around The Green, and all the estates on Dunmurry Lane. I spoke to a number of people last night, as I say it was last night because I did only get to hear about this very recently. I was one of the people who contacted Councillor Baker about the thing and I said is this the case that Dunmurry was trying to be kept as part of Lisburn because quite honestly I have always felt part of Belfast anyway. If I was sending letters for the last 11 years, it has been Dunmurry, Belfast on the letter. My kids go to school in Andersonstown, would socialise in Belfast and I have always felt part of Belfast. I did not know that this was being changed about; I hope I am not treading on any toes by saying that I think we should have been part of Belfast all along anyway. But the other work that we carry out in the area, on the Safer Neighbourhood project we carry out interface work and deal with a lot of resident problems. We deal directly with the Colin area and directly probably as a Belfast whole thing, and if somebody wanted to contact, you have the PSNI would back the good work that we do in that area against anti-social behaviour and whatever, and the people have been on to me that I sort of class myself as representing, really, and cannot

understand why there is now an issue about changing the boundary in the area again. Everybody thought this was sort of sewed up and sold, that we were going to be part of Belfast.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

The Safer Neighbourhood project – does that cover the residents in Colin area and Dunmurry?

**Eammon
Cunningham**

It covers – we would also have an interface group that would work along with Dunmurry Village Residents and Seymour Hill and so on if there would be any – so it covers the whole area. But where we would sort of take down to would be round to the Dunmurry Village area, right the way up and then the whole of the Colin, Twinbrook, Poleglass, Areema Drive. I'm actually a past resident of Areema Drive and this is one of the reasons I got to know about this, because I believe that there was a letter and I have not, unfortunately, because it was so late, seen it yet. But there was a letter put round and I have not actually got to look at it so I cannot really, but I heard that it was not very, it did not give a lot of clarity on what the actual issue was about. It was a box tick here and I want to get a look at that and I will be making representations on Monday. I will be better prepared for Monday and I will be speaking to more residents that I feel that I represent because I know Areema Drive especially when I lived in it, we had a Safer Neighbourhood Project in there and they would have been fully supportive of the Belfast and, as I say, we have always felt a part of Belfast.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much, Mr Cunningham. Would anyone have any questions for this speaker? No. Thank you very much. Joseph McGlone.

**Joseph
McGlone**

The name is Joseph McGlone. I own a business in the Dunmurry area, it is a public house called the Motte 'N' Bailey.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

And you have not made a written submission?

**Joseph
McGlone**

I have not, no. As the previous speaker has already said, I was fully supportive of the move to Belfast area through - I do not want to go through what the previous speaker has already said.

**Assistant
Commissioner** But you want to support what he said?

**Joseph
McGlone** I just want to support exactly what he said. I am from Belfast, myself. My customer base in Dunmurry is from the Belfast area. I moved to Dunmurry myself and was a resident there for 10 years. I no longer live in Dunmurry, but, as I say, I have owned a business for the last eleven years in Dunmurry. I just want to come forward and just state my support for the move too. I only found out last night that there were objections to this.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Well, I record your support of that. Thank you Mr McGlone. Is there anything that you want to add additionally? Would any one have any questions for that speaker? No. Thank you very much, Mr McGlone. Bill Groves. Hello.

Bill Groves My name is Bill Groves. I am the vice-chair of the Upper Andersonstown Community Forum. I have made a written submission for myself and also one from the forum although the Chairperson is unable to attend today so he has asked me to do it in his place.

**Assistant
Commissioner** There was a written submission, is that right?

Bill Groves From the Upper Andersonstown Forum, yes. It deals with a number of streets and the wards that they fall into in the general Upper Falls area. The wards I would want to cover here would be the Falls Park, Anderstown, Shaw's Road, Collin Glen, Stewartstown and Ladybrook.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Yes, I know the arguments you mean, yes.

Bill Groves There is a number of - it just comes down to where people see themselves as fitting in the community. You have Benraw Gardens Green, Benraw Road, Dunluce Walk, Fruithill Court, Fruithill Park, all of Stockman's area, the streets are all named here and they are all based in the Falls Park ward where we would be arguing that these should be in the Andersonstown ward, basically because that is where the community development is in the area, that is where the community festivals are in the area. There is a natural boundary using Kennedy Way that splits the Andersonstown area as a whole.

Assistant Commissioner I should say that this is a submission that has been made quite substantially by other Residents' Associations and individuals in those areas. It is something that I am going to be looking at in detail and testing to reconfigure – to test a reconfiguration of those areas to suit the submissions that have been made to see if that would be an alternative.

Bill Groves And you will find that the rest of the points that I am looking to make are along the same sort of lines. So if you want me to go ahead?

Assistant Commissioner I do not, I have quite a few written submissions on this issue covering all those wards, and it is something that I will be looking at in great detail. You will be able to look at my report as to how I have researched that and what my conclusions are. So I do not really need you to elaborate any further. But if you have any additional points to make?

Bill Groves The only additional point I would like to make is in terms of the Irish language. It is the cultural aspect of the Irish language in the Upper Falls is tremendous. There has been a Gaeltacht area on the Shaw's Road for 40 years, you know, the first Irish School ever in the North on the Shaw's Road, you know, we have the GAA county wards ground in the area. So the vast majority of people in the area would welcome a change of the name into the Irish.

Assistant Commissioner In West Belfast wards?

Bill Groves Well, in the Upper Falls in particular.

Assistant Commissioner Upper Falls. Does anyone have any questions or comments about the issues raised by that speaker? No, thank you very much, Mr Groves, that was very helpful.

Bill Groves Thank you.

Assistant Commissioner Could I call Councillor Nelson McCausland, please.

Nelson McCausland Nelson McCausland representing the DUP. I want to concentrate mainly on two issues in regard to North Belfast and just make brief reference to two other points in other areas of

the city. I will deal with the two brief references first. In regard to East Belfast, there is the issue of the boundary between Gilnahirk Ward and Ballyhanwood, and the Commissioner was using land there which is effectively, or has been, a green wedge as the boundary. That is being built on as we speak and we had suggested then that the line should be and I think in our submission we may have said the Ardneth Youth Centre, Grace Baptist Church and the Hanwood Centre as the third element in that line. It is actually the Tullycarnet Community Centre (rather than the Hanwood Centre).

The other was, I was just interested to note, that we had made a submission that Dunmurry should move in with Lisburn Council. I was just interested to note then that there seems to be a cross-community view on that because the SDLP from Lisburn and Castlereagh were making the same point and I thought that was significant. The two areas in North Belfast that I wanted to concentrate on were Lower Oldpark and then parts of Rathcoole. If I could take the Lower Oldpark area first, I have here a petition of residents from the Lower Oldpark area which I will leave with you. It is a small area and this was just, some local people collected this in one afternoon, actually yesterday afternoon, in a couple of hours and they had 150 signatures from the folk who were in at that point. It was to argue the case that Lower Oldpark should be in with the Shankill and, therefore, in terms of arguing that, which we have argued already in our submission, I just wanted to strengthen that by just giving some sort of local context to that. Over the years since the early 70s when there were huge demographic changes in those areas, that area has been largely defined by peace lines. The Lower Oldpark community, and I would do quite a bit of work along with some of my colleagues with Lower Oldpark Community Association and with the community Centre in Avoca Street and with the youth workers in the library down there at the bottom of the Oldpark Road, their natural gravitation is not towards the Oldpark or to the Cliftonville Road, it is all over towards the Crumlin Road and then into the Shankill area. The proposal, as currently there, that youth services for that area should be provided by the Hammer Youth Centre which is half way along Agnes Street and which would also cater for Lower Shankill and Mid Shankill. In terms of the Crumlin Road steering group, which was looking at the development of the Crumlin Road, again they saw themselves as part of that Shankill community. So whether it is youth provision, gravitation of the community towards the Shankill area, community infrastructure, churches, all of those things, their linkage would be in that direction. There was an attempt in the past to pull them more into North Belfast but it

just did not work and it is understandable when you think of the fact that you have the peace lines there. It is a solid wall right along there at Rosapenna, and then down between lower Oldpark and lower Cliftonville. That whole area around Avoca Street up to Manor Street, down to Cliftonpark Avenue and over to the peace line, together with the other section which is Hillview Road down -- it's a triangle from Hillview Road, Crumlin Road and Oldpark Road, that all of that would move over into the Crumlin ward. I will leave the petition over there for you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Sorry, could I just clarify, you mentioned Shankill and Crumlin ward.

**Nelson
McCausland**

I used the word Shankill in the general terms, the general area, you know, I meant the Shankill area. Sorry, I was not using it as a ward. Also in that context, the redevelopment of the Tudor area, which is on the other side of the Crumlin Road, which had become very run down over a number of years - the regeneration of that area with all new housing has strengthened that link because now you have something to link to much more readily and they would use a lot of shared facilities and I mentioned youth as an example of that. Again, I would say that if there are 150 signatures there gathered in a couple of hours yesterday afternoon, that would indicate that that is an overwhelming view, because there are not that many people living in their area, it is a small area.

In terms of the north end, we are concerned that in other areas of the city there has been an expansion outwards and there is a very strong case for Belfast growing. That argument will have been rehearsed many times by many people. The one area where you have not seen the expansion of the growth was northwards and we have argued in our submission that the natural boundary would be down the O'Neill Road and Station Road to the shore which would bring into Belfast Rathcoole estate, plus the other estates that lie in between. You would be bringing in Bawnmore and so on as well. It would also include the estates on the other side of the Doagh Road, between the lower part of the Doagh Road and the shore. There are issues there first of all of how you define boundaries and I would be grateful if there was the opportunity for yourselves to have a site visit just to see that. The Commissioner talks about natural boundaries, and if you look at the most natural boundary area, it is the Belfast hills. If you stand down on the Shore Road, you can actually stand at Mount Vernon roundabout or whatever and look across, you can see there how the Carnmoney hill is

at the end of the Belfast hills. In all of the documentation about the Belfast hills, and there is a project around that and it is being developed for tourist reasons, the point is it is always physically and in every other way seen as the end, the continuation of the Belfast hills. So if you took the boundary as Carnmoney Hill, that would naturally include everything that is on the shorewards side of that, which would be also, therefore, Bawnmore, Rathcoole, and the other smaller estates at the lower end of the Doagh Road. It is also a natural boundary insofar as when you move beyond Carnmoney Hill, if you are looking for a boundary, you have the hospital site, Whiteabbey Hospital, which is right there on one side of Station Road and runs nearly most of the length of Station Road. Again, you have a natural boundary there that justifies that. That would be where we would suggest that the boundary be drawn. I wanted just to pick up on other reasons why I think that is important, and one of the strongest is that that area is in practice a natural extension and is intimately connected with the rest of North Belfast. It was interesting recently, Crusaders Football club has brought forward proposals to redevelop their site or to redevelop their ground, possibly in a location in North Belfast, but in many ways now the preferred option is a site out at Rathcoole. In the course of that proposal, I am using that to illustrate the intimate connections that there are and I met with the club on a number of occasions. They are saying that two-thirds of their membership comes from Rathcoole. That came to me as a surprise, I had anticipated that the bulk of their support would be just in the immediate area, but the bulk of it is from Rathcoole, people coming in because they were originally from the Shore Road and they have moved out to Rathcoole. Their proposal is to share a ground with Newington Football Club, which would be largely drawn from another community, and it says Newington Manager, Eamon McCarthy, said both clubs have deep roots in communities across North Belfast and Newtownabbey. So it is not just an issue about Crusaders, it also applies to Newington. People see this as a natural extension, and it is not just the fact of going to a football match on a Saturday, but there is a social life around that, there are youth football clubs as well, that are connected with Crusaders. All of that would suggest to me that there are social connections between Rathcoole and North Belfast. In terms of the community empowerment partnerships, and the North Belfast Community Action Unit, when that was set up it included all of the most deprived areas of North Belfast but it also stretched out to Greencastle, and therefore to Bawnmore and then out to Rathcoole. So the North Belfast Community Action Unit recognised that those largely working-class communities along the Shore Road there, had their linkage to

North Belfast. Some years ago I spent about 6 months teaching in a school down that area and again it was interesting talking to the children to get the sense of how many of their family connections, everybody's aunts and grannies and all the rest of it, lived in North Belfast in what is now the Castle electoral area. So it is that connection as well. I notice increasingly- I have mentioned there social connections through the football, the schools, the family connections, churches again - there would be a great deal of movement in both directions. People from Rathcoole are coming to churches in North Belfast, people in North Belfast are going to churches in the Rathcoole area, particularly places like Abbots Cross Congregational Church, the North Belfast Mission and, in fact, groups like the Methodist Church and the City Mission see Rathcoole as part of Belfast. The City Mission, which is very much an urban initiative of the Presbyterian Church, has its mission there in Rathcoole and it is one of the most thriving. When the North Belfast Mission closed from York Street it moved out to Rathcoole. There are also educational connections. You have only to look at the number of buses going in both directions in the morning to schools and the North East College site there which would be down on the Shore Road within the area that we are indicating, not that far from Station Road, to see that the North East College site is used by many people from North Belfast. Although you would think that they would move towards the Belfast Metropolitan College, quite a number of them in North Belfast find it much easier to go out to the college there, the North East College, and, of course, there is a bus route then from the city centre out to that to accommodate people going out to the college. So I refer there to education, whether it be further education, secondary education, church connections, community development connections, a natural boundary, sporting connections, and all of those would suggest to me very strongly that that area, which really effectively is bounded by O'Neill Road and Station Road, and which includes Bawnmore, Rathcoole and the other smaller estates just beyond the Doagh Road, that that would be a natural extension for Belfast in that direction and would therefore mean that you are not just seeing extensions in other areas and North Belfast left as it is, but it would be growing in all directions. I will leave you a copy of the press cuttings about the reference I made to the Crusaders and their situation. As I suggested, if it was possible to have the site visit, it would be easier to explain that a bit more clearly because when you stand down there and look out it becomes pretty obvious.

Assistant

Commissioner I will be helped by the written submission and you have provided photographs in the written submission as well. So I think that will help me when I do visit the site. Have you anything further that you wish to add on that?

Nelson

McCausland No, those were the main points that I wanted to make.

Assistant

Commissioner Would anyone in the room have any points or questions they would like to raise on these issues. No. Thank you very much, that is very helpful.

Nelson

McCausland Will someone be in touch then about the site visit or how does that work?

Assistant

Commissioner I have to make those on my own.

Nelson

McCausland Okay, well I think, if you keep in your mind Mount Vernon roundabout and do not get knocked down in the traffic.

Assistant

Commissioner Yes, I know where you mean.

Nelson

McCausland It is a good location. Thank you very much indeed.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you very much indeed. Vincent Parker. Mr Parker, you have made a written submission in advance?

Vincent Parker Yes.

Assistant

Commissioner Was that made on behalf of an association or individually?

Vincent Parker No, individually as the Sinn Fein Balmoral representative. My name is Vincent Parker. Generally, comments I want to make in terms of other submissions is that I oppose the increase in the number of wards to more than 60, and would accept the Provisional Recommendations, the optimum number of wards in Belfast as 60 as laid out in the current recommendations. Any increase in the wards in Belfast would have a detrimental effect, I believe. Specifically, I want to talk about Balmoral and

the submission by Castlereagh Council for the inclusion of Finaghy and the Upper Malone ward into the proposed Castlereagh & Lisburn Council area. I believe it should be objected to on the basis of the fact that historically, economically, socially, and culturally they all relate to Belfast, both those wards. Within both those wards the schools that residents attend are within the Belfast Education and Library Board area. The primary schools that most residents in that area would send their children to are St Anne's, Finaghy Primary, St Michael's, and the post primary schools are Rathmore, Methodist College, Victoria College, St Mary's, Christian Brothers, La Salle, Malone College, all clearly identified as Belfast schools. Residents in that area use the services of Belfast, read Belfast newspapers, attend churches that are very clearly identifiable within the Belfast area. I think there is no link whatsoever to Lisburn or Castlereagh Council. Also, I want to make the point that there is a large number, an increasing number, of residents in the Finaghy ward, in the Upper Malone ward, who send their children to Bunscoil, an Irish language medium school and also school their children through the Irish language and I would call for support for submissions that have been made by others and by myself for the recognition of the use of Irish language versions of the wards.

**Assistant
Commissioner** In which wards?

Vincent Parker Finaghy and Upper Malone.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Finaghy and Upper Malone. And are you saying there is appropriate demand for that in those wards.

Vincent Parker Yes, there are two schools that residents in that area would send their children to, Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, and An Droichid on the Ormeau Road and the Meanscoil is the post primary school. There is an increase in number, particularly in the Finaghy Ward in the Archville, Ardmore, Finaghy Crossroads, Upper Lisburn Road area of those who send their children to particularly both primary schools.

**Assistant
Commissioner** Thank you. Anything further you want to add?

Vincent Parker No, that is it.

Assistant

Commissioner Would anyone have any questions for this speaker? Yes, Mr Kennedy.

Ray Kennedy

It is Ray Kennedy and I would like to make this on a personal basis as a resident who lives in Finaghy and I would support what the last speaker has said in relation to the land-grabbing attempt by some of the councils just to take land for the sake of expanding their empire, rather than actually using real boundaries, real community boundaries and real natural boundaries as part of their submission. That is all.

Assistant

Commissioner Okay, thank you. Any further comments? No. Thank you very much Mr Parker, that is very helpful.

Bronagh

Graham

Bronagh Graham. Resident of North Belfast and member of the North Belfast DPP and principal DPP. I am here in a bit of rush – I have no written submissions and again I just found out about it and I am very keen to voice my concerns and my opposition at introducing Rathcoole and increasing the number of wards to 61. First of all, I hear the talk about natural boundaries and can I suggest that maybe if you went on to the Antrim Road and stood at Bellevue Zoo on the Antrim Road and had a look down, you have got a vast expanse of land that is not residential. It is the Valley Leisure Centre, it is the industrial estate, it is basically on the other side of the motorway when you look and I see that as a natural boundary, absolutely. When you see the land and the motorway, so beyond the motorway ...

Assistant

Commissioner The motorway is the boundary?

Bronagh

Graham

Yes, the M2. I live up the Antrim Road so I live actually quite close to where Rathcoole is and that whole area – the people there were born, they are schooled, they socialise, they go to church, they marry, all in the Newtownabbey area, not in Belfast. Nelson referred you to a football club on the Shore Road, and he used the words 'come in' which I thought was actually very prevalent, because using the words come in - as in 'coming in to Belfast' - because they are not part of Belfast. He also mentioned natural boundaries. He mentioned about Carnmoney Hill being a natural boundary and if you stand on the motorway, Carnmoney Hill was never seen as part of the Belfast Hills. I've done the Belfast Hills walk many times and it starts at the Cave Hill and works that way and there is a huge

big dip in between, which actually I believe the motorway goes out between the Cavehill and Carnmoney, so Carnmoney is never seen as part of the Belfast Hills and certainly not Station Road or, I think you mentioned, Station Road. I am a resident of North Belfast, I am not even sure where Station Road is so I am pretty sure it is Newtownabbey. But I know roughly where he is, you know, it is down opposite on the other side of the O'Neil Road , opposite the cemetery. The people of that area actually, they live and die in Newtownabbey, the grave yard down there at Carnmoney is where they are buried as well. Personally I do not want to see North Belfast extended out because Rathcoole is seen as a deprived area and I believe needs all the services, as many services, as possible. I think to bring it and introduce it into Belfast would be to its detriment. I believe that Newtownabbey Borough Council would have more resources, more funding and everything to help the people in Rathcoole as it is seen as a deprived area, not so though in Belfast. I think it would weigh heavy on Belfast, because there are enough of the areas within the City itself to deal with. Locality; I live up the Antrim Road. A natural extension of North Belfast to me would be a continuation of the Antrim Road – Collinbridge, Glengormley, that sort of thing rather than cutting down off streets. I think a natural progression would be out that way rather than Rathcoole if you are looking at the demographics.

Assistant Commissioner Do you agree with the boundary that is proposed by the Commissioner at present?

Bronagh Graham The 60. Is this what you are talking about?

Assistant Commissioner Yes.

Bronagh Graham Sorry, yes, I do.

Assistant Commissioner You agree with that boundary.

Bronagh Graham Absolutely, yes. And again, we are talking about the M2, isn't that right?

Assistant Commissioner Yes.

**Bronagh
Graham**

I am keen to get my points across, obviously. I had read some of the recommendations as well as they talked about people moving out to Rathcoole, you know, many years ago, and I do not actually see an appetite of people who actually live out there wanting to come back into Belfast. In fact, if anything, there is an appetite to go out further, they are talking about Carrickfergus and along the Shore Road, Jordanstown, those are the areas and other parts of Antrim, rather than coming back into Belfast and, again, that is local knowledge that I have. I do not think there are any other points I have.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

No, thank you very much. Would anyone have any comments or questions for the speaker? No. Thank you. Malachy Mulgrew

**Malachy
Mulgrew**

My name is Malachy Mulgrew. I am a resident of North Belfast. I am also a community relations worker in North Belfast and I work across the majority of North Belfast geographically. I suppose what I am here about is I have looked at this proposal to include the 60 model to 61 and include Rathcoole. As a person who has lived round there over 40 years, I would have a few views on it and that is what I am here to express. I know we need boundaries. There is a natural boundary there that is the M2 which I would accept and agree. I can understand why it is there. I listen to Nelson, I do not want to mix up other people's - talking about different boundaries. If you are going to include Rathcoole and natural boundaries, then why would you not want to include Collinbridge, as mentioned, or Glengormley for that matter, because Glengormley is as close to the city centre as Rathcoole is. What I would be more concerned about is Rathcoole; from time to time I would meet them because they are a deprived area, and I actually think that Rathcoole moving to Belfast would have a very detrimental effect on other areas like Cloughfern, even Monkstown. They are their natural supporters, so they are going to lose their biggest supporter, so do you go on out and take in Cloughfern, do you go on out and take in Monkstown, you know, do you go on to Carrickfergus?. You know, things were mentioned earlier on about people moving to Rathcoole. People moved to Antrim – are we going to bring Antrim in, you know, lots of people have moved to Antrim over the last 30 or 40 years. Do we bring it in? So, we can all make arguments and I know that. I am only here just to make a point that I think the boundary of the M2 there is fine. It has been made there, we cannot move it up or down the actual road. Rathcoole also has its own hinterland. They

have their own newspapers, they have their own provisions. As a person who played for a football team that Nelson mentioned, I do not know any supporters that Newington have in Rathcoole. You know, they may want to go out there because all football clubs want grounds but, you know, you cannot use arguments that you cannot back up. I played for Newington and I can assure you they do not have too many supporters in Rathcoole. I would also say as a member of the North Belfast Partnership Board, North Belfast Community Support Group, and Nelson sits on the partnership board with me, I do not want to make this personal, I have never heard him mention Rathcoole or the needs of Rathcoole in the last two years on the partnership board because it is not seen as part of North Belfast. I think basically that is my reason for saying leave the boundary as it is, the M2 is fine, why change it? Because if you change it, you have an argument for where we go to - we could keep changing on back into the hills or whatever, but that is basically my argument.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much, Mr Mulgrew. Would any one have any points or questions for the speaker? No. Thank you very much indeed. Could I call Joe O'Donnghaile, please. Morning.

**Joe
O'Donnghaile**

My name's Joe O'Donnghaile. I'm representing the Short Strand Partnership today but I'm also a former councillor on Belfast City Council.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Okay go ahead.

**Joe
O'Donnghaile**

Well I would like to speak in general terms just about the recommendations that have already been made. I am representing a number of colleagues that cannot be here today. I am speaking on their behalf as a former councillor who is the Director of the Short Strand Partnership, a member of the Short Strand Community Forum and also a representative on the Community Safety Partnership. A number of those bodies, if not all of them, have already contacted you and made written submissions. I would just like to say that our view is that we would prefer to endorse the original recommendations. We think that they have seen what needs to be done in looking at Belfast on the whole, and that they maintain the balance of the city which is important. That is crucial, I think, to any change that needs to be made, that the balance of the city is kept and it is seen by the populous to be fair and equitable. I think we are of the view as set out in the recommendations

that the optimum number of wards is sixty and that we also accept the outlying boundaries. You have to look at this in where you cannot stop, and we feel sixty is the optimum. It is the right balance, as already outlined, that needs to be struck and in supporting and endorsing the recommendations we feel that if this is accepted, the populous of the city as a whole will see that they can take and lend their support to and feel confident in. I am sure that that is the result that people are looking to achieve in all of this, that it is not just seen to be on one side or the other but it is a general region of the city accepting what is best for it. I just want to make one further point, and it is in relation to the ward names. Again, all of those organisations that I mentioned at the beginning have made written submissions in relation to the Gaelic town names of the wards, and we feel it would be important, not least of all for the heritage of Belfast, but certainly for the growing Gaelic community that those wards and those ward names are at least put up in Gaelic as well.

Assistant

Commissioner Any wards in particular that you are referring to?

Joe

O'Donnghaile Well we would prefer them all to be, but where I live in baile mhic airt, that is something they would particularly like to see.

Assistant

Commissioner And do you feel if you could tell me if there is evidence of a demand for that in that area?

Joe

O'Donnghaile Absolutely, for example I would say the Shore Road the first Gaelic nursery school in Belfast originated in that community and it has now allowed itself to be part of An Droichid which is perhaps one of the largest now and historically the name Ballymacaret, baile mhic airt, has always been represented on any maps and any indigenous history of the city.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you very much Mr O'Donnghaile. Would anyone have any comments or questions on the questions raised by the speaker? No. Thank you very much indeed. Niall O Donnghaile? Yes that's fine, can I ask the translator to come forward? Could you switch both microphones on please gentlemen? Have you made a written submission at all? No. Please go ahead.

Niall

O'Donnghaile

Is mise Niall Ó Donnghaile agus tá mé mar ionadaí Shinn Féin in Oirthear Bhéal Feirste. Ba mhaith liom pointe eile a lua ansin. Is iar dhalta mé as Naiscoil Mhic Airt a luaigh an cainteoir deireanach ansin. Ar dtús báire, caithfidh mé a rá go bhfuil mise in éadan na moltaí, idir scríofa agus labhartha a mholann gur chóir do na dáilcheantracha i mBéal Feirste dul go dtí níos mó ná seasca. Tacaím leis na moltaí sealadacha fá choinne seasca dailcheantracha anseo i mBéal Feirste. Creidim go mbeidh impleachtaí áirithe ar na gcomhairlí as a bhaintear na dailcheantracha ar bith. Agus sílim go bhfuil na teorainní imlínithe sna moltaí sealadacha na teorainní is soiléire. I dtaca leis an Ghaeilge agus ainmneacha Gaeilge, tacaím leis an chur i láthair inné ón Dr. Pól Deeds. Tá sé tábhachtach a lua go raibh ochtó a dó faoin chéad do na moltaí ó Bhéal Feirste i bhfabhar ainmneacha Gaeilge a úsáid sna toghcheantracha. Dá dtiocfadh liom labhairt ar Oirthear Bhéal Feirste agus moltaí áirithe a mholaim Dún Domhnaill a bheith mar chuid de Bhéal Feirste. Tá mé in éadan na moltaí seo mar gheall ar chúpla fáth. Ar ndóigh, titfidh an daonra sna comhairlí Lios na gCearrbhach agus Caiseal Rí má chuirtear Dún Domhnaill isteach i mBéal Feirste. Tá sé tábhachtach a lua chomh maith go dtéann na moltaí sealadacha seo i bhfad chun cothromaíocht réasúnta polaitíochta a chruthú i mBéal Feirste agus is rud dearfach é seo. Bheinn buartha go gcuirfeadh inchur Rath Coole agus Dún Domhnaill in éadan na sáioibre sin. Creidim go bhfuil na hargóintí seo na hargóintí fá choinne Rath Coole agus Dún Domhnaill argóintí polaitiúla atá i gceist nach bhfuil i bhfách le spiorad na moltaí sealadacha chun cathair roinnte a chruthú. Sin an méid

[Interpreter] I am Niall O Donnghaile and I am a representative of Sinn Fein in East Belfast. I would like to also point out that I am a former pupil of that the previous speaker mentioned there. I would like to first of all point out that I am against the proposals between written and orally submitted that the amount of electoral wards in Belfast go above the number of 60. I support the provisional recommendations that the amount of wards in Belfast remain at 60. There will be implications for any Council which wards are taken from. I think that the directions in the Provisional Recommendations are the clearest ones. I support Dr Pol Deeds' presentation yesterday as referring to the Irish language and the use of the Irish language in the names of the wards. It is important to recognise that eighty two percent of the submissions made and the proposals made were in favour of the use of the Irish language. If I could speak about East Belfast and the submissions and proposals that recommend that Dundonald is made a part of Belfast electoral area. I

oppose these proposals for certain reasons. Castlereagh and Lisburn, the population there will fall if Dundonald is added to the Belfast area. These proposals go to creating a political equality in the wards in Belfast and that is a positive thing. I would be worried that the inclusion of Rathcoole and Dundonald would go against the good work that has been done. I believe that the arguments made for the inclusion of Dundonald and Rathcoole are done on a political basis and they go against the whole effort to create a shared city. And that is it.

[Translator] I'm Niall Ó Donnghaile and am a Sinn Féin representative in East Belfast. I would like to mention another point. I am an ex-pupil of Naiscoil Mhic Airt. Firstly, I have to say that I am against the proposals, both written and spoken, that propose that the electoral areas in Belfast should increase to more than sixty. I support the provisional proposals for 60 electoral areas here in Belfast. I think that this will have certain implications for the councils with which the electoral areas are concerned and I think that the outline borders in the provisional proposals are the clearest borders. Regarding Irish and the Irish names, I support the presentation that Dr. Pól Deeds made yesterday. It is important to mention that 82% of the proposals from Belfast were in support of the use of Irish names in the electoral areas. If I could speak about East Belfast and the various proposals that suggest Dundonald should be part of Belfast I am against these proposals for a number of reasons. Of course, the population will fall in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Councils if Dundonald is placed in Belfast. It is important to mention also that these provisional proposals go a long way in creating reasonable political equality in Belfast and this is a positive thing. I would be worried that the input of Rathcoole and Dundonald would go against that excellent work. I think that these arguments for Rathcoole and Dundonald are political arguments and that they are not in spirit with the provisional proposals to create a shared city. That's all.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Can I just clarify that the naming of the wards in your submission would be all wards in Belfast?

**Niall
O'Donnghaile**

Well, yes 82% of the submissions were in favour of that. It is important to note too that there were no submissions made against that recommendation.

Assistant

Commissioner Thank you very much. Does anyone have any comments or questions for the speaker? Yes, can you come forward because I need you to speak into the microphone?

Padraig

Ó Lianáin

As Gaeilge chomh maith. An rud atá mé ag iarraidh ná ar cuireadh aighneacht ar bith in éadan na Gaeilge

[Interpreter] I'd like to do mine in Irish as well. What I want to ask is did any submission oppose the Irish language?

[Translator] *In Irish also. What I would like to know was any submission made against the Irish Language?*

Assistant

Commissioner No. No written submissions.

Padraig

Ó Lianáin

An rud a ba mhaith liom a rá go dtacaím go gcuirfear na hainmneacha uilig as Gaeilge go háirithe na cinn i mBéal Feirste. Chan achan cheanna acu, gabh mo leithscéal, na cinn ar cuireadh aighneacht isteach i bhfabhar.

[Interpreter] Okay. What I would like to say is that I support the proposal that all wards are named in Irish, particularly the ones in Belfast. Not all of them but the ones that submissions supported the use of the Irish language.

[Translator] *what I would like to say is that I support that all names should be in Irish, especially those in Belfast, not every one, excuse me, those for which a submission was made.*

Assistant

Commissioner Can I just have your name please for my records?

Padraig

Ó Lianáin

Padraig Ó Lianáin

Assistant

Commissioner And just to clarify that was not all wards. The ones referred to in the submissions?

Niall

O'Donnghaile

Dá dtiocfadh liomsa sin a shoiléiriú chomh maith. Tá se tábhacht a lua na moltaí, na haighneachtaí a mholann na hainmneacha Gaeilge i mBéal Feirste, na daoine a bhfuil i bhfabhar sin. Silim gurb é sin an rud is ciallmhaire agus mar a

dúirt mé ní ba luaithe tá sé tábhachtach a lua nár cuireadh aighneachtaí ar bith in éadan na moltaí sin.

[Interpreter] If I could also clarify that. Just to clarify that. I am in favour that the areas that submissions supported the use of the Irish versions of the names be changed and put into Irish and it is also important to note and to note publicly that there were no submissions against the use of Gaelic.

[Translator] If I could clarify that also. It is important to mention, the submissions that propose the Irish Language names in Belfast, those people who are in favour of that. I think that is the most sensible thing and as I said earlier, it is important to mention that no submissions were made against those proposals. To clarify that, I am in favour of those areas for which there were submissions which proposed names in Irish, especially in Belfast.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you very much. Any further comments on this issue? No. Thank you very much gentlemen.

Padraig Ó Lianáin Thank you.

Assistant Commissioner Jennifer McCann, please.

Jennifer McCann Yes, my name is Jennifer McCann and I am one of the West Belfast MLAs. I am particularly representing the Colin area of West Belfast.

Assistant Commissioner You made a written submission?

Jennifer McCann Yes, I have already made a fairly extensive written submission so I do not want to re-rehearse those arguments again, but I did want to give more evidence to the Commission in that I have heard that Lisburn Council have put in a submission actually going against the Commission's recommendations that the Colin area should not be going into West Belfast so I would like to make further comments on that, just as a result of speaking with constituents who have actually been made aware of the submission that Lisburn Council have made. The

Dunmurry area as well, we would class the whole area as Colin really, that is what we would call it, Dunmurry as well.

Assistant Commissioner So you are referring to the Colin area and Dunmurry?

Jennifer McCann Yes. Just on that very basis we would see that area as one area. That is the way we would view that area and I would just like to give some illustration of how the local community feels. There is no factual basis at all to argue that the local community looks to Lisburn as opposed to Belfast. I do not believe that is the case. The largest schools in the area in terms of pupils' attendance are from St Anne's Queen of Peace in Rathmore, and the other South and West Belfast-based schools, that is where the population would go to school. I think also that local people view the Andersonstown News, for instance, as a local newspaper which is widely read in West Belfast and is located in most of the stores in West Belfast would be looked at as the largest local newspaper in the area. We also have Glencolin for Neighbourhoods and Areema and The Green Residents Association who work together. So again, Dunmurry would be seen as an integral part of the Colin area.

Assistant Commissioner Sorry, those Residents' Associations cover both areas?

Jennifer McCann Both areas yes. They would cover Dunmurry and Colin. Well there would be separate Residents' Associations all around the area, individual Residents Associations. What I am saying is that the Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership, who works with those residents organisations, they work with them collectively. They also work with the local one at Areema as well. I would like to say that we would see that as an integral part of the Colin area and the Colin community and we really would see that people would look to West Belfast as opposed to Lisburn. And can I just say that the UUP, the Alliance and our own party all... I think that that is evidence of a cross-community view that we would support the Commission's recommendations as well. And just to add the point I would also like to ask for the translation of the wards to be bi-lingual, in Gaelic as well as English.

Assistant Commissioner Which wards? Just in the Colin area and Dunmurry or...

**Jennifer
McCann**

Colin and Dunmurry areas. No, sorry all wards but specifically those areas.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

And would you have knowledge of the demand for that in those areas?

**Jennifer
McCann**

Certainly. There are two Irish speaking schools in the area as well.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you, anything further?

**Jennifer
McCann**

No.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Does anyone have any questions or comments? No. Thank you very much. Right could I call Jim Rogers Please?

Jim Rogers

I have two colleagues with me. My name is Councillor Jim Rogers, representative from Belfast City Council. Councillor Fred Cobain MLA as well as a Councillor of Belfast and Stephen Barr, one of our party's advisors. We are all representing the Ulster Unionist Party. We have already made a written submission but we would like to enlarge on it slightly.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Okay, go ahead.

**Jim
Rogers**

Good morning. Can I say at the outset that we firmly believe, with respect, that there is a fundamental flaw running through this review in the drawing up of the wards and that flaw is the complete lack of any requirement on the review to take account of local community identities. This is a particular issue with regard to the proposals for the Dundonald area. A second major flaw, we believe, and possibly a fatal one, is the fact that on the Provisional Recommendations, the city of Belfast will still be constrained by outdated Victorian boundaries to both the east and north, some of which date back to 1892. Once again, this issue is most obvious in the Dundonald area, which is to be linked with Lisburn in an arrangement that only can be described as bizarre and at worst as an attempt to gerrymander Belfast. This is the only conclusion that we can come to whenever we look at what was stated in the

Commissioner's statement, dated 17 September 2008, which was recommending that the boundary of Belfast Local Government District should reflect its natural setting as encompassed by the surrounding hills, a number of landscape features and some major roads. Given this statement from the Commissioner, we are at a loss as to why he chose the boundary he did to the east of Belfast where he did half the job, and as a result left the urban Dundonald area assailed and part of the geographically bizarre Lisburn Council arrangement. We will cover this issue later in our comments. We obviously support the proposed transfer of Knocknagony from North Down into Belfast, as we believe this really recognises the community identity of the people who live in the area and corrects an anomaly which has arisen due to outdated boundaries being rendered obsolete by modern housing development. If one looks at a map of the proposed Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council, it is immediately apparent that the Dundonald area is an anomaly, out on a limb at the north-east of the proposed Council. There are absolutely no ties between Dundonald and Lisburn and not even the semblance of a major transport link. Anyone wishing to travel between the two urban areas will have to travel into Belfast to do so. This fact alone highlights the absurdity of the proposals contained in the Provisional Recommendations. It is curious that the Provisional Recommendations go half way to address the problems in the east, by recommending that the existing wards of Hillfoot, Lower Braniel, Upper Braniel, Gilnahirk and Tullycarnet be transferred into Belfast, thereby creating a more appropriate boundary in this part of the east. But it is inexplicable that the Dundonald area should be left out, and it is immediately obvious to anyone feeding a basic knowledge of the Dundonald area that it is an extension of East Belfast, comprising mainly of people who have migrated along the main arterial route of the Newtownards Road. They look to East Belfast for family ties, church ties, schools, shopping patterns, social and sporting links. They are East Belfast to the core and in no way whatsoever could they be said to look to Lisburn. No-one could retain any credibility by seeking to argue otherwise. The Ulster Unionist Party is, therefore, firmly of the opinion that the proposed wards of Dundonald, Carrowreagh, Graham's Bridge, Enler and the urban portion of Ballyhanwood should be incorporated into the Belfast City Council. Indeed, this proposal would merely reflect a proposal of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, Fifth Periodical Report on Parliamentary Constituencies in March 2008 which proposed that these wards should form part of the East Belfast parliamentary constituency. We are aware of a suggestion that there is a green wedge between the proposed eastern boundary of Belfast and the

Dundonald area, and this can only refer to the cemetery on the Upper Newtownards Road, that is Dundonald cemetery, which is owned by Belfast City Council and the golf course at Knock Golf Club just across the road from Dundonald cemetery. This argument is not sustainable for two reasons. Firstly, it is well known that there is a planning application to develop a significant portion of the Knock Golf Club for housing. Secondly, and even more importantly, if this short stretch of the Upper Newtownards Road is to be regarded as a green wedge, it is nothing to the many miles of green wedge which exists between Dundonald and the nearest settlement of Moneyreagh, which in any case looks to Comber and Newtownards, not Lisburn. Indeed, heading south from Dundonald, the nearest settlement of any size is Carryduff which is as far away from Dundonald as the furthest point in West Belfast. We are unaware of the Commissioner's reasoning for including Dundonald with Lisburn and not with Belfast. We can say with some certainty that the reasoning does not include local community identity or geographical features. There is only one logical place for Dundonald to be placed, and it certainly is not with Lisburn. We are willing to accompany the Assistant Commissioner on a visit to this area and we would certainly invite you to do that with us in order to let you see the situation for yourselves. Our proposals for Dundonald merely reflect what the Provisional Recommendations propose in the south and west of the city, where the existing wards of Twinbrook, Kilwee, Poleglass, Collin Glen, Dunmurry and part of Seymour Hill are due to transfer into Belfast. For the most part, the electors here would regard themselves as living in West Belfast and forming part of the wider West Belfast community, and the proposal is to tidy up the city boundary in this area. Once again, the bulk of these wards already form part of the West Belfast Parliamentary Constituency. All we are asking for is equality of treatment, the same principle to be followed in East Belfast by incorporating Dundonald into the wider East Belfast community. Any other course of action would, we believe, remove all credibility from the review. Finally, in regards to part of Newtownabbey, we also believe that there should be a re-drawing of the northern boundary of Belfast City to better reflect the identities and interests of the people who live there, where it is most difficult to identify a coherent boundary in this area than in either, the west, south and east of the city. We believe that a coherent and easy identifiable boundary can be established based on the main dual carriageway linking the M2 and the Shore Road at Whiteabbey. This would transfer the proposed wards of Valley, O'Neill, Rathcoole and Whitehouse to Belfast and like our proposals in the south and east of the city, would better reflect the interest of the people in these

wards, who we believe identify with Belfast. We believe that the wards should only be known in one language, that of English. I will ask my colleagues, Councillor Cobain and Stephen Barr if they would like to add anything.

**Stephen
Barr**

With regard to the Dunmurry issue which has been raised by Lisburn City Council, we will have no real objection to what the City Council were putting forward. If they are satisfied that Dunmurry should be retained in Lisburn, we are happy enough to go along with that. The other point to reiterate at the start, the Ulster Unionist Party has been consistent from the beginning that there should be fifteen councils. We accept that that battle has been lost, but we still make the point that we still believe that fifteen would have been a better model to cover Northern Ireland than the eleven that we are faced with. All our comments relating to the eleven council model should be prefixed with the fact that it is an unsatisfactory arrangement, making the best of a bad job.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Would anyone have any comments or questions on this issue?

**Karen
Blair**

Karen Blair, Cleaver, Fulton & Rankin on behalf of Lisburn City Council. Madam Assistant Commissioner, we would welcome the comments made in relation to Dunmurry Cross and the Lisburn City Council position with regard to Dundonald. We had made submissions yesterday in relation to the legislative requirements of a major part of Castlereagh moving into the new Lisburn & Castlereagh Council, and our reservations that if Dundonald were included or if Dundonald were to move to Belfast, whether or not a major part of Castlereagh would still remain along with the other proposals that have been discussed. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Would you like to respond to that?

**Stephen
Blair**

Yes. That was an issue which the Ulster Unionist Party tried to head off in the Assembly debates in April and May. The issue of a 'major part', whether it referred to territory or to population was deemed to be territory. The area we are proposing to go into Belfast, with a significant amount of population electorate, is actually a rather small part of the actual territory of the former Castlereagh Borough and we believe there is not any legislative problem with that.

**Jim
Rogers**

Can I also say it is basically just to tidy up the area? It just does not make sense to leave a small part of Dundonald and include another part of it and that is why we are arguing that that small section should be part of Belfast City Council and not the Castlereagh/Lisburn Council area.

**Conor
Keenan**

My name is Conor Keenan, Sinn Fein. You obviously have a very well prepared submission. But there is a lot made there about the lack of Dundonald recognition and association or relation to Lisburn, and it misses the fact that this proposed council is Lisburn and Castlereagh and is it not only the fact that the people in the Dundonald ward associate and are already a part of Castlereagh?

**Jim
Rogers**

No, I would not accept that at all. Anybody that I know already made the point about schools and shops and about sporting activities. They all see themselves as very much part of East Belfast and not Castlereagh, or Lisburn, or whatever the new Council's name is going to be.

**Stephen
Barr**

The other point, if people in Twinbrook who are about two miles from Lisburn, identify with Belfast. You would have to accept that people in Dundonald who are twelve miles plus from Lisburn, will identify more with Belfast.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Does your party have any evidence in relation to the opinion of the residents of the area?

**Jim
Rogers**

Absolutely, because a number of them have made contact with us, both in the outskirts of West Belfast, part of the West Belfast Imperial constituency, and the same with those who live in Dundonald have made strong representation and are very unhappy and they are hoping that we can persuade you to recommend a change in the boundary.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Are there any petitions or anything from the residents?

**Jim
Rogers**

No. They wanted to present us with a petition but we told them it would not be necessary because time was of the essence knowing that we were coming here today.

**Stephen
Barr**

I understand from some of our Castlereagh Councillors there actually are petitions being organised.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Okay. Anything further, questions or comments on this issue? No. Thank you very much gentlemen.

**Jim
Rogers**

Thank you very much indeed. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Are there any further speakers who are not named on the list? Yes.

**Peter
Lynch**

My name is Peter Lynch, Sinn Fein. I am asking a question in relation to what the previous speaker was saying. He was saying that there are petitions being organised. Can we still put petitions in or is the deadline closed?

**Assistant
Commissioner**

No, the deadline is closed.

**Peter
Lynch**

Okay, thank you.

**Karen
Blair**

Karen Blair, Cleaver Fulton & Rankin, Lisburn City Council. I wanted to refer to the fact a written petition is amongst your papers in relation to the Dunmurry residents and there has been quite a bit of evidence but certainly there is that petition showing that there is public support for the Council's position.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Yes, I have that. Are there any other speakers who want to come forward to make any further comments? No. In that case I am going to close the proceedings, as I have just confirmed that no one else wishes to speak. If everyone is content that they have a full opportunity to air their views and present their submissions, I am, therefore, bringing the hearing to a close. May I remind everyone that once I have closed the hearing, I cannot receive any further evidence. Before I formally close

these proceedings, I would like to place on record my gratitude to everyone who has attended, particularly those who have made representations. Everyone has given their views in a forthright and frank way, and have kept to the point and I find their submissions very helpful. I should also like to thank my support team from the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Office, especially Liz Benson, Enda McAtamney from Land and Property Services, Kieran Donnelly and Kath Goodson from Morrow Communications and the transcribers and Connor our audio engineer for the help that everyone has given me in preparing for the hearing and the conducting of the hearing. I would also like to thank Ciaran O'Pronntaigh, our interpreter for the submissions in the Irish language. I would also like to thank the management and staff of Malone House for the excellent facilities that have been provided. So my immediate task now is to carefully consider all of the evidence that I have heard at this hearing, as well as the written representations that were received during the recent consultation period and to prepare a report for the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner within the next four weeks. My report will be made publicly available together with the Commissioner's revised recommendations report, if he decides to produce one, or with his final recommendations report and my understanding is that my report will be sent to everyone who has requested a copy upon registration at this hearing. It will ultimately be a matter for the Commissioner to decide whether to accept any or all of my recommendations or to reject them and take whatever course of action he thinks fit. Should the Commissioner decide to publish a revised recommendations report, written recommendations will be invited within a specified period, but there will not be any further public hearings.

The Commissioner is to submit his final report to the Department of the Environment by 30 June 2009. Thank you all very much for your assistance and participation and good morning.

ENDS
