

1 **RECORD OF A PUBLIC LOCAL INQUIRY HELD INTO THE PROVISIONAL**
2 **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN**
3 **IRELAND IN RESPECT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES OF**
4 **BELFAST EAST, BELFAST NORTH, BELFAST SOUTH AND BELFAST WEST**
5 **CONDUCTED AT THE CITY HALL, BELFAST ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2005**

6
7 *The Assistant Commissioner, Mr James Toolan, BA, Barrister at Law of the Inn*
8 *of Court of Northern Ireland, opened the Inquiry at 10.37 am.*

9
10 **Mr James Toolan:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is about 10.35 am,
11 and I now formally open this Inquiry. My name is James Toolan, and I have been
12 appointed as the Assistant Commissioner to conduct this Local Inquiry for the
13 Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. The Inquiry will consider the
14 Commission's Provisional Recommendations for the parliamentary
15 constituencies of Belfast East Borough Constituency, Belfast North Borough
16 Constituency, Belfast South Borough Constituency and Belfast West Borough
17 Constituency, and the representations made in respect of those
18 recommendations. I will also consider the written representations that have been
19 made to the Commission.

20
21 In due course, I will be required to make a recommendation to the Commission.
22 In arriving at my conclusions, I will take full account of the representations made
23 in relation to the Commission's Provisional Recommendations. The Commission
24 have already received many written submissions. Those are most helpful, and I
25 am grateful to the individuals and bodies concerned for their assistance. They
26 are bound together in this volume, copies of which may be taken from the desk
27 on my left. I hope to receive further assistance from the oral submissions that
28 will be made during the course of this public hearing.

29
30 I will be assisted in the running of the Inquiry by the Secretary to the Boundary
31 Commission, Mr John Fisher, who is to my left, together with members of the

1 Boundary Commission's secretariat. The other members of the secretariat
2 present today are Dr Colm McNamee, Mr Crawford McIlveen, Mrs Carolyn
3 Fullerton and Ms Beverley McCabe, and they too are located at the desk on my
4 left. Please approach them at any time with any queries you may have about the
5 Inquiry. I will also be assisted by two members of Hansard staff from the
6 Northern Ireland Assembly, who are sitting in front of me to the right. Hansard
7 will make a transcript of this Inquiry, which will be available when I write my
8 report.

9
10 Shortly, I will adjourn the Inquiry for no more than 10 minutes, so that I can meet
11 those who wish to make oral representations and informally arrange an order in
12 which they will be heard. When I adjourn, I will be grateful if those people would
13 come forward, and we can then decide on an order for speaking.

14
15 Copies of the Provisional Recommendations are available at the desk on my left
16 along with copies of the other documents, such as the 'Procedure at Local
17 Inquiries' booklet, the Commission's Statement of Reasons and their Explanatory
18 Note. May I ask that anyone who has not read the Provisional
19 Recommendations obtain a copy during the short adjournment, read the
20 announcement of 29 April 2004, and study the map. Also available are bound
21 copies of written submissions that have been made to the Commission.

22
23 There is one matter that I should emphasise at the outset. It is helpfully
24 summarised in paragraph 4 of the Commission's Explanatory Note, which reads:

25
26 *"The Commission are an independent and impartial body. The outcome of previous elections or*
27 *the system of election employed do not enter their consideration when deciding*
28 *recommendations. Neither do the Commission consider the effect of their recommendations on*
29 *future voting patterns or traditional loyalties or affiliations."*

30
31 I mention that just in case anyone may have intended making representations in
32 relation to such matters, which are not proper considerations for this Inquiry or for

1 the Commission. Clearly, as you may well understand, this is not a forum for
2 political comment or for the airing of political opinions.

3

4 The purpose of this Inquiry is substantially to obtain local views. If you have a
5 view on the Commission's proposals, this is your opportunity to make it heard.
6 Many of you will already have made written submissions, and I have studied
7 those carefully as a part of my preparation for this hearing. I will certainly take
8 those written submissions into account when I come to consider my
9 recommendations. Some of you who have made written submissions will want to
10 elaborate on those submissions and develop them during the course of this
11 hearing. I welcome that because it is likely to assist me in considering the
12 various issues that arise.

13

14 If you wish to propose elaborate or substantial counterproposals which have not
15 been submitted to the Commission, it would be helpful if you could inform me of
16 this during the short adjournment. If you have already made your points fully in
17 writing, please do not feel under any obligation to make any oral submission.
18 You may wish simply to state that you support or oppose a particular proposal for
19 the reasons that you have already stated in writing. I can assure you that full
20 account will be taken of the written submissions, whether or not they are referred
21 to during the course of these hearings.

22

23 I should make it clear that any interested person may attend the Inquiry and — if
24 they wish — take part in making oral representations. That is the case whether
25 or not they have previously submitted in writing a representation to the
26 Commission. Those of you who have not written a letter to the Commission
27 commenting on the Provisional Recommendations are free to make your views
28 known at this Inquiry. You are not precluded from making oral submissions
29 simply because you have not written a letter or forwarded representations to the
30 Commission.

31

1 If you have not made representations in writing and wish to be heard, you should
2 make your views known orally at this hearing as this may be your last opportunity
3 to be heard. Some of you who do not approach me during the short adjournment
4 to register your intention to speak may find that, as the hearing proceeds, there is
5 something you wish to say which is relevant to an issue under consideration. If
6 that happens, please let me know, and I will certainly give you an opportunity to
7 speak.

8

9 I must emphasise that what you cannot do is effectively reserve your position and
10 await my report. If you want your view to have an effect on the Boundary
11 Commission's recommendations, then you should let me know what that view is.
12 These hearings may be the last opportunity to make submissions. It will not be
13 possible to make written submissions to me after the Local Inquiry has
14 concluded, and it is unlikely that a further Local Inquiry will be held.

15

16 Could I say a word next about practical arrangements? It may well be that some
17 of you will wish to try to get away as early as possible and cannot stay for long. If
18 you approach me during the adjournment, I will try and fit you in and
19 accommodate your wishes. Some people may not be able to get here until later,
20 and if they have a representative or someone here to let me know that, then I will
21 of course do what I can to accommodate them later. If there is anyone who
22 wishes to be heard and who has difficulty in being here at a particular time,
23 please could I be told so that I can try to make some arrangements for a time at
24 which he or she can be heard.

25

26 Let me say a word about the procedure that we will follow in relation to the oral
27 submissions. You can speak from where you are sitting or come to the front,
28 using the podium if you wish, provided that what you say can be heard by
29 everyone. Please could you start by stating your name and whether you are
30 speaking in a personal capacity or in a representative capacity. Also please
31 could you state at the outset whether you have made a written submission.

1

2 If you have a summary or a note of the submission you wish to make today,
3 could you please provide me with a copy of that and provide some copies for the
4 secretariat and the Hansard reporters. Availability of such a written summary will
5 of course greatly assist in the carriage of the hearing. If you do not already have
6 copies of your statement or note, please approach one of the representatives of
7 the Boundary Commission secretariat during the adjournment, and they will
8 arrange for copies to be made for the Commission, the Hansard reporters, and
9 for myself.

10

11 *10.45 am*

12

13 Your oral submissions will be of particular assistance if you are able to explain
14 the reasons why you have taken a particular position, and if you are able to
15 explain any counterproposals which you may wish to make and the reasons for
16 that counterproposal. When you have finished your oral submission, I may give
17 other interested parties the opportunity to put proper questions to you in relation
18 to your submission and any counterproposal you may make. It may well be that I
19 will have some questions for you as well.

20

21 To those of you who wish to put forward any questions to persons making oral
22 submissions, I should point out that formal cross-examination, in my experience,
23 is not appropriate at an Inquiry of this nature. However, if you have questions to
24 put to another speaker, I will allow them as long as they are proper and helpful.
25 It would be generally useful to me and will serve to highlight the relevant issues if
26 you put your case to speakers who take a different view from you, and I
27 encourage you to do that. If you wish, you may put your question through me to
28 the speaker.

29

30 I wish to emphasise that it is my hope and expectation that the hearing can be
31 conducted in a dignified, informative and informal manner, conducive to all who

1 wish to contribute to the proceedings being permitted to give of their best. I
2 mention this as I am aware that there may well be persons attending unfamiliar
3 with the environment of — and speaking at — a public inquiry or hearing of this
4 nature.

5

6 I mentioned that I may also raise questions or points with speakers during the
7 course of the hearing, and I am required to consider the Commission's
8 provisional proposals and an array of counterproposals and representations,
9 some of which may ultimately be aired solely as part of written representation or
10 comment and may not be advanced in the course of oral submission during the
11 hearing. Therefore, please do not make any deductions based on — or be
12 deterred by — any particular line of exploratory questioning taken by me. After
13 the hearings are over, I may go to view areas under consideration. If there is a
14 particular boundary or feature that you want me to look at, then please mention it
15 during the course of your evidence. I will note that and try to arrange to go and
16 see it.

17

18 There are some other practical matters I must mention. It would assist me and
19 the Hansard reporters if you could let us have in advance copies of any prepared
20 statements that any of you are going to read.

21

22 Upon entering the room today, you may have been given the opportunity to
23 record your name and address on an attendance list by one of the Commission
24 representatives. If you have not already done so, would you please ensure that
25 you do so during the short adjournment. Most importantly, could you ensure that
26 your details are printed clearly. The advantages of completing the attendance
27 register in this way are that you will automatically receive a copy of my report
28 once it is published by the Commission, together with the Commission's decision,
29 and, if you are mentioned in it, your name is, I have to say, more likely to be spelt
30 correctly.

31

1 Signing the attendance list will also assist us should it be necessary to evacuate
2 the building during the course of the Inquiry because it will enable us to check
3 that everyone is accounted for. I have been asked to tell you that in the event of
4 an alarm sounding, it will not be a practice: it will be the real thing, and it will be
5 necessary for us to evacuate the building. In such an event, you shall hear the
6 continual sounding of a bell; you are requested to evacuate by the highlighted fire
7 routes and to take direction from the security staff. Do not use the lifts or attempt
8 to remove your car from the car park. The assembly point is situated at the front
9 lawn.

10
11 I have been asked to remind visitors that the building is completely non-smoking.
12 People can smoke immediately outside the building. You are also advised the
13 public toilets are on the ground floor and are signposted. There are unisex and
14 special-needs toilets on the first floor at the other side of the rotunda.

15
16 So far as the times of this hearing are concerned, we have three days available if
17 necessary. I expect to close the first day of the Inquiry at or about four o'clock
18 this afternoon, but I am not going to be extremely rigid about that. I am going to
19 try to accommodate people and their wishes. If they wish to press on, I will be
20 happy to do so. I will adjourn for lunch today at about one o'clock, for one hour,
21 sitting again at two o'clock. We will take a short coffee break or tea break this
22 morning at 11.30 am, which shall last for 10 minutes approximately, and a further
23 break this afternoon, again for 10 minutes, at about three o'clock.

24
25 Can I ask you please that you turn off any mobile phones that you may have with
26 you. It is not so much a matter of the annoyance that it may cause to others as
27 the embarrassment that it will probably cause to you should your mobile phone
28 go off.

29
30 That is really all I wish to say in my opening remarks. I will adjourn now for 10
31 minutes, and it would be helpful if those of you who intend to say something

1 during the course of the Inquiry now come forward, and we will have chat about
2 the procedure that we will follow. I will need your name and that of the
3 organisation that you represent, should you be here in a representative capacity.
4 It would also be helpful to know the constituencies about which you wish to
5 speak and say whether or not you have submitted a written representation.

6

7 I would also like you to indicate your preferred time for speaking. I am aware that
8 many of you will want to speak today, but I am sure that you will understand that I
9 may have to ask some of you to speak tomorrow or later, so please be flexible.
10 If, however, you are unable to attend the Inquiry after today, I will endeavour to fit
11 you in at a convenient point. I would also like to know whether you will be
12 speaking from a prepared text. Perhaps now we will have a short break for 10
13 minutes. Thank you very much.

14

15 *Informal break at 10.51 am.*

16

17 *Inquiry resumed at 11.00 am.*

18

19 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I think that I am now in a position
20 to reconvene. I will just make some preliminary comments. I have been greatly
21 assisted by the approaches made and the indications given. It would be in the
22 normal course of events, theoretically, that we should run the Inquiry on the basis
23 of the order taken in the Provisional Recommendations and the Statement of
24 Reasons — in other words, start with East Belfast.

25

26 I am happy enough to do that, but I am also aware — as I am sure that witnesses
27 will perhaps identify — that there are clear associations at issue as between East
28 Belfast and the neighbouring South Belfast, and again perhaps an allegiance of
29 some issues as between North Belfast and West Belfast. Therefore, I think it
30 would perhaps defy logic if I were to start at the east and then move north in a
31 haphazard fashion. The more logical theme would be to start with the east side

1 of the city, move across to the south, and then take a clockwise sweep up to the
2 west and north.

3

4 Having said that, I have been advised by a number of people that they are in
5 personal difficulty in that they have got commitments for this afternoon. Mr Isaac
6 Clarke has commitments, but fortunately enough, he is here to address us on the
7 East Belfast constituency. Mr Alban Maginness MLA is here to talk on behalf of
8 the SDLP in relation to North Belfast. Therefore, I may call Mr Maginness first
9 because he is not only going to address the Inquiry on North Belfast, but also on
10 another counterproposal that has been mooted by the Alliance Party.

11

12 Their first counterproposal is a three-seat issue as opposed to a four-seat issue.
13 That is more of a global matter, and is something that we will have to deal with
14 from the outset. We shall hear then from Dr Stephen Farry, and, as I have said,
15 you are entitled to put questions to him. In the course of your own
16 representations, perhaps you would preface your own submissions if you wish by
17 any comments you wish to make on the issue of three seats or four seats as a
18 starting point.

19

20 After that, we will get down to the refinement of the second issue as to whether
21 or not, if we do retain four seats, there is any logical reason why there should be
22 a departure from the political topography of North, South, East, and West Belfast.
23 For example, whether there should be a central constituency with three
24 surrounding constituencies or whether we hold to the traditional landscape of four
25 constituencies but radiating out, as appears to be the case. Has anyone any
26 observations to make at this point?

27

28 No. Well, if you are encountering any particular difficulty, please feel free to
29 contact me or Mr Fisher, and we will try to accommodate any difficulty you have.

30

31 So could I ask at the opening, Mr Maginness, would you wish to address us?

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Mr Alban Maginness MLA: Yes.

Mr Toolan: As you prepare yourself at the rostrum, I am going to deal with one further matter, Mr Maginness. I mentioned in my opening statement that I have been greatly assisted by numerous written representations. As I said, I am duty bound to have regard to them, but I would like to know whether the parties, groups or individuals that have made those representations are actually represented here today. That would be very useful. I have a schedule of them here. The first one is Mr John Auld. Is Mr Auld here?

Mr John Auld: Yes.

Mr Toolan: Mr Auld, thank you very much. As I said, and I reiterate, if during the course of the hearing, someone changes their mind or feels the desire to say anything then so be it. So that is Mr Auld. Is Cllr Thomas Burns here? Is Mr David McCarthy here, Secretary of the Dunmurry True Blues Loyal Orange Lodge? Mr Gerry McBride, Policy and Co-ordination Officer for Down District Council? Mr Robert Foy? If you are here on behalf of any of these people, please speak. Cllr John Norris? Thank you. Cllr Wallace Browne? Yes, thank you. Mary Wylie? No. Mr William Leathem, Lagan Valley Democratic Unionist Party? No. Mr Jeffrey Donaldson MP, I am aware is not here, and Mr Peter Robinson MP is not here. Mrs Angela Smith and Mr Jackie Stewart from the Dunmurry and the Seymour Hill and Conway Residents' Associations are not here. Dr Alasdair McDonnell MP is not here, but Mr Maginness is here. Dr Esmond Birnie will represent the Ulster Unionist Party, Dr Stephen Farry the Alliance Party, and we have Mr Sean Begley for Sinn Féin.

Thank you very much. I just wanted to get a sense of who is here and who is not here.

1 **Mr Sean Begley:** I just wanted to say that my party has made a written
2 submission for the Commission.

3

4 **Mr Toolan:** Absolutely. Have you got copies there?

5

6 **Mr Begley:** Yes.

7

8 **Mr Toolan:** Yes. In tandem with what I said at the opening, it would be
9 invaluable if any written submissions people wish to put in or copies of any
10 statements they have or anything else I would be very content to have them.
11 And that is something that I will have to have regard to.

12

13 I am glad to see Dr McNamee here with a roving microphone. If you do wish to
14 speak, he will be a bit like Mr Jerry Springer, running around.

15

16 **Mr Maginness:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I propose to deal with the
17 issue of four or three seats in Belfast. The Belfast District Executive of the SDLP
18 is supportive of the retention of four seats in Belfast, and we say so for the
19 following reasons. Although the population has, in fact, declined over the past
20 two decades or more, there is greater demographic stability now than in the past,
21 and the potential for population growth is a reasonable possibility in the near
22 future. In addition, those who have left the Belfast local government district —
23 and I do emphasise the local government district — have in significant numbers
24 moved into the surrounding suburbs and still have very close ties and links to the
25 city through work, family, social ties and other relationships.

26

27 Belfast as a political reality and as a political entity is not simply confined to the
28 formal local government boundary. The continuance of four seats in Belfast after
29 the 1995 Boundary Commission report has further consolidated the four-seat
30 structure within Belfast itself. This has served to reinforce the historic character
31 and identity of the seats individually and their collective impact on the politics of

1 Belfast — indeed, perhaps the politics of Northern Ireland.

2

3 Three seats in Belfast — and I think this is an important consideration, which
4 effectively would mean withdrawing to within the Belfast City Council boundary —
5 would probably mean a reduction by one of the overall parliamentary seats in
6 Northern Ireland, bringing down our representation from 18 to 17.

7

8 This probable reduction in representation would, in our opinion, be regrettable
9 and lessen Northern Ireland's political voice in Parliament. It is better to
10 maximise our representation rather than to weaken it. It also could have a
11 disruptive knock-on effect on representation in the Assembly. It obviously would
12 mean a reduction in Assembly representation, but also, in terms of the
13 reorganisation internally in terms of political parties, within constituencies it could
14 have a considerable disruptive effect given present structures and present
15 patterns of representation.

16

17 The notion of confining Belfast to its local government district was substantially
18 breached by the inclusion of Castlereagh, Lisburn City and Newtownabbey wards
19 in Belfast seats since the 1995 Boundary Commission report. And, of course,
20 before that, there were wards from Castlereagh in East Belfast. This, therefore,
21 is a redundant notion, given present political realities. For the foreseeable future,
22 Belfast seats will contain a significant number of wards from outside the Belfast
23 City Council boundaries.

24

25 Given the various permutations — and this is a very important aspect, discussed
26 in the course of the Review of Public Administration, and I do not think that we
27 can be oblivious to what is going on around us in terms of the Review of Public
28 Administration — it is probable that there will be a radical reordering of local
29 government district boundaries. Indeed, there is talk of seven councils as being
30 the preferred option by the Government at this moment in time. That being so,
31 reliance on present local government district boundaries would be unwise in all

1 circumstances.

2

3 Having four seats in Belfast rather than three gives greater flexibility to the
4 Boundary Commission in coming to its conclusions. It makes life easier in terms
5 of reshaping constituencies. Four seats give the Commission — working within
6 the parameters of the electoral quota — a greater ability to define and reshape
7 the four seats within the scope of the electoral quota.

8

9 Finally, for decades, there has been an established historic, political character
10 and identity to the four Belfast seats, and that should not be overlooked. The
11 logical route we say to follow is for the four Belfast seats to be retained, and for
12 their respective boundaries to be further extended into the suburban wards of the
13 surrounding local government districts. This process was established following
14 on from the Boundary Commission report in 1995, and subsequent experience
15 would suggest that this extension into the surrounding suburban districts has —
16 by and large — met with widespread political approval to date. At least, one
17 cannot detect any serious opposition to that extension and the maintenance
18 thereby of the four seats.

19

20 A further extension on similar lines by this Boundary Commission should
21 continue to guarantee the integrity of the existing four seats in Belfast. I
22 conclude there, Mr Chairman.

23

24 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much. Perhaps — just for the sake of fluidity — to
25 put it like that, would anyone wish to comment? Dr Farry, you might wish to
26 reserve your position, but would you wish to ask any questions? Anybody else?
27 Would you be prepared to receive questions?

28

29 **Dr Stephen Farry:** I am happy to address the group.

30

1 **Mr Toolan:** That is OK. It is just in case you wanted to make any points. That is
2 fine. Does anybody else wish to speak? Certainly, Mr Begley.

3

4 **Mr Begley:** I wanted on behalf of the party to support the four constituencies in
5 Belfast, and I think there are very good reasons for doing that, so I might want to
6 speak to that.

7

8 **Mr Toolan:** Yes, and you will know that once I deal with Dr Farry's
9 counterproposal, then anybody who wishes to speak after that, or ask Dr Farry
10 questions about that, we will deal with it. Does anybody want to do that? At this
11 point, it is more a matter of clarification or amplifying some point that Mr
12 Maginness has made, if you wish to make a point. No. Right, thank you.

13

14 The second limb of your presentation will be to deal with your role as Chairman
15 of the North Belfast SDLP Association.

16

17 **Mr Maginness:** Yes, do you want me to deal with that now, Mr Chairman?

18

19 **Mr Toolan:** Yes. You will be aware that Mr Maginness has to leave the province
20 this afternoon, so I wish to be flexible and to accommodate him.

21

22 **Mr Maginness:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I am grateful to you for
23 allowing me to speak now in relation to the North Belfast constituency, speaking
24 on behalf of the SDLP. The SDLP accepts the need for the present boundary to
25 be revised, in order that the percentage deviation from the electoral quota be
26 reduced, and we do so in support of an extension.

27

28 *11.15 am*

29

30 We are, however, concerned with the present draft proposals for North Belfast.
31 We accept that the present boundaries should be extended to take in additional

1 wards from the Newtownabbey local government district. The Boundary
2 Commission, however, in their Provisional Recommendations, proposed that
3 these wards should come, in the main, from the Antrim Line district electoral
4 area, that is, Collinbridge, Glebe and Glengormley wards. Of course, there are
5 four other wards in that area.

6

7 In addition, the Boundary Commission, in their Provisional Recommendations,
8 have recommended that the Cloughfern ward, also in Newtownabbey, should
9 come into North Belfast. That, of course, would complete the Macedon district
10 electoral area. I think it is the only outstanding ward in Macedon that is not in
11 North Belfast, and the other wards there are Abbey, Coole, Dunanney, Valley
12 and Whitehouse, but Cloughfern would complete that. One can see the logic of
13 that, but I will come back to that later.

14

15 Mr Chairman, the main effect of this proposal is to cut into two parts the Antrim
16 Line district electoral area, separating one from another in the North Belfast and
17 South Antrim parliamentary constituencies respectively. This rather arbitrary
18 division does not make sense insofar as the wards making up Antrim Line are
19 closely associated socially, economically and physically, in terms of them being a
20 conglomerate urban or suburban area, and this proposal therefore damages the
21 integrity of the district electoral area, the Antrim Line.

22

23 We think that a more sensible alternative would be to take the Jordanstown,
24 Monkstown and Rostulla wards into North Belfast. They are fairly well
25 interconnected and form a geographic sweep along the shore on the Antrim side
26 of the Belfast Lough, going towards Carrickfergus and Larne. Many people living
27 in those wards originally come from North Belfast, or Belfast generally, and still
28 work in Belfast, or have close family or social ties with Belfast, and North Belfast
29 in particular. These wards are presently in the East Antrim constituency, and it is
30 proposed by the Commission that they remain there. They are also in close
31 proximity geographically to the Cloughfern ward, which the Commission have

1 also provisionally proposed to transfer into Belfast North, as I have referred to
2 previously.

3

4 All of these wards are part of the Newtownabbey Borough Council area. Of
5 course, I am mindful that the wards of Monkstown, Rostulla and Jordanstown are
6 part of the University district electoral area, and I am aware, of course, that it
7 would mean fracturing that district electoral area as well. But the argument that
8 we would put forward is this: that the impact on the University district electoral
9 area would be much less, as we believe the Jordanstown, Monkstown and
10 Rostulla wards have more connectivity than the other wards within that particular
11 district electoral area.

12

13 Mr Chairman, there is no reason in principle not to include Jordanstown,
14 Monkstown and Rostulla wards in North Belfast. Indeed, in our opinion, it makes
15 good sense and would seem to be more logical and reasonable to do so, rather
16 than arbitrarily divide the Antrim Line district electoral area.

17

18 Again, one of the objectives of the Commission, insofar as it is practical, is to
19 preserve the integrity of district electoral areas, and that must be borne in mind.
20 As to the effect on Antrim Line, we would say, on balance, by dividing the Antrim
21 Line district electoral area, you cause more damage in terms of fracturing that
22 particular district or electoral area than you would do in the University district
23 electoral area.

24

25 There is, of course, a further alternative, and that is to put all of the Antrim Line
26 district electoral area into Belfast North, but that would not work out in terms of
27 the total number of voters and would not satisfy the Commission's attempt to limit
28 the electoral quota deviation, the total number of voters there being in the order
29 of 15,300. That, in fact, would adversely affect the calculations of the Boundary
30 Commission in terms of trying to balance the electoral quota deviation, if I can
31 put it that way.

1

2 It is interesting to note — indeed, important to note — that if the wards of
3 Jordanstown, Monkstown and Rostulla were transferred in North Belfast, the total
4 figure — according to the Commission's figures, based on May 2003 — would be
5 7,973. If the wards of Collinbridge, Glebe, Glengormley and Cloughfern were
6 transferred into North Belfast, the total figure is 7,915: remarkably similar, Mr
7 Chairman, in terms of the actual voters to be transferred. Thus, it is very much in
8 line with the reasoning of the Boundary Commission's Provisional
9 Recommendations and should satisfy the Boundary Commission from that point
10 of view. These figures are very similar, in fact, and therefore will have the same
11 or very similar numerical impact on the reconstituted North Belfast constituency.
12 Nearly the same result would be achieved in terms of limiting the electoral quota
13 deviation.

14

15 If the wards of Jordanstown, Monkstown and Rostulla, as well as Cloughfern,
16 were all to be transferred to North Belfast, the total figure would be 9,900 and
17 marginally outside the Commission's attempt to limit the electoral quota
18 deviation, but not that greatly out. You are talking in terms of roughly 2,000
19 votes; marginal and significant, but not, I would think, that far out.

20

21 Mr Chairman, I would conclude simply by rehearsing the argument: the impact in
22 terms of transferring Glebe, Glengormley and Collinbridge to North Belfast — the
23 impact on Antrim Line — we think would be serious. It would be a serious
24 fracturing of that district electoral area. Our alternative is to transfer Rostulla,
25 Jordanstown and Monkstown into North Belfast. That would seem to conform
26 with the geographic spread of North Belfast and along the shore, and it would
27 seem to us that the impact on the University district electoral area in terms of
28 dividing that, would be much, much less than on Antrim Line, and perhaps the
29 ideal thing would be to bring Antrim Line into North Belfast completely. However,
30 of course, the figures there do not stack up, and, therefore, it probably is not a
31 serious runner, so we are proposing the alternative, which is the transfer of

1 Jordanstown, Monkstown and Rostulla to Belfast North, and, possibly, in addition
2 to that, Cloughfern.

3

4 Mr Chairman, that concludes my submission.

5

6 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much. Mr Maginness, you would be happy to take
7 some questions?

8

9 **Mr Maginness:** Yes.

10

11 **Mr Toolan:** Would anybody wish to put questions?

12

13 **Mr Auld:** Can I just make the point that you have referred to Antrim Line, where
14 I currently live, and, in terms of Antrim Line, basically, the main connecting road
15 there is the Antrim Road at Bellevue Bridge. You have made the point that if you
16 add those electors into North Belfast that that will bring North Belfast too far over
17 the quota. However, the second issue, which you have not referred to, is that the
18 boundaries in the greater Shankill area currently weave through the streets of the
19 Shankill area, and for me, those boundaries are not logical. That is a point that I
20 have made in my own submission; the point being, if you remove the Crumlin
21 and Woodvale wards and transfer those into West Belfast, then you do have the
22 room, as it were, to add at least six Antrim Line wards, possibly the Mallusk ward
23 as well.

24

25 The point I would make is, instead of adding Jordanstown, you could add at least
26 Antrim Line and Mallusk, and many people in North Belfast would work in
27 Mallusk, where there is a big industrial estate — at least two industrial estates.
28 That would be my point, rather than Jordanstown, which is quite distant from the
29 boundary of North Belfast.

30

31 **Mr Maginness:** I am dealing specifically with the proposals put forward; the

1 Provisional Recommendations put forward by the Boundary Commission in their
2 report, and trying to deal with the logic of what they are proposing. If you really
3 looked at their reasoning, they are saying, “Yes, there is a natural affinity
4 between Newtownabbey and North Belfast.” That is very true. We are not
5 arguing against that. We say, “Yes, that is true.” Therefore, they propose, in
6 terms of increasing the numbers, that you bring in wards from the Antrim Line
7 area, and of course Mallusk is in the Antrim Line; it is a ward within that, although
8 not one of the wards that is being proposed for transfer.

9
10 What we are saying is, “Look, if you are doing that, you really should bring the
11 whole Antrim Line in.” If you do that then the figures do not stack up, and that is
12 the problem.

13
14 **Mr Auld:** If you instead transfer the Crumlin and Woodvale wards to West
15 Belfast, then you do have enough room in North Belfast to transfer the entire
16 Antrim Line, or at least all of Antrim Line with the exception of the Mallusk ward.

17
18 **Mr Maginness:** Yes, I can follow your line of argument there. It does not form
19 part of our proposal, but it is something that we would be interested in, certainly.
20 The main thrust of what I am saying to you on behalf of the SDLP is that if you
21 fracture Antrim Line, you are causing a political dislocation, which is unnecessary
22 and unhelpful. OK, there is going to be some division of the University area, but
23 that is preferable and there is less damage caused to that than fracturing Antrim
24 Line. But I appreciate the point you are making.

25
26 *11.30 am*

27
28 **Dr Farry:** First of all, I agree with the point made by Mr Auld, so you will be
29 pleased to know that I shall not repeat it. The question, however, for Mr
30 Maginness is: in terms of taking three wards into North Belfast, what is the
31 current East Antrim or the proposed Antrim Coast and Glens constituency?

1

2 How does the SDLP plan to deal with the impact upon either the current or the
3 new seat, if they make the change that they are today recommending? It has not
4 made a direct reference to that in its written statements.

5

6 **Mr Maginness:** What we are dealing with are the recommendations that have
7 been proposed by the Commission in their Provisional Recommendations. There
8 inevitably is a knock-on or a ripple effect, but what we are dealing with is the
9 specific recommendations, and are trying to cope with them as best as possible
10 in the circumstances. I do not think that this Inquiry can really deal with North
11 Antrim and East Antrim and the division that they are in. It is not a matter for me,
12 on behalf of the SDLP in Belfast, to put forward an alternative to that.

13

14 **Mr Richard Bullick:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. To follow up on the point that Dr
15 Farry raised: it seems to me that while this Inquiry does not specifically deal with
16 the issue of the Antrim constituencies, given that there is an inescapable ripple
17 effect, I think your proposal can only really be judged in the context of what the
18 implication might be. It may well be that the SDLP in Belfast does not have a
19 view on that, but from the point of view of amplifying — to use the language of
20 the Chairman — your proposal, it would be helpful to see how that might have
21 implications, and how you might then make up the three Antrim constituencies.

22

23 **Mr Maginness:** I am not here to make representations on behalf of other
24 constituencies. At this moment in time, I am just referring specifically to the
25 Provisional Recommendations. I have to leave it at that.

26

27 **Mr Begley:** In terms of the North Belfast constituency, certainly Collinbridge-
28 Glebe-Glengormley, I think, is the natural area. I agree with the Commission on
29 that. There are obviously patterns that people follow in terms of work and travel.
30 We are talking about Belfast spreading outward and, rather than having the three
31 constituencies, having four. There is a natural affinity there, certainly, in any

1 constituency that is important. The SDLP's presentation talks about going
2 towards Jordanstown and the University area. I do not think that North Belfast
3 has a greater affinity with the wards proposed by the Boundary Commission in
4 terms of getting the numbers. I would like to hear Mr Maginness's opinion on
5 that.

6

7 **Mr Maginness:** Just by way of comment on your point: there is a natural affinity
8 — nobody would argue against that — in terms of Glengormley and the other two
9 wards with Belfast and North Belfast, in particular. Equally, one can argue that
10 the other wards in Antrim Line have a similar affinity: Mallusk, Hightown,
11 Ballyhenry, and Burnthill. They all have that affinity, and you cannot really argue
12 against that. I reiterate that what we are saying is that you are actually impacting
13 in a very serious way on the district electoral area of Antrim Line. You are taking
14 three wards out rather arbitrarily. There is no logic to taking those three out
15 except that they are geographically nearer to Belfast. In terms of the social
16 contact, cultural linkage, family relationships and so forth, the other wards are
17 equally as good candidates for transfer. The reality is that you have to go back
18 to this provisional recommendation, which seems more and more arbitrary as
19 you look at it. If you look at the alternative that we proposed, there is a natural
20 extension in terms of geography, social linkage and so forth. That is the view
21 that we are adhering to at this point in time.

22

23 **Mr Begley:** In terms of what Mr Maginness said regarding the council
24 boundaries and wards, this is one of the big flaws in the Commission, I think.
25 New council boundaries are going to be drawn, but we do not actually know
26 where those boundaries will be. This will happen in four years, but there will not
27 be another Commission for Westminster carve-ups for probably 10 years. I am
28 not so sure that that argument, in terms of council boundaries, really stacks up
29 for much of this point in time. It is coming back to the social interaction that there
30 is with the three particular wards in Newtownabbey that have been
31 recommended to be put in North Belfast by the Commission.

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Mr Maginness: I understand the point that you are making, but it is most unlikely that the ward boundaries themselves will change. Certainly, the boundaries of the councils will change fairly radically, although the impact on Belfast may not be as significant as in other district council areas where councils will merge. In Belfast, there is one council that extends across four constituencies. The likelihood of that expanding as radically as say other parts of the North is less likely although I cannot predict, obviously. I bear in mind what you are saying, and it is something that I referred to myself in my representations this morning. There is a radical reordering of local government boundaries; we should be cognisant of that. As far as the wards are concerned, as basic units they are not really going to change.

Mr Toolan: You will be aware that we will be dealing with North Belfast later. I am happy to emphasise that you will have a chance to make your points. It is unusual that we have had to interpose this at this point, but I hope, Mr Maginness, that it has been convenient for you. Thank you very much to those of you that have contributed.

I am aware that it is after 11.35am, and that I promised people a short break for tea or coffee. Can we make it a five-minute break? When we come back, we will deal with the substantive proposal in relation to three seats and four seats. I will invite Dr Farry to speak about that. I am aware that Mr Clarke may have difficulties. I will speak to Dr Farry about how long his presentation might take, and if I find that that will disrupt Mr Clarke's plans, then I will be happy for Mr Clarke to make his short presentation.

Informal break at 11.39am

Inquiry resumed at 11.55 am.

1 **Mr Toolan:** Ladies and gentlemen, are most of us present after the recess? I
2 have been notified of another difficulty on behalf of one of our speakers here
3 today, and I am happy that Mr Isaac Clarke, who is from the East Belfast Ulster
4 Unionist Association, should give us a presentation in relation to East Belfast
5 proposals. I am advised that this will take a relatively short period of time. I am
6 further advised by Dr Farry that he is happy then to move his counterproposal in
7 relation to the three-seat/four-seat constituency issue, and we will deal with that
8 in isolation. You will have an opportunity to question Dr Farry about that, to moot
9 and present your own proposals in relation to the three-seat/four-seat issue, and
10 after that we will deal with the constituencies at large, starting with South and
11 East Belfast. Mr Clarke.

12

13 **Mr Isaac Clarke:** Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Isaac Clarke. I am the
14 chairman of East Belfast Ulster Unionist Association, and I am speaking on
15 behalf of the Ulster Unionists in East Belfast. We support the retention of 18
16 seats in the Province, and we strongly support the retention of four seats in
17 Belfast. When it comes to the particular proposals about East Belfast, we have
18 no real disagreement with the Commission's proposals. We certainly welcome
19 the thoughts about the people in Ballyhanwood, Dundonald, Enler and Ballybeen
20 coming into Belfast, because that is basically what they are: Belfast folk. They
21 lived in Belfast, they moved out, and now they are moving back.

22

23 While taking into regard the very strong feelings and the strong affinity within the
24 Cregagh estate to remain part of East Belfast, the only reason I can give for
25 moving the boundary would be simply to tidy up that boundary up the middle of
26 the Cregagh Road. It is a bit tortuous down round by Bell's Bridge and halfway
27 up Mount Merrion Avenue; it does not make a great deal of sense, and, from that
28 point of view, I would support the Commission's recommendations that Cregagh
29 and Wynchurch move into South Belfast. I recognise the very strong feelings
30 within the estate, and it is something that needs to be taken into consideration,
31 and I am sure that the Commission will do that, but we, by and large, in East

1 Belfast, support the Commission's recommendations. That is all I have to say.
2 Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

3

4 **Mr Toolan:** Has anybody got any questions for Mr Clarke? Mr Bullick.

5

6 **Mr Bullick:** Mr Clarke, my question is in relation, you will be surprised to learn,
7 to the Cregagh and Wynchurch issue. I think you have properly conceded the
8 fact that it is only, on the basis of your argument, a tidying up exercise that they
9 might be moved. Is it not the case that if Cregagh and Wynchurch went into
10 South Belfast, there are still the flats at the roundabout which would still be in
11 East Belfast? That would be untidy in itself and, perhaps before you go on to
12 answer, given that all the other considerations, we would say, point to Cregagh
13 and Wynchurch remaining within East Belfast, is it not the case that the only
14 argument you have put forward for doing that is flawed in itself?

15

16 **Mr Clarke:** No, I do not think so because the flats at Bell's Bridge are certainly
17 on the same side of the Cregagh Road as all of the Cregagh estate. I am simply
18 saying that the boundary should be straight up the middle of the Cregagh Road.

19

20 *12.00 pm*

21

22 **Mr Bullick:** Is it not the case that that is not how the wards are drawn?

23

24 **Mr Clarke:** I do not know about how the wards are drawn. I am simply saying
25 that the boundary should be the Cregagh Road.

26

27 **Mr Bullick:** The point I am making to you is that the suggestion that you are
28 putting to the Assistant Commissioner is one that is not, in fact, possible on the
29 basis of the ward boundaries.

30

31 **Mr Clarke:** You probably know more about that than I do. I am sorry if I have

1 got that wrong.

2

3 **Mr Toolan:** Mr Clarke, can I just ask you a question or two? You are the
4 chairman of the Ulster Unionist Association?

5

6 **Mr Clarke:** That is correct.

7

8 **Mr Toolan:** Wynchurch and Cregagh — have they always been in East Belfast?

9

10 **Mr Clarke:** For as long as I can remember, they have been in East Belfast.

11

12 **Mr Toolan:** But to the city side you have got Ravenhill and then Woodstock, and
13 they are presently in the South Belfast constituency.

14

15 **Mr Clarke:** That is right.

16

17 **Mr Toolan:** Your association, does it just cover... That is outside your
18 jurisdiction, your bailiwick, let us say, Ravenhill and Woodstock?

19

20 **Mr Clarke:** Mr Burns is here from South Belfast. Cregagh estate and the
21 Wynchurch area have probably been part of East Belfast for a very long time,
22 and certainly the folk in the Cregagh estate, I think, look upon themselves as
23 East Belfast folk, and, to a lesser degree, I think the same thing is probably true
24 of Wynchurch. The only reason that I would support the Commission is purely
25 and simply to tidy up that boundary.

26

27 **Mr Toolan:** Are you aware, in terms of the Wynchurch ward, of how much of the
28 Cregagh estate is within the Wynchurch ward?

29

30 **Mr Clarke:** No, I am not. I am sorry.

31

1 **Mr Toolan:** That is OK. I just want to deal with one other matter that came up in
2 some of the proposals and that is Hillfoot ward. Your association, you would
3 cover Hillfoot?

4
5 **Mr Clarke:** Hillfoot is part of East Belfast, yes, but it is not one that we would
6 consider lies naturally in South Belfast.

7
8 **Mr Toolan:** You do not think it lies naturally into South Belfast?

9
10 **Mr Clarke:** No.

11
12 **Mr Toolan:** It has been mooted; I put it no stronger than that. You are familiar
13 with Cregagh Glen, as such, at the top of the Cregagh Road, and that effectively
14 divides the ward.

15
16 **Mr Clarke:** You could actually take it straight up the Cregagh Glen, probably up
17 to Manse Road, which would put Hillfoot into South Belfast as well.

18
19 **Mr Toolan:** Just looking at the map, it would nearly appear that part of it may lie
20 in South Belfast. Have you any views about that?

21
22 **Mr Clarke:** Not really. I mean I do not know anything about the folk in Hillfoot
23 very much. I know a lot about the people in the Cregagh and Wynchurch area,
24 because it is local to me.

25
26 **Mr Toolan:** The reason why I am raising these points is that these points may
27 emerge again at a substantive hearing.

28
29 **Mr Clarke:** I am sorry that I am not better prepared about the wards.

30
31 **Mr Toolan:** I raise that in case, with retrospect, you discovered these issues

1 were being mooted, and you would like to have commented on them

2

3 **Mr Clarke:** As I said, it is purely the boundary that I would be interested in. It is
4 not something that I would die in a ditch over, but it is something I think would
5 tidy up that particular matter.

6

7 **Mr Toolan:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr Clarke.

8

9 I think we are now in a position to deal with the counterproposal submitted by the
10 Alliance Party in relation to the three-constituency/four-constituency issue in
11 relation to Belfast. Can I ask you, Dr Farry — I know it sounds a bit pedantic —
12 just to state your name? It assists our Hansard record staff if you would state
13 your name, your capacity and your affiliation.

14

15 **Dr Farry:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Good afternoon. I am Stephen
16 Farry, General Secretary of the Alliance Party, and I am speaking on behalf of
17 the party.

18

19 We have put forward two sets of proposals for all of Northern Ireland — properly
20 integrated proposals: one on the basis of three seats in Belfast, and one on the
21 basis of four seats in Belfast. We believe that there is a case for the Inquiry to
22 consider a three-seat model in Belfast, but we have also recognised that the
23 Provisional Recommendations are on the basis of four, as are most of the other
24 submissions, so that we are in a position to be prepared to argue for changes to
25 be made on the basis of the four-seat model, as we anticipate that is where most
26 of the debate is going to lie.

27

28 I appreciate as well that the issue of three seats in Belfast was one that was well
29 analysed by the Boundary Commission back in 1995 and, indeed, the initial
30 proposal for three seats was tabled and subsequently overturned in the public
31 inquiry. But I think it is important to recognise that the assumptions of 1995 do

1 not necessarily still apply in 2005, and it is still valid to consider that three-seat
2 model.

3

4 Belfast city, within the current city council boundaries, has today less than three
5 electoral quotas. Under the proposals for the review of public administration —
6 irrespective of whether we go for a seven, 11 or 15-council model for Northern
7 Ireland — it is still recognised that the present Belfast City Council will more or
8 less be preserved intact. There are no major plans to change its boundaries,
9 though a Local Government Boundary Commission may make some minor
10 alterations to the boundaries. Also, just to clarify a point from earlier, it is
11 possible that ward boundaries may be changed as part of that review, as there
12 are some major differentials between the population of wards within certain local
13 government districts at present, not least Belfast.

14

15 If you look at the current four Belfast parliamentary constituencies, collectively
16 they are much less than four quotas, and even under the current proposals from
17 the Boundary Commission, they still make up less than four quotas. If you
18 compare that situation to that in Down and Armagh, with the exception of North
19 Down, all of the seats in that area are significantly over the quota, and that is set
20 to remain the case under the current proposals. While it may be traditional for
21 Belfast to have four seats and for the distribution of seats in the remainder of
22 Northern Ireland to conform to this, this need not be the case. Indeed, there are
23 many examples of cities in Great Britain which have actually lost parliamentary
24 seats as population has shifted out from cities into suburban areas.

25

26 In our opinion, the Boundary Commission have taken a conservative approach in
27 simply extending the existing Belfast seats outwards and in the process creating
28 a ripple effect, as other seats in turn are pushed outwards, with sometimes
29 illogical boundaries being created — not least the situation in Glengormley.

30

31 Population trends would indicate that Belfast is going to continue to lose people

1 compared to other parts of Northern Ireland. We would contend that four seats in
2 Belfast cannot be stretched out from Belfast city indefinitely without disrupting
3 what are already natural and coherent seats elsewhere in Northern Ireland. To
4 an extent, the Boundary Commission have acknowledged this through having to
5 leave their current four proposals for Belfast all under the electoral quota.
6 Indeed, the current set of recommendations merely defers the day when more
7 radical surgery will be required. The situation is not sustainable in the long term.
8 The 1995 surgery in the west of Northern Ireland, for example, has now created
9 a much more sustainable solution there. We can see that today, with virtually no
10 major proposal for change being produced there.

11
12 If the Boundary Commission in future come to look at Belfast again they will have
13 great difficulty in actually trying to extend the seats out further if the seats
14 continue to lose population, relative to other parts of Northern Ireland. For
15 example, it is difficult to extend East Belfast any further out without entering into
16 North Down and breaking up the cohesion of that constituency through taking in
17 Hollywood. It is difficult to extend North Belfast any further than is presently
18 mooted. If West Belfast is extended any further than the current proposals, it will
19 disrupt the Lagan Valley constituency, and, indeed, South Belfast cannot be
20 logically extended any further southwards, so I think we are almost at the limit of
21 the stretching out of the Belfast constituencies.

22
23 Also, I do not accept the argument that moving to three seats in Belfast will
24 inevitably lead to 17 seats becoming the default number of seats for Northern
25 Ireland as a whole. Any readjustment of seats in Northern Ireland will be much
26 easier on the basis of 18 sets of boundaries, including the creation of a new seat.
27 In 1995, it did prove necessary to move from 17 to 18 seats through the creation
28 of West Tyrone, in order to provide natural and rational boundaries. The other
29 aspect of this is the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which establishes that there shall
30 be 108 Members in the Assembly and also that there shall be six Members from
31 each seat. That entails that there will be 18 constituencies. So if the Boundary

1 Commission decided to opt for 17, it would actually seriously undermine the
2 basis of that piece of legislation.

3
4 From the Belfast perspective today it is natural for most local representatives to
5 wish to argue for the retention of four seats, but this may not be the case
6 elsewhere in Northern Ireland. There is already evidence from those, particularly
7 from the South Down area, including the SDLP and some of the district councils,
8 that they believe that three Belfast seats should be reconsidered. I am not sure
9 how they are going to be able to express that opinion in the Inquiry for the Down
10 and Armagh areas.

11
12 We have produced a full set of proposals for 18 constituencies, including three in
13 Belfast, in addition to the four-seat proposal that we have put forward. Our three-
14 seat model is intended largely to be illustrative, and we freely recognise that
15 there may be changes that others may be prepared to advocate that can improve
16 it; we are open-minded on that point. Also, the degree of change within this
17 model may not be as radical as some may expect. There would be no need for
18 any changes in the west and only limited change within the three Antrim
19 constituencies. Within Belfast, obviously, there would be three constituencies.
20 North Belfast could extend southwards and take in all of Court; a South-East
21 Belfast seat could extend East Belfast to the Lagan, more or less — there may
22 be some need to juggle some wards — and the remainder would create a South-
23 West Belfast constituency. That in turn would allow for seven seats to be created
24 in the south-east, including the creation of a new seat. That, in turn, would
25 alleviate the problem of all those seats in that part of Northern Ireland being over
26 the quota. Again, we have a scheme for that, although, again, we are open-
27 minded on how that could be changed.

28
29 Mr Chairman, we are being flexible in what we are suggesting and are prepared
30 to argue as the debate shapes, but it is important to acknowledge and put on the
31 record today that there is, certainly in the opinion of the Alliance Party, a strong

1 case for looking at the issue of three seats in Belfast and the creation of an
2 additional seat in the south-east of Northern Ireland. Thank you very much. I am
3 happy to take questions.

4
5 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you, Dr Farry. I am aware that some people will wish to put a
6 counterproposal of their own, and others will be happy just to put a question to Dr
7 Farry. I am happy to deal with it any way you wish, if you wish to put questions
8 or come up and make an address on the issue. Mr Bullick?

9
10 **Mr Bullick:** Perhaps to tease out the issues raised, I ask a number of
11 questions?

12
13 First, it seems to be inevitable that under a three-seat proposal you have a
14 South-West Belfast. Can you think of many things that South and West Belfast
15 really have in common that would lead them to be a cohesive constituency? The
16 second question I would ask is: are your comments really not more relevant for a
17 Boundary Commission which may well take place in 10 or 12 years in that you
18 seem to accept that, even within your own terms, these proposals are still within
19 the terms of reasonableness? Is it not the case that population patterns are likely
20 to be very different, given Government planning policies, in the future than they
21 have been in the past? Finally, is it really credible to suggest that Forestside
22 should be outside a Belfast constituency?

23
24 **Dr Farry:** First of all, in terms of South and West Belfast, I think identity in
25 Belfast is a very flexible, shifting notion. While there are settled communities in
26 Belfast, particularly in South Belfast, there is a substantial changeover in
27 population as people move in and out. Certainly, the nature of South Belfast has
28 changed demographically quite substantially over the past 30 years. As to the
29 applicability of the proposals — in terms of today versus 10 or 12 years from now
30 — certainly, I recognise that the current proposals from the Boundary
31 Commission do meet the terms of reference in that the proposed seats are all

1 within the acceptable range that is put forward. However, I am conscious that
2 what you have essentially in Belfast is a pattern where four seats are all under
3 the quota.

4
5 Elsewhere in Northern Ireland, particularly in the south-east, you have a pattern
6 where all the seats are over the quota. That looks to me like there is a major
7 imbalance in the distribution of seats within Northern Ireland. This issue is here
8 and present today; it should be addressed today. Equally, it will be there in 10
9 years from now, and perhaps more acute than is the case today. Certainly in 10
10 years' time, it is one that will have to be faced up to.

11
12 In terms of the Forestside issue, you can make that point regarding a whole host
13 of issues. There are going to be anomalies in all circumstances that you actually
14 draw boundaries: people do not live in Forestside — not the shopping centre,
15 anyway; just near it.

16
17 *12.15 pm*

18
19 **Dr Esmond Birnie MLA:** Thank you very much. Esmond Birnie, Ulster Unionist
20 Party.

21
22 Dr Farry, you characterised the Boundary Commission draft proposals as
23 conservative. I would put to you that you are taking a conservative line in the
24 sense that you seem very much constrained both by the Belfast City Council
25 boundaries — more or less — and what the Review of Public Administration is
26 likely to do. We do not know, obviously, as of yet, what it will do for sure.

27
28 I would ask why not consider the emphasis of the various so-called strategic
29 planning documents produced by the Department for Regional Development —
30 the Regional Development Strategy, the Regional Transportation Strategy, the
31 Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan — all of which emphasise what is the reality of the

1 surburbanisation of Belfast. People are moving out of the centre, and
2 Newtownbreda, Glengormley or Dundonald are all very much tied in to the same
3 working, social, economic urban system. I would say that four seats moving
4 outwards is a recognition of that reality. Thank you.

5

6 **Dr Farry:** Thank you for the question. I would certainly recognise that there are
7 Government proposals to try to increase the number of people who live within the
8 city of Belfast. Equally, most of the population increases are to be allocated for a
9 number of towns on the fringes of Belfast. For example, Moira has been
10 allocated as a major growth area; Ballyclare as a major growth area; parts of the
11 Newtownards area as major growth areas. I would question how far you can
12 stretch the Belfast seats out with any credibility. Are we talking about West
13 Belfast moving out to take in chunks of Lisburn? Are we talking about East
14 Belfast moving into chunks of North Down, perhaps out as far as Newtownards?
15 North Belfast going out as far as Ballyclare? I think to do that would break up
16 what are, in essence, natural seats that are still sustainable seats in those parts
17 of Northern Ireland.

18

19 **Mr Begley:** Could I ask Dr Farry, in terms of the Electoral Fraud (Northern
20 Ireland) Act 2002, which was put in place in recent years, whether he has looked
21 at what effect that would have had in terms of the Boundary Commission's initial
22 report and the figures in terms of the people on the register? There is a fair
23 deficiency in the numbers of people who are not now on the register because of
24 that, and that has been accepted by probably all the political parties at this stage
25 — it has certainly been accepted by the Electoral Office. That has also been
26 accepted by the British Government. We talk about four constituencies with new
27 electoral registration, and the numbers could really be much higher than they are
28 today. I would just ask whether you have taken that into consideration.

29

30 **Dr Farry:** Certainly, you can make that argument right across Northern Ireland:
31 that there may be an under-representation in terms of the electoral register. One

1 would hope that it would even itself out, but even if there were a differential
2 pattern in any under-representation, you still have a situation where the Belfast
3 seats would still be substantially under the quota. It would not make a massive
4 difference to the overall pattern.

5

6 **Mr Maginness:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

7

8 You have dismissed the argument that, by having three seats in Belfast, you
9 would probably have a reduction by one of the overall parliamentary
10 representation from 18 to 17, and you seem very confident in your argument. Is
11 it not more probable that representation would be reduced and that your hope for
12 a new South-East Belfast seat is really quite improbable?

13

14 **Dr Farry:** If you look at the figures for the south-east, where all the seats are
15 over the quota, then I do not think it is improbable, because to properly address
16 that imbalance in that part of Northern Ireland, I think you need to consider the
17 creation of an additional seat. Certainly, the creation of West Tyrone in 1995 to
18 alleviate the problems in the west of Northern Ireland where seats were over the
19 quota is a good example of the Boundary Commission doing just that.

20

21 **Mr Toolan:** Are there any more questions for Dr Farry? As part of your
22 proposal, of course, you have presented the statistics and the maps, and they
23 stand and are incorporated into the papers?

24

25 **Dr Farry:** They are available in the document.

26

27 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much. Staying with the issue of the three or four-
28 seat constituency, would anybody wish to make a substantive address on it?

29

30 **Mr Bullick:** My name is Richard Bullick. I am speaking today on behalf of the
31 Belfast DUP MPs and MLAs. In particular, at the start, could I indicate that Mr

1 Peter Robinson had hoped to be able to attend, but other commitments have
2 made that impossible.

3

4 The submission that I have passed to the Commissioner deals with a number of
5 issues. Relevant to this debate will be the part that deals with the number of
6 constituencies in Northern Ireland as a whole and the number of constituencies
7 in Belfast. That is dealt with at page four of the submission.

8

9 It seems to me that the issues of four seats for Belfast and 18 seats for Northern
10 Ireland sit together, so if we are coming on to the issue of four seats for Belfast, I
11 just want to touch on the issue of 18 seats for Northern Ireland. We agree with
12 the Boundary Commission's provisional recommendation that there should
13 continue to be 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland. We believe that this is the
14 right decision in light of the rules for redistribution. The rules in this regard
15 provide that:

16

17 *"The number of constituencies in Northern Ireland shall not be greater than 18 or less than 16*
18 *and shall be 17 unless it appears to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland that Northern*
19 *Ireland should for the time being be divided into 16 or (as the case may be) into 18*
20 *constituencies."*

21

22 The rule also provides that:

23

24 *"The electorate of any constituency shall be as near the electoral quota as is practicable having*
25 *regard to rules 1 to 4".*

26

27 Further to that:

28

29 *"It shall not be the duty of a Boundary Commission to aim at giving full effect in all circumstances*
30 *to the above rules (except rule 3A) but they shall take account as far as they reasonably can —*
31 *of the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies other than alterations made for*
32 *the purpose of rule 4, and*
33 *any local ties which would be broken by such alterations."*

1

2 I apologise to those who do not have the rules in front of them. That may not
3 have made a lot of sense. Clearly, it is important that the rules are read in the
4 round, and that one aspect is not disregarded at the expense of another. Where
5 there is an apparent tension between various rules, these should be read as to
6 create the least conflict with the overall intention of the rules. Such a conflict
7 exists between the starting point that there should be 17 constituencies and the
8 other rules, which would lean towards the *status quo* of 18 remaining. In
9 resolving this issue, it is instructive that the rules do provide for alternatives to 17
10 and also that, on the previous occasion, the Boundary Commission departed
11 from the option of 17 constituencies even when it represented the *status quo*.

12

13 Having considered various permutations of 17 seats, we do not believe that it is
14 possible to draw boundaries that do not significantly offend against other rules for
15 the Boundary Commission. In particular, we believe that any options that come
16 close to being acceptably near the electoral quota for each constituency result in
17 considerable changes in boundaries and would result in significant disruption.
18 Manifestly, this creates significant inconvenience and breaches numerous local
19 ties.

20

21 Applying the words of the Revised Recommendations to the last Boundary
22 Commission to Northern Ireland, the impact of the option of 17 would be:

23

24 *“more radical than was acceptable to the electorates of the constituencies concerned”.*

25

26 Given that the constituencies cannot reasonably be divided into 17, the options of
27 16 and 18 have to be considered. Self-evidently, when one considers the
28 solution that is likely to cause the least disruption or, using the language of the
29 rules:

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31 *“the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies”,*

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and:

“local ties which would be broken”,

the option of the *status quo* of 18 is likely to meet the requirement of the rules best.

As an afterthought, though it may be outside the terms of consideration of the Boundary Commission, we believe that, as a matter of principle, Northern Ireland should have the greatest possible representation at Westminster. I was pleased to hear Alban Maginness earlier endorsing that. Perhaps as a side note, I did notice while reading through the report of the Boundary Commission two years before, Mr Feeney, who at that time represented the SDLP, was arguing against the increase in constituencies at the time. Perhaps we have all come a long way in 20 or 25 years.

Turning to the issue of the number of constituencies in Belfast, we agree with the Boundary Commission’s provisional recommendation that there should be four seats in Belfast. Faced with a situation where the Belfast constituencies are all below the electoral quota, the Boundary Commission are faced with the question of whether they extend the boundaries to the Belfast constituencies or create three Belfast constituencies. For a number of very persuasive reasons, we believe that the Commission was correct to opt for four Belfast constituencies.

The first point is the context of 18 seats. In the context of 18 seats for Northern Ireland, there is a natural fit for four seats in Belfast.

The second point is the unnatural nature of three Belfast seats. Three Belfast seats would not only breach significant local ties to those who would fall outside

1 the new boundaries, but would also result in a wholly unnatural merger of South
2 and West Belfast, a point that I have touched upon already.

3
4 My third point concerns population trends in Belfast. With a target for 60%
5 brownfield development, which is likely to be met most easily in Belfast with
6 significant development in the Titanic quarter, the city is set for population
7 increases in the inner city. When combined with the movement of many people
8 to the suburbs of the city, it is clear that population trends favour a four-seat
9 Belfast, which better reflects the true nature of the city.

10
11 The next point concerns the natural boundaries of Belfast. Three constituencies
12 for Belfast would not reflect the true boundaries of the city and the true identity of
13 those who live outside the boundaries. It is clear — and widely accepted — that
14 the present boundaries of Belfast City Council do not represent the limits of the
15 city. This is already reflected in the present constituency boundaries. All of the
16 areas that we suggest Belfast could expand to, in the south and east of the city,
17 have strong natural links with the city.

18
19 My next point is that it reflects a living city. The city of Belfast is very different in
20 its nature and make-up today than it was 30 or 40 years ago. How people live is
21 changing and will continue to change, with population and travel patterns
22 affected. Indeed, it is clear from all the long-term strategy documents such as
23 the Regional Development Strategy, the Regional Transportation Strategy, the
24 Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, that the
25 boundaries of Belfast today are far in excess of what they were a generation ago.
26 Only four seats for Belfast can properly reflect this.

27
28 The final substantive point on this issue concerns the previous Boundary
29 Commission. The issue of the number of seats for Belfast was the subject of
30 significant discussion at the last Boundary Commission, when it was decided that
31 the boundaries should be expanded to reflect the true nature of the city. Having

1 determined the matter the last time, we believe that the same principles should
2 be applied on this occasion to keep to four seats.

3

4 As an afterthought, as a fall-back position, we considered the issue of how three
5 seats in Belfast could be created, but after considering the matter we felt that this
6 could not be reasonably done in light of the statutory criteria. In that respect, we
7 do not propose to put forward a plan for a three-seat Belfast.

8

9 **Mr Toolan:** You wish to reserve your position on that, Mr Bullick?

10

11 **Mr Bullick:** Yes. That would be the end of the submission in relation to the issue
12 of 18 seats for Northern Ireland and four seats for Belfast.

13

14 **Mr Toolan:** Would anyone like to ask Mr Bullick any questions?

15

16 **Mr Bullick:** I will not fall into the trap of believing that silence is acceptance on all
17 parts.

18

19 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much. Does anybody else wish to make a
20 substantive presentation in relation to this issue? Mr Begley?

21

22 **Mr Begley:** There was discussion on Friday, and it has been flagged up today,
23 about if we go for the three-seat model, the parties having a fall-back position in
24 terms of making a submission. Certainly, our party would not be of that mind.
25 We would support the four seats in Belfast, so certainly, we would not be of a
26 mind to go that way.

27

28 **Mr Toolan:** I am inferring from that, with that in mind, that you have not gone
29 down the road of preparing a fall-back?

30

31 **Mr Begley:** We have discussed it, and we have not gone down the road of a fall-

1 back position. We certainly support the four constituencies in Belfast for all the
2 reasons expressed by the previous speaker.

3

4 **Mr Toolan:** Right, OK. Does anybody else wish to make a presentation or make
5 a comment on the three/four seat issue? Can I deem that that issue now is
6 closed for the purposes of this part of the Inquiry? Obviously, it is a matter that I
7 will have to consider in the round. Again, I will have to consider very carefully the
8 proposal that was put on behalf of the Alliance Party.

9

10 At this point, I thank people for the detail that they have gone into about that
11 issue. There were very considered arguments about it and very pragmatic and
12 practical. I do appreciate that.

13

14 Can we just move on? It is now half past twelve, and I think we should keep
15 going while we can. We now move to the second counterproposal submitted by
16 the Alliance Party. What I am prepared to do at this time — I am just being
17 cautious — is just call the party representatives in alphabetical order. I know that
18 that favours some more than others, but bear with me, otherwise a minor conflict
19 will arise, which I would be unhappy to entertain.

20

21 **Mr Bullick:** Is that indicative of the party's name or the representative's name?

22

23 **Mr Toolan:** Mr Bullick, I regret to say the party name. In fact, I have not even
24 applied myself to giving them an alphabetical prioritisation, but I will be guided by
25 Mr Fisher in that regard. I am quite confident that the Alliance Party definitely
26 comes first.

27

28 Dr Farry, can I ask you to come back again? Sorry that this appears to lack
29 fluidity and fluency, but it makes for a more logical analysis.

30

31 **Dr Farry:** Do you want me to address East Belfast or all of Belfast as one?

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Mr Toolan: If you so wish, I am happy to deal with it globally at this point. Would that suit everybody, to go through it from one constituency to the next? I am going to be quite fluid about that.

12.30 pm

Dr Farry: Thank you very much, Assistant Commissioner. I am back again. You will be pleased to know that we do have a full set of proposals on the basis of four seats for Belfast, in anticipation that that would be where most of the debate would be taking place. Again, those are behind me and also are part of the documentation provided by the Boundary Commission today. I will just run through the four seats as proposed by the Boundary Commission. We have a number of changes that we would wish to make to those.

Perhaps, as the debate goes on during the course of today and tomorrow, we will look at the seats in detail; we can maybe look at those issues up close, but maybe just now focus in terms of the generalities. First of all, we would largely accept the proposals for East Belfast. I think the addition of Castlereagh East is logical; however, we would retain both Cregagh and Wynchurch within East Belfast, but place the Hillfoot ward into South Belfast. We feel that that is a more natural alignment and also reflects the current alignment of district electoral areas, which is one of the criteria that the Boundary Commission do need to consider in making their recommendations.

It is worth noting that, if that is the case, all of the wards that currently reside within Castlereagh East and Castlereagh Central would then be within the East Belfast constituency, while all of the wards within Castlereagh West and Castlereagh South would be within the South Belfast constituency, with one exception, which I shall come to in a moment.

1 In terms of the Cregagh/Wynchurch issue, we feel that, again, certainly Cregagh
2 is an integral part of East Belfast and part of that greater East Belfast identity. I
3 think someone said that whenever you talk about George Best being a boy from
4 East Belfast, he is from the Cregagh estate, and I think Wynchurch goes with
5 Cregagh in that respect. It is also worth noting that the current Cregagh estate
6 actually veers into the Downshire ward, as far as I am reliably informed by the
7 locals in that area, and that the current proposals from the Commission would
8 end up splitting the Cregagh estate between East and South Belfast.

9
10 The Hillfoot area, I think, more logically belongs in South Belfast, given that it is
11 part of the Castlereagh West district electoral area, although, again, we are
12 flexible if people want to propose maybe splitting that ward. The exception that
13 we would add into South Belfast is the Moneyreagh district. Moneyreagh is a
14 largely rural area, but if you look at the map you will see that most of the
15 population in the Moneyreagh area actually live on the fringes of Carryduff. So,
16 in terms of the population of that area, it certainly makes sense to add it into
17 South Belfast. It would also mean that all of the current Castlereagh area would
18 then be within the Belfast constituencies, rather than Moneyreagh being part of
19 the Strangford constituency, and, again, all of the Castlereagh South district
20 electoral area would be part of South Belfast. That would be the main change
21 that we would make with South Belfast.

22
23 We are happy with the transfer of Derryaghy, Dunmurry and Seymour Hill into
24 West Belfast, and think that is necessary, in terms of population figures, to make
25 sure that West Belfast is reasonably close to the quota. It is certainly worth
26 noting that Lagan Valley, from which they are coming, is still over the quota. We
27 would also include both Woodvale and Crumlin within West Belfast, as was
28 suggested by Mr Auld earlier on. We think that makes sense. That would unite
29 all of the Court distict electoral area within the one constituency. I know,
30 certainly, there would be people who would raise concerns about what is
31 presumably a Unionist area going in with a Nationalist area, but those types of

1 considerations are not really ones for the Boundary Commission either way in
2 terms of the argument. I think it makes a lot more geographic sense to tidy up
3 that anomaly along the Shankill Road.

4
5 We believe that North Belfast should be extended outwards to include the three
6 other wards within the Glengormley area, bar Mallusk — that would be Hightown,
7 Ballyhenry and Burnthill. We would also return Cloughfern to East Antrim from
8 the current set of proposals, and we would also transfer the Abbey area from
9 North Belfast to East Antrim. Given our proposals elsewhere in Northern Ireland,
10 where we are opposed to the Antrim Coast and Glens constituency and wish to
11 retain the current East Antrim constituency, we believe it is necessary to transfer
12 both Cloughfern and the Abbey area into that constituency to make up a seat that
13 is reasonably close to the electoral quota.

14
15 OK, so those are our proposals for Belfast. We are largely happy with the
16 proposals for Belfast, if we are working on the basis of four seats in Belfast,
17 although we would make some adjustments along the fringes. I think we are
18 particularly concerned about the Glengormley boundary as it currently stands, as
19 we do not think it actually is logical, and it goes up and down streets and makes
20 no local sense. Thank you very much, Chairman.

21
22 **Mr Toolan:** Has anyone any questions to ask Dr Farry? Mr Bullick.

23
24 **Mr Bullick:** Dr Farry, I cannot find fault with your suggestions for the south and
25 east of the city, but is it not the case that, although one can make an argument
26 for reuniting Court ward, the wards of Woodvale and Crumlin have no connection
27 — other than with their neighbouring wards — with West Belfast whatsoever? It
28 is not simply a question of them being Unionist as opposed to Nationalist wards,
29 but every pattern of life leads them northwards rather than southwards in that
30 part of the city.

1

2 **Dr Farry:** Yes, but they also have a connection with Shankill, Highfield and
3 Glencairn, and wards that are all currently part of the West Belfast area. Also, it
4 makes sense to include all of a district electoral area within one constituency, if
5 that can be achieved. Also, the need to balance out the population elsewhere in
6 the city would certainly lean to the inclusion of both those wards within the West
7 Belfast constituency.

8

9 **Mr Toolan:** Any more questions? I have competing claims here — I will defer to
10 the sitting MP.

11

12 **Dr Alastair McDonnell MP:** I will always defer to Mr Maginness.

13

14 **Mr Maginness:** I hope I get this right. Could I just ask you, in relation to North
15 Belfast, I understand in relation to Woodvale and Crumlin, you propose to
16 transfer those two wards into West Belfast? As I say, it is not something we are
17 specifically proposing, but certainly we would look sympathetically on that
18 transfer. However, you talk about taking in — I presume in addition to
19 Glengormley, Collinbridge and Glebe — Hightown, Ballyhenry and Burnthill. Is
20 that right?

21

22 **Dr Farry:** That is correct, yes.

23

24 **Mr Maginness:** Effectively, you are talking about all of Antrim Line being taken
25 into North Belfast, with the exception of Mallusk.

26

27 **Dr Farry:** That is correct, although I think we will be open to argument over the
28 issue of Mallusk as well.

29

30 **Mr Maginness:** Yes, well, the point that I was going to make to you is that, if you
31 are proposing to take in Hightown, Ballyhenry and Burnthill, surely it is logical

1 and reasonable then to take in Mallusk.

2

3 **Dr Farry:** Certainly, there would be a logic to that, although given the
4 geographic size of Mallusk and the population spread there, which would be
5 slightly different from that in Moneyreagh, then I think that is one case where an
6 argument can be made either way. Certainly, we are willing to listen to
7 proposals from others in that regard. I think it is also worth stressing that, in
8 taking three wards out of what would be the Boundary Commission's proposal for
9 South Antrim, we would be proposing to include three wards at the top end of
10 South Antrim from the current North Antrim constituency.

11

12 **Mr Maginness:** Is there balance there? I have already earlier referred in my
13 own contribution to the excess of votes, as it were, if you took in all of Antrim
14 Line. Is the balance there that you are talking about taking out Woodvale and
15 Crumlin? Is that, in essence, what you are saying?

16

17 **Dr Farry:** Certainly it would leave the Belfast North constituency well within the
18 parameters in terms of the electoral quota, but it would also leave it as a much
19 more coherent constituency.

20

21 **Mr Maginness:** Yes. The other thing that you have talked about is transferring
22 Abbey, which is presently in North Belfast, to East Antrim. Is that right?

23

24 **Dr Farry:** That is correct, yes.

25

26 **Mr Maginness:** And the retention of Cloughfern in East Antrim?

27

28 **Dr Farry:** Yes.

29

30 **Mr Maginness:** I assumed from looking at the provisional proposals by the
31 Boundary Commission that the reason why they were putting Cloughfern into

1 North Belfast was really a sort of tidying-up job in terms of Macedon. If you took
2 Abbey out — I do not understand the logic of that — but if you took Abbey out
3 and Cloughfern, you dislocate Abbey as a district electoral area.

4
5 **Dr Farry:** Well, I think this goes to the earlier point about the ripple effects of
6 trying to maintain a four-seat Belfast model to what happens elsewhere in
7 Northern Ireland. Our proposals in this regard are largely governed by what we
8 see happening within County Antrim.

9
10 With the indulgence of the Chair, the Antrim Coast and Glens constituency, as
11 currently is proposed, running from the University up to Ballycastle, or Rathlin,
12 indeed, makes no sense to us. It does not have a natural geographic transport
13 corridor; it is extremely stretched out. We would prefer to work on the basis of
14 the existing East Antrim constituency, which we find to be logical and coherent.
15 However, it is one where there are pressures in terms of the electoral quota, and
16 we feel that the addition of both Cloughfern and Abbey are necessary to ensure
17 that the East Antrim constituency can persist as a constituency that is within the
18 acceptable parameters.

19
20 **Mr Maginness:** I can understand the retention of Cloughfern, but the retransfer
21 — if I can put it that way — of Abbey, seems to me to be rather bizarre at this
22 stage.

23
24 **Dr Farry:** It is governed by East Antrim considerations.

25
26 **Mr Maginness:** I have no further questions, but I think Alasdair will.

27
28 *12.45 pm*

1 **Dr McDonnell:** Thank you very much. Dr Farry, it was not quite clear to me on
2 the proposals that you were making whether these were driven by some sort of
3 logic, or perhaps there were other considerations involved.

4
5 **Dr Farry:** Always logical proposals.

6
7 **Dr McDonnell:** Always logical. Well, perhaps that is really what I wanted
8 confirmation of, because we have heard a lot here, including from yourself, about
9 the logic of boundaries and the logic of various things. I am just looking at the
10 Moneyreagh ward and, while there may be some reasons as to how you can tie it
11 to South Belfast, the logic that you used to exclude Cregagh and Wynchurch,
12 which I may come back to in a second, was stood on its head by the suggestion
13 on Moneyreagh, which on this map here extends to within a few yards of
14 Comber, and extends to within a short distance of Ballygowan, and extends quite
15 a bit south of Carryduff, which, in other words, is a large, rural, agricultural ward,
16 and really probably belongs more with an agricultural district than with the city of
17 Belfast.

18
19 If you exclude Wynchurch on the logic that you were starting out on, how can you
20 include Moneyreagh, which does not meet your criteria at all on the logic that you
21 were applying to Wynchurch?

22
23 **Dr Farry:** OK. I think, first of all, it is important to recognise that there are
24 people still farming in all four of the Belfast constituencies, albeit on a very small
25 scale. With reference to the issue of Moneyreagh, first of all, there is an element
26 of the Moneyreagh constituency that is in essence the Carryduff town or village.
27 I am not quite sure how they categorise themselves at the moment. Moneyreagh
28 would be the only ward within the Castlereagh local government district that
29 would be excluded from the four Belfast constituencies, and in that respect it
30 would be somewhat of an anomaly.

31

1 One of the considerations under the Boundary Commission is that, as far as
2 possible, district electoral areas should be kept intact. I think, given that it is an
3 anomaly, South Belfast is still 5.3% under quota, and, of all the four seats in
4 Belfast, it is the one that is most deficient in terms of population. So I do not
5 think that you can argue against it in terms of population. But the addition of
6 Moneyreagh into South Belfast would ensure that all of Castlereagh South DEA,
7 as well as all of Castlereagh West DEA, if you go with our proposals on Hillfoot,
8 would be within South Belfast, and all of Castlereagh East DEA and all of
9 Castlereagh Central DEA would be within Belfast East if Wynchurch and
10 Cregagh were transferred back to East Belfast.

11
12 Also, if you look at East Belfast, there are substantial rural areas, in particular in
13 the Ballyhanwood area, that are of a similar nature to the Moneyreagh area, but
14 they are included within the city. So there is precedent for that in the
15 Ballyhanwood area, which joins on to Moneyreagh.

16
17 **Dr Birnie:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I, in a sense, really may repeat
18 somewhat Mr McDonnell's question about Moneyreagh. I am just looking at the
19 map, and admittedly it is a fairly small-scale map, but it does look as though
20 Moneyreagh is a low-density population — therefore scattered population;
21 therefore farming area — and it does not seem sensible to me that the urban
22 constituency of South Belfast should have to, in a sense, take on that quite
23 legitimate but obviously quite different representational sectional-interest group.

24
25 My other question relates to your proposal on the other side of the city — and I
26 entirely accept your argument in your introduction about the Boundary
27 Commission itself. Obviously, it is not right for them to enter into issues of a
28 small “p” party political nature, but — in terms of urban geography; urban identity;
29 of where people go to shop; where they use social and recreational facilities —
30 how can you really defend saying that the Woodvale and Crumlin wards have an

1 affinity, a linkage, a convenience — to use the rules binding the Electoral
2 Commission — with West Belfast? Thank you.

3

4 **Dr Farry:** Well, what I am saying with respect to West Belfast is that the Crumlin
5 and Woodvale wards have an affinity with the rest of the Court DEA and that the
6 Shankill Road forms a natural arterial route through the city, and at the moment,
7 it alternates between constituencies. In my opinion, the presence of Woodvale
8 and Crumlin within North Belfast is an anomaly.

9

10 Certainly, subject to changes elsewhere, I could see a situation where all five
11 wards in the Court DEA would be part of North Belfast. Equally, I can see a
12 scenario, which, indeed, we are proposing, where all five Court wards should be
13 part of West Belfast. The central point is that it does not make much sense to
14 split the Court DEA between North and West Belfast.

15

16 **Mr Toolan:** Dr Farry, can I just raise a number of matters with you? You have
17 no problem at all with, I will call them, the “Dundonald Five”.

18

19 **Dr Farry:** Yes.

20

21 **Mr Toolan:** Moving towards the south and east; Cregagh and Wynchurch. Have
22 you any views about just how tied they are to each other?

23

24 **Dr Farry:** Well, I think the two go hand in hand. Both of them are on the city
25 side of the Knock dual carriageway. I think to transfer one in a different direction
26 from the other does not make sense, so I think whatever fate awaits both those
27 wards, they should go hand in hand either to East or South Belfast, and our
28 preference would be back to East Belfast.

29

30 **Mr Toolan:** Back to East Belfast; right. Now, can I just deal with the Hillfoot
31 ward? You want it transferred into South Belfast. Just looking at it, one of the

1 speakers talked about the affinity with East Belfast in Hillfoot. Have you any view
2 about that and the view about splitting the ward?

3

4 **Dr Farry:** Certainly, talking to our local representatives — while Hillfoot is
5 currently part of the East Belfast constituency — they do not believe it has the
6 same degree of affinity to East Belfast as, certainly, the Cregagh and Wynchurch
7 areas would have. Certainly, I would concede that there are some loyalties
8 there. Keeping Hillfoot within South Belfast would preserve all of Castlereagh
9 West within the one constituency rather than having one ward out of five as part
10 of the East Belfast area. If Moneyreagh were added into South Belfast, the
11 geographic shape of Hillfoot would not look as much of an anomaly as it currently
12 stands. Certainly, I am loath to make an exception in the case of Hillfoot for
13 splitting the ward, but I think, compared to a lot of others, perhaps the case there
14 is stronger, and I think there is some scope for taking some of the eastern
15 aspects of Hillfoot into East Belfast and leaving the rest of the ward within South
16 Belfast. However, I am not too sure if it is worth singling out one ward for that
17 treatment.

18

19 **Mr Toolan:** I think that it has to be borne in mind that if we were to go down that
20 road, obviously, it would have to be worth it, and at the moment, we have no
21 evidence as such before us. Can I just deal with Belfast South? You are quite
22 content that East and West Carryduff be integrated?

23

24 **Dr Farry:** Clearly, South Belfast does have to be extended out, and Carryduff is
25 the most logical addition to that, and there are natural transport corridors into the
26 city from that route.

27

28 **Mr Toolan:** Just dealing with West Belfast, again, you are agreeing with the
29 proposal that Dunmurry, Seymour Hill and Derryaghy should be moved to West
30 Belfast?

31

1 **Dr Farry:** Yes.

2

3 **Mr Toolan:** Have you any particular views about how those wards are tied in? I
4 am aware that Seymour Hill includes the Conway area. Do you think that those
5 three wards come as a set or are they divisible?

6

7 **Dr Farry:** I feel that they do come as a set. I think this again illustrates the
8 dilemma that the Boundary Commission find themselves in. I am conscious that
9 there are arguments being voiced that those wards, or elements of those wards,
10 should be retained within the Lagan Valley constituency, but the West Belfast
11 constituency, without their addition, would be again substantially below the
12 electoral quota, and the West Belfast constituency does need to be extended
13 outwards to include other territory. If you look at the map, there is almost a
14 natural geographic break along the lines that the Boundary Commission are
15 suggesting, although that is not to diminish the fact that the people in those areas
16 may have traditional links to the Lisburn area. Geographically, it does make a
17 certain degree of sense, but fundamentally it is necessary that Belfast West is
18 extended out, and that is the only area where it can be done.

19

20 **Mr Toolan:** Right. Mr Bullick has mentioned Woodvale and Crumlin. I think you
21 are motivated by the topography of the Shankill Road and the influence of the
22 interjecting wards on the constituencies there. Are you quite firm in your view
23 that Woodvale and Crumlin should be part of West Belfast?

24

25 **Dr Farry:** Certainly I am firm in the view that Woodvale and Court should be part
26 of the same constituency as the remainder of the Court district electoral area. At
27 the moment, we are proposing West Belfast, but if a scenario were presented to
28 us where they were part of North Belfast, we would be prepared to consider that.

29

30 **Mr Toolan:** Right. Just dealing with North Belfast; in your written representation
31 you talked about the weaving boundary that now arises from the proposals. Can

1 I ask you to clarify just what you meant by that — what is troubling you about
2 that?

3

4 **Dr Farry:** It is not an area that I am directly familiar with. Others in the party
5 have much more knowledge of the area. However, I am reliably informed that
6 the boundary as currently suggested goes up and down streets and splits off
7 natural areas from one another. In essence, Glengormley village is arbitrarily
8 split in two between South Antrim and North Belfast, and it makes much more
9 sense that all of Glengormley village would be part of either South Antrim
10 constituency or as part of a North Belfast constituency. As things stand, with the
11 current situation with the population of North Belfast, we believe that all of the
12 Glengormley area should be included within North Belfast. Certainly, if
13 Woodvale and Crumlin were moved into West Belfast, that would facilitate that in
14 particular.

15

16 **Mr Toolan:** You have talked about community cohesion in Glengormley. Is that
17 your prime motive for proposing that Hightown, Ballyhenry and Burnthill should
18 be included?

19

20 **Dr Farry:** Yes, I think if you make the argument about where the cleavage would
21 exist in Glengormley — and certainly, divisions exist that I shall not go into — the
22 current boundaries, as proposed, do not reflect that social cleavage. I think it is a
23 very arbitrary division that does not make any geographic sense in terms of the
24 streets in the area. I would certainly welcome the Commission's looking at that in
25 greater detail.

26

27 **Mr Toolan:** I propose to go out and look at this area. Are you happy that
28 Cloughfern should go back into East Antrim?

29

30 **Dr Farry:** I think that is necessary from the perspective of the East Antrim
31 constituency. We feel that the proposal for the Antrim Coast and Glens seat

1 does not make any geographic sense whatsoever. I think the East Antrim seat
2 as it stands is a logical and coherent unit, but it is somewhat under the electoral
3 quota, and we feel that, if it is not going to be moving northwards into the Glens,
4 it does need to move slightly southwards to take in some additional population,
5 and the return of Cloughfern plus the addition of Abbey would be necessary for
6 that.

7

8 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much.

9

10 **Dr Farry:** Thank you.

11

12 **Mr Toolan:** I am just going to ask Mr Fisher who is next.

13

14 **Mr John Fisher:** The Democratic Unionist Party is next.

15

16 **Mr Toolan:** Mr Bullick, you come second in every sense of the word — by
17 personal name and party identity. It is nearly one o'clock. Maybe we will call it a
18 day for the moment and start again at two o'clock with Mr Bullick. Thank you.

19

20 *Inquiry adjourned at 1.00 pm.*

21

22 *The Assistant Commissioner, Mr James Toolan, reconvened the Inquiry at 2.08*
23 *pm*

24

25 **Mr James Toolan:** Good afternoon. Welcome back to the Inquiry. I had
26 mentioned to Mr Bullick that I would hear him next. However, what I will do, on
27 reflection, is put just one point that I meant to put to Dr Farry. It was arising out
28 of the engagement in relation to the Woodvale and Crumlin constituencies' input
29 or export into West Belfast/North Belfast. You are broadly in favour of moving
30 Woodvale and Crumlin into the West Belfast constituency. I am aware now —
31 and I am alive to the fact — that there will be an issue about that. Have you had

1 a chance to look at the maps? Can you address us on what you believe to be
2 the character of the Crumlin constituency?

3

4 **Dr Stephen Farry:** Sure. I think there is a point there that the Crumlin ward
5 might be slightly different in relation to the Crumlin Road. However, I do feel that
6 the overriding point of keeping the Court DEA united within either West Belfast or
7 North Belfast is probably the more important factor that overcomes that. Crumlin
8 ward still has a link to the other four wards within the Court DEA and it can still be
9 placed alongside those four in either constituency. We would still favour the
10 West Belfast option for all five, though accepting the point that there is a slight
11 difference in the way that the Crumlin ward would orientate towards North
12 Belfast.

13

14 **Mr Toolan:** Yes. It was just over lunchtime that I was looking at the map.
15 Looking at the Crumlin Road, it appears as if the Crumlin ward is intersected by
16 the Crumlin Road. You do not know anything about the population weighting or
17 electorate weighting in that vis-à-vis whether it is more dense to the west side of
18 the road?

19

20 **Dr Farry:** I am not sure. I would imagine that there is fairly common density
21 throughout.

22

23 **Mr Toolan:** Throughout. I emphasise that we will hear more about this from the
24 appropriate representatives in the area. However, just looking at the map, in
25 terms of habitation and buildings and whatnot as depicted on the map, it is
26 slightly more dense to the south of the Crumlin Road than to the north.

27

28 **Dr Farry:** Yes. Certainly, if the density is towards the south and that would lean
29 towards including it more within West Belfast alongside Woodvale. Looking at
30 the map, clearly the density of the housing on the south side is greater than on
31 the north side.

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Mr Toolan: I would wish to emphasise that my looking at a map is not the acid test here, but you yourself have no points to make as such about the orientation, for example?

Dr Farry: No. Our overriding point would be that the Court DEA should be united within either West Belfast or North Belfast, and our preference at this stage is West Belfast for all five.

Mr Toolan: Thank you very much. That will save me calling you again, so thank you very much for that interjection.

Mr John Auld: The parts of the Crumlin ward in the north make up around about one third of the electorate of the overall ward, and those areas are separated from the neighbouring ward, I think, of Ardoyne, by a peace line. Therefore it is impossible to get from Crumlin to Ardoyne without going down the Crumlin Road and basically doing a semicircle around there. The point is that there is not exactly a community of interest between Crumlin and either Ardoyne or Water Works wards. In many cases they are separated by peace lines, which is an unfortunate aspect of Northern Ireland.

Mr Toolan: Thank you for that observation, Mr Auld. That takes us to a presentation on behalf of the Democratic Unionist Party by Mr Bullick. Again, I would ask you, Mr Bullick, just to give your full name and the capacity in which you speak for the record.

Mr Richard Bullick: I am still Richard Bullick. This morning, I spoke on behalf of all of the Belfast DUP MPs and MLAs. My comments this afternoon — at least in the early part of the afternoon — will deal with the South and East Belfast constituencies, and those comments are on behalf of the South and East Belfast MP and MLAs.

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Mr Toolan: In that light, Mr Bullick, you have presented a written submission this morning. The Commission staff have made copies of it, and I want to ask Dr McNamee to distribute it for ease of proceedings.

2.15 pm

Mr Bullick: Obviously, this morning, I touched on the issue of the number of seats for Northern Ireland and the number of seats for Belfast. Perhaps even before turning to the specific issues of South and East Belfast, there were some observations of a more general nature which I thought may help inform some of the conversation later on. I think, in very broad outline, we do accept the building blocks of the provisional recommendation in relation to Belfast with only a number of amendments.

In relation to the relationship between the Parliamentary Boundary Commission and the Local Government Boundary Commission, I think we would like to make the point that, although it is outside the responsibility of this Boundary Commission, it is to be regretted that, once again, the Parliamentary Boundary Commission precedes the Local Government Boundary Commission. This inevitably results in unnecessary difficulties in drawing boundaries that could be avoided if the process were to be in the reverse order, and serious consideration should be given to addressing that issue in the future. I think, even already this morning, we have touched on some issues that would have perhaps been more easily dealt with at a local government level.

In relation to the issues of wards, which was also touched on this morning, rule 4 states that:

“So far as is practicable, no ward shall be included partly in one constituency and partly in another.”

1

2 In our submissions, we have not recommended that any ward be split, although
3 on occasion it would alleviate difficulties pertaining to maintaining local ties.
4 Again, a Local Government Boundary Commission before the Parliamentary
5 Boundary Commission could have avoided certain difficulties. I think our view
6 would be — perhaps just dealing out of order with the issue of Hillfoot — that
7 there needs to be an overwhelming case, in a sense, to split a ward to go down
8 that road. Otherwise, you sort of have a Local Government Boundary
9 Commission running at the same time.

10

11 In relation to local government districts, it is worth noting that, in the past, while
12 the rules provide no special status for district electoral areas, a previous report of
13 an Assistant Commissioner indicated that the Commission also recognised that
14 local ties might include ties between wards belonging to the same district
15 electoral area in relation to the current councils and to any new arrangements for
16 local government. DEAs are likely to continue to be the fundamental building
17 blocks. And again, that will be relevant when we come to look at some of the
18 issues later on in relation to how Castlereagh Council is dealt with.

19

20 On the issue of deviation from electoral quota, all of the proposed constituencies
21 in the Provisional Recommendations are within 7.5% of the electoral quota. This
22 contrasts with a maximum deviation of 11.5% from the final recommendation in
23 1995, which included five constituencies with a deviation of greater than 10%.
24 The Boundary Commission also indicated that in the Statement of Reasons for
25 the Provisional Recommendations that they would seek to restrict constituency
26 electorates to within a tolerance of 10% above or below the average sized
27 constituency electorate. We accept that around 10% seems a reasonable target
28 for deviation but believe that it is also important to limit an overly technical
29 approach on the deviation by recognising the importance of other relevant
30 considerations.

31

1 In relation to the Electoral Fraud Act 2002, clearly that has had a significant
2 impact on the electoral register, particularly in areas of Belfast. However, there is
3 no reason to believe that the electoral registers will change significantly because
4 of that during the currency of this Boundary Commission's final proposals.
5 Therefore, we do not believe that it is a significant factor that needs to be taken
6 into account during this Boundary Commission.

7
8 Turning to the question of options for the south and east of the city, at present
9 East Belfast is 14.9% under the electoral quota and South Belfast is 17% under.
10 In order to reach a more acceptable level, it is therefore necessary for each of
11 these constituencies to expand. There are, however, a limited number of options
12 in this regard.

13
14 North Down: it is theoretically possible for East Belfast to expand into North
15 Down by taking in wards in the Holywood DEA. For a number of reasons, this
16 would not be a viable option. First, North Down is 5.8% under the electoral quota
17 under the Boundary Commission's provisional recommendation. Without any
18 simple option for it to expand, the loss of additional wards would further increase
19 its deviation from the electoral quota to an increasingly unacceptable level.

20
21 Secondly, and more significantly, moving Holywood wards into East Belfast and
22 out of North Down would result in inconveniences attendant on alterations of
23 constituencies and the breaking of local ties. Indeed, the issue of the transfer of
24 the Holywood wards out of North Down was proposed in the Provisional
25 Recommendations to the last Boundary Commission, and the response to the
26 proposal was, according to the Assistant Commissioner, who heard the Inquiry,
27 overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the *status quo*, that is the return of the
28 Holywood wards to North Down constituency.

29
30 He concluded:

31

1 *"I am, therefore, ... satisfied that there are special local ties of a geographical, historical and*
2 *cultural nature... which would be broken if the Holywood wards were taken from the North Down*
3 *constituency."*

4
5 We believe that these factors are still relevant, and therefore there is no viable
6 option of extending East Belfast into North Down.

7
8 West Belfast: South Belfast borders West Belfast, and this would also offer a
9 theoretical possibility for South Belfast to expand. However, for a number of
10 reasons, this is not a realistic possibility. South Belfast and West Belfast are very
11 different constituencies and, clearly, adding portions of West Belfast into South
12 Belfast would offend against the consideration of local ties. There is also a
13 clearly defined boundary between the two constituencies, which makes sense.
14 The significance of the difference between the two constituencies not only
15 renders the addition of parts of West Belfast into South Belfast inappropriate, but
16 also provides another example of how unacceptable it would be to have three
17 constituencies for Belfast, as this would inevitably require parts of the two
18 existing constituencies to form a new constituency.

19
20 Setting aside the strong local ties argument, it is also the case that the proposed
21 West Belfast constituency is already 3.7% under quota, with the current
22 constituency being 16.6% under quota. The removal of any of the existing wards
23 would clearly be unacceptable, and the removal of any of the new wards, while
24 they could more easily be justified on a local ties basis, may be difficult, in that it
25 will cause knock-on effects.

26
27 Lagan Valley: apart from the wards that are proposed to move to West Belfast,
28 the only other ward that adjoins South Belfast is Drumbo. It is a mostly rural
29 ward which, whilst it has strong links with South Belfast, does appear to be a
30 more natural fit for Lagan Valley.

31
32 Strangford: this is the most obvious area for expansion for both East and South

1 Belfast. At the moment, Strangford is 8% over the electoral quota, and South
2 Down is 15.1% over. This essentially means that Strangford will naturally move
3 southwards. This also makes sense when one considers that South and East
4 Belfast are under quota. For East Belfast, there is a natural expansion into
5 Dundonald; this not only makes sense from the deviation from an electoral quota
6 perspective, but also from a local ties perspective. It unites all of Castlereagh
7 East into the East Belfast constituency. It also returns wards that were
8 previously in East Belfast into the constituency. It is also true to say that, while
9 the Dundonald wards are currently in Strangford and have also been in North
10 Down, they most naturally sit in East Belfast from the perspective of local ties, in
11 terms of where people work and originally came from. It is, in essence, largely a
12 natural extension of the Newtownards Road. Even though it is close to
13 Newtownards, Dundonald looks more towards Belfast; this is another argument
14 for four rather than three seats in Belfast.

15
16 For South Belfast, there is also an easy expansion into Strangford; in particular,
17 the wards of Carryduff East and Carryduff West make sense for inclusion into
18 South Belfast. It would clearly assist in both reducing Strangford's number of
19 electors and increasing that of South Belfast, but can also be justified on a
20 number of other considerations. With developments in recent years, Carryduff is
21 increasingly looking to Belfast; this is both in terms of where people work, where
22 they were originally from, and where they identify with. That particular corridor is
23 increasingly built up and has reached the point where it is difficult to say at any
24 point that one has left Belfast. While the option was not required during the last
25 Boundary Commission to give South Belfast enough electors, it is clearly now
26 appropriate.

27
28 The ward of Moneyreagh is also worth considering for inclusion in South Belfast.
29 While it contains some relatively rural aspects, the following considerations lean
30 in favour of inclusion in South Belfast. It assists in the goal of balancing the
31 electorates in constituencies by moving both Strangford and South Belfast to

1 nearer the quota. Its inclusion, along with Carryduff East and West, would mean
2 that the whole of the Castlereagh South DEA would be in South Belfast, which
3 would strengthen local ties, and that obviously touches on the earlier
4 consideration I pointed out about the previous Assistant Commissioner's
5 comments.

6
7 While being somewhat rural, a number of the Dundonald wards also have
8 significant rural aspects and, again, that is fairly obvious from even a cursory
9 inspection of the map, and it is particularly evident if one takes a drive around the
10 Dundonald wards. It is very difficult to be sure when one is leaving Moneyreagh
11 and entering some of the other adjoining wards, which, even on the provisional
12 recommendation, are suggested to come into the East Belfast constituency.

13
14 Development around Carryduff has extended into the Moneyreagh ward, and it
15 was clear that future development would merely increase this trend.
16 Undoubtedly, in the near future, parts of the Moneyreagh ward will increasingly
17 not merely look to, but will be part of, Belfast. Indeed, whatever view one takes
18 of development, Moneyreagh undoubtedly looks more towards Belfast than it
19 does towards Newtownabbey, or any part of Strangford.

20
21 I think that it is probably worth adding at this time that Moneyreagh probably has
22 at least as much in common with South Belfast as it does have with very
23 significant portions of Strangford. Certainly, it has little or nothing in common
24 with the peninsula, and it is probably stretching it to say that it even has a strong
25 link with Newtownards, whereas if one examines the map we can already see
26 that, if the provisional recommendation were to stand, there is a substantial
27 amount of housing within what might be regarded as Carryduff, which is in fact in
28 the Moneyreagh ward, and I am aware that there are people who live in Carryduff
29 and would regard the notion of being separated from the rest of Carryduff as not
30 making any particular sense.

31

1 Turning to the East Belfast/South Belfast boundary, changing the boundary
2 between South and East Belfast will not add extra voters to two constituencies
3 which are both under quota, but it may have implications for the number of extra
4 votes which are required in other areas. There are a number of wards which
5 should be considered in this regard.

6

7 After I make my contribution, I intend to ask the Lord Mayor, Wallace Browne, to
8 speak on the issue of Cregagh and Cllr John Norris to speak on the issue of the
9 petition that was contained within the papers provided to the Boundary
10 Commission last year. Robin Newton, the MLA for East Belfast, will also make
11 general comments in relation to East Belfast.

12

13 It is clear that there is a very strong local feeling in the Cregagh ward that it
14 should remain in East Belfast. This is evidenced by the very considerable
15 number of signatures that were obtained in a short period of time, who believed
16 that, due to its nature and historic ties, Cregagh ward should be in East Belfast.
17 Not a single person approached believed that the Cregagh should be in South
18 Belfast. In every respect, it is inextricably linked with East Belfast and is quite
19 distinct from the character of South Belfast. Cregagh is clearly part of East
20 Belfast in every regard, including culture, sport, church life, transport, work and
21 retail patterns.

22

23 Wynchurch ward also includes part of the Cregagh estate, with its very strong
24 East Belfast identity, while at the other end of the ward there are less compelling
25 links with the constituency. Given its long association with the constituency, we
26 believe that there is a strong case for retaining it in East Belfast, and — perhaps
27 touching on a question that was posed earlier on — I think a drive down the
28 street that divides Cregagh from Wynchurch would indicate that it is virtually
29 impossible to separate the two. The housing is of exactly the same nature on
30 one side of the street as on the other, and if we say Cregagh must remain in East
31 Belfast — and that being the case — I think it is inevitable that Wynchurch must

1 also remain in East Belfast.

2

3 Hillfoot is an example of a ward that would benefit from a Local Government
4 Boundary Commission, as it is not a natural unit. Although Hillfoot is presently in
5 East Belfast, and has been in recent years, it does not share the long association
6 of the Cregagh and Wynchurch wards. Geographically, it is also separated by
7 the dual carriageway.

8

9 It is clear that, rather than including the wards of Cregagh and Wynchurch in
10 South Belfast, the preservation of long-established ties would suggest that these
11 two wards should remain in East Belfast and, if necessary, Hillfoot could transfer
12 to South Belfast, given its more limited history in East Belfast. Indeed, I think I
13 am right in saying that, previous to the last Boundary Commission, it was in the
14 Strangford constituency and was added. Of these three wards, Cregagh clearly
15 has the closest links with East Belfast, and the Hillfoot ward has the strongest
16 connection with South Belfast.

17

18 In conclusion, based on 18 seats for Northern Ireland and four for Belfast, and in
19 light of the above, we believe that the following is the most sensible way forward
20 in relation to the south and east of the city: add the Dundonald wards to East
21 Belfast, add the Carryduff wards to South Belfast, add Moneyreagh to South
22 Belfast, keep Cregagh and Wynchurch in East Belfast and transfer Hillfoot from
23 East Belfast to South Belfast. Or, as compared with the Provisional
24 Recommendations, it would mean Cregagh and Wynchurch moving to East
25 Belfast, Hillfoot moving to South Belfast and Moneyreagh moving to South
26 Belfast. These proposals would provide for the long-established constituencies
27 of East and South Belfast to be stable constituencies in the longer term and
28 would reflect the natural extent of Belfast as well as reflecting the changing
29 trends for those living in the city.

30

31 The boundary between South and East Belfast would also maximise the natural

1 local ties involved. We make no comment on other boundaries in the
2 constituencies surrounding Belfast and our proposals do not have a significant
3 consequential impact. In fact, the final picture would then be Belfast East —
4 60,222 or 1.2% under the electoral quota; Belfast South — 59,390 or 2.5% under
5 the electoral quota; and Strangford — 60,933 or 0.05% under the electoral quota.

6
7 In light of all the above, we do not suggest that any changes require to be made
8 to the names of the constituencies. Mr Chairman, it is a matter for yourself, but I
9 would suggest that it may be more helpful to hear from the three other speakers
10 on the issue and then, at that point, it would be helpful for me to come back if any
11 questions arise.

12
13 *2.30 pm*

14
15 **Mr Toolan:** I am very happy, Mr Bullick, to hear them now. Perhaps we could
16 hear from the Lord Mayor, Wallace Browne.

17
18 **Mr Wallace Browne:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. I am Wallace Browne,
19 chairman of the East Belfast DUP Association. First, on behalf of the East
20 Belfast DUP Association, may I record my support for the Commission's
21 recommendation for East Belfast, with the exception of the proposal to remove
22 Cregagh and Wynchurch wards.

23
24 In particular, with Cregagh, it is an area which has inextricable links to East
25 Belfast and it has no natural association or bond with South Belfast. I have been
26 the Chairman of East Belfast since 1990, and I have met many residents within
27 the ward and, with an election practically every year since 1990, I have had the
28 opportunity to go door to door, meeting ordinary constituents with no political
29 association, and I feel that having the opportunity to absorb their views within the
30 ward affords me the necessary insight to make representations that cannot be
31 viewed as politically partisan.

1

2 Residents within the ward hold the same association to East Belfast as those that
3 live within its centre. Historically, those within the Cregagh ward dedicated
4 themselves to ensure that East Belfast was the industrial success it became.
5 Historically, it provided labour for Harland & Wolff and the ropeworks, and the
6 residents have been socially embedded within East Belfast both culturally and
7 economically. Indeed, within that area, they would give their sporting support to
8 Glentoran, which is based in the east.

9

10 I think it must be noted that it is within working-class wards, such as Cregagh,
11 that a sense of belonging is important. Social cohesion requires a vibrant
12 community spirit and, in turn, that community requires security. They need to
13 know their historical presence as an integral part of East Belfast is ensured for
14 years to come. So I would say that the people of Cregagh belong within East
15 Belfast. They are part of its social fabric and shall ensure its continued
16 prosperity. I hope that the Commission will be inclined to accept the real
17 opposition from those that really matter on these issues — the people in those
18 wards themselves that are to be excluded through these proposals.

19

20 I think that the case for Wynchurch being part of East Belfast has been made by
21 Richard Bullick. Thank you all very much.

22

23 **Mr Toolan:** Can I ask Cllr Browne a question? Obviously, you are making the
24 case that, as far as you are concerned, the two wards are indivisible. Do you
25 know how much of the Cregagh estate is based in the Wynchurch ward?

26

27 **Mr Browne:** I would say about 10%. I think it would be wrong to exclude that
28 from East Belfast because I think it forms a natural link.

29

30 **Mr Toolan:** It is The Straight that divides into Mount Merrion Drive, I think. Yes.
31 Are you taking a similar position on Hillfoot?

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Mr Browne: I think that Hillfoot is divided by the Knock dual carriageway so I do not think as strong an argument could be made for Hillfoot being part of East Belfast.

Mr Toolan: Thank you very much.

Mr John Norris: Thank you, Mr Chairman. The Lord Mayor has taken away a lot of my thunder. Basically, I am standing here on the same grounds as he is. I was one of the two representatives of my party, the Democratic Unionist Party, who went around the estate and knocked on doors. We covered about 55% of the people in the estate and the other 45% were either working or not available. We knocked on all the doors but, unfortunately, we had a bit of a time problem, which did not enable us to get around every house.

A large section of that estate, from a sports point of view, as has already been pointed out, would be Glentoran supporters associated with East Belfast. I myself go back about 40 years —even more — through my membership of the Boys’ Brigade and my contact with the boys in the estate. I was an officer in the Boys’ Brigade and, through my contact with the young lads in the estate, I have built up many friendships there. I know personally how strongly the people in Cregagh feel about staying within East Belfast. There is no question that, if I had got round the other 45%, I would have been very doubtful if I would have had anybody saying to me, “Yes, we would like into South Belfast.”

My case is a very simple one, Mr Chairman. The people of Cregagh wish to remain in East Belfast, and I would ask the Commission to consider the wishes of the people and to back the people on this matter. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr Toolan: Thank you, Cllr Norris.

1 That concludes that element. Do you wish to call another witness? Yes, Cllr
2 Newton. Cllr Newton, can I just ask you again for the record what capacity you
3 are speaking in?
4

5 **Mr Robin Newton MLA:** Thank you very much. I am Robin Newton, a DUP
6 Member of the Assembly for East Belfast. Richard very eloquently made the
7 point, and that was very much supported by Cllr Browne and Cllr Norris, in terms
8 of how people feel about where they reside in Belfast, and where their affinities
9 actually lie. It is quite clear — particularly at election times — when one
10 canvasses the particular areas of Cregagh and Wynchurch that the people there
11 feel themselves to be East Belfast voters and, indeed, East Belfast people.
12

13 As people of East Belfast, their whole affinity is towards that, and that is shown
14 by where they shop, where they go for entertainment and where their work and,
15 indeed, their travel is. They regard themselves as East Belfast people and,
16 indeed, the vast majority of them, when seeking alternative housing, actually
17 nominate other areas of East Belfast if they have to move away from the
18 Cregagh or Wynchurch areas.
19

20 I think that that is particularly recognised by the Northern Ireland Housing
21 Executive when offering choices to East Belfast residents, who opt to stay, if
22 possible, within the area. Strong family ties exist over generations, particularly in
23 the Cregagh estate. You have made the point, Mr Chairman, about the wards
24 being divided by The Straight, and it is difficult to see and understand the
25 difference there. Richard Bullick made the point that the housing on either side
26 of The Straight is the same.
27

28 The vast majority of people who reside in the Cregagh estate have come from
29 other parts of East Belfast, either many years ago or more recently. That tends
30 to have been the Castlereagh Road, the Bloomfield Road or the Albertbridge
31 Road — from around that area is where they gravitated towards the Cregagh

1 estate. I recognise that the very first speaker this morning, from the Ulster
2 Unionist Party, also made the comment that there was a strong affinity with East
3 Belfast among people who live in the Cregagh area.

4
5 I can only conclude my remarks, Mr Chairman, by saying that I am supportive of
6 the previous speakers. It certainly is my finding, as I speak to, work with, and, at
7 election times, canvass people in the estate.

8
9 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much, Mr Newton. Mr Bullick, does that conclude
10 your list of witnesses for this part of the Inquiry?

11
12 **Mr Bullick:** Yes.

13
14 **Mr Toolan:** Do you wish to proceed?

15
16 **Mr Bullick:** I am happy to deal with any questions that arise.

17
18 **Mr Toolan:** Does anybody wish to ask Mr Bullick any questions in relation to his
19 presentation? Dr Birnie?

20
21 **Dr Esmond Birnie MLA:** I should say, Mr Chairman, that I am not a councillor; I
22 am an MLA. Can I ask you, Mr Bullick, about your statement, or your party's
23 statement, that Cregagh is part of East Belfast in every regard including, culture,
24 sport, church life, transport, work and retail patterns? Do you not feel that that
25 needs to be somewhat qualified? Unless you have got a massive amount of
26 statistical evidence about where people shop, the schools they send their
27 children to, the hospitals they use, the sports grounds they go to, the churches
28 they attend, then that statement, while it is partially true, is a great exaggeration.
29 There are clearly many cases where there are people on the Cregagh estate
30 and, indeed Wynchurch, who would travel up the Cregagh Road to go to
31 supermarkets which clearly lie in the South Belfast constituency.

1

2 **Mr Bullick:** Thank you, Dr Birnie — 0.9% of the vote is not that much, I
3 suppose.

4

5 Part of the reason and justification for the comments made is that there is
6 absolutely no doubt, in a general nature, that all of those factors are true.
7 Probably, as to the first speaker from your own party this morning, while he did
8 believe a tidying-up exercise was required in that particular area, I do not think
9 that there was a single sentence in his submission that would have demurred
10 from the notion that Cregagh is really part of East Belfast. In a sense, the only
11 reason he saw for moving it out of East Belfast was as a rounding exercise. I do
12 not think that he was making the case in any sense that this was naturally part of
13 South Belfast. In a sense, given that, in my view, every indicator leads one to
14 believe that it is part of East Belfast.

15

16 Clearly, people from any constituency use certain services in other
17 constituencies; it would be ludicrous to suggest otherwise. The speakers who
18 came before me have knowledge on the ground and are ideally placed to make
19 this case. A particularly striking point was the issue of rehousing. People
20 having to move out of Cregagh have a natural affinity to move to other parts of
21 East Belfast. If you are asking me whether people from Cregagh ever wander
22 outside the boundaries of East Belfast, then clearly you are right.

23

24 **Mr Stephen Barr:** I am Stephen Barr, from the Ulster Unionist Party. I
25 appreciate that obviously Cregagh *et cetera* is a very urban area. I appreciate
26 that local representatives are saying that it is East Belfast. But, at least, if it were
27 put into South Belfast, it would still be in an urban area, similar to the one that it
28 is in at the moment, whereas Moneyreagh appears to be particularly rural. It
29 certainly does not sit comfortably with South Belfast. I suggest that Cregagh and
30 Wynchurch sit more comfortably with South Belfast than Moneyreagh ever
31 would. Are you really satisfied that Moneyreagh will sit with South Belfast — the

1 Lisburn Road and areas like that?

2

3 **Mr Bullick:** Yes, I am really satisfied. Let me expand on why that is the case.
4 There is no doubt about it — Moneyreagh is a somewhat rural constituency and,
5 in terms of area, is perhaps predominantly a rural constituency, but one has to
6 look beyond that. In all of these things there will be balancing exercises to be
7 undertaken. If you look at a map of the wards immediately to the north of the
8 Moneyreagh ward, there is Upper Braniel, Ballyhanwood, Carrowreagh and
9 Dundonald. In all of those wards there are very substantial rural aspects. In fact,
10 one does not even have to look across the city to see that that is also the case in
11 North and West Belfast — albeit with the mountain being a slightly different
12 consideration. With the inclusion of the Dundonald ward, which seems to be
13 largely uncontested, East Belfast will take on a somewhat rural aspect.

14

15 The point that I would make is that it has the benefit of entirely uniting
16 Castlereagh Council in Belfast constituencies, which I think is to be desired. As
17 the Alliance representative said earlier, if Moneyreagh is left outside the Belfast
18 constituencies, then we find ourselves in a situation whereby it is the one ward
19 from Castlereagh council that is not part of Belfast. I recall from reading through
20 some of the previous Boundary Commission reports that there was a preference
21 once taken by the Commission that there should be at least three wards, I think it
22 was, from any district electoral area within a particular constituency. In a sense,
23 that is not a rule that holds hard and fast today, but clearly the logic that informed
24 that rule at the time is still present. On that basis, I think it would be preferable
25 that Moneyreagh, as part of that Castlereagh DEA, would remain within Belfast.

26

27 *2.45 pm*

28

29 Ultimately, I come back to two points: you say that perhaps Moneyreagh does
30 not have some things in common with other parts of South Belfast. My sense
31 would be that a lot of the people who live in Moneyreagh are people who will

1 travel to Belfast for work or other activities. Even without looking to the Carryduff
2 example, Moneyreagh people have much more in common with South Belfast
3 and, in particular, the neighbouring wards, than they do with the fishermen in
4 Portavogie or Portaferry or anything down the peninsula. Moneyreagh people
5 and Newtownards people are not even the same, never mind Moneyreagh
6 people and people from the peninsula or, indeed, people from the areas of the
7 parliamentary constituency of South Down, who are likely to come into
8 Strangford. It seems to me that Moneyreagh and those people have less in
9 common than with Belfast. Although it is rural, I do not regard that as being a
10 significant distortion from what would otherwise be the case. I go back and make
11 the point again that if one looks at the map at Carryduff East and downwards into
12 part of Carryduff, there is significant housing in that area.

13
14 We talked earlier about issues or arbitrary boundaries in North Belfast and
15 northwards. It would be entirely arbitrary if residents of Carryduff were in a
16 different constituency from their next-door neighbours. Sometimes these things
17 are absolutely unavoidable, but whenever one weighs all of those factors
18 together, it seems to me that Moneyreagh has a perfectly reasonable fit within
19 South Belfast, even before one takes into account the likely expansion of
20 Carryduff in the near future, which will only increase the linkage between
21 Moneyreagh and South Belfast. So, whilst somebody who lives in Moneyreagh
22 may well feel they live in the countryside, it is very much the countryside with an
23 affinity to Belfast, and not the countryside that looks towards Donaghadee or
24 Portavogie or Portaferry.

25
26 **Dr Farry:** Thank you very much. I think our proposals and the DUP proposals in
27 this regard are almost identical, if not totally identical. I have a couple of points
28 on the issue of Moneyreagh. First of all, Mr Bullick, do you know how far out
29 within Moneyreagh the Belfast postcodes are retained? Certainly, to my
30 knowledge, Crossnacreevy, which is in part of Moneyreagh, uses Belfast
31 postcodes. Also, do you think that the addition of Moneyreagh into South Belfast

1 in part rounds off the slight anomaly on the map of the Hillfoot area going back
2 into South Belfast? Would you recognise that there is a much greater dislocation
3 to be involved in the arbitrary split of elements of Carryduff into Strangford than
4 there would be if you moved the other direction and put Moneyreagh into Belfast,
5 in that there would not be a major loss or change of identity for that area?

6
7 **Mr Bullick:** I will deal with those points in turn. I suspect that you are right in
8 terms of the postcodes; I am not absolutely certain. It is something that, clearly,
9 could be looked into. There is no doubt that the Moneyreagh and Hillfoot
10 proposals sit together very well. It makes total sense of the Hillfoot move to
11 South Belfast, and I think there is a grave difficulty in justifying one part of
12 Carryduff being in Strangford and one part of it being in South Belfast. It does
13 not seem to make any sense, and that is especially the case given that it is likely
14 to be a growing part of Carryduff. As the Commission has taken the view at the
15 provisional stage to extend outwards to Carryduff, it seems to me to be a very
16 small additional step, and a perfectly sensible step, to take in Moneyreagh, which
17 is part of greater Carryduff.

18
19 The other point which could be made, of course, is that with those boundaries as
20 the Alliance Party and the DUP have proposed, it is likely to make Belfast entirely
21 sustainable as a four-constituency area into the foreseeable future, and there will
22 be no further need to tamper with the boundaries in the short or medium term. It
23 is a long-term solution.

24
25 **Mr Toolan:** Are there any other questions for Mr Bullick? What do you wish to
26 do with the other element of your submission on the north and west?

27
28 **Mr Bullick:** It would be preferable, if it is possible, to leave it until a little later,
29 just in case some of the North Belfast representatives were to attend.

30
31 **Mr Toolan:** You were hoping to call a speaker in that regard, perhaps, or have

1 an alternative speaker?

2

3 **Mr Bullick:** In the event that they do not come, I am certainly happy to proceed
4 later, but if you give them the opportunity, that might be helpful.

5

6 **Mr Toolan:** Who is next? Dr Birnie?

7

8 **Dr Birnie:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I am Esmond Birnie, speaking
9 on behalf of the South Belfast Ulster Unionist Association. My comments are
10 substantially following those of our written submission of June last year. There is
11 a short one-page summary, which I think has been copied to the secretariat,
12 relating to what I will now say.

13

14 Just to reiterate, we do support the 18 and four-seat point. Moving beyond that, I
15 want to restrict my remarks to South and East Belfast insofar as East Belfast is
16 affected by the South Belfast proposals. It is very obvious that the Boundary
17 Commission was starting from a position where South Belfast was very seriously
18 under quota, so there was a need for additional numbers, or else we would be in
19 the scenario of potentially moving from four seats in Belfast to three, which we
20 believe, for many of the reasons made this morning, would not have been a
21 desirable outcome for the city of Belfast or, indeed, for the whole of Northern
22 Ireland.

23

24 The addition of Carryduff East and West is certainly consistent with the transport
25 and strategic planning realities such as the south-east corridor into Belfast, which
26 has been recognised by the various Department for Regional Development
27 regional strategy documents, some of which are referred to in the Boundary
28 Commission's own Statement of Reasons. Also, a further reason for placing the
29 two Carryduff wards into South Belfast is that, undoubtedly, there has been some
30 population transfer and movement from persons, as it were, moving up the
31 Saintfield Road from living within South Belfast, as it is traditionally defined, out

1 to these outer, now suburban, commuter areas.

2

3 I want to turn to what I think is very much the key area of debate, relating to the
4 Cregagh and Wynchurch switch. I do concede that this is a harder one to justify,
5 particularly in the case of the former ward, as indeed the previous speaker
6 mentioned, particularly in terms of the points in the Boundary Commission rules
7 relating to respecting local ties and convenience. It is clear, and we have seen
8 the evidence relating to the 700-plus petition signatures, that many people are,
9 as it were, used to the current position of Cregagh ward within East Belfast, and
10 certainly I would not want to deny that that strength of feeling exists. However,
11 that said — and this alludes to some of the debate which we have just had — it is
12 clear that people from both the Cregagh and Wynchurch wards would on many
13 occasions move across, as it were, the constituency boundary to, for example,
14 shop, and to the best of my knowledge, the two closest mini-supermarkets to the
15 Cregagh estate would be the Co-op and Iceland stores, which are on the
16 Cregagh Road but in the South Belfast section of the Cregagh Road.

17

18 We have had reference to sport. I do not think anyone is suggesting that a shift
19 of parliamentary boundaries is going to affect the football team which people,
20 rightly or wrongly, identify with. That is part of their identity, and nobody is going
21 to take it away from them. I would suggest that when and if — perhaps more
22 when — the new Belfast City Council leisure facility in Ormeau Park is
23 constructed, I would imagine that people from the Cregagh estate will shift across
24 the current constituency boundary to use that facility, notwithstanding whatever
25 affinity they feel to either East or South Belfast.

26

27 My understanding would be that the closest secondary school to the Cregagh
28 estate is Knockbreda High School, which, as I read the map, is literally on the
29 current ward and indeed parliamentary boundaries between South and East
30 Belfast. So there again, it is not obvious to me that a shift in the boundary would
31 necessarily deny those very real realities in terms of people's everyday lives.

1

2 It can also be argued that the Cregagh and Wynchurch wards do face some
3 common constituency issues with South Belfast; in fact, overlapping issues. I
4 refer to two in my experience as a South Belfast Assembly Member since 1998.
5 For example, I have encountered one planning issue that did straddle the
6 constituency boundaries in that area, and secondly — which I think is still a live
7 issue — the bus routes, particularly from Rosetta/Mount Merrion, which have
8 been the subject of contention in recent months with the introduction of the new
9 Metro services. Those bus routes would start off in Cregagh and Wynchurch
10 wards and then sweep round into the South Belfast constituency. So, at the
11 moment, the boundary is straddling a common bus route. If, however, the
12 Cregagh Road, subject to the anomalies which were pointed out this morning,
13 substantially became the south/east boundary, that would not be the case any
14 more.

15

16 Could I finally make a point about the Hillfoot ward? When we made our original
17 submission back in June of last year, we very much stuck to the general policy of
18 not wishing to — or we respected the policy as it were — of not dividing a ward.
19 Since the question has arisen a number of times, I would say that we would
20 certainly be open to the possibility of a division — or dare I say it, a partition — of
21 the Hillfoot ward, perhaps along the lines of the Cregagh Glen. If that does not
22 happen, and if we we did go down the route, as proposed by Mr Bullick, of
23 incorporating all of Hillfoot ward as it currently stands into South Belfast, but not
24 also including Cregagh and Wynchurch, you are going to have a very much
25 irregularly shaped boundary between the south and east constituencies in that
26 area. There would, as it were, be a substantial peninsula of East Belfast sticking
27 out by several miles into South Belfast. Those would be the summary points I
28 would make. Thank you.

29

30 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you. Would anybody like to ask Dr Birnie some questions?

31

1 **Mr Norris:** You have overlooked a high school and a primary school at
2 Lisnasharragh, which are much nearer the Cregagh than the other school that
3 you mentioned.

4

5 **Dr Birnie:** I would have to check the map, but I would imagine that they would
6 be roughly the same distance.

7

8 **Mr Norris:** I assure you that the Lisnasharragh schools are much closer to the
9 Cregagh estate than the school you mentioned.

10

11 **Dr Birnie:** It would depend, sir, on which part of the Cregagh estate you took. If
12 you took the extremity towards South Belfast, towards the south-east, I am
13 almost certain that Knockbreda would be closer.

14

15 *3.00 pm*

16

17 You represent the area; I do not, but clearly some young people would go in one
18 direction geographically and some in the other, so I am saying that in terms of
19 boundary, given that there is Knockbreda High School does not, in a sense, deny
20 that.

21

22 **Dr Farry:** Thank you very much. First of all, can I ask Dr Birnie whether he
23 thinks there is any connection between the Cregagh ward and the Downshire
24 ward, in particular with reference to the Cregagh estate?

25

26 **Dr Birnie:** Yes, I think this point has been already alluded to. Given that the
27 boundary does not exactly follow, in all its course, the Cregagh Road, clearly yes
28 there is, and whatever we do here, we are not going to get a perfect solution. I
29 recognise that if we followed the Boundary Commission's draft proposals you
30 would end up with, as a previous contributor suggested, maybe 80% or 90% of

1 Cregagh estate moving into South Belfast, but there would be an element left
2 behind. Yes, I can see that that is regrettable.

3

4 **Dr Farry:** Leaving aside the argument over where people in Cregagh and
5 Wynchurch wards do most of their affairs, do you think that the boundary
6 between Cregagh and Wynchurch and the rest of South Belfast is a more natural
7 boundary than the one currently proposed by the Boundary Commission,
8 between Downshire and Cregagh and Wynchurch?

9

10 **Dr Birnie:** Yes, that would be my argument; that if we went down the route in
11 the draft proposals, the Cregagh Road, with some bends and bumps, as it were,
12 would substantially be the south/east demarcation, and I think that would be
13 tidier, and indeed it would also be tidier as I said earlier, than the proposal, which
14 we heard from the previous speaker, which would give you this very substantial
15 jutting-in effect of the two wards, Cregagh and Wynchurch, but then equally
16 Hillfoot in its entirety in South Belfast moving in a north-easterly direction but still
17 in South Belfast.

18

19 **Dr Farry:** Does Mount Merrion not make a more natural boundary?

20

21 **Dr Birnie:** This is the issue of whether you can separate Wynchurch and
22 Cregagh wards. I think that is going to be difficult too.

23

24 **Dr Farry:** Finally, do you have any views on this proposal to include
25 Moneyreagh within South Belfast?

26

27 **Dr Birnie:** I will repeat the point that I made to yourself, Dr Farry, this morning,
28 that my reading of it would be that Moneyreagh ward is still — although it may
29 change in the future — substantially low-density population, certainly very
30 extensive geographically and predominantly rural. Therefore, close local ties
31 would not exist between it and the rest of South Belfast. I think you would be

1 creating, in terms of shape and size, a rather peculiarly characterised
2 constituency in the shape of such a South Belfast seat.

3
4 **Mr Toolan:** Any more questions?

5
6 **Mr Bullick:** Dr Birnie, just to pick up on a number of the points you made and
7 see how they perhaps fit with some of the comments that were made by your
8 colleague this morning. You indicated that you had no doubt the people of
9 Cregagh were used to being in East Belfast? Presumably you would accept that
10 it is somewhat more than just, “It has always been this way”? There is a close
11 affinity and desire by people in the area that that would continue to be the case.

12
13 Next point, dealing with the issue of Hillfoot, what would you say to the twofold
14 suggestion that Hillfoot when combined with Moneyreagh makes total sense,
15 and, in any event, Hillfoot even on its own makes sense when you are on the
16 ground, as opposed to perhaps just looking at a map and judging it on that
17 particular basis?

18
19 My third and final point: is it really your suggestion that the issue of local ties —
20 the centrepiece of your argument on local ties — turns on what direction a bus
21 goes? It seems to me that that is perhaps straining at the very margins of
22 credibility whenever you are trying to build a case; whenever one weighs that
23 against all of the other factors that have been detailed by the local
24 representatives for the area.

25
26 **Dr Birnie:** OK. Really, the issue is how do you define, I think for two of your
27 questions, local ties. Obviously, part of it is a psychological thing of what people
28 identify with, but I think it has to be more than that, because in almost any case
29 of a proposed ward change, if you were — as has been done in this case — to
30 petition people, survey people, given that most people are adverse or reluctant to
31 see change, you will get most people responding by saying, “I am against

1 change.” It is not surprising that nobody wanted to sign a petition saying that
2 they wanted to move into South Belfast. I think you have to go beyond that and
3 actually test what people actually do. Where do they walk to? Where do they
4 drive to? Where do they take the bus to?

5
6 While I cannot deny that particularly the Cregagh ward and, to some extent, the
7 Wynchurch ward would have substantial movement across their ward boundaries
8 into the rest of East Belfast for various social, shopping, retail, sporting, cultural,
9 church, education *et cetera* reasons, there are probably just as strong flows into
10 South Belfast.

11
12 Now, the Hillfoot question is obviously an interesting one as well. I would go
13 along with your argument as far as to say that probably historically the people
14 living in Hillfoot do not have that strong an affinity to East Belfast, so in a sense
15 you might say that might predispose to shifting them in either direction as the
16 numbers require. But I think you are going to end up with this very strange
17 geographical effect, that you will be able to travel a mile or so along the Knock
18 dual carriageway, and on one side of it you will be in East Belfast, but on the
19 other side of it you will still be in South Belfast, even though you are moving in a
20 north-east direction. Given that, perhaps we should be open to the possibility —
21 notwithstanding the general preference of not splitting wards — that perhaps
22 Hillfoot ward should be cut roughly at its middle point, so that one part moves into
23 South Belfast and the other is retained in East Belfast.

24
25 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much, Dr Birnie. I am aware that Mr Begley has
26 some observations to make, and I am aware, Mr Bullick, that you wish to make
27 your submission in relation to the north and west. I am aware that Mr Auld will
28 not be able to come tomorrow — if we do not conclude today — so I have
29 indicated to him that I would like to hear from him, I suppose, as one of the
30 citizens of Belfast, to put it like that. Have we concluded with the South and East
31 Belfast elements of it? I think we have.

1

2 **Mr Bullick:** I am content to go ahead.

3

4 **Mr Toolan:** Right. What do you wish to do Mr Begley? Do you wish to hear
5 about the north and west?

6

7 **Mr Sean Begley:** I would like to make this afternoon a short comment on North
8 and West Belfast.

9

10 **Mr Toolan:** Yes, surely. Dr Farry has already given his presentation on North
11 and West Belfast. Dr Birnie, you are not interested in North and West Belfast as
12 such?

13

14 **Dr Birnie:** I am certainly very interested in it.

15

16 **Mr Toolan:** Right. Mr Barr, you are not making any submission yourself?

17

18 **Mr Barr:** I am happy to move along.

19

20 **Mr Toolan:** We have time to spare, in a sense. Certainly, I am not closing the
21 door on tomorrow — far from it — but what I would like to do is to perhaps, rather
22 than stop now, see if we can make some movement. North and West Belfast, do
23 you wish, Mr Bullick, to go ahead?

24

25 **Mr Bullick:** I am content to proceed, if no other representatives are due to
26 present their proposals before me.

27

28 **Mr Toolan:** We have effectively had them from the SDLP; we have had them
29 from the Alliance Party. I believe the Ulster Unionist Party are not going to really
30 make a submission on it as such. In fact, you are the only one left, and then Mr
31 Begley wants to talk more globally and make a few observations, and I would like

1 to hear Mr Auld. Thank you very much.

2

3 **Mr Bullick:** Richard Bullick, speaking on behalf of the North Belfast MP and the
4 North and West Belfast MLAs for the area.

5

6 In relation to North and West Belfast, we accept the Boundary Commission's
7 Provisional Recommendations. It is clear from the figures that both North and
8 West Belfast are significantly under-represented, with West Belfast presently
9 16.6% beneath the electoral quota and North Belfast 15.7% under the electoral
10 quota. Given that we would support a four-seat Belfast, it is therefore inevitable
11 that both of these constituencies will require additional wards to bring them closer
12 to the electoral quota.

13

14 As has been indicated earlier, we believe that it is not possible to breach the
15 boundary between West Belfast and South Belfast. It is therefore inevitable that
16 North Belfast must expand northwards and West Belfast must expand
17 southwards. Given that the boundary between North and West Belfast is now
18 well established, since the increase in the number of seats for Northern Ireland
19 and the creation of the new North Belfast in the early 1980s, and given that both
20 areas need additional electors, we agree that the present dividing line between
21 the two should be maintained. Indeed, focusing on the language of the statutory
22 rules, it is obvious that any change will cause inconvenience and therefore
23 should be minimised. In this regard, we do not believe that anything has
24 changed from the time of the last Boundary Commission, which would cause this
25 boundary to be revisited. Any credible argument concerning the joining of the
26 Court wards could only be mounted in the context of their being joined with North
27 Belfast, rather than West Belfast.

28

29 In no respect could the Woodvale or Crumlin wards be considered to be in West
30 Belfast. They are in every regard part of North Belfast. Indeed, whether one
31 considers the affinity of the electors, shopping patterns, the organisation of

1 significant non-governmental agencies, social links or geographical features, they
2 are clearly separate from West Belfast. Perhaps after I have finished the formal
3 presentation, I will touch on a number of other points in that regard which lead
4 one to the view that, whilst there is an argument for the unity of the Court DEA, it
5 is only an argument for the unity of the Court DEA northwards.

6
7 The only part of West Belfast the Woodvale and Crumlin wards have in common
8 are the other Court wards, and they have nothing whatsoever in common with
9 any other part of West Belfast. Of course, given the population figures in the
10 various areas, the option at this time of reuniting the Court wards in North Belfast
11 is not realistically open to the Commission. Certainly, the argument that they
12 should be united has been presented on previous occasions, but on every
13 previous occasion that I am aware of, those arguments were in the context of
14 North Belfast and not in the context of West Belfast.

15
16 *3.15 pm*

17
18 On the basis that North Belfast needs to expand, it is therefore inevitable that this
19 must be done so in a northerly direction into East and South Antrim. While
20 determining the exact nature of the expansion is more of an art than a science,
21 and in the past some of the boundary lines in this area have seemed somewhat,
22 perhaps inevitably, arbitrary, we believe that, on balance, the provisional
23 recommendation is at least as defensible as any other possible arrangements. In
24 particular, it clearly makes sense that the ward of Cloughfern from the Macedon
25 DEA is united with the other five wards in that DEA. Indeed, in terms of the local
26 ties, the addition of Cloughfern makes clear sense from a social and
27 geographical sense.

28
29 The benefit of accepting the arrangements in this area as proposed will also
30 mean that there will be no impact on adjoining constituencies which would cause
31 a significant ripple effect. Accepting that the boundary should remain between

1 North and West Belfast, it is therefore inevitable that West Belfast must expand
2 southwards into Lagan Valley, given the nature of the map and the area. In this
3 area such a decision has inescapable implications. Once again, in light of the
4 above, we do not believe that there is any need to change the names of these
5 constituencies.

6

7 Perhaps if I touch just in a little detail on the two issues that seem to be in
8 dispute, namely the boundary between West Belfast and North Belfast, and then
9 the question of the Cloughfern ward and where it most naturally fits. We would
10 say that if one has a look at the map of Belfast in this regard it is perfectly
11 obvious that the addition of Cloughfern as part of North Belfast makes total
12 sense. In fact, the boundary at the minute arguably makes no sense at all in
13 terms that it divides a housing area very significantly. It is fair to say that many
14 people, perhaps most of those people who live in Cloughfern, are originally from
15 inner North Belfast and they identify with North Belfast, even at the moment, as
16 much as they would identify with East Antrim, which I think probably runs
17 somewhat contrary to the previous contention in relation to the south and east of
18 the city, where it is suggested that there is a natural affinity to the *status quo*.

19

20 We would suggest that in this area it would make much more sense if Cloughfern
21 were added in North Belfast and that whole housing area were united. Indeed, it
22 is also fair to say that many Government agencies already combine Cloughfern
23 and Rathcoole in terms of administration for the area, so there are strong local
24 ties that justify that decision, and one example of that is the Housing Executive.
25 They are part of the local Housing Executive district and always have been.

26

27 There is absolutely no doubt that the people of Cloughfern, like Rathcoole, do
28 look towards Belfast for their particular identity. So, we would suggest that
29 whether one takes a look at the map and sees the natural dividing line north of
30 Cloughfern or looks on the ground, it is perfectly obvious that Cloughfern has
31 only previously been in East Antrim as a rounding exercise very largely, and its

1 natural home is in North Belfast.

2

3 Turning to the issue of the boundary between North and West Belfast, it has
4 been suggested that the two wards which are presently in North Belfast,
5 Woodvale and Crumlin, should move to West Belfast. As I previously indicated,
6 whilst there is an argument to be made for the unity of Court, this argument is
7 entirely, and has always been entirely, in the context of it moving northwards and
8 not southwards into West Belfast. It is certainly the case that the community
9 infrastructure in the area all links them with North Belfast rather than with West
10 Belfast. In this area, there is undoubtedly weak community infrastructure and
11 capacity, and even as we speak, there is work going on in that area — an upper
12 North Belfast community empowerment programme — which links those wards,
13 and they work together with North Belfast.

14

15 Again, any movement of those areas into West Belfast could potentially disrupt
16 that link and the cohesion of the representatives in the particular area. Again,
17 Crumlin is part of the Cliftonville-Ardoyne neighbourhood renewal partnership, all
18 of which are integral to the development of North Belfast rather than to the
19 development of West Belfast, and to remove Crumlin from this partnership would
20 significantly damage that relationship and disturb the present arrangements.

21

22 I think I am right in saying that the Woodvale ward, apart from one very small
23 section of it, has always been in North Belfast, so there are long historic links;
24 and really there are no links, there is no affinity, between Woodvale and any
25 other part of West Belfast. Peace lines were mentioned earlier, and whilst we do
26 not want to draw boundaries on the basis of peace lines, clearly those are factors
27 that need to be taken into account as well. Even industrial buffer zones in the
28 area would all lead to the belief that these communities face northwards rather
29 than southwards into West Belfast. Again, the number of people from Woodvale
30 who would move any further than Court within West Belfast is very small.

31

1 Turning to Crumlin, it itself has always been part of North Belfast and has a close
2 link with other parts of North Belfast — for example, looking a little further
3 northward to Ballysillan. Indeed, there is no main arterial route from the Crumlin
4 Road to West Belfast, another factor which is clearly relevant to be taken into
5 account when one judges whether there are close links.

6

7 Ultimately, when one takes a look at the issue in the round and looks at the issue
8 of even the Greater Shankill partnership, it deals with the Greater Shankill area
9 and then looks north to Ballysillan. All of these factors are northwards rather
10 than southwards into West Belfast. It seems that, given there is now a long,
11 settled boundary between the two constituencies for over 20 years, this is not the
12 time to reopen this issue, given that it would cause difficult ripple effects in other
13 areas. Our proposals, in accepting the provisional recommendation of the
14 Boundary Commission, do not have ripple impacts. They would allow the Belfast
15 Inquiry to report in a manner which would have no implications, certainly in the
16 north and west of the city, for any other Inquiries and very limited implications in
17 the south and east, given that we only suggest one ward transfer.

18

19 So, taking all of those factors into account, we say that the issue should not now
20 be reopened 25 years on after the boundary has been set. While there are some
21 arguments for the unity of Court, there are no arguments to speak of to argue
22 that Woodvale and Crumlin should look unnaturally southwards into West
23 Belfast, when they have little or nothing in common with West Belfast. Those
24 would be our submissions in relation to North Belfast and that particular
25 boundary.

26

27 **Mr Toolan:** Would Dr Farry like to ask some questions?

28

29 **Dr Farry:** Thank you very much. Could I maybe just turn to the North Belfast
30 issue first? Can I ask Mr Bullick, does he recognise that the current proposed
31 boundary within Glengormley village is unnatural in that it ducks and weaves

1 through streets and does not actually make any sense on the ground?

2

3 **Mr Bullick:** The creation of Newtownabbey and Glengormley as an area has
4 almost inevitably led to difficulties in terms of drawing boundaries. That is the
5 case at the moment and will continue to be the case in the future, in my view,
6 almost regardless of how one draws boundaries, so I would accept that there is
7 no ideal solution in that area. Is it any more unacceptable than the alternatives?
8 We would say no.

9

10 **Dr Farry:** OK, as long as you can draw neater boundaries as an acceptable
11 alternative. That point aside, with the indulgence of the Chairman, I ask how
12 does your preference for leaving Cloughfern ward within the North Belfast
13 constituency affect or impact upon the proposals that your party may have for the
14 East Antrim or Antrim Coast and Glens model?

15

16 **Mr Bullick:** As I indicated at the outset, I am speaking today on behalf of the
17 North and West Belfast representatives of the party. There will certainly be views
18 aired in relation to the make up of the arrangements in County Antrim at the
19 Inquiry in Ballymena. I think it is fair to say that there will be no submissions at
20 that Inquiry which are inconsistent with the boundary that I suggested should be
21 drawn at this Inquiry in that we would suggest that we would leave the provisional
22 recommendation boundary between East Antrim, South Antrim, and North
23 Belfast the same.

24

25 There may be other options as to how County Antrim as a whole would be
26 divided up, but they would not have any adverse impact on this Inquiry.
27 Therefore, our submissions will have the benefit of simplicity in that there will be
28 no infringement from one Inquiry into the other.

29

30 **Dr Farry:** I wait with interest. Moving on then to the North Belfast and West
31 Belfast boundary issue, would you argue that the Glencairn, Highfield and

1 Shankill wards have any more affinity with the rest of West Belfast than Crumlin
2 or Woodvale?

3

4 **Mr Bullick:** As I indicated previously, as has been argued at previous Boundary
5 Commissions, and as a matter of public record, on previous occasions there has
6 been a case made for the unity of Court district electoral area but, as I say, the
7 unity of Court in the context of North Belfast. At its absolute height, your
8 suggestion would be that one pocket of West Belfast, which clearly has
9 something in common with each other, is then grafted on to a constituency which
10 it has nothing in common with. If you are asking me, “Does one end of the
11 Shankill have something in common with the other?”, clearly it does, but that has
12 nothing in common with anything further south.

13

14 **Dr Farry:** I think this is actually potentially leading to quite an interesting point of
15 principle. Would you accept, Mr Bullick, that if you work on the basis that the
16 greater Shankill is a coherent community and also that the greater Falls area is
17 also a coherent community, if the population needs dictate that, shall we say, two
18 distinct areas need to be put together into one constituency to make up an
19 electoral quota, is there actually anything wrong with doing that? If you are not
20 actually breaking up natural communities, but you are putting two natural
21 communities within one constituency? As a general matter of principle, is that a
22 problem?

23

24 **Mr Bullick:** I am somewhat reluctant to move from the general to the specific —
25 or backwards — as a matter of principle, to have some comment thrown back at
26 me on a future occasion. It seems to me that the issue does not arise in this
27 particular case. In any event, it is not what we are dealing with here. We are not
28 dealing with communities of equal size — I would make that point. It seems to
29 me that we are dealing with one small section of a community which has a
30 natural pull northwards rather than southwards.

31 In that context, given the other factors, it is perfectly defensible and perfectly

1 sensible that the long-established boundary remains. I think to artificially tinker
2 with that is unnecessary in these circumstances.

3
4 **Dr Farry:** Finally, I am playing devil's advocate to a certain extent, but it is
5 important to explore the issue. We have received a number of representations
6 from people in the Seymour Hill area regarding the movement from Lagan Valley
7 into West Belfast. Do you have any concerns on that issue?

8
9 **Mr Bullick:** I am always somewhat suspicious when somebody suggests they
10 are playing devil's advocate with respect to a particular argument. It often covers
11 some other agenda of some kind. The submissions on behalf of the North and
12 West Belfast MP and MLAs are that, in the round and on balance, the boundaries
13 suggested by the provisional recommendation are appropriate. I think the
14 language used in the submissions was "inescapable". No doubt there may be
15 other submissions at other Inquiries.

16
17 **Mr Toolan:** Any further questions? Thank you very much. That was very helpful.
18 We concluded there on the West Belfast constituency, which has got a light
19 treatment so far. Does anybody wish to make any representations in relation to
20 West Belfast? Mr Begley, would you like to do that now? I am also alive to Mr
21 Auld. Do you wish to make global comments incorporating your West Belfast
22 comments at this point?

23
24 *3.30 pm*

25
26 **Mr Begley:** I want to talk globally about Belfast in terms of our party. Basically,
27 we agree with the four constituencies. We think that is the way forward. We also
28 agree that to actually get the proper quotas, we have to push the boundaries out
29 to do that.

30
31 I have also mentioned in an earlier comment the Electoral Fraud Act 2002 and

1 the effect that that had. I think the Electoral Commission has to take that into
2 consideration as well, because it could push the quotas up if we had a proper
3 system of registration. We think to not factor that in would be amiss at this
4 particular stage. If you look at the figures from 2001 until now, you will see that,
5 because of the Electoral Fraud Act, the register has fallen substantially within the
6 four Belfast constituencies. I know as well, obviously, there are movements of
7 people and that has contributed as well, but certainly in the last number of years
8 the electoral register has had an impact as well.

9
10 As for West Belfast, we would agree with the recommendations from the
11 Boundary Commission in terms of putting the Derryaghy, Dunmurry and
12 Seymour Hill wards into West Belfast. We feel that that is the only way forward.
13 The West Belfast and North Belfast boundaries have been there for some time
14 and are well established. So I believe that is the outward direction that you have
15 to go in to get the quota for the constituency. Certainly, I know that that has a
16 knock-on effect, which we will make presentation on in terms of Lagan Valley.

17
18 In terms of North Belfast, we would agree with the Commission extending North
19 Belfast northwards and taking in the wards of Collinbridge, Glebe and
20 Glengormley. We would agree with that. We will be making a submission on
21 East Antrim, and we would come back to Cloughfern in that submission because
22 we feel that Cloughfern should be in East Antrim. In that particular submission —
23 because we have problems with the carve-up of the Antrim constituencies with
24 the recommendations that have been made by the Boundary Commission — we
25 will make a lot more detailed presentations on those particular constituencies.
26 We will factor Cloughfern in at that stage in that presentation.

27 Those are just a few observations that I wanted to make on behalf of the party.

28
29 **Mr Toolan:** That is very concise; thank you very much.

1 What I propose is that we ask Mr Auld to make his presentation, or make his
2 observations. OK? Then maybe we will adjourn for a short cup of tea or a cup of
3 coffee.

4

5 **Dr Farry:** Can we ask Mr Begley questions?

6

7 **Mr Toolan:** I do not know whether his observations were in the nature of a
8 presentation as such. Are you happy to receive questions, yes?

9

10 **Mr Begley:** Yes.

11

12 **Dr Farry:** Thank you very much. I just wanted to ask Mr Begley about the
13 boundary within the Glengormley area, which I think should be a major issue for
14 the Inquiry. Does he feel that the current proposal of the Boundary Commission
15 is actually a natural boundary within the Glengormley village area, and whether
16 or not it would make much more sense to include at least three more wards from
17 the Antrim Line DEA within North Belfast?

18

19 **Mr Begley:** I am aware that there are problems with the boundaries in
20 Glengormley, and, certainly, whatever way it is carved up, I think that those
21 problems will remain. But, certainly, I think that the three wards that have been
22 included in North Belfast at this point, we would be happy enough with. But I
23 would have to accept, yes, that there are difficulties with Glengormley in terms of
24 the boundaries and the way through the particular area. But, regardless of what
25 way you carve it up, I think you are still going to have problems getting a definite
26 boundary. So I think there are problems in that particular area.

27

28 **Mr Toolan:** Just to clarify: I think maybe there are two elements to the issue
29 you are addressing. Number one is the fact that the proposals, and effectively
30 the boundaries, split Glengormley. But the other one is the actual topographical

1 look of the way that the boundaries go through, I think, Ferndale and up Ferndale
2 Road and out at Burnthill Road, and that they are quite nebulous and indecisive.

3

4 **Dr Farry:** I am not 100% familiar with the area and which streets are affected,
5 but I certainly am aware at a general level that there are a number of streets that
6 are broken up in a very haphazard manner.

7

8 **Mr Toolan:** Yes, I think you were accepting that, Mr Begley. Some of the
9 boundaries are unhappy in that respect, perhaps.

10

11 **Mr Begley:** They are unhappy in that respect.

12

13 **Mr Toolan:** What about the split? In the current proposals, there is a suggestion
14 of a split that would go right across Glengormley and split the two parts of
15 Glengormley from each other. Have you any feeling about that?

16

17 **Mr Begley:** Well, I feel that I would be happy enough with the split, but I
18 certainly am prepared to come back and revisit it if necessary.

19

20 **Mr Toolan:** Yes, I think the Alliance proposal and perhaps Mr Auld's point, as I
21 anticipate it, will be to bring in Ballyhenry, Burnthill and Hightown to try, let us
22 say, to complete the picture and to keep a sense of cohesion. I understand right,
23 Mr Auld, in anticipation of what you are going to say, and you, Dr Farry? Have
24 you any views about bringing those other few wards in?

25

26 **Mr Begley:** I would be unhappy about taking those particular wards in at this
27 particular point in time, but, certainly, I am happy enough, and I accept the
28 difficulties, with the wards that are included at this point in time.

29

1 **Dr Farry:** Is there a reason why Mr Begley is unhappy to bring those three
2 wards into North Belfast? Is that a general feeling or is there an actual rationale
3 to object to that?

4
5 **Mr Begley:** Well, in the round, in terms of those particular wards, we have the
6 knock-on effect. We have to take a global picture of all the constituencies, and
7 obviously there is a knock-on effect in terms of other constituencies and what
8 happens there. So we have to look at that as well, and we cannot just isolate
9 that particular area that Dr Farry has spoken about. So we have to look at the
10 global picture as well as the picture in North Belfast.

11
12 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you. Anything else, Dr Farry?

13
14 **Dr Farry:** Just to make the point that, while that is correct that there would be
15 knock-on effects from that, it certainly is our opinion that the addition of three
16 further wards from the North Antrim area into South Antrim can more than make
17 up the issue of the three wards moving into North Belfast.

18
19 **Mr Begley:** I do not want to bring North Antrim into it, but, certainly, we are very
20 much opposed to those three wards coming out of North Antrim. So, obviously,
21 in our submission — and I have mentioned this at the start to make the point —
22 when I talk about North Belfast, obviously it has a knock-on effect into the Antrim
23 wards. But we have difficulties with that at this point. Obviously, there is that
24 knock-on effect in terms of the Antrim wards.

25
26 **Mr Toolan:** It is just after half past three, so I think we will have a very short
27 break, and then we will hear from Mr Auld. Then we will do a stock check and
28 just see where we are going after this. Thank you very much.

29
30 *Informal break at 3.37 pm.*

31

1 *Inquiry resumed at 3.51 pm.*

2

3 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you for returning. I had indicated before lunchtime that I
4 would hear from Mr Auld, and I also welcome to the Inquiry Mr Dodds, the sitting
5 MP for North Belfast, and I would like to hear from him, as indeed I would any
6 sitting MP with views on these matters. In that vein, notwithstanding that I said
7 that the Inquiry would close at four o'clock, it is probably in the interest of
8 everybody who is here not to have to return. So I propose that we sit beyond
9 four o'clock today. Mr Auld, would you like to begin?

10

11 **Mr Auld:** OK, I am mainly going to talk about North and West Belfast. I should
12 point out that I am speaking in an individual capacity and I am unconnected to
13 any party or political grouping.

14

15 **Mr Toolan:** May I just ask — you are a resident in Belfast?

16

17 **Mr Auld:** I was resident before in inner-city North Belfast, but I have moved to
18 what is now Collinbridge ward — Church Road.

19

20 **Mr Toolan:** Thank you very much.

21

22 **Mr Auld:** First, what I wanted to talk about was the proposed split of
23 Glengormley village, which has already been raised, I think, by Dr Farry and also
24 by the Democratic Unionist Party. On that issue, I would say that I currently
25 reside in Collinbridge ward, and I would support the Commission insofar as
26 adding those three wards to North Belfast. However, I would also support the
27 point previously raised that subdividing Glengormley village makes absolutely no
28 sense whatsoever.

29

30 A lot of people residing in Glengormley and Glebe wards would use shops in the
31 other three wards of Burnthill, Ballyhenry and Hightown. You also have schools

1 in that area; for example, Hightown school, which is a school mainly for people in
2 North Belfast. Additionally, a lot of people in those three wards in question,
3 namely Ballyhenry, Hightown and Burnthill, would use shops in North Belfast,
4 they work in North Belfast and would use, for example, the Abbeycentre, which I
5 believe is in the Valley ward, or one of those wards. Therefore, to exclude them,
6 while including the other three wards, would not make a lot of sense.

7

8 I think in relation to the Mallusk ward, there is actually a case for adding that to
9 North Belfast, the reason for that being, if you look at the ward on the map, it
10 looks like it is predominantly a rural ward; however, the electorate of that ward is
11 double the average for a Newtownabbey ward. I think it is about 3,600.
12 Furthermore, apart from the urban areas, which are mainly concentrated in the
13 east of that ward and which adjoin the Hightown and Ballyhenry wards, you also
14 have a series of industrial estates in that ward that predominantly provide
15 employment for the people of North Belfast, and also possibly people from
16 Carrickfergus and a few from Templepatrick; however, predominantly, it would be
17 people from North Belfast.

18

19 The second issue I would raise would be the aforementioned Crumlin and
20 Woodvale wards. In the case of those two wards, I think Mr Bullick has already
21 raised a point. However, the point he made was that those boundaries have
22 been fixed for quite a while, and I do not believe that that is the case, because
23 they have been in flux for a considerable period of time, depending on the way
24 that the local government boundaries have been drawn.

25

26 For example, the bulk of the Glencairn ward was in North Belfast prior to 1983.
27 You had the southern part of Woodvale ward, which was in West Belfast prior to
28 1983, and also parts of Shankill ward that were in West Belfast. Furthermore, I
29 would question whether people in that area would regard themselves as being
30 part of North Belfast rather than West Belfast. Basically, if you look at that area,
31 you would see murals stating that you were entering loyalist West Belfast, for

1 example, and it is the case that, in the past, both the DUP and the Ulster Unionist
2 Party representatives for that area have run under the label of West Belfast
3 Loyalist Commission, or West Belfast loyalist community candidates or
4 something in the 1975 Assembly elections. So, basically, on those grounds, I
5 would question whether that area is part of North Belfast rather than West
6 Belfast. Having worked in that area in the past myself, I certainly felt that there
7 was no clear sense of identity *vis-à-vis* North and West Belfast.

8

9 Additionally, in terms of the Crumlin ward, if you look at the neighbouring wards
10 to the north, you have Ardoyne ward and the Water Works ward. In many cases,
11 they are separated from Crumlin ward by huge peace lines. The only way to get
12 from Crumlin ward to Ardoyne ward is by scaling a huge 20-foot wall, which does
13 not really make much sense.

14

15 The people of Crumlin ward generally would use shops on the Shankill Road,
16 which is the main arterial route; ditto with people from the Woodvale ward. The
17 main arterial route through there would be the Shankill Road. In the case of the
18 Shankill Road, if you are canvassing, for example, in that area, you need to enter
19 the Shankill Road at Peter's Hill, which takes you into West Belfast. You then
20 enter into Crumlin ward, which is part of North Belfast and then, further on up,
21 you enter into Glencairn ward and Highfield ward, which again are part of West
22 Belfast. That situation is totally illogical and makes absolutely no sense.

23

24 I would therefore say that the Court DEA should be kept together, and the
25 question therefore would be whether you would put that area in either North
26 Belfast or West Belfast. My preference would be for putting it in North Belfast.
27 However, in terms of electorates, the only way that that is feasible is by reducing
28 Belfast down to three seats, and I think we have already raised this issue
29 previously. I think the majority of submissions are against this. I would therefore
30 say that it would be best placing that area in West Belfast. That in turn would

1 make way for adding Newtownabbey wards — the ones I have mentioned — into
2 North Belfast.

3

4 As regards Dunmurry and Seymour Hill further on down, I would accept I had
5 previously said that they should be added to West Belfast. However, I think on
6 the basis of submissions received, which I have read, the Commission might look
7 to reconsider that. However, I would say that the Derryaghy ward would be best
8 placed in West Belfast on the grounds that that area includes the Lagmore
9 housing development, which is generally part of West Belfast rather than Lisburn.

10

11 *4.00 pm*

12

13 **Mr Toolan:** Are you prepared to accept some questions?

14

15 **Mr Auld:** Yes, surely.

16

17 **Mr Barr:** Stephen Barr, Ulster Unionist Party. Just to reinforce the point; you
18 seem happy enough to put Crumlin and Woodvale into West Belfast when many
19 of the people there would politically, certainly, look to the north, yet you say you
20 would put Lagmore into West because they identify with the west, which seems
21 to be almost a contrary argument.

22

23 **Mr Auld:** No. I would say that, obviously, you do have considerations to make
24 here in terms of electorates, and in the ideal world we would have all of Court in
25 there. We would also probably have, for example, Woodstock in East Belfast;
26 Ravenhill in East Belfast. However, we do have to make considerations on the
27 basis of electorates. What I was thinking of was in terms of ripple effects — also
28 relating to the North Antrim, South Antrim and East Antrim constituencies. I think
29 you really have to transfer wards from the south of Ballymena into South Antrim
30 and make way for those by extending North Belfast further into Newtownabbey,
31 into wards that are generally part of North Belfast.

1

2 You also have the issue that I have raised. Unfortunately, those areas are
3 separated from parts of North Belfast by peace lines. I do recognise that that is
4 an unfortunate part of life, and it does equally apply to dividing that along the
5 West Belfast peace line between the Shankill and Falls as well. However, I
6 would argue that you cannot simply create communities on the basis of sectarian
7 divisions. If you take all those wards out of West Belfast, that serves no purpose
8 other than creating, basically, an homogenous entirely Catholic constituency,
9 which is not part of the Commission's remit.

10

11 **Mr Bullick:** Mr Auld, one very simple question just to clarify or amplify some of
12 the comments you made a few moments ago. Am I right in saying that if you
13 were given a free canvas to work on, these wards would head northwards rather
14 than southwards and they have much more in common with North Belfast than
15 they do with West Belfast?

16

17 **Mr Auld:** I think it is a question that you have to look at both ways. The greater
18 Shankill area is a self-contained community. If you were working these things
19 ideally, you would give it its own MP, which is not feasible at all, I know.
20 Therefore, you have to make a judgement on the basis of whether you transfer
21 those to the north or do you transfer those to the west? I would probably agree
22 with you. You would probably be better putting them all in North Belfast.
23 However, for knock-on reasons that I have alluded to earlier, you simply cannot
24 do that. For me, the overriding consideration has got to be to connect all the
25 Court wards together in one constituency on the basis of them being basically a
26 self-contained area.

27

28 **Dr Alasdair McDonnell MP:** Again, playing devil's advocate, and not to take
29 anything away from your submission, which I very much appreciate, it strikes me,
30 and while I can appreciate that people are operating on local government blocks
31 or local government wards that are 12 and a half years old and, therefore,

1 already well out of date, but while you are operating on an Antrim Line operation
2 in Glengormley, why stop at Hightown, Ballyhenry and Burnthill? The boundary
3 between Burnthill and Carnmoney is very irregular, and would it not make more
4 geographic sense to include Carnmoney instead of the urban bits of Mallusk?

5
6 **Mr Auld:** I think Burnthill would generally look more south — the main shopping
7 area for Burnthill ward would be further south in Glengormley village.
8 Carnmoney, certainly, you could add. However, the answer to that, I think, is
9 electorates — that you take it too far over the electoral quota. Certainly, I think in
10 10 or 12 years' time, it is an issue that the Commission could look at.

11
12 **Dr McDonnell:** A point that I think was made earlier by yourself, Mr Chairman,
13 was about taking a walk round that place, because the boundary — and I only
14 know the place vaguely —between Burnthill and Carnmoney is a bit ragged and
15 streets are divided, and not just halfway up the street, but up the middle, and
16 they zigzag all over the place. It strikes me, arising on the back of your
17 submission, that that nearly makes more sense than pulling in the urban bits of
18 Mallusk that are fairly clean cut. But I think it goes back to some of the stuff that
19 we are left here with — a very imperfect blueprint in terms of the old things —
20 and we can only look to the Chairman and to the Commission to break a few
21 ward boundaries and basically do a bit of tidying up round the edges because I
22 think the crucial thing is the age of our building blocks.

23
24 **Mr Toolan:** Any more questions for Mr Auld? Dr Farry.

25
26 **Dr Farry:** Thanks very much. Just an observation on the issue of South Antrim
27 and how far into South Antrim you can go in particular in terms of Antrim Line
28 and the issue of whether or not Mallusk ward would also be transferred across
29 alongside the other three Antrim Line wards that are still in South Antrim. I think
30 if you took Mallusk in as well, the South Antrim seat would become rather
31 unshapely, with a big bite into it, under the current ward boundaries at least, and

1 that may create a problem.

2

3 And can I also just confirm with Mr Auld that, when he talks about the need for
4 balance and the three Glengormley wards going into North Belfast, he will
5 compensate that with Grange, Kells and Glenwhirry, which was my
6 understanding?

7

8 **Mr Auld:** Yes, I think Grange, Glenwhirry, Kells; yes.

9

10 **Dr Farry:** Yes, I think we are certainly on the same wavelength on that one. That
11 is great. Thank you.

12

13 **Mr Auld:** Just on the grounds of Mallusk, I accept what you say on Mallusk, and
14 I would be flexible on the issue of Mallusk. I think there are arguments both ways
15 — if you do that, then to a certain degree you do cut off Carnmoney and Mossley
16 from the rest of the South Antrim seat. That would certainly be an argument
17 against that.

18

19 **Dr McDonnell:** On a point of information from yourself rather than Mr Auld, are
20 you — or is this Commission hearing — in a position to make a recommendation
21 about wards in North or South Antrim beyond the Grange and the Kells wards?

22

23

24 **Mr Toolan:** My remit is really the Belfast constituencies, but obviously I cannot
25 completely ignore — I am hedging a bit here — what would be regarded as the
26 ripple effect.

27

28 **Dr McDonnell:** Well, if that is the case, I would certainly endorse what Mr Auld
29 has said, because I know that some of my colleagues may not be comfortable
30 with it, but it makes sense to me, with my limited knowledge of that mid-Antrim
31 area, that with areas such as Grange creeping up towards Portglenone and

1 areas north of Randalstown, that would make considerable sense and would fit
2 as much with Antrim as with Ballymena.

3

4 **Mr Toolan:** Any more questions for Mr Auld? Thank you very much, Mr Auld. I
5 appreciate your coming. Thank you.

6

7 I will ask Mr Nigel Dodds to make his presentation or observations, as the case
8 may be. Perhaps you will excuse me for being a bit pedantic, Mr Dodds, if I ask
9 you to give your full name and the capacity in which you speak.

10

11 **Mr Nigel Dodds MP:** Thank you very much indeed, Mr Chairman. My name is
12 Nigel Dodds, the Member of Parliament for North Belfast. First of all, apologies
13 that I have not been able to be present at any earlier point during the
14 deliberations, Mr Chairman. It was no discourtesy; just that other duties have
15 called me elsewhere.

16

17 I will make a few comments, and I am by no means any expert in terms of the
18 detailed knowledge of where all the lines on the map are to be, but what I would
19 just like to mention — and it has possibly already been mentioned — my
20 understanding from my experience of some of the linkages that exist between the
21 communities and so on in North Belfast and how they impact on some of the
22 suggestions that have been made in the Provisional Recommendations.

23

24 If I can just deal with the Newtownabbey situation first of all. You will be aware
25 that, at the current time, we have five out of the six Macedon wards in North
26 Belfast. The one that is not is Cloughfern. It has always been something of an
27 anomaly as to why that should have been in the first place. It certainly would tidy
28 up the boundary to have Cloughfern included. All of the people of Rathfern,
29 King's Park and so on who are in the Cloughfern ward see themselves very
30 much as part of the Rathcoole, Rush Park and Abbots Cross area, and look to
31 that.

1

2 One of my constituency offices indeed is sited technically over the border of
3 North Belfast right opposite the entrance to Rathfern, because there was no
4 other logical place to put it. People see themselves as part of that general area,
5 and they have got used to the idea now of not being in North Belfast, the same
6 as the rest of the area, but they still find it somewhat anomalous. So I think there
7 is — without any doubt — great sense in bringing Cloughfern into North Belfast,
8 where it should, I think, have been in the first place.

9

10 Certainly, the people who live in Rathfern would be of similar background to
11 Rathcoole in the sense that a lot of that connection is looking towards Belfast.

12

13 The statutory agencies, the Housing Executive for instance, includes Rathfern
14 and King's Park as part of its district number one, based at Rantalard House in
15 Rathcoole. Indeed, there may even be an argument to say that rather than
16 looking towards the Antrim Line wards, if you go beyond Cloughfern and look into
17 Monkstown, Monkstown probably has a stronger affiliation towards North Belfast
18 than maybe some of the Antrim Line wards. Again, it is the same sort of
19 background in terms of where people have originally come from and the sort of
20 linkages that exist there.

21

22 Obviously, when it comes to Newtownabbey — given the nature of the place — it
23 is very difficult to ever draw any line which is satisfactory, because, given the
24 numbers and so on, you are going to have to put lines somewhere, and it is
25 somewhat arbitrary. I think that it is inevitable that there will be some difficulties.
26 But certainly, as far as Cloughfern, I do not think there is any question at all that it
27 needs to be included in North Belfast. Broadly speaking, in terms of the
28 Provisional Recommendations, we think that it makes as much sense as any
29 other set of proposals that could be put forward. As I say, I throw out the
30 suggestion of the Monkstown area because there are strong linkages there
31 between Monkstown and the rest of Macedon.

1

2 Coming on to the north and west boundary on the Shankill, Mr Chairman. If you
3 go down the road today and ask anyone in those two wards that you met in the
4 street which part of Belfast they belong to, I have absolutely no doubt that,
5 without exception, people would say they are in North Belfast and identify with
6 North Belfast. Indeed, as Mr Auld indicated, there may be an argument for
7 reuniting Court, but it certainly would be on the basis of reuniting it within North
8 Belfast, not within West Belfast. Indeed, those people who are currently part of
9 West Belfast would, by and large, look towards North Belfast for a lot of their
10 linkages — community, social, family, shopping and all the rest of it.

11

12 In Crumlin and Woodvale, the fact is that the statutory agencies and community
13 organisation of the area is based on it being very much part of North Belfast.
14 Woodvale ward — apart from the Kirk Street to March Street area — has been in
15 North Belfast. Crumlin ward has always been in North Belfast; the Greater
16 Shankill Partnership, for instance, comprises the wards in Court plus Ballysillan,
17 which shows the linkages between Woodvale and Crumlin in particular, but
18 indeed the whole of the Shankill and the rest of North Belfast — not West Belfast.
19 All the shopping links, all the road links, family ties; all of that points in the
20 direction of North Belfast.

21

22 However, I accept that reuniting the Court area might be desirable in itself, but to
23 do so in the context of moving them into West Belfast is not something that could
24 be done without breaching, I think, the very clear terms of reference of the
25 Commission. And to move them all into North Belfast would, I think, then
26 obviously be an issue which could cause further ripple effects. So, broadly
27 speaking, we believe that the Boundary Commission Provisional
28 Recommendations have got it broadly right. But I think that the idea that
29 somehow people in Woodvale and Crumlin see themselves as part of West
30 Belfast or that because, decades ago, there was some kind of West Belfast
31 Loyalist candidates — I am not sure; it was before my time I have to say, and

1 that shows how long ago it is — I do not think that that stands any scrutiny at all.

2

3 That is all I would like to say just at the minute. I am happy to take questions.

4

5 **Mr Toolan:** Would anyone like to ask Mr Dodds any questions?

6

7 *4.15 pm*

8

9 **Dr Farry:** Thank you very much. First of all, this North versus West Belfast
10 issue. As a point of general principle, is there anything wrong in itself with a
11 greater Shankill community as a coherent unit plus a greater Falls community as
12 a general unit being part of the same constituency if that is what is required to
13 make a substantial constituency in terms of population.

14

15 **Mr Dodds:** In terms of both of them being part of the same constituency?

16

17 **Dr Farry:** Yes.

18

19 **Mr Dodds:** If there were a suggestion that the way to move forward — in terms
20 of the boundaries of the constituency — was to move people who see
21 themselves as being part of North Belfast, and have all their links with North
22 Belfast, into a West Belfast constituency, that would add to the sense that
23 already exists in the west part of the Shankill that they are alienated and
24 disenfranchised. You will remember that there was a petition sent to the Speaker
25 of the House of Commons on that very issue. I think that that would go down
26 extremely badly locally.

27

28 **Dr Farry:** That was a general point of principle; not so much a reference to West
29 Belfast. The other point is on the Monkstown suggestion — that Monkstown
30 would be moved from East Antrim into North Belfast. Would you accept that, as

1 Monkstown is part of the University DEA, that move would lead to the University
2 district having parts of three constituencies — an undesirable outcome?

3

4 **Mr Dodds:** I understand that point. I hasten to add, as I indicated, I was simply
5 throwing it out as an observation. I am not making a terribly strong point.
6 However, what it does illustrate is that when people talk about the relative
7 linkages with various wards and going beyond and into Burnthill, Ballyhenry and
8 so on, there are cases that can be made out to move the other direction, in terms
9 of Monkstown. That is the difficulty that we are in. I think that if it is a given that
10 there is a boundary between North and West Belfast, you cannot move the
11 Crumlin and Woodvale into West, and Cloughfern has to come in. There are
12 obvious consequences of that in terms of just the numbers.

13

14 **Dr McDonnell:** Mr Dodds, this is just purely academic; I am not politically point-
15 scoring. I was amused that, in fact, my colleague Alban Maginness made some
16 of those points about Monkstown and other parts this morning, and I am glad that
17 you picked up on them and have reinforced them to some extent.

18

19 **Mr Dodds:** Delighted to.

20

21 **Dr McDonnell:** One of the things that I would ask, in that event — and I am
22 asking this purely in a personal capacity at this stage, just as it comes into my
23 head — is how comfortable you would be, or would you have any comment to
24 make, on all this juggling around with South Antrim, East Antrim and North
25 Antrim. Could Ballyclare or Ballynure fit in East Antrim?

26

27 **Mr Dodds:** If I may be permitted to speculate on that, Mr Chairman. I know it is
28 slightly beyond our remit, and we are conscious of ripple effects. But I would
29 have thought that, yes, I have some past experience of East Antrim — having
30 been involved there many years ago — and I think that there would be many
31 people in Ballyclare and looking at that situation who would not see it as

1 unnatural to be linked to East Antrim as opposed to South Antrim. I think that
2 would be quite natural, and one could see an argument for saying that if these
3 three wards — Glenwhirry, Kells, I think, and the other one — were moved into
4 South Antrim, that the obvious thing to do would be to take Ballyclare into East
5 Antrim.

6

7 It makes sense, but that is pure observation. In terms of what I am talking about,
8 I just wanted to put on the record how I think people in my area certainly view the
9 situation, and would be absolutely, completely nonplussed and perplexed at any
10 suggestion that Woodvale and Crumlin were part of West Belfast. They just do
11 not see that at all. All the linkages — church, social, family, community, statutory
12 organisations, community organisations — are all based on the linkages with
13 Ballysillan and the rest of North Belfast.

14

15 **Mr Toolan:** Any more questions for Mr Dodds? In that light, thank you, Mr
16 Dodds, for coming. I appreciate your presence here today and thank you for
17 making your contribution.

18

19 I indicated that I would hear from Mr Auld and Mr Dodds. Is there anyone else
20 here present who would like to speak who has not either spoken before, or else
21 would wish to — barring repetition — speak again on any point? You would like
22 to speak, Mr Barr? Yes, surely.

23

24 **Mr Barr:** Stephen Barr, speaking on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party. I will not
25 go into too much detail because many parties seem to be in agreement on North
26 and West Belfast, certainly regarding the boundaries. We back the Provisional
27 Recommendations for North and West Belfast. We certainly would oppose any
28 move to change the boundary between North and West Belfast, believing that
29 Crumlin and Woodvale should remain in North. With regard to West Belfast, we
30 realise it does require more electors. The only place they really can come from,
31 once you have decided on the north-west boundary, is from Lagan Valley or

1 South Belfast, and we are aware of opposition in Seymour Hill to moving into
2 West Belfast. However, that will have to wait for another review, which is at the
3 Slieve Donard hotel in a couple of weeks. We will let them fight their own corner.
4

5 With regard to the position in the Glengormley area, we recognise that there is a
6 bit of an uncomfortable boundary there. It is an urban area and it is being split,
7 but in the interests of electoral equality, we believe it is probably the best option
8 at the moment. Therefore, we are content to endorse the Provisional
9 Recommendations, and we also support the transfer of Cloughfern into North
10 Belfast. That would be the Ulster Unionist Party's position.
11

12 **Mr Toolan:** Are you happy to take any questions? Does anybody wish to raise
13 any questions? No. Mr Barr, thank you very much — short and sweet.
14

15 Is there anybody else who wishes to make a point, or make any comments? Can
16 I just ask persons present whether they know of anybody else who has indicated
17 that they will be coming to the Inquiry and would wish to be heard? I am thinking
18 of tomorrow. I am loath to continue, and just have a recess until tomorrow. I am
19 of the belief that probably all those who wish to speak have spoken and
20 therefore, with that in mind, I am inclined to close the Inquiry, but if anybody
21 knows of any points or representations have been made — I have not received
22 any — from any source to say, "We will be here on Tuesday" or "It will be
23 inconvenient for us to be here on Monday", please bring it to my attention. No?
24 In that light, I propose to formally close the Inquiry. If anyone wishes to say
25 anything else before I formally close, I would be glad to hear from them.
26

27 **Dr McDonnell:** I want to thank you and the support staff you have here for how
28 accommodating you have been today to everyone, and especially to people like
29 me who were not able to be here all of the time. You have very much perused
30 and explored all the options that I could think of, so thank you for your kindness
31 and courtesy to all of us.

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Mr Toolan: Thank you very much, Dr McDonnell. You will probably have gauged that I had an awful array of questions to ask people. I was parsing through the papers and I was being a little cautious because I felt I would have to ask a lot of questions. However, a lot of the issues that were brought here today have been explored so thoroughly, and there have been counterproposals and counter-counterproposals.

Most of the points that were troubling me have been aired, so I have not really been required to ask too many questions today, and that speaks highly of all those present. I really do thank you for the contributions that each of you have made. They have been very considered, very pragmatic and very sensible.

One can see — I think you appreciate — that there are very strong competing claims about certain matters, but we are delighted to see that there is so much consensus here as well. That is very refreshing.

I would be remiss if I were to close the Inquiry without endorsing the points that Dr McDonnell has made, and to thank Mr Fisher and his secretariat for the wonderful administrative back-up that they have given to me in preparing for this Inquiry. They have done sterling work and have been very strident in their efforts to make sure that things go very well. That is very much appreciated, Mr Fisher, and all the staff.

I would also like to thank the officials and the staff here at the City Hall who made us so welcome and, as I said, we were accommodated very well in every sense of the word and I appreciate their efforts and their contribution to this.

I would like to thank you all. As you will know, I will be compiling a report from the evidence I have heard. Indeed, there have been many written submissions that I have received and the Boundary Commission have received, and I also will

1 have to pay due regard to them.

2

3 I propose to shortly visit some of the locations that have been discussed today to
4 assist my understanding of the issues involved, and before long I will have a
5 transcript of proceedings from officials from Hansard. Indeed, in that regard, I
6 am grateful to our two staff members from Hansard, because I will be greatly
7 indebted to them — they saved me a lot of writing. Thanks indeed to our sound
8 engineer, who did a great job very effectively in the background. I appreciate
9 indeed the efforts and time you have spent here in making things run smoothly.

10

11 I will, of course, be submitting my report to the Commission, and after that, it falls
12 to the Boundary Commission either to consider my representations and accept
13 them, to reject them out of hand, or partly accept them and partly reject them. It
14 is for them to change their mind, if necessary, on the Provisional
15 Recommendations. If there are, of course, revised representations, one can
16 expect that further comment will be invited, but, as such, I suspect there will not
17 be a further public Inquiry.

18

19 May I remind you that if you would like to receive a copy of my report, you should
20 ensure that you have filled out the attendance list with your contact details.

21

22 Thank you very much; it was nice meeting you all, and a pleasant experience.

23 Thank you.

24

25 *Inquiry closed at 4.29 pm.*

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