

**Local Government Boundaries Commissioner
for Northern Ireland**

Your Transcript
Thank You.

Transcript Details					
	Assistant Commissioner	Bill Smith			
Consultation Details					
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**Assistant
Commissioner**

You are very welcome to this hearing. I am pleased to open the hearing into the proposed Local Government District of Antrim and Newtownabbey. My name is Bill Smith and I have been appointed by the Department of the Environment to conduct this hearing. I would like to introduce my team: Enda McAtamney is our expert on mapping from Land and Property Services; Kath Goodson is responsible for the organisation of the event and any media enquiries, if there were anyone from the press here; Debbie Davison is from the Commission Secretariat and my assistant; and Barry White is responsible for the recording of the event and the transcription. Everything that is said will be recorded and the transcript will eventually be made publicly available.

I would like to make it clear that I am independent of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner, Dick Mackenzie, and it is not my role to defend his recommendations. My job is to listen to and consider the evidence put forward at this hearing, and to report my findings and recommendations to him. My recommendations are to be made within four weeks of the close of this hearing. As far as the times of this hearing are concerned we have two days available, if necessary. I intend to break for lunch between twelve thirty and one thirty and to carry on until four pm today if we need to. I do not intend to stop for coffee and tea breaks, but I will stop for adjournments, if necessary.

Although this hearing is scheduled to last for two days we may, depending on progress, be able to conclude today. Copies of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations are available for inspection here, as are copies of the Procedure Guide and those govern the conduct of the hearing. There are also copies available of the written representations that have been made relating to this district, which were put to the Commissioner's Secretariat during the consultation period which ended on the 12 November. This hearing will be recorded, as I said, and a transcript will be available on the Commissioner's website in due course. If anyone wants to receive a printed copy please leave your name and contact details with either Kath or Debbie. Enda has maps on display showing the eleven council model, the boundary proposals for this district and the adjacent districts. He will also be available to advise me on the detail of any proposals put forward at this

hearing and to help anyone who wants to make representations concerning mapping matters.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider oral representations on the Provisional Recommendations for the Local Government District of Antrim and Newtownabbey, and if you have a view on the Commissioner's recommendations this is your opportunity to be heard. It is actually your last opportunity to make oral representations. You cannot reserve your position to await my report, and it will not be possible for you to make any written or oral representations to me after this hearing.

Some of you may already have made written representations. I have studied these carefully as part of preparing for this hearing and I will take them into account in my report to the Commissioner. Those of you who have already made written representations may want to elaborate on them today; however, it will not help me to have repetitions of written submissions. If you have already made your points fully in writing you may simply wish to state that you support, or oppose, a particular recommendation for the reasons that you have already stated. I can assure you I will take full account of all the written representations that have been put in, regardless of whether or not there are referred to today.

I should be grateful if other speakers would try not to repeat points already made, but rather simply record their support. On the other hand if you want to present some substantial proposals that you have not already made in writing, please let the staff know during the short adjournment which I will call after I have finished speaking.

If you are making an oral representation, it is important that you try and back up your proposals with evidence, where possible, rather than relying on unsubstantiated statements and bear in mind that making his recommendations the Commissioner was, and will be, constrained by the rules which are set out in the legislation. There are copies of these at the back of the Procedure Guide.

There are a number of issues that are outside the scope of the hearing, either because they have been agreed by government, or because they will be matters for the new councils once they are established, or the Department of the Environment or the Secretary of State. These include: the number of the new councils; 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 the proposed wards will be combined; and the city or borough status of the new councils. City or borough status is a matter for the Department of the Environment to address when it brings forward the legislation for the organisation of local government. I would ask you please not to raise these issues in your representations, since I will not be in a position to address them in my report.

When you arrived here today you will have been given the opportunity to record your attendance and to indicate whether or not you wish to speak. If you have not already done this please do so during the adjournment. Signing the register will also help us in case there is an emergency evacuation so that we can check that everyone is accounted for.

As for the order of the speakers, I would ask everyone to be as flexible as they can. I will try to accommodate people as far as practicable. There may be people who, due to work commitments or personal difficulties, want to get away earlier or cannot stay for long and I will try to give them priority. If anyone has difficulty being present at a particular time, please let my team know so that we can make arrangements for a time that is suitable to you.

That said, it is customary to hear first from Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, followed by local councillors, then council officials, then representatives of groups and organisations, then individual members of the public.

Let me say a bit about the procedure that we will follow in relation to the oral representations. Please start by stating your name and stating whether you are speaking in a personal capacity or as a representative of an organisation, and if so what the organisation is. Please speak clearly and slowly and try not to use abbreviations or colloquialisms which may cause difficulties for the transcribers. Also could you please state whether you have already made a written submission.

If you have a summary or a note of your representation it would be helpful if you could let me, or the team, have a copy. If you do not have copies let Kath or Debbie know during the adjournment and they will be happy to make copies.

Your evidence would be more helpful if you are able to explain the reasons why you have taken a particular position, any specific counter-proposals that you want to make to the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations and the reasons for those counter-proposals in the context of the rules that are laid down in the legislation and available in the Procedure Guide.

When you have finished speaking, other people may want to put questions to you, and I may also want to ask you questions or raise points of clarification. I want the hearing to be as informal as possible, but also as business-like as possible. There will be no formal cross-examinations, but I would be very happy for people to put questions to the speaker through myself. What I hope to get from the day is to hear all new relevant information relating to the Commissioner's proposals, counter-proposals and to get through the business as efficiently as possible. Further details of the procedures I intend to follow are contained in the Procedure Guide that you have.

After the hearing is over, I may go to view some of the areas that we are considering. If there is a particular boundary or feature that you would like me to look at, please mention it during the course of your evidence.

I am now going to adjourn for a short period just to finalise the order of speaking.

ADJOURNMENT

The speaking order will be Councillor Billy Webb from Newtownabbey. Second, Councillor David Ford from the Alliance Party. Third, Councillor Thomas Burns from the SDLP. Fourth, Councillor Peter O'Hagan from Lisburn. Fifth, sixth and seventh, I think jointly if that is how you want it, Colin McClintock, Michael Gordon and Karen Blair who are from Lisburn. That concludes the list of people who have said that they want to speak, so can I invite Councillor Webb first to come to the table please? You are very welcome.

Billy Webb

Thank you. I am Billy Webb. I am a Councillor with Newtownabbey. I am here today with my colleague, Vera McWilliam from Newtownabbey, and I am also here with the full support of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Antrim Council.

I represent Macedon District Electoral Area, part of which seems to now attract the attention of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party. This is evident from the

papers submitted to the Commissioner. The attraction of my area is, of course, the Abbey Centre and Rathcoole. This attempt to grab hold of our rate base and community can only be described as financial and social piracy for political purposes. The present boundary between Belfast Council and Newtownabbey Council has been accepted by Newtownabbey, by Antrim and I understand Belfast City Council have not expressed any interest in changing the boundary between them and ourselves.

Newtownabbey Council and Antrim Council have already advised the Commissioner that they support the current boundary proposals and do not wish to see changes, except for a proposal from Antrim Council that Glenavy be included in the new Antrim/Newtownabbey area.

Some of the suggestions contained within the documents from the Democratic Unionist Party and Ulster Unionist Party are hardly worth commenting on, as they would seem to have been pulled out of the air in an attempt to justify their raid on Newtownabbey. I will, however, say that I would agree with the sentiments expressed in the Ulster Unionists Party submission, namely this review should explicitly take account of local community identities.

Newtownabbey is presently celebrating its 50th year and in those years we have developed an identity for the borough. Rathcoole and the surrounding area is an integral part of it, and has expressed no wish to be cared for by Belfast City Council. Indeed, the electorate of this area of Newtownabbey have not even been consulted by either the Ulster Unionist Party or Democratic Unionist Party who both propose this move to Belfast.

The Abbey Centre represents a significant rate base for Newtownabbey and its removal from the new Antrim/Newtownabbey Council area would have a major detrimental impact on the new council resources. The argument that Westminster Parliamentary boundaries should be used to secure this local government prize is without merit, and does not meet the sensible criteria used by the Commissioner in determining local government boundaries.

The Democratic Unionist Party case refers to the fact that Newtownabbey is linked to North Belfast by a road network. We find this laughable. One would have to assume from this that the current road infrastructure elsewhere in the province all end with dead ends at the boundary with another Council.

The significance of mentioning the fact that the North Belfast Action Unit works in part of the Newtownabbey borough has been lost on us, as any work they do within Newtownabbey is of their own volition. There was little consultation, or communication, with Newtownabbey Council regarding this initiative at the time it was established, or in the intervening period. Indeed, Newtownabbey Council officers recently made contact with the unit and requested a meeting to determine the actual remit of that organisation and also its future plans.

Can I conclude by saying that I see nothing in these submissions from the Ulster Unionist Party or the Democratic Unionist Party which should influence change to the proposed boundary between Belfast and Newtownabbey, and we in Antrim and Newtownabbey would ask for them to be rejected. Our stand on this was unanimously supported - the draft proposals contained within the report - both by Newtownabbey and also by Antrim. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much. Could I ask does anyone else present want to ask any questions or ask for any clarification of those remarks? If not, they seem very clear to me. I have no questions or clarification. They obviously refer to submissions that have been made in writing by people who probably are not present. That is fine, that is how the system works. I will take what they said and your response into account, and thank you very much for making this point so succinctly.

Billy Webb

Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Can I next call Councillor David Ford please from the Alliance Party? You are very welcome.

David Ford

Thank you. Thank you for your welcome, Assistant Commissioner. I am David Ford, Leader of the Alliance Party, MLA for South Antrim and Councillor for Antrim Town. I am accompanied by my colleague Michael Carchie Campbell; between us we speak for the Alliance Party.

We have, and have just supplied to you, a statement amplifying the written representations that we previously made, a statement of comments on other written submissions. Given the state of my voice this morning I am asking Michael to read those to you. I trust my voice will then survive to make a further

verbal comment on the district boundary in the Tildarg area and answer any questions you may have.

**Michael C
Campbell**

All the information is intended to supplement the previous written submission for the benefit of the Assistant Commissioner and the Commissioner. It deals with wards in the groups identified. Given that access to elector numbers is more easily obtained for existing, rather than proposed wards, references are to modifications of the existing ward structure of the two boroughs as used since 1993.

Toome, Randalstown and Parkgate: Toome ward would include all of the existing Toome, plus the townlands of Ballycloghan, Ballynacoooley, Ballynacraigy, Cranfield, Killyfad, Staffordstown and Tamnaderry from the rural part of Cranfield ward. The ward would include the rural part of the current Drumanaway, together with the remainder of Cranfield ward. Randalstown ward would include the urban part of Drumanaway ward, all of the current Randalstown west of the River Maine, and the southern part of that ward east of the river with the remainder going to Shilvodan. Shilvodan ward would include the estates on the Craigstown and Barnish Roads, that is the Brambles, Beechmount Park, Ashdale and The Meadows, as well as the remainder of the current Shilvodan excepting the townlands of Artnagullian, Carncome, Edenvale and Lislunnan which would transfer to Parkgate. Parkgate ward would include the existing Parkgate, roughly about four townlands. Please note that this is a slight revision to our original proposal for Drumanaway and Randalstown.

Antrim Town: Balloo ward would include all the current ward, plus the area between the Crumlin and Templepatrick railway lines, that is, Moylena Road and Greenvale and the town centre including Riverside but not Town Parks South.

Fountain Hill ward would include Town Park South and Fountain Street, with Station Road as its western boundary – that is the Inner Belfast Road, Folly and Parkhall areas, also taking in Queen's Road and Mallusk Gardens from Steeple.

Round Tower ward would include the remainder of the Steeple area plus Millhouse and Springfarm. Greystone ward would include all the current Greystone plus Stiles estate and the Lower Greystone Road, that is Knockmoyle and Braeside Gardens.

Masserene ward would include the remainder of the town centre and the Ballymena and Randalstown roads with the railway as its eastern boundary.

Crumlin, Muckamore and Templepatrick: Crumlin ward would lose the Tromery estate and Bramblewood to Ballydonaghy ward, with a small urban area at present in Aldergrove moving into Crumlin. Ballydonaghy ward would take in the remaining part of East Crumlin and towards Ballutoag, as well as Loanends and Clady, except the townlands which transfer to Templepatrick.

Templepatrick ward would include the current ward plus the area east of the Clady Water, that is Ballynabarnish, Ballynalough, Rickamore, Toberagnee and Umgall from Clady with Shanoguestown townland and the estates of Grainger's Mill and Alexandra Park to the east of Muckamore village.

Aldergrove ward would include the current ward except the urban area in Crumlin with the addition of Muckamore Garden Village. It might be renamed 'Aldergrove and Muckamore South'. Ballycraigy and Farranshane ward would combine the two existing wards apart from the Garden Village.

In Ballyclare, Doagh ward would consist of the village and its extension into the Cogry/Burnside area. Given the relatively urban nature of this area there is justification for the ward's eastern boundary here running along the settlement limit, splitting the townlands of Cogry and Burnside. Ballynure ward would be unchanged. Ballyclare North ward would thus include the town lands of Ballynashee, Carnlea, Drumadarragh, Dunamoy, Tildarg and Walkmill with the larger areas of Burnside and Cogry. It would also include the Gateside area north of Victoria Road and the area between the Doagh and Rashee Roads, except for the western edge, that is Highgrove and Russell Manor.

Ballyclare East ward would include the urban areas from the current Ballyclare North and South wards which lie east of Victoria Road, Rashee Road, Main Street, Hillhead Road and the by-pass. Ballyclare South ward would include Highgrove and Russell Manor as well as the entire area between the Doagh Road and the Six Mile Water River.

Ballyrobert would include most of the current ward including the urban area south of the river and west of Hillhead Road, plus the townland of Ballycraigy from Mallusk ward.

The last ward would include the urban fringe from Hightown Road stretching west through to all of Grange and Mallusk and Craigarogan townlands. Ballyvesey ward would include the remainder of the current Mallusk ward apart from Ballycraigie townland. The Glengormley area, Collinbridge ward would be unchanged apart from losing a small area of Elmfield. Glebe ward would also gain the new housing to the south of O'Neill Road adjacent to the Children's Hospice and The Brackens on the north of Carnmoney Hill, requiring the ward boundary to follow the townland boundary over the hill between Carnmoney and Dunanney townlands, then directly north through Ballyduff townland to the Ballyduff Road. It would lose the Archvale/Abernethy area to Glengormley.

Glengormley ward would gain the above area but lose Queen's Avenue and Burnthill Gardens to Ballyhenry. They will also gain part of the village centre from Hightown. Hightown ward would add the Sandyknowles/Sandyholme area from Ballyhenry. Ballyhenry ward would thus gain from Glengormley and lose to Hightown. In the Carnmoney area, Burnthill ward requires a small addition which enables a straightening of the boundary in the Wynland area.

Mossley ward would consist of the entire urban north of Manse Road and east of Ballyclare Road. Carnmoney ward would extend to include the Christine and Fairview areas with the boundary continuing across the open space at the top of Beverley Road to Ballyduff Road. Hawthorne Ward would include Sharonmore/Ravelston, Woodford/Knockview, and Ballyduff estates.

The Jordanstown area is still a ward that would remain unchanged given its defined boundaries with the railway and the Parliamentary boundary. Jordanstown or possibly Jordanstown East ward would consist of approximately that part of the existing Jordanstown ward within Jordanstown townland. Twinburn, or possibly Jordanstown West ward, would consist of approximately that part of the existing Jordanstown ward within Monkstown and Ballyhowne townlands. Monkstown ward would remain unchanged noting that it lies on the parliamentary boundary.

Whiteabbey, Whitehouse areas - our initial proposals are unchanged for the wards for Abbey, Valley, Cloughfern, Rathcoole and Dunanney.

We now have Alliances responses to other proposals from other people. The response to the DUP submission: Alliance opposes

the transfer of the Rathcoole, Merville, Bawnmore area to Belfast. The M2 is a readily identifiable boundary in the urban area which has been used since 1973 as the Belfast/Newtownabbey boundary. There is no other easily identifiable boundary unless the entire Newtownabbey urban area was transferred to Belfast. This would make the remaining area unviable, even if it did not breach the rules.

In particular, the proposed boundary along O'Neill Road and Station Road is actually through the centre of a local community, centred on the shops and facilities around Cloughfern Corner and Whiteabbey Hospital. The Parliamentary Boundary Commission has recently moved away from using this land as an appropriate boundary. We see no particular reason for the transfer of part of Grange in Ballymena into this district. The suggested use of the Roguery Road as the district boundary divides townlands in breach of the requirement not to divide townlands unless this is unavoidable, as well as using a road which unites areas on both sides as a boundary.

Similarly, many of the DUP proposals suggests using roads in rural areas as ward boundaries in breach of the requirement to not divide townlands unless this is unavoidable. Many of the boundaries are ill-defined; the proposals for the wards of Shilvodan, spanning the Maine river, and Mossley North, in particular, appear to have little logical basis.

In response to the Ulster Unionist submission, the UUP similarly suggests an expansion of Belfast to include Rathcoole, Merville and Bawnmore. While acknowledging that it is more difficult to identify the coherent boundary in this area, this submission states erroneously that O'Neill Road and Station Road form a 'main dual carriageway link'. As stated above, we do not accept this as a suitable or logical boundary. Both the DUP and UUP submissions would remove the Abbey Centre and Valley Retail Park, the commercial centre of Newtownabbey, from the new district. We agree with the Ulster Unionist Party that there are problems in the Hightown and Carnmoney Hill areas, and have made proposals to remedy these.

In response to the SDLP submission by Thomas Burns MLA we accept that there are community links between Glenavy and Crumlin, although we note that the council boundary in this area follows a long and established line which was used as the boundary between Antrim and Lisburn rural districts pre-1973 except for the transfer of Ballysessy townland to Lisburn borough in 1973.

Given the boundary of both the existing Glenavy ward, which extends to the south of Stoneyford, and the proposed Glenavy and Stoneyford wards which also extend well beyond any greater Crumlin community, it is difficult to locate the appropriate boundary if any transfer were to take place. We have not yet seen any evidence of a desire on the part of the residents of Glenavy or Dundrod to transfer to Antrim/Newtownabbey district.

In response to the Antrim Borough Council submission, we note that the Council has acknowledged that it has no community information for the inclusion of Glenavy and has advanced no evidence for the inclusion of Kells. In response to the Belfast High School submission, we would have no objection to the inclusion of part of the school grounds currently within Carrickfergus, although this appears to be solely of administrative interest to the school.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much.

David Ford

If I could continue then with the further submission about a potential minor change to the district boundary. This matter arose at a relatively late stage; we raised it last week at the hearing for Mid Antrim Council. The current position is that in the area north of Ballyclare the townlands of Tildarg, Carnlea and Ballynashee are divided between the current Ballymena and the current Newtownabbey [areas] along the line of the Tildarg and Braepark Roads. It appeared to me that the logical boundary, as one who lives quite close to that area, would be along the crest of the hill between the Six Mile Water and Glenwhirry River Valleys, which would transfer a small population south of the crest down to those two roads I named into the Antrim/Newtownabbey area.

We conducted a survey and out of approximately 20 houses there we have a 5% response rate, that is to say, one person. I have supplied you with a copy of the e-mail I received back on that yesterday. I have removed the identity details since the individual had not been asked to give permission for his personal details to be revealed, but it is from a resident of the Tildarg Road, in the vicinity of Tildarg School, therefore very close to the centre of the area we are talking about. It states, 'Many thanks for your letter regarding our boundary. I'm in complete agreement with you that we, on the Ballymena side of Tildarg Road, should be in the Council as our neighbours on the opposite side of the road. I have never understood the

logic in a dividing line being drawn across the middle of our road. The obvious downside of this boundary is that two waste collections are made per week, one for Newtownabbey Borough Council side of the road, the other for the Ballymena side. My preference would be for inclusion in an Antrim and Newtownabbey Council, including Ballyclare, since Ballyclare is the nearest town which offers council facilities, waste disposal, leisure centre, library etc." I would not wish to maintain that a 5% response to the survey is an overwhelming view, but that individual view is quite clear and I sought responses from the residents of that area, whichever side they took. I checked e-mails earlier this morning and checked the answerphone earlier this morning and there were no other responses at that stage.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you both very much for those comprehensive proposals. I hope that people in the audience were able to follow. We can make copies if anybody wants one. [There were] three proposals. The first was setting out proposals for changes in ward boundaries. The second was a response to the submissions that had been put in by other parties, and the third was the response to the survey in relation to Tildarg? That is the detailed ward boundary proposals?

Does anybody want to ask any questions or seek any clarification on any of those three areas of presentation? If not, I have one question. The presentation was very clear and easy to understand. The second, the response to the other parties gave clear reasons for your position. I wonder if you could give us the reasoning behind the proposed changes in the ward boundaries, whether there is a sort of broad philosophical approach or whether it is different for each ward, or set of wards?

David Ford

At the risk of sounding critical of those who drew up these proposals, it appeared to us that there were major flaws in a very large number of the proposed wards. Others, for example, have agreed with us on the proposed Carnmoney Hill, stretching from housing on the north-west and south of the hill right down to the railway at Whiteabbey. That was probably the worst example. There are other examples like Hightown, Mossley, which appeared to span communities with little interest. It was on that basis that we went back to the existing ward pattern, which is very largely the pattern of the 1980's, revised in the 1990's after fairly detailed consideration on both occasions, and it appeared to us that that was a better basis on which to start an analysis than some wards which respected

neither local communities nor, and I accept that this is not a defining point for you and the Commissioner, but nor the parliamentary boundary which was subject to detailed consideration a short time ago, which for example, had set some established boundaries through urban Newtownabbey.

On that basis we thought it was better to go back to some small building blocks based on existing wards and taking account of the parliamentary boundary where possible as being a better way of representing local coherent communities than, frankly, what appeared to have been put together in rather more haste than I would have believed was reasonable to require of the staff who did so.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

So in terms of the rules, we would be relating the argument to Paragraphs 14 to...

David Ford

Well number 14, boundaries which are readily identifiable. I think if you look at, for example, wards like the original proposal of Antrim centre it is a classic example of a ward which juggles in and out of different areas rather than following more clearly defined areas.

I think on this occasion as opposed to the last occasion we met, Rule 15, the townlands rule has been largely respected in the submission, though not in the comments of some others. I think the key issue, though, was the identification of wards, and building on the history of what people had been used to, to some extent since the 1970's but certainly since the 1980's last revision. It would be our submission that what we have done is considerably closer to that than some of the proposals which first emanated.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

That is very helpful, thank you very much. Is there anything that anyone wants to say before these speakers leave? No, very well, thank you very much.

Could I then call Councillor Thomas Burns from the SDLP? Good morning Councillor Burns. You are welcome.

Thomas Burns

Good Morning Assistant Commissioner. I would like to talk about my submission, plus in general to give an oral presentation of the new boundary proposals.

My name is Thomas Burns. I am an SDLP MLA for South Antrim and an SDLP Councillor in Antrim Borough Council for the

Antrim South-East area. First of all I would like to say that I agree with the vast majority of the recommendations of the Commissioner. I agree with the basic Antrim and Newtownabbey boroughs coming together to form a new Council area.

The one major disagreement that I have is that the old ward boundary of Glenavy, which now includes a new part of a new ward, Stoneyford, should be part of that new Antrim/Newtownabbey District Council and not Lisburn and Castlereagh.

In my written submission, I have outlined some of the strong community identities between the people of Crumlin and Glenavy. Being a resident of Crumlin myself, it is hard to describe the huge growth that has taken place in the Crumlin/Glenavy area over the past ten years. All our infrastructure that we had is presently too small. Our primary schools have had to be re-built and new primary schools have now just opened. Three years ago St Joseph's in Crumlin was opened and now has 700 hundred pupils, and this week the pupils are moving into a new school in Ballymacrocket in Glenavy.

We very much feel that Glenavy always should have been part of the Antrim Borough Council area and especially the Ballyseshy ward. Prior to 1993, the re-drawing of the boundaries, the Ballyseshy ward was part of Antrim Borough Council and after that Antrim Borough Council serviced the part that fell in closest to the Antrim Borough, namely the Crumlin Road, the Pigeontown Road, was where their bins came in.

There is a tremendous difficulty in that area now in the fact that the boundary of the Antrim borough and the Lisburn area in the Ballyseshy ward are now so close, any expansion of Glenavy would be coming directly into Antrim Borough. If it was possible, it is a lot easier to see all that on the ground and, Mr Commissioner, we would be requesting possibly a site visit to look at that particular area and others as well.

I have mentioned the facilities that Antrim Borough Council are providing within Crumlin. Leisure facilities, football pitches, Community Centre and a household recycling centre for waste. There are none of these facilities provided in Glenavy and the people of Glenavy come to Crumlin to use these Council facilities. I mentioned also in my submission the problem of the policing in that Crumlin and Glenavy fall into

District D of the policing framework, but we were very much controlled from Crumlin until the introduction of the local District Partnership, the District Policing Partnerships. It then became quite difficult, because everything was recorded and the DPP in Lisburn were obviously looking after Glenavy and the DPP in Antrim looked after Crumlin. The two areas are so close together, but have different policing teams in them, and it would strengthen the policing team if the same policing team were overall in both areas.

One other great dispute we would have would be the management of Lough Neagh and I would agree with the Commissioner that there should be three Councils looking after Lough Neagh. On the western shore the new Mid Ulster Council comprising of Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt, the Council then, at the top end of it, being Craigavon and Armagh and Antrim and Newtownabbey should look after it from Toome to Tommy's Point. The fact that Lisburn/Castlereagh are coming in there just for a mere three miles of the shore, it makes much more sense to have a bigger Council controlling the Lough, the pollution that is going into Lough and the water that is coming out of the Lough and also the leisure facilities that would operate there.

We also have a particular difficulty at the Sandy Bay Point, because the Sandy Bay Point actually comes back into the Antrim Borough Council area but is in Glenavy. Rams Island, an area that Antrim Borough Council is working extremely hard on to promote tourism, and I have a boat that going out there to Rams Island is launched from Sandy Bay. If you were to expand it any further - if there was a jetty - the jetty would be built in Antrim Borough Council but the car park and all the surrounding is in Lisburn and it would make much, much more sense for that whole Glenavy ward to be brought into the Antrim/Newtownabbey Council area.

There is one other constituency matter that affects both the Crumlin and Glenavy area. We all belong in the same parish. Right across the religious denominations the Crumlin and Glenavy are really Crumlin and Killead or Crumlin/Glenavy parish. It has led to some difficulties here about graves in that Antrim Borough Council have a Council graves cemetery in Crumlin, which the people of Crumlin are readily encouraged to be buried in. The people in Glenavy are then treated as outsiders and coming from outside that Borough, although they are in the same parish. It causes great confusion and sometimes great hurt to those people when they are charged for an outside rate in their own parish, and in this weeks' Antrim

Guardian this has been highlighted that the number of graves in the Crumlin cemetery has risen.

One other issue that I would make as regards the Glenavy ward, and the upper part of the Stoneyford, which we claim is all part of an old Glenavy ward, would be the Ulster Grand Prix. That would be the circuit for the Ulster Grand Prix, that whole top part of what you have down as the Stoneyford and Glenavy. It would make common sense to have all that area in one Council area.

Moving onto one of the other very important points is that in the Westminster electoral area, and the same area is used to elect the MLA's, that the Glenavy ward and the upper part of the Stoneyford ward is to come into the Westminster constituency for South Antrim. I would agree entirely with that recommendation that it does come in. Now there has never been an election as yet where this new boundary would be used where that Glenavy area would come into South Antrim. I feel very strongly that we are starting out here on a new Council area and we are starting out here on a new Westminster constituency and I feel that, again, the proper thing to do would be to bring Glenavy into that constituency and not to make them feel like a poor relation of a Westminster boundary.

I feel that there must be consistency of representation at all levels. Your area should consist of your MP, your MLA's, your Councillor and your community groups, and it really helps that all those are in the one area. David Ford raised it here that Antrim Borough Council also sent a letter into the Commissioner saying that they wished to have the Lough included in their area, but it really was the Glenavy ward that Antrim Borough Council also raised this area that they felt that it should come within.

I have mentioned the connections between the area in the parish boundaries, the BT29 which would be the postal district which we all fall into, both Crumlin and Glenavy. I would like to also highlight to the Assistant Commissioner that in Crumlin, Tesco's are building a new superstore and they realise that their catchment area and the growth for that new store was a 35,000 sq. ft. store with 359 car parking spaces. Their catchment that they are looking for is not just solely at Crumlin, that would extend right out to Crumlin and Glenavy, Stoneyford, Dundrod area as well. We would like to have all of the Glenavy ward in the new Antrim Newtownabbey Council, but we accept that the Stoneyford village should go to Lisburn, so what we would

really be recommending [is] that these should follow the Westminster constituency boundary.

People could readily see this as being the B38 road, as clearly identifiable as roughly the area on it. On the ground it does go a few fields further down the road towards Lisburn, which is a clear cut-off point there with the townland boundaries. Now, when any of these constituencies are being formed by, be they parishes or wards or whatever out in the country areas the townland boundary seems to be where you make up your wards from: you amalgamate a number of townlands together to form that ward. I understand that in an urban situation that is not really the case, it cannot really form part of that. But in a country area your townlands are still very much a prominent factor in where your boundary comes, and I feel that the B38 road is more or less the boundary line, but when you take into consideration the townlands that brings you a few hundred yards down the road and that is where the Westminster boundary was formed.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I firmly believe that the Glenavy and upper part of the Stoneyford ward belongs in the new Antrim and Newtownabbey District Council, but the Boundaries Commissioner decided that it will be in South Antrim, Westminster constituency and that there must be consistency of representation. That would conclude my oral presentation.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much Councillor Burns. That is very clear and [there are] some important practical arguments there. I wonder if you could help me by trying to relate the practical arguments that you have made to the rules that I have to operate under, and that the Commissioner operated under when he was producing his Provisional Recommendations - paragraphs 14 to 19 in the Procedure Guide. Paragraph 14, for example, as regards should be had to the desirability of determining district and ward boundaries which are readily identifiable and so on. If I was to support your proposals I would need to do so within the context of the legislative framework which is set out in those rules.

**Brian
McWilliams**

Can I submit one quick point on that?

My name is Brian McWilliams, I am a researcher for the SDLP in South Antrim. I work for my esteemed colleague, Mr Burns. There is one readily identifiable boundary, the B38 road runs

across the upper part of the Stoneyford ward and it is a large rough tarmac, you cannot really miss it. If you would like to come out we would show you.

Assistant Commissioner All right. And we have your contact details?

Brian McWilliams I work for Councillor Burns, yes.

Thomas Burns Yes, people would say that the B38 was a normal boundary, but it is so close to what Westminster was offering that you would never leave half of those townlands out that just fall below it. It would be much more common sense to bring all of that in as what was recommended in the Westminster constituency boundary changes.

Assistant Commissioner Could I ask members of the audience are there any questions or points of clarification that they want to make before we move on? If not, I would call the next speaker. Thank you very much Councillor Burns. Councillor Peter O'Hagan from Lisburn?

Thomas Burns Could I just before I leave, I am not too sure about this. Your site visit, do we organise that site visit or do you contact us about a site visit?

Assistant Commissioner I will contact you, probably some time in the next couple of weeks.

Thomas Burns Thank you.

Assistant Commissioner Okay, thank you very much. Thanks for the invitation.

Thomas Burns You are very welcome.

Assistant Commissioner Thank you, Councillor O'Hagan.

Peter O'Hagan Thank you Commissioner. Peter O'Hagan, SDLP Councillor in Lisburn. The Lisburn/Castlereagh hearing was on Monday and I went along to that and made comments that I am about to repeat some way, so this is by way of being the second leg and away leg, if you like, but I feel in a way my case has

already been made by the Alliance Party. I listened carefully to what they had to say. I am here in relation to the proposal to remove the Glenavy ward and part of Stoneyford. I had no contact with the Alliance party about what they were going to say, but they seemed to say in relation to Glenavy and Stoneyford, leave well enough alone.

Could I first begin with this notion put forward by Councillor Burns that in some way the boundary of the Councils should coincide with Westminster? That clearly is a nonsense in that there are 18 Westminster constituencies and there are 11 councils and there is no way that you could argue, therefore, that Westminster boundaries at present coincide with council boundaries and do not seem to be in the future, so I think I would discard that.

What is happening in Lisburn is the fact that myself and my two colleagues, when the proposals came before us for consideration, our initial reaction was we will keep our noses out of other people's patch, and we have done that. We accept that Poleglass, Twinbrook, the four wards will be going into Belfast. We made a case for the retention of Dunmurry; that is purely Lisburn internally, but we certainly strongly oppose any attempt to further denude or disseminate what has been happening in the Lisburn City Council area. Now I want to go through some of the things Councillor Burns referred to.

The present boundary, as the Alliance Party pointed out, existed in the days of the old Lisburn Rural Council and, indeed, I remember in the 60's with a group of activists there lobbying for housing, because there was no public housing in Glenavy. We put up a candidate in the local election and he lost it by, maybe, 20 votes but we were naïve and did not know much about elections. The net result was the sitting Councillor stirred himself, and within a short time there was a development there that is there to this day in Glenavy. That is the boundary that was and is, and that is the boundary that Lisburn people know and have accepted.

Crumlin has developed beyond recognition. In fact, one might say Crumlin is out of control in many ways. Many of the people who have come to Crumlin have brought with them political baggage and other types of baggage, the result being that largely the people of Glenavy do not want anything to do with them. Indeed, there are elements within that Crumlin community who go to Glenavy and cause problems that you could, I suppose, refer to the local policing, the difficulties they have. Crumlin has policing problems; they are fairly frequently

in the headlines and my humble submission would be that the Police have enough to do in the Crumlin area, whereas the Moira/Lisburn District Policing Partnership can handle Stoneyford/Glenavy quite easily. I mention that since it was brought up.

Lisburn Council has, for instance, two playgrounds in Glenavy at the present time, the most recent one in the new development costing £50,000. There are all kinds of sports facilities and Lisburn Council has a youth sports co-ordinator in Ballymacrocket, that is the Glenavy area.

There are all kinds of things; a most significant development is the Boxing Club that was using premises in Crumlin. They have now returned to Glenavy, obtained premises and with the support of Lisburn Council they are going well. There was also reference to the fact that Lisburn Council had not provided facilities in other areas. Let me tell you that nearby in Maghaberry there is a new community hall costing £200,000 being completed, there is a playground in the centre of Maghaberry, there is a new playground in the centre of Stoneyford, so to say that Lisburn Council does not take its responsibilities seriously is not factual. We are trying to get, obviously, a community hall in Glenavy and land is difficult, as you can imagine, but there is a new Glenavy youth initiative to which the Council has contributed £25,000 and that is a youth club in the centre of Glenavy.

People will shop wherever they see a bargain. Glenavy people will go to Belfast if there is a bargain, they will go to Lisburn, they will go all kinds of places but the fact that they go shopping somewhere does not necessarily mean that you can lay claim to them. You know, we have shoppers who go to Sprucefield, if you know it well; they come from all over the place. We cannot go out and say because they come we want to take you over, so shopping is not all that important.

I leave my colleagues to deal with the proposal for our little strip of land around the Lough. In my submission, in Belfast, it is an historical fact recognised that throughout Ireland, and even for those who initially set up counties, there was always a desire to have access to water, which throws up some surprising results. I find out in 1972, for instance, that County Leitrim believe it or not, has a strip that runs to the Atlantic Ocean and sometime when you are passing that road between Bundoran and Sligo, you will pass through a little place called Tullaghan. That is actually in Leitrim and it runs to the sea.

In the same way, five of the six counties go to Lough Neagh. Now this proposal, therefore, flies in the face of that to deny Lisburn/Castlereagh Council in the future access to the Lough. It is only three miles, but I have to tell you that at the moment the Sandy Bay Marina is proceeding and money is being invested and my understanding is that Antrim's marina has been stalled for a number of years, and at the moment is going nowhere. Parish was mentioned and the parish of Killead includes Glenavy and Crumlin. But the parish Church is in Glenavy, the parish priest lives in Glenavy and the parochial hall is in Glenavy, and they have a huge graveyard. That is the largest denomination in the area, so I am not sure where these other things are coming from.

Once you go down into Stoneyford I suppose the flagship of some of our efforts in tourism is the Ulster Grand Prix. Lisburn Council has invested huge sums over recent years and that has been acknowledged. If you pass by you will see the change and the improvements that have been made. The race was a bit of a disaster this year because of the weather, but that was outside of our control.

I have come here because I looked at Antrim Council's submission and they made no reference to this. I have to be honest and say I was concerned, you know, what seemed to me a bit of political piracy, and I have come therefore to strongly oppose the claim that Glenavy and Stoneyford should be removed from its historical position within the new Lisburn/Castlereagh.

Final point. The people in Glenavy are hard-headed sensible people. They know a bargain when they see one and my final comment would be in terms of the rates. Antrim's rates last year were the ninth highest in the rates league. Lisburn, 23rd out of 26. Antrim's increase last year was 9.88%. Lisburn's increase was 1.7%, so the Glenavy people would clearly know which side their bread is buttered on. That is my final point, Mr Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and I thank you for the time and for the opportunity to put the points.

Assistant

Commissioner

Thank you very much Councillor O'Hagan. That is very clear and I wonder if there are any points that anybody in the audience wants to put to you? Any questions?

Peter O'Hagan

Four years ago I was asked to join with one or two others to sit down with a blank sheet to consider the new council areas, how many there ought to be. I then sat down for a while and

after we'd talked around the thing I said, 'Right here's my proposal, 15, put it down and we'll go home. And they said 'Where do you get 15 from? I said, 'Put the 4 Belfast ones into one and then outside there are 14 others,' done and dusted. Now people came and they talked about Westminster constituencies and the revision of those and the population changes and said that would not be the basis, so it was quite clear that everybody was saying at that stage that Westminster boundaries would not, and could not, coincide with the local government Boundaries. So there is not an argument, it is happening all over Northern Ireland. In this case, the historical points that I put to you, going back to the 60's, that area was part and parcel of the Glenavy or the rural council area known as Lisburn Rural Council which stretched away from there right down as far as Andersonstown. At that time Crumlin was a very small place, it was like Glenavy, a village. Glenavy has expanded but not to the extent of Crumlin.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much Councillor Hagan. Could I now invite three people to make the representation together, Colin McClintock, Michael Gordon and Karen Blair? You are very welcome. Good morning.

Karen Blair

Good morning Assistant Commissioner. My name is Karen Blair of Cleaver, Fulton & Rankin Solicitors, and we are solicitors for Lisburn City Council in relation to this issue. You have heard Councillor Burns: we have received both his written statement and heard the further points he has made. I will make a few points as introduction before handing over to Dr Gordon from Turley Associates and Colin McClintock from Lisburn City Council.

The preliminary comments I had in relation to what Councillor Burns had said, was that we did hear from him in relation to issues of community and identity, but as you appear to already have identified, these are matters which do fall outside of the remit in that the focus of the Commission on the basis of the rules and the legislation are that you need to be looking for the readily identifiable boundary, and also the issue that the major part of Lisburn should be in the new district council area. Although you are only dealing with one particular incursion, as of today, there are significant other submissions which have been put in, in the context of Belfast, that would seriously impact upon the 'major part' argument.

On a related point in relation to community and identity, at some of the other hearings in relation to Dunmurry and also

Belvoir in the Lisburn and Belfast area, there was a significant strength of feeling put forward at the hearings with a lot of petitions and personal representations where people were concerned about the Provisional Recommendations that had been made. That is not something that is in the papers before you at the moment, as far as I am aware. Perhaps I could hand over to Dr Gordon who will deal with the specifics of the readily identifiable boundary issue. Thank you.

**Michael
Gordon**

Thank you. Michael Gordon from Turley Associates on behalf of Lisburn City Council. These comments relate specifically to Councillor Burn's submission, but also relate to that of Antrim Borough Council in relation to their observations that would have an impact on the Glenavy ward.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

I am sorry, could you just clarify what the business of Turley Associates is?

**Michael
Gordon**

My apologies, we are Chartered Town Planners, planning consultants. Two main observations: obviously, we disagree with Councillor Burns' submission for two main reasons, the first being that the proposed new boundary between the two district councils would not be readily identifiable. Secondly, the factors that are identified to support the case for transfer are not relevant in terms of the legislation. So, dealing firstly with the proposed new boundary and the readily identifiable point. Under Councillors Burns' submission, the new boundary between the two district Councils would be defined by the southern boundary of the current Glenavy ward and the townland boundaries within the Stoneyford ward. You have already accepted an invitation to go out and inspect the area on the ground; we would appreciate being involved in that exercise also. Just for clarification, when the issue arose of site inspections last week, one of the other Assistant Commissioners said that she would actually visit the site on her own and would not appreciate being accompanied. I just wondered if we could get some clarification on that point. If we are able to accompany you we would like to.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Yes, I think it would be helpful to go with the parties so that I can discuss my observations with people on either side at the time of the visit.

**Michael
Gordon**

Thank you. To assist your thoughts on that we have prepared a small scale map and it picks up on the alternative boundary that Councillor Burns has identified.

This map, Assistant Commissioner, picks up on the boundary that was drawn in the plans that are associated with Councillor Burns submission - it does not follow the line of the B38 which was discussed this morning, but what this plan shows is that while the existing northern boundary is generally defined by the Glenavy river, which is readily identifiable on the ground, the alternative proposed boundary, particularly in relation to the Stoneyford adjustment, is not readily identifiable on the ground because it has been drawn to townland boundaries which are no more than field boundaries and the occasional drainage ditch. We would say that the alternative boundary in relation to the townlands in this area fails the test.

We appreciate that there are two rules that will be in your mind when you look at this issue. There is the rule about the townlands and the severance of the townlands, and also the readily identifiable boundary point, and I would just draw your attention to paragraph 2.5 of the Commissioner's report where he says that he has only departed from townland boundaries to achieve electoral equality or to use a more readily identifiable boundary. We are interpreting that to mean that if there is a choice between a townland boundary or readily identifiable boundary, he will choose the readily identifiable boundary, which in this case we say is the Glenavy River, the established boundary between the two existing district councils.

There was some reference this morning to the B38 and you will see not only from this map, but also from your own visit, which we hope to accompany you on, that there are a number of minor roads that run in an east-west direction than a north-south direction in this area. So there is a lot of tarmac in this particular part of County Antrim, and we think there is no need to pick a line amongst the many choices that you might have there, because none of those roads would be preferable or more readily identifiable than the existing boundary at the Glenavy River.

**Colin
McClintock**

Moving on to the other factors which are identified in Councillor Burns' representation, the main part (page 19) of the submission really deals with the Antrim/Newtownabbey District Council proposals, and page 4 deals with the Belfast proposals.

Given the fact that the major thrust of the submission is in respect of the boundaries between Belfast and ...

Audio missing UNFORTUNATELY THE AUDIO EQUIPMENT DID NOT RECORD ALL OF THE ORAL REPRESENTATION FROM THE THREE SPEAKERS REPRESENTING LISBURN CITY COUNCIL. PLEASE REFER TO THE COUNCIL'S WRITTEN REPRESENTATION DATED 12 NOVEMBER 2008. YOU CAN ACCESS THIS SUBMISSION THROUGH THE LGBC WEBPAGE – WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ON PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS – LISBURN CITY & CASTLEREAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL. ALSO THE TRANSCRIPT DOES NOT COVER THE START OF MR KINGS ORAL SUBMISSION PLEASE REFER TO THE DUP WRITTEN SUBMISSION THROUGH THE WEBPAGE.

Peter King ... the proposed Antrim/Newtownabbey District Council, I would suggest that both page 4 and page 19 of the Party submission marked are read in conjunction. In addition, Appendix 2 of 28 of the Party submission deals with proposed internal ward boundaries.

In short, Mr Commissioner, there is not anything I wish to add to the written submissions save this. I have had an opportunity to speak to electoral representatives on the ground in North Belfast. Their input has been essential in the presentation of the written submission.

Two points were raised that are not covered in the written submission in respect of the Belfast-Antrim/Newtownabbey District Council boundary. The first one is in respect of Crusaders Football Club. You may or may not be aware Mr Assistant Commissioner that the Club is in the process at looking at grounds to relocate from its current home. There is a proposal that any new home is a shared facility with Newington Football Club, and one of the options that both clubs are looking at is establishing a home at Valley Park which is on the Rathcoole side of the M2 and it is our contention that that is fully consistent with the notion that North Belfast extends well beyond the M2 motorway. There are cultural links, sporting links, scholastic links, shopping links that take Belfast into the area beyond the M2 motorway.

The second point has been fully explored in the written submissions in respect again of North Belfast. This time the North Belfast Community Action Unit works on the ground with community empowerment partnerships, both in Rathcoole and

in Greencastle and the Greencastle CEP actually straddles the M2. Again we would contend that supports our contention that the M2 should not be seen as some form of restriction in respect of the boundary between Belfast and any of its neighbouring constituencies.

The only other major point dealt with in the written submission deals with the internal boundaries. For ease of yourself and everybody else, and I do not intend to read into the record the appendix that has been attached to the written submission, safe to say that the proposal is to retain a 40 seat Council for Antrim and Newtownabbey District Council and the internal ward changes deal with that. They are set out in Appendix 2 which is page 28 of the written submission.

The rationale is dealt with really at the start, and it deals with the average ward size, but beyond that the proposals are by and large based on the Provisional Recommendations, with tweaking. This is not a major assault on the Provisional Recommendations as such is our contention that the proposals contained in Appendix 2 are fully in accordance with the procedural rules.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much. Could I just ask you as a point of clarification what the basis is for the estimated electorates for the new ward boundaries that you have proposed in Appendix 2?

Peter King

I have had an opportunity to speak with the author and they have been based on previous local government returns.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Does anybody else have any questions or points of clarification? Yes?

*Comment from the floor – inaudible. Microphone not used.
Councillor Webb questioned the relevance of the points made about the football stadium and community partnerships.*

Peter King

In respect of the issue of sporting provision, there is certainly nothing in the rules that suggest that it should be ignored and the submission is that it is a factor that that should be properly looked at in respect of the issue about the stadium or stadia. I think I made it clear that was just one option, and if there was any suggestion that was a firm plan I do not think that was part of my oral submission. Certainly if there was any misunderstanding, then I take the fact that it was fairly clear

when I said it was one of the options being looked at. In respect of the community empowerment partnership I would just point to the fact that the North Belfast Community Action Unit does work with the Rathcoole CAP.

Assistant Commissioner All right, thank you very much.

Peter King Thank you very much, Sir.

Assistant Commissioner I can say it is very helpful to have alternative proposals for the other 40 wards taking account of the implications of any transfer.

Peter King Well, Sir, when we approached this process the options were coming along and addressing you for what could have been 45 minutes to an hour or having a pre-cooked written submission and allowing ourselves then to be open for questions, and we thought for the efficiency of the hearing the latter approach would be more sensible.

Assistant Commissioner I am grateful for that.

Peter King Sir, thank you very much.

Assistant Commissioner Unless anybody else has any more questions or observations? Yes Councillor Ford?

David Ford Yes, I will just make it a brief one. I read with interest the written submission takes up, and I have counted, 14 lines to describe the boundary proposed to include Bawnmore, Rathcoole and Merville within North Belfast, whereas the current boundary could be described as along the M2, I wonder if Mr King has a more readily identifiable boundary?

My next point is about things like traffic communications. Given that Metro buses go through Glengormley and Mallusk as far as Ballyrobert how can you suggest that therefore makes the Bawnmore, Merville, Rathcoole area unique compared to the rest of Newtownabbey.

Peter King I am not suggesting any area is unique and certainly I have had an opportunity to listen to Mr Ford and his party's response

to the written submission made by the Democratic Unionist Party. I would contend there is nothing in the proposals, either in respect of the internal wards, or *vis-a-vis* the boundary between Belfast and the proposed new council that contravenes the rules set out in the various pieces of legislation. I would contend that a motorway *per se* does not equate to a natural boundary when there are other potential lines that can be drawn. There is nothing, I submit in our proposals, that does violence to the rules which the Commissioner will eventually make his recommendations to and I stand by that. Thank you very much.

Assistant

Commissioner Right, unless there are any further observations or questions I thank you for your presentation and I call the next speaker. The next speaker is Joan Cosgrove.

Joan Cosgrove Good morning.

Assistant

Commissioner Good morning, you are very welcome. If you would tell us who you are speaking on behalf of?

Joan Cosgrove I am Joan Cosgrove and I am speaking on behalf of two people at the moment, one organisation and one personal. I had no intentions of speaking this morning. I came along as an observer with the view of recognising the boundaries already set by the Commissioner, and wanting to find out as how we could co-ordinate with another senior group in the area. I am the current Chair of Newtownabbey Senior Citizen's forum that has a membership of 550 people and my main purpose for coming today was to find out what the boundaries were, and how then we, as a senior citizen could represent, could co-ordinate and collaborate with the Antrim area and represent people of that particular generation. Therefore, I am coming in acceptance of the Commissioner's boundaries as stated. I think it is only but right that they remain as they are at the moment, first of all because of ownership. Newtownabbey has been formed by a number of townlands. It is celebrating its 50th anniversary. It has become an identity that people identify with and I do not know about the numbers and things like that, but to think that the Abbey Centre, Bawnmore and Rathcoole do not feel as though they belong to Newtownabbey, it is a myth. I work very closely as the Chairperson of Newtownabbey Senior Citizen's forum throughout Newtownabbey and we all have an identification with Newtownabbey. My concern at the proposals I have heard, and now I am speaking on a

personal level, my concern is that people will be further disenfranchised if these boundaries are changed the way the suggestion has been. I am personally speaking now; I feel I belong to Newtownabbey. I want to belong to Newtownabbey and I know people in Rathcoole and Bawnmore also feel that they belong to Newtownabbey. We know our local councillors; we thought it was just an amalgamation of both so that we could bring our identity with us to the new council that is going to be formed.

I just think that long and hard for one man, one vote and talking now as a senior citizen of 70 years of age who has come through the Troubles with people, while I am accusing nobody at this moment of gerrymandering it is a bit of a concern in my head that these new proposals that I have heard this morning are maybe related to politics rather than political involvement. We cannot disenfranchise our people; we have come out of 30 odd years of turmoil. We are now set on, hopefully, a road to real politics and to keep people involved in real politics you need an identity and you need to feel identified with the area that you are with. To start changing that, after all the changes we have had within Northern Ireland, and all the things that we have had to accept as part of that change, I cannot see the validity of it and therefore I am speaking as a citizen of Northern Ireland who has devoted quite a bit of my free time to the furtherment of peace and reconciliation. I would appeal to the Council, to the Commissioner to stand firm. Thank you.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Thank you very much Mrs Cosgrove. Has anybody any questions or observations to make on what you have said?

Comment from the floor (inaudible)
Councillor David Ford indicated that it was nice to hear from somebody who was involved in community work rather than a professional politician.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

Indeed. Any other observations? Thank you very much, thank you for taking the time and trouble to talk to us.

Joan Cosgrove

Thank you very much.

**Assistant
Commissioner**

We have not been notified of any other speakers, but if anybody else does want to make any observations and they

have heard what other people have to say, you are very welcome to come forward and do so.

The question I am trying to resolve is whether it is necessary to come back for a second session tomorrow or whether we can end the hearing now.

Comment from the floor- inaudible – microphone not used.

Assistant

Commissioner Equally it would be unfortunate if somebody came tomorrow and you were all denied the privilege of hearing what they have to say and of responding to it.

Comment from the floor- inaudible – microphone not used.

Assistant

Commissioner I am going to take advice on that from my officials. Nobody has registered a desire to come tomorrow, nevertheless, in view of the fact that the announcement has been made that the hearing would be available for both days, what we propose to do is to have people here. I will be here myself and some of the staff will be here, so if anyone does turn up tomorrow we are available to hear what it is they have to say. I am adjourning the hearing for the rest of today and I will be available to hear more evidence tomorrow, however, should any of you want to come back.

Comment from the floor – inaudible – microphone not used.

Assistant

Commissioner That completes the proceedings for today. Thank you all very much for coming. I am going to take away all that you have said and look at that, along with the written representations that I have received, and anything further that comes tomorrow. Thank you for your attendance, for your submissions and representations.

ENDS
