

Thursday  
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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 21 July 2016**

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# House of Commons

Thursday 21 July 2016

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

### QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported to the House, That Her Majesty, having been attended with its Address of 26th May, was pleased to receive the same very graciously and give the following Answer:

*I have received with great satisfaction the dutiful and loyal expression of your thanks for the speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament*

### ELECTORAL COMMISSION (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported to the House, That the Address of 14th June, praying that Her Majesty will reappoint Alasdair Morgan as an Electoral Commissioner with effect from 1st October 2016 for the period ending on 30th September 2020, was presented to Her Majesty, who was graciously pleased to comply with the request.

### INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported to the House, That the Address of 13th July, praying that Her Majesty will reappoint Jenny Willott to the office of ordinary member of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority with effect from 7th August 2016 for the period ending 31st December 2020, was presented to Her Majesty, who was graciously pleased to comply with the request.

## Oral Answers to Questions

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

*The Attorney General was asked—*

#### Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union

1. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): What discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the timescale for invoking article 50 of the treaty on European Union. [905999]

4. **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): What discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the timescale for invoking article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. [906003]

13. **Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): What discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the timescale for invoking article 50 of the treaty on European Union. [906013]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** The hon. Gentleman will know that the Prime Minister has visited Scotland and Wales already and has made it clear that she wants to achieve the best possible deal for the whole of the United Kingdom on leaving the European Union. She has also made it clear that article 50 of the treaty on European Union will not be triggered before the end of the year.

**Martyn Day:** The Prime Minister has stated that Brexit means Brexit, and the First Minister of Scotland has stated that, for us, remain means remain. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the Scottish people have spoken and that therefore their sovereignty should be respected?

**The Attorney General:** The people of the United Kingdom have spoken and their sovereignty must be respected. The people of the United Kingdom have made their decision on whether to leave the European Union, and we will respect it.

**Alison Thewliss:** The Prime Minister has indicated that she will not trigger article 50 in the UK until there is a UK approach to Brexit. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that a legislative consent motion is required before the Government have the legal authority to trigger article 50?

**The Attorney General:** It is perfectly right, as the Prime Minister has made clear, that all parts of the United Kingdom, including the Governments of the devolved Administrations, should be able to participate in the process of developing the United Kingdom's approach to these negotiations. That does not mean that any of the parts of the United Kingdom has a veto over this process: so, consultation most certainly, but veto I am afraid not.

**Peter Grant:** At a time when Brexit is already causing more than enough confusion, the Prime Minister is saying that article 50 will definitely not be triggered before the end of the year, but the Brexit Minister has said that it definitely will be. Will the Attorney General clarify for us who is correct in articulating present Government policy?

**The Attorney General:** No, I do not think there is any confusion. We must ensure that there is clarity about the United Kingdom's position going into the negotiations, and that we have done that work before we begin them. As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is for the United Kingdom Government to determine the point at which article 50 is triggered. We should do so when we are ready.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Will the Attorney General tell my constituents in Kettering what invoking article 50 means? What is article 50? Where is it kept? Is it in a secret drawer in the Prime Minister's office to

which only the Attorney General has the key? Is it a letter that the Prime Minister signs, or is it the Queen who signs it? How will article 50 be invoked?

**The Attorney General:** I can assist my hon. Friend and his constituents to this extent. Article 50 is article 50 of the treaty on European Union and therefore copies of it are kept in all sorts of places. I am not sure whether there is one in my desk, but what it says is:

“A Member State which decides to withdraw shall notify the European Council of its intention.”

As I have said, it will be for the UK Government to do that at a time of their choosing.

**Mr David Nuttall** (Bury North) (Con): I am quite happy with the Government consulting the devolved Administrations, but what concerns me is that we do not finish up being held to ransom by the Scottish nationalists. Whatever the Government try to do, they will never be able to satisfy the Scottish nationalists. Can the Attorney General please reassure me and my constituents, who voted overwhelmingly to leave the European Union, that their wishes will not be frustrated by the Scottish National party?

**The Attorney General:** The Prime Minister has been very clear that the United Kingdom will leave the European Union, and that means all of the United Kingdom, but, as I said earlier, it is very important that in the process of exiting the European Union all parts of the United Kingdom have an opportunity to contribute to the negotiations in which we will engage. That is the spirit in which the UK Government will approach this process.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): We have to be mindful that the EU referendum was UK-wide, so all parts of the United Kingdom were involved. I hope the Prime Minister will come to Northern Ireland; perhaps the Minister can confirm that. It is important to keep the grants and assistance that Northern Ireland receives.

**The Attorney General:** Indeed. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am sure the Prime Minister will wish to visit Northern Ireland very shortly, and she and we have clearly in mind the particular difficulties that will apply to the process in Northern Ireland because of the land border with the Republic of Ireland. The hon. Gentleman will have been present yesterday when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland dealt with this question. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is at the forefront of our minds and we will wish to make sure that we reach a satisfactory settlement.

**Richard Arkless** (Dumfries and Galloway) (SNP): The new Brexit Minister has said that the UK may be able to stop EU migrants coming to the UK before we leave the European Union, while remaining in the single market. What is the legal basis for this pick-and-mix approach to European law? Does he think that this hubristic attitude will get the UK the best deal in the negotiations?

**The Attorney General:** The legal position is clear. For as long as we remain members of the European Union, the rights and responsibilities that attract as a result of

that membership will persist, but it is open to the member states to negotiate different arrangements if they think it is appropriate to do so, and we will see, once article 50 is triggered, exactly how those negotiations play out. The legal position, as I say, is that the rights and responsibilities of member states, and of course of citizens of those member states, will persist for as long as we are members of the European Union.

### Female Genital Mutilation

2. **Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): What steps the Government is taking to increase the number of prosecutions for female genital mutilation. [906000]

5. **Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): What steps the Government is taking to increase the number of prosecutions for female genital mutilation. [906004]

7. **Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): What steps the Government is taking to increase the number of prosecutions for female genital mutilation. [906006]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** The Government significantly strengthened the law via amendments to the Serious Crime Act 2015 to improve protection of victims through lifelong anonymity and to break down barriers to prosecution. The introduction of a mandatory reporting duty for front-line professionals to identify FGM cases of girls under 18 further improves opportunities for safeguarding and prosecution.

**Lilian Greenwood:** At the age of 11, Valentine Nkoyo was forced to go through female genital mutilation. Nineteen years later she set up the Mojatu Foundation, a social enterprise in my constituency, to use her own experience to raise awareness of FGM, help protect children at risk in the UK and support survivors. Mojatu's current project aims to create a network of media-trained community champions to help tackle the issues affecting women and girls who are at risk or living with the consequences of FGM, to increase self-reporting. What engagement has the Solicitor General had with community organisations such as Mojatu to address the low level of prosecutions for FGM?

**The Solicitor General:** I pay tribute to the work of that community organisation and many others in the network who are fighting the scourge of FGM. The hon. Lady will be pleased to note that I and other members of the Government have regular engagement with community groups. The Department of Health has provided £4 million worth of funding over the past three years in order, among other things, to enhance community engagement so that awareness can be spread and victims need not suffer in silence.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** The lack of services to support victims of female genital mutilation is often seen as a reason why so many cases are left unreported. What effect will cuts of 24% to the Crown Prosecution Service have on the reporting of FGM cases?

**The Solicitor General:** May I reassure the hon. Lady that the Crown Prosecution Service places great importance upon the need to properly investigate and prosecute, where appropriate, crimes of FGM? It was regrettable

that in the years prior to 2010 not one single prosecution occurred. Cultural and other obstacles have prevented the effective investigation and prosecution of this scourge. The work of community groups and the resolution of the Government mean that that is gradually changing for the better.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The Solicitor General will no doubt be aware of the European Commission guidelines on action against female genital mutilation. Notwithstanding the vote on 23 June for the UK to leave the European Union, can the Minister say whether it is still the intention of the Government to accept into British law the recommendations of the European Commission's report?

**The Solicitor General:** With regard to the specifics, that matter needs to be considered carefully, and I will take that away with me. However, on the general principles laid out in that report, there is no doubt whatever that this Government remain fully committed to making sure that FGM is properly explained, properly challenged and properly dealt with, whether that is by prosecution, awareness in the community or other preventive measures.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): What steps are the Government taking to ensure that, in communities where, on occasions, a blind eye is turned to this obscenity, people understand that the law will be upheld and that the 130,000-odd young females who are affected will be protected in future, as this will affect others?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Gentleman is right to reiterate that community engagement and community involvement will be key in making more progress on this area. I am glad to see that, certainly in England, the Department for Education has £2.25 million of funding to invest in awareness of and education about this issue, and I think that will also have a beneficial effect.

#### EU and Domestic Law: Separation

3. **Stephen Kinnoek** (Aberavon) (Lab): What his role is in assessing the steps that will be required to separate EU law from domestic law. [906001]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** My role in relation to the UK's withdrawal from the EU is the same as my role in relation to other areas of Government business: I act as the Government's principal legal adviser. In terms of seeking Law Officer advice in relation to the UK's exit, the standard rules in the Cabinet manual apply. The Law Officers must be consulted by Ministers or officials before the Government are committed to critical decisions involving legal considerations.

**Stephen Kinnoek:** Have the Government made an estimate of the cost of the vast number of lawyers and trade negotiators that are going to have to be hired to deliver our disentanglement from the European Union? If such an estimate has not yet been made, will the Attorney General please confirm by when he will be able to furnish the House with that information?

**The Attorney General:** We will undoubtedly need the best advice we can have and the best trade negotiators we can have. Of course, the Government already have

some of that capacity, but the Department responsible is looking carefully at exactly what additional capacity we will need to gain, and as soon as it is in a position to give that information to the House, I am sure it will do so.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): Our membership of the European Union has brought about substantial enhancements in our health and safety laws. Will the Attorney General guarantee that, with leaving the European Union, none of those health and safety laws will be weakened in any way?

**The Attorney General:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are many of those regulations that we will wish to retain, but of course the exercise of looking at exactly which parts of the canon of European law we wish to transfer into UK law, which we wish to adapt and which we may not wish to continue with at all, is a very lengthy one that we will need to continue with. But I agree with him that it will not, in all likelihood, be the case that all of those rules and regulations will be dispensed with altogether, and both businesses and those who are employed by them benefit from some of those measures.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): Leaving the European Union will involve repeal of the European Communities Act 1972, which means all secondary legislation made under the Act will automatically fail unless it is re-enacted. Can the Attorney General tell us what steps are being taken, or will be taken, to ensure we have the necessary legislation to guarantee protection on important employment rights, such as transfers of undertakings and paid holidays for employees?

**The Attorney General:** May I first of all say that it is always nice to see anyone on the Labour Front Bench these days, but it is a particular pleasure to see that the hon. Lady retains her position?

I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds): it is clearly the case that the British Government will wish to retain in some form some of the regulations and pieces of legislation she refers to. Of course, the exercise of determining which pieces of legislation is going to be time-consuming and complex, but I have no doubt that what this Government will wish to do is persist with high-quality protection for those in employment in this country, whether that is European legislation or, in future, domestic legislation.

**Jo Stevens:** I listened to the answer that the Attorney General gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds). Prior to being elected to this House, I represented families of people killed or injured at work. Most health and safety legislation providing protection for UK workers derives from EU law, and in his answer the Attorney General did not satisfy me that he will provide equivalent or better protection. Does he agree that workers need to be protected against injury, illness and death at work, and that workplace health and safety legislation is essential and not red tape? Will he give this House and, in particular, the families of those killed at work a guarantee that, at the very least, equivalent legislation and workplace protections will be urgently re-enacted?

**The Attorney General:** I agree that injury, illness and death at work must be prevented and dealt with through appropriate legislation and regulation. Of course, we had already sought to protect workers from those things prior to our membership of the European Union, and we will certainly seek to do so post-membership. I do not believe that it is beyond the capacity of this House to design legislation and regulation that will enable us to provide effective protection, and this Government are entirely committed to doing so.

### Economic Crime

6. **Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential effect of introducing a criminal offence of failure to prevent economic crime on the incidence of such crime. [906005]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** Under existing law, a company faces criminal liability only if prosecutors can prove that a sufficiently senior person knew about the criminal conduct. That can be extremely hard to prove, especially in large companies with complex management structures. That is why the Government will consult on whether the “failure to prevent” model should be extended to other types of economic offending.

**Nigel Huddleston:** In an increasingly globalised world, international co-operation and co-ordination is key to tackling often very sophisticated economic crime. What is the Serious Fraud Office doing to tackle those crimes, both domestically and overseas?

**The Attorney General:** The Serious Fraud Office does indeed attempt to engage with its counterparts abroad and a variety of agencies in other countries to do its work. Of course, as my hon. Friend may be aware, a “failure to prevent” offence is available in many other jurisdictions, and that is one of the reasons that we believe it is worth considering here.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Attorney General knows that I have campaigned for much more vigorous action in this sector. I have called for proper resources to be given to the Serious Fraud Office, because it has become far too dependent on this country’s big accountancy firms, and that is the road to ruin and ineffective action.

**The Attorney General:** I am aware of the hon. Gentleman’s campaigning record. As he knows, the amount of money that the Serious Fraud Office receives as part of its core budget has increased over the past few years and it will continue to increase. As he also knows, it has access to “blockbuster” funding for particularly large and unexpected cases. Of course, this is not just about money; it is also about the tools that the Serious Fraud Office and other investigators and prosecutors have at their disposal. That is one of the reasons why it is always worth keeping this area under review, which is what we are doing.

**Rob Marris** (Wolverhampton South West) (Lab): May I caution the Attorney General? Setting up an offence of failing to prevent a crime committed by another is a very serious step in our legal system. It could affect many hon. Members in everyday life. For example, if

they failed to prevent someone from shoplifting, would they be committing a criminal offence? These kinds of things are very difficult and I urge caution on the Attorney General.

**The Attorney General:** The hon. Gentleman is right to urge caution, but what we are proposing does not go anywhere near as far as he is suggesting. The types of offences under discussion are failures by corporate entities to prevent fraud, money laundering and the like. As he will know, there are already similar types of offences on the statute book in relation to bribery, and there will shortly be some in relation to tax evasion. This is an extension of a logical principle and it is designed to ensure that we are able to catch not just those in smaller businesses who are engaged in this kind of behaviour, but those in larger business too.

### EU Referendum: Protection of Human Rights

8. **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential effect of the decision to leave the EU on the protection of human rights. [906007]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** I consider the best protection of fundamental rights in the United Kingdom to be UK law. I am, therefore, confident that the decision to leave the European Union will not result in any reduction in the protection of such rights in the United Kingdom.

**Jeff Smith:** We now have a Prime Minister who has advocated withdrawing from the European convention on human rights. Can the Attorney General confirm whether that will be Government policy?

**The Attorney General:** As the hon. Gentleman quite correctly observes, we have a new Prime Minister and we also have a new Secretary of State for Justice. Both have been in office for only a little over a week, so the hon. Gentleman will have to be a little more patient.

### Hate Crime

9. **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions on the prosecution of hate crime. [906009]

10. **Andrew Stephenson** (Pendle) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions on the prosecution of hate crime. [906010]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** I discuss this matter regularly with the DPP, and the Government will publish their hate crime strategy very shortly.

**Bob Blackman:** I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his answer. Given the terrible terrorist atrocities in Nice, Paris and, recently, Germany, many people in this country are fearful that because of their religion or the colour of their skin, they will be the subject of hate crime. What assurances can my hon. and learned Friend give to those people that we will prosecute, to the full extent of the law, anyone involved in hate crime?

**The Solicitor General:** I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the community work he does in his constituency. Hate crime of any kind, whether it is on the grounds of disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity, has absolutely no place in our society. We are utterly committed to tackling hate crime.

**Andrew Stephenson:** A Member of the other place recently received a vile racist letter containing white powder, as did a number of mosques and Islamic centres representing a large Pakistani heritage community in Pendle. The long-term rise in Islamophobia is a serious concern. Will my hon. and learned Friend join me in condemning these racist incidents and advise me whether he believes that the separate recording of Islamophobia as a hate crime is likely to help to bring about successful prosecutions?

**The Solicitor General:** The incident that my hon. Friend describes is despicable and shameful, and we must stand together against such hate crime and ensure that it is stamped out. Religious hate crime has been recorded separately since April of this year, at the request of the Prime Minister in her former role as Home Secretary. That will give us a greater understanding of the nature of hate crime.

**Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op):** Reports of hate crimes rose exponentially—by 57%—following Brexit. Is the Solicitor General confident that the Crown Prosecution Service is adequately resourced to deal effectively with these reports and support victims?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Lady is right to note the alarming spike in incidents of hate crime that surrounded the recent referendum and the weeks subsequent to it. I reassure her that the CPS remains absolutely committed to prosecuting all types of such crime, which, frankly, have no place in our society.

**Paula Sherriff (Dewsbury) (Lab):** Three weeks ago, I asked the former Prime Minister, and he agreed, to look into setting up a cross-party commission on hate crime following a sharp increase, as yesterday's statistics revealed. Can the Solicitor General assure the House that that will be achieved as a priority? Will he offer his full support to my West Yorkshire cross-party initiative to tackle these terrible acts?

**The Solicitor General:** I pay tribute to the hon. Lady, who speaks with eloquence and passion on these issues. Of course, I give her my full support with regard to the cross-party initiative in West Yorkshire. The former Prime Minister was right to emphasise that it is up to all of us, whichever side of politics we come from, to come together to tackle this scourge. We know what it can lead to, and therefore we have to stamp it out before it becomes something even more vile.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

*The Minister for Women and Equalities was asked—*

### EU Referendum: Hate Crime

1. **Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op):** What steps the Government have taken to tackle hate crime against black, Asian and minority ethnic communities since the EU referendum. [905983]

**The Minister for Women and Equalities (Justine Greening):** As the House has just discussed, hate crime of any kind, including that which is targeted at BAME communities, has absolutely no place in our society. I am sure I speak for the whole House when I say how appalled I am at the recent reported increase in hate crime. The Government are monitoring the situation and working across Departments and with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and community partners to provide reassurance and send out a clear message that hate crime will not be tolerated, and that we will take action against those who promote hatred.

**Christina Rees:** I am proud of the Safer Neath Port Talbot partnership, which has been working to counteract the rise in hate crime since the EU referendum by holding hate crime awareness sessions in Neath communities. We should all say no to hate crime. What steps is the Minister taking to adopt such best practice and roll it out across the country to raise awareness and heal divisions in communities?

**Justine Greening:** I would be very interested to talk to the hon. Lady further about her experience of the work under way in her own community. As she highlights, one of the most effective things we can do to tackle hate crime is to work at community level to spread a message of inclusion, acceptance and tolerance across our society. The broader work happening in Government is being done not just through policing and the Home Office, but through the Department for Communities and Local Government and in my own Department—the Department for Education—through schools.

**Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con):** I welcome my right hon. Friend to her position. Does she feel, as I do, that we should also be looking at online hate crime, from which people often suffer the most? Does she believe, as I do, that platforms and social media outlets should do more to standardise reporting in this area and, frankly, to take more action against the perpetrators?

**Justine Greening:** I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is important to address the online element of this crime effectively. She will be aware that one of the things the Government have recently done is to strengthen online reporting. Part of the increase in hate crime is due to the tool we set up called True Vision, a website where people can report it online more effectively. She is absolutely right to say that there are different channels through which hate crimes are perpetrated and all of them need a strong response.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab):** The Minister's answer on online hate crime and online reporting is very welcome, but does she agree that, given the level of vile hatred that exists in certain parts of social media, it is absolutely essential for law enforcement agencies to chase it down and bring specific cases to court to ensure that there is no hiding place for the violent hatred that people pour on to social media?

**Justine Greening:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. As crime moves on to different forums, including online, it is important that the police and the Crown Prosecution Service collectively take strong action to show that this

sort of behaviour across our country will not be tolerated and that we will take action against it wherever it raises its head.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): This may be a special occasion because all 12 Members on both the Government and Opposition Front Benches are female.

Last night, Kettering Borough Council passed a motion condemning racism, xenophobia and hate crimes. I am proud to be a member of Kettering Borough Council and to have supported the motion. Will my right hon. Friend encourage other local authorities to do the same?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman makes a very perceptive observation about the make-up of the Front Benches. The merit of his making it is that it is now on the record in *Hansard* forever.

**Justine Greening:** That is perhaps appropriate given that this is Women and Equalities questions. I should say that when the Government decided to draw Ministers from across Departments to answer these questions, there was no particular attempt to make sure we had an all-women list of Ministers, but it shows how things are changing with female representation in Parliament, alongside the fact that, as of last week, we have our second female Prime Minister.

To come to my hon. Friend's very important question, I applaud Kettering Borough Council for its strong stance against racism. Part of ensuring that we stamp out hate crime and racism generally is not only for us to work strongly on the ground, but for people in positions of authority—community leaders included—to advocate the kind of inclusive society that we all want. The steps taken by Kettering Borough Council are particularly welcome, and I hope other councils follow suit.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Last Saturday, I attended an event in my constituency organised by a fantastic community group called Kumon Y'all. It was amazing to see people of many faiths and no faith engaging with each other through sport and other activities. Does the Minister agree that such events should be encouraged wherever possible, especially in these troubled times when we are seeing an alarming rise in hate crime?

**Justine Greening:** Yes, I do. We all have our own experiences of that at constituency level. My local Ahmadiyya Muslim community holds a peace conference every year, which brings together all faiths and all parts of our community, and it does a huge amount of fundraising, which also benefits our broader community. These are the kinds of examples of community leadership to which I was just referring. As MPs, we can play a real role in encouraging and supporting that when we see it happening in our own localities.

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Minister to her place. I am really proud to be one of the women on the all-women Front Benches. It seems that we might be taking over the world slowly but surely, which is fantastic.

We have heard from many Members on both sides of the House that there has been a dramatic wave of hate crime, hostility and intolerance towards EU nationals and members of the BAME community living in the

UK. I have been encouraged by the many members of the public and people in high-profile positions who have challenged that behaviour and shown what a great multicultural Britain we are. However, like many across the House and the country I was dismayed and upset by *The Sun* columnist Kelvin MacKenzie's disgraceful Islamophobic attack on the "Channel 4 News" presenter Fatima Manji. Will the Minister join me in making it clear that all parties in this House regard those comments as totally unacceptable? That being the case, will she also join me in urging Mr MacKenzie to make a full public apology, and *The Sun* and other media to be more responsible as to who and what they allow on their media outlets?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. As a result of the extreme seriousness of the matter I let the hon. Lady complete her question, but never again must she ask such a long question. I am afraid it was not just too long, but far too long, albeit very important.

**Justine Greening:** The hon. Lady has raised an important issue. This is not the first time that Kelvin MacKenzie has written and said things that are deeply controversial and to many people in our country deeply offensive, frankly. It is for him to decide how he wants to respond to the wave of criticism he has received since writing that article. From my perspective, I am proud that we live in a country where men and women are equal. That includes women having the right to wear what they want and to be able to get on in their job wearing what they want. In my view, that includes newscasters and journalists. We need to make sure we have some kind of consensus on not rising to the bait of people such as Kelvin MacKenzie. Frankly, I hope that we can treat his comments with the derision that they deserve.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister has put the bigoted fellow in his place pretty comprehensively.

### Single-tier State Pension

2. **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What assessment the Government have made of the effect of the single-tier state pension on gender equality. [905984]

3. **Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): What assessment the Government have made of the effect of the single-tier state pension on gender equality. [905985]

10. **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): What assessment the Government have made of the effect of the single-tier state pension on gender equality. [905993]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Caroline Nokes):** We have reformed the complicated pension system to introduce a simpler state pension. Together with automatic enrolment, the triple lock, the protection of pensioner benefits and new pension freedoms, that will ensure that pensioners, both women and men, have greater protection, security and choice in retirement.

**Gavin Newlands:** I thank the Minister for that answer and welcome her to her place.

The new state pension will mean 350,000 women born between 1951 and 1953 retire on the old system, just before the new proposals come into force, whereas a man born on the same day will retire slightly later but receive a pension under the new arrangements. Does she agree that a pensions commission must urgently be established to end such inequalities?

**Caroline Nokes:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome.

Some £1.1 billion was committed at the time of the Pensions Act 2011 to reduce the maximum delay that anyone would experience in claiming their state pension. As a result of the Government's triple lock, since April 2011 the basic state pension has risen by £570 a year. The Government's position on this policy is very clear.

**Margaret Ferrier:** The current review of the state pension age by John Cridland is critical to ensuring that the existing inequalities in the current pension system do not plague future retirees. Does the Minister agree that discrepancies in life expectancy, including among some of the poorest women in society and across the UK regions, must be closely examined to prevent gender inequalities?

**Caroline Nokes:** I absolutely agree that it is important to prevent gender inequalities, but equally we have to be realistic and acknowledge that, across the country, people are living longer. If we want to carry on with a sustainable and affordable pension system we must equalise the state pension age for both men and women.

**Alan Brown:** Forget the triple lock and the other measures to protect pensions that the Minister has just promoted; the simple fact is that according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies in future 14% of women will receive a lower income at state pension age than they would have under the current system. What discussions is the Minister having with colleagues from the Department for Work and Pensions to try to prevent that?

**Caroline Nokes:** The new state pension is much more generous for many women. More than 3 million women stand to gain £550 a year by 2030 as a result of the changes.

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): May I take this opportunity to welcome the Minister to her place? As a fellow feminist, I am sure she will agree that we are talking about our mothers' generation, who broke down the barriers on equal pay. What message does it send to their daughters, a generation burdened with huge amounts of student debt, when their mothers have been short-changed by the lack of transitional arrangements for their state pension? What incentive is there for younger women to trust the Government when it comes to saving for their future?

**Caroline Nokes:** I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome.

What we have seen from the reforms that the Government have made is that women of her age and my age are doing more now to save for their future than ever before. It is really important to reflect that some of the

previous arrangements dated back to the 1940s. The world has moved on an incredible amount since that time and, I would argue, absolutely for the better.

### Senior Executive Roles

4. **Oliver Colvile** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): What steps the Government have taken to increase numbers of women in senior executive roles. [905986]

5. **Andrew Stephenson** (Pendle) (Con): What steps the Government have taken to increase numbers of women in senior executive roles. [905988]

7. **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): What steps the Government have taken to increase numbers of women in senior executive roles. [905990]

**The Minister for Women and Equalities (Justine Greening):** This area is a real success story—we have more women on boards than ever before—but we know that we have got more to do. I fully endorse the business-led target of 33% of women on FTSE 350 boards by 2020. To achieve that, we have established the new independent Hampton Alexander review, which will have a particular focus on improving gender representation in the all-important executive layer of FTSE companies.

**Mr Speaker:** We now have the statutory male on the Government Front Bench. If the Minister for Schools had not turned up, I might have been tempted to invite the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) to make an appearance on the Front Bench, but I suspect that would have been a divisible proposition.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Only a matter of time.

**Mr Speaker:** Indeed.

**Andrew Stephenson:** Does the Minister agree that the 33% target of women on FTSE 350 boards is achievable?

**Justine Greening:** Yes, I do. We will need to take some steps, but so far the proposal of working voluntarily with business has seen some real progress, including a doubling of women on boards in the FTSE 350, from 9.5% in 2010, when the coalition Government came to office, to 22% now. The number of all male boards has also dropped from 152 in 2011 to 15 today. We have more to do, but I fully expect and hope that we can meet that ambitious, achievable target by 2020.

**Oliver Colvile:** May I congratulate those on the Front Bench on the fantastic representation of women there? As my right hon. Friend the Minister knows, Plymouth University is taking the lead, in that half its board of governors are women. What is her Department doing to ensure more women are in senior leadership roles in universities?

**Justine Greening:** I should start by congratulating Plymouth University on making fantastic progress. I have been delighted to see that the latest "WomenCount" report on higher education—which the Government supported—showed that a third of governing bodies are now gender balanced. It is good that we now have a new code of governance in force, and the Higher Education

Funding Council for England has also set an aspirational target for 40% of women on governing bodies. An Athena SWAN charter mark has also been embraced as a sector standard, which I strongly support.

**Lucy Allan:** I, too, wish to add my congratulations to the Secretary of State, who has long been a role model for many women following behind her. I know that when she came into Parliament in 2005 it looked a very different place. What is her Department doing to ensure that women across the UK—not just in London—have opportunities to access senior executive roles, and can she assure me that those women will be encouraged into sectors other than those traditionally occupied by women?

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend's question has two parts that I should answer. First, we have just expanded the Women's Business Council to 20 members. That includes organisations based in Scotland and Wales, so we are expanding and making sure that its geographical focus is UK-wide. Secondly, we are also changing the council so that it has greater representation of industries such as engineering, defence systems and construction. A good example would be Halfords Group, which is based in the west Midlands near her constituency, whose board is 50% women and whose chief executive is female. We must champion best practice.

**Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab):** Will the Government lead by example by increasing the number of women in senior management roles in their Departments, agencies and other organisations in which they have influence, including the NHS?

**Justine Greening:** We are certainly going to try to make sure we do lead by example. The fact that we have our second female Prime Minister is a very good, strong and historic start. She recognises that the public sector needs to make progress, as does the private sector.

**Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab):** The Minister rightly mentions some of the progress made on getting female representation in boardrooms, but it is still a fact, which I think was researched by *The Guardian*, that there are more men called John—and a fine name it is, Mr Speaker—who are bosses in FTSE 100 companies than there are women running those companies. What more can the Government do to ensure that women see it as their role to run FTSE 100 companies?

**Justine Greening:** The hon. Gentleman is right to point out the problem. Despite progress, the reality is that only 18 of the FTSE 350 companies have female CEOs. We need to ensure not only that women aim high, but that, for example when women have children and come back into the workplace, their careers are not hindered and they can go on and get to the very top.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** Of 318 female executive committee members in business, from a total of 2,038 across both genders, just 122 held roles with financial responsibility. Has the Minister had any discussions with companies about the possibility of mentoring women in business to enable them to achieve very senior roles?

**Justine Greening:** I really welcome that question, as somebody whose background is as a chartered accountant. Some accounting firms have done great work to pull through their best and brightest women. The point the hon. Gentleman makes is not just about the numbers, but seeing women in pivotal roles on boards. That is precisely the kind of next step we want companies to take.

**Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con):** I welcome my right hon. Friend to her post. She is there on merit and the Conservative party has shown that women can get to the very top on merit. Can she give me an assurance that merit will always be the deciding factor on whether people are promoted to a role, irrespective of people's gender, race or sexual inclination? When recruiting people, we should be blind to those things.

**Justine Greening:** I have great news for my hon. Friend: there are plenty of fantastic women out there who are ready, willing and able to get into the top jobs, so I assure him there will be no compromise on merit—indeed, dare I say, Mr Speaker, that we might see a raising of the performance levels?

### Welfare Policy: Gender Equality

6. **Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP):** What assessment the Government have made of the effect on gender equality of their welfare policies. [905989]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Caroline Nokes):** The Government set out our assessment of the impact of the welfare policies in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, with similar assessments for previous changes. Every Government policy change is carefully considered in line with legal obligations.

**Alison Thewliss:** Engender has said that, since 2010, £26 billion of cuts to benefits, tax credits, pay and pensions have been made, and that 85% of that figure has come from women's income. The statement made yesterday by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions confirms that the two-child policy and, presumably, the rape clause are carrying on. They will also have an effect on women's incomes. What is the Minister doing to redress the balance?

**Caroline Nokes:** It is really important to reflect on the economic statistics. There are more women in work than ever before and the roll-out of universal credit will ensure that being in work pays. The reforms we have made are assisting people into work and ensuring that women are at the forefront of that.

**Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP):** The Minister will be aware of the continuing concern across the United Kingdom about the welfare reform proposals as they impinge particularly on women with young families. Will she keep under review that continuing concern, right across the entire country, to ensure that there is no continuing disadvantage to females, particularly those with young families?

**Caroline Nokes:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point about women with families. The Government's investment in childcare support—the

doubling of free childcare from 15 to 30 hours for nearly 400,000 working parents of three and four-year-olds from September 2017—is an example of how we are making sure that women get back into work.

**Angela Crawley** (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP): I welcome the Secretary of State and Ministers, new and existing, to their places. Prior to Brexit, the Secretary of State said that leaving the EU would cost the economy “a £36bn hit to tax receipts every year - it won't just be public services squeezed, it will be our jobs, especially the livelihoods of people on lower incomes.”

We already know that 80% of welfare cuts fall on women. Can the Minister assure me that these cuts will not fall on women's shoulders?

**Caroline Nokes:** As the hon. Lady will have heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister say yesterday, we are conscious that we have to make sure that the changes resulting from the EU referendum result work for everybody across society, and of course that includes women.

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

8. **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the effect of proposed changes to the funding of the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the work of that commission. [905991]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities (Caroline Dinenage):** The Equality and Human Rights Commission performs a very important and valuable role, and its appointed chair, David Isaac, and the board are well equipped for this task. The commission receives, and will continue to receive, sufficient funds to enable it to fulfil its full range of statutory duties.

**Dr Huq:** Will the Minister scotch the rumours that swingeing cuts to the EHRC budget are on their way—69% down on 2010, apparently? In this climate of post-Brexit racism and employment tribunal fee charges, it is needed more than ever, yet it is operating on less than the old Disability Rights Commission, which area comprises only one part of its multiple good works.

**Caroline Dinenage:** I am happy to scotch some of these rumours. When the EHRC was established in 2007, it was done without a full understanding of what it would need from a budgetary point of view and what it would cost. Nearly 10 years later, we have a much better understanding of its running and efficiency costs, and of course it saw a reduction in function in 2013. It has had to make significant savings, but at each stage, it has done so only after huge discussion with our Ministry, and it does not dispute that it will continue to be able to fulfil its statutory functions to the highest possible standard.

### Welfare Policies: Effect on Disabled People

9. **Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): What assessment the Government have made of the effect on equality for disabled people of its policies on welfare. [905992]

11. **Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): What assessment the Government have made of the effect on equality for disabled people of its policies on welfare. [905995]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Caroline Nokes):** Spending to support people with disabilities and health conditions will be higher in real terms in every year to 2020 than it was in 2010. The Government have set out their assessment of the impact of the welfare policies in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, and made similar assessments for previous changes.

**Deidre Brock:** The UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights recently called for the Government's regressive cuts to social security to be reversed and for a comprehensive assessment of their impact on vulnerable women, children and disabled people. How would the Minister respond to these calls from the international community? Will she commit to raising these concerns with her colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions so that these shameful cuts can be abandoned?

**Caroline Nokes:** Spending on the main disability benefits rose by more than £3 billion in real terms during the course of the last Parliament, and overall spending on personal independence payments and disability living allowance will be higher this year in real terms than spending on DLA was in 2010. Our welfare reforms will ensure that the billions we spend better reflect today's understanding of disability and offer targeted support to enable disabled people to live independent lives.

**Marion Fellows:** I welcome the Minister, a former colleague on the Education Select Committee, to her position. She will be aware of the Government's long-promised Work and Health programme and of how disabled people are still awaiting publication of the Green Paper to map out what employment support will be made available for those with disabilities. Does she agree that her Government must now map out the timeline for publication and ensure that sufficient funding is made available for disabled people, who have borne the brunt of Tory austerity cuts?

**Caroline Nokes:** I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome. I very much enjoyed our time together on the Select Committee. She is absolutely right that we will publish a Green Paper to engage with disability groups and disabled individuals in order to build a strategy that works for them. It is critical that we get more disabled people into work. I spent some time before the general election as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the then Minister for Disabled People, and I know how hard he worked to promote the Disability Confident campaign and to ensure good examples of companies we could champion for showing that employing disabled people was good not only for disabled people but for the economy and individual companies.

### Topical Questions

T1. [906015] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

**The Minister for Women and Equalities (Justine Greening):**

I am delighted to stand at the Dispatch Box today as the Minister for Women and Equalities. I want the House to know that this Government are committed to tackling inequality wherever it exists, so that we can have a country that works for everyone. We want to see opportunity levelled up, and we should never accept the status quo in a society in which, for example, some of our girls are undergoing female genital mutilation, others suffer from forced marriage and homophobic bullying still takes place in our schools. Tackling inequality was a central part of my work at the Department for International Development. I shall bring all that passion and practicality to my role as Minister for Women and Equalities.

**Gavin Newlands:** I welcome the new Secretary of State to her place. She will no doubt have heard the Prime Minister saying yesterday in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Stuart Blair Donaldson) that there is “always more to do” on the issue of violence against women. It is our view that the best way to achieve this is to ratify the Istanbul convention. Will the new Minister for Women and Equalities support the private Member’s Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford), which commits the UK Government to doing more to protect women by ratifying that convention?

**Justine Greening:** I shall certainly take on board the hon. Gentleman’s points. I have spent much of the last three and a half years pressing internationally for stronger action to combat violence against women and girls, including, in March this year, attending the UN Commission on the Status of Women with the then Minister for Women and Equalities. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to highlight this issue; I shall get back to him with an updated Government position.

T3. [906017] **Mike Freer** (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con): I welcome the Ministry of Defence’s decision to allow women to fight on the frontline. Will the Minister explain what steps the Government will take to encourage women to take up these new posts?

**Justine Greening:** As my hon. Friend points out, the recent decision enables women to serve in the Royal Marines, the Royal Armoured Corps and Infantry and the Royal Air Force Regiment, so they will be able to fill ground close combat roles. We are putting in place a range of activities, working through the Ministry of Defence, including improved community engagement and recruitment processes. There is a target for 15% of all recruitments to be female by 2020.

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): The Government took six long months to release their response to the Women and Equalities Committee report into transgender equality. LGBT campaigners have called the Government’s response

“lots of polite words signifying precisely nothing”.

Will the Minister explain why the Government rejected the Committee’s main recommendation that the protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010 regarding trans people should be changed to “gender identity”?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities (Caroline Dinenage):**

I do reject that. The response to the Women and Equalities Select Committee took representations from more than 12 different Government Departments and public bodies. It was an entirely comprehensive piece of work, and a very large number of the recommendations were accepted and are being followed up, not least the commitment to look again at the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which trans people tell me is disturbing, long winded and in much need of reform. This Department takes its commitment to trans people very seriously.

T5. [906019] **Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): Will the Minister join me in congratulating the organisers of the Essex women’s business experience 2016, a networking event in Southend? Will her Department do all it can to help and encourage women to set up their own businesses?

**Caroline Dinenage:** I am delighted to hear about the success of the Essex women’s business experience 2016, which I am told offered a range of workshops and networking opportunities to help inspire female entrepreneurs. The UK has been ranked as the best place in Europe for female entrepreneurs, and the Government are working hard to support them, not least through the £2.2 million women in broadband package to help support women to gain the skills and confidence they need to start their own businesses.

T2. [906016] **Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): I, too, welcome the Minister for Women and Equalities to her place. A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies published just this week detailed that by 2014-15, two thirds of children classified as living below the poverty line were from families in which at least one parent was in work. Does the Minister agree that the Government should commit to abandoning the cuts to work allowances that will see low to middle-income families that are already struggling to keep their heads above water struggle even further, and focus on lifting the income of these working households to alleviate child poverty?

**Justine Greening:** One of the most important things to have happened under this and, indeed, the last Government is a dramatic fall in unemployment. Ultimately, as I know from my own childhood experience—my dad was unemployed for a year—the main thing that we can do to combat poverty is create jobs, but the hon. Lady is right to say that we now want to go beyond that, and enable people to do better in work. That is not only the right thing to do for them to improve their own household circumstances, but the smart thing to do to drive productivity in our economy.

T6. [906021] **Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): Careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and the engineering sector in particular, fail to attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and also women. We must challenge those perceptions and stereotypes to deal with that problem, and with our productivity crisis. In September, I will host Wiltshire’s first engineering festival. Will the Secretary of State join me there?

**Justine Greening:** The festival sounds like a great initiative. I should be delighted if my hon. Friend would send me some details, and I will see if I can possibly come along to it.

The good news is that there were 13,000 more entries by girls to maths and science A-levels in 2015 than there were in 2010. However, we need to do more to challenge the perceptions about engineers, and about STEM careers, that too often put girls off studying those subjects.

T4. [906018] **Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): A number of organisations have conveyed disappointment at the Government's response to the findings of the transgender inquiry conducted by the Women and Equalities Committee. Stonewall has questioned the Government's insistence on further evidence, believing that they have sufficient evidence to take proper action. Does the Minister accept the assessment that this has been a lost opportunity to ensure that all trans and non-binary people are clearly protected in law, and will she commit herself to working with them and others to achieve true equality for all trans people?

**Caroline Dinenage:** Again, I rebut the allegations that this has been a missed opportunity, given that we have taken on board so many of the Committee's recommendations. The inquiry was a ground-breaking piece of work which has encouraged at least 12 Government organisations to look again at what they do, and to make some very strong and firm commitments to the transgender population to demonstrate that we support them and are paying attention to their needs.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): The Minister for Women and Equalities said a moment ago that she and the Government were committed to stamping out inequality wherever it happened. One of the starkest areas of inequality is sentencing: in every single category of offence, a man is more likely to be sent to prison than a woman. For example, 33% of men but only 15% of women convicted of child cruelty and neglect were sent to prison. Will the Minister write to the chairman of the Sentencing Council instructing him to treat women and men in the same way when they come before the courts?

**Caroline Dinenage:** As my hon. Friend knows, the judiciary are entirely independent of the Government, and rightly so. There are no gender preferences in sentencing guidelines; every sentence is handed down on the basis of the offence committed and any mitigating factors. As my hon. Friend also knows, although women who are convicted of the offence that he identified are less likely to go to prison, the sentences that they receive when they are sent to prison are longer than those given to their male counterparts.

T7. [906023] **Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): We learnt this week that the Government had downgraded the pensions portfolio from Minister of State to Under-Secretary of State. Vast inequalities are facing women such as the members of the Women Against State Pension Inequality Campaign, and will face future pensioners following the change in the state pension. Is it not simply shameful that a Minister of State has not been appointed to deal with not just those inequalities, but the uncertainty that retirees will face following the vote to leave the European Union?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Caroline Nokes):** The Department for Work and Pensions takes its responsibilities for these issues extremely seriously, and it has, in fact, been strengthened by having an additional "half a Minister". I think it trivial to focus on a job title when what we are seeking to do is give qualified, competent and determined people the right roles.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister on her appointment. One of the key decisions that she will have to make very quickly relates to the close of the two-year period of discussion of caste discrimination. I have already written to her, but will she undertake to meet me and a delegation from the Hindu community who are determined to see that illogical discrimination removed from the statute book?

**Justine Greening:** I should be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman. I will locate his letter at the Department, and read it very carefully.

## School Funding

10.34 am

**Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on school funding.

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening)**: I am firmly committed to introducing fairer funding for schools, high needs and early years. This is an important reform, to fairly and transparently allocate funding on the basis of schools' and children's actual needs.

As the written statement I have laid today sets out, this Government are investing record levels of funding for schools. With that investment, fairer funding will set a common foundation that will enable schools to maximise the potential of every child. They will no longer be held back by a funding system that is now arbitrary, out of date and unfair. Fairer funding will provide a crucial underpinning for the education system to act as a motor for social mobility and social justice.

The first stage consultations on national funding formulae for schools and high needs have been met with an overwhelmingly positive response from headteachers, teachers, governors and parents. I am also clear that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a historic change and therefore we must make sure we take the time to get the final approach right. I will therefore publish the Government's full response to the first stage of the schools and high needs consultations, and set out my proposals for the second stage, once Parliament returns in the autumn. We will run a full consultation, and make final decisions early in the new year. Given the importance of consulting widely and fully with the sector and getting implementation right, the new system will apply from 2018-19. I will set out our full plans for a national funding formula for early years shortly.

I do understand that local authorities need sufficient information to begin planning their funding arrangements for 2017 to 2018. Local authorities need time to consult with local schools—both academies and maintained—to ensure that the funding they provide is being directed appropriately. As well as a fair system, schools and local authorities need stability and early notice of any changes in order to fulfil this important duty properly.

I have therefore confirmed today in my written statement that no local authority will see a reduction from their 2016-17 funding for schools or for high needs next year. Final allocations for that will follow in December on the basis of the latest pupil numbers, as usual. My written statement also confirms that for 2017-18 we will retain the minimum funding guarantee for schools, so that no school can face a funding reduction of more than 1.5% per pupil next year. As my written statement today confirms, I am determined to ensure both that we move to a fair funding system and that we do so in a measured and properly consultative fashion.

This will be a crucial part of delivering an education system that works for every child, no matter their background.

**Neil Carmichael**: The key point, as the Secretary of State has spotted, is that local authorities need to have time to prepare, and so too do schools. So the essential question is: can the Government really meet this timetable

as set out, because that is the desire of all schools, particularly in England obviously, and it is of interest to every single Member of Parliament in England? I ask the Secretary of State to confirm when she really does expect this programme to be fulfilled, and how she is going to be sure that the next consultation period does not take quite as long as the previous one, because that took some three months to complete, and we still do not know where we are. Those are the key questions.

**Justine Greening**: My hon. Friend is right that we want to strike a balance between moving rapidly towards a fairer funding formula while at the same time making sure we do so in a way that allows time not only for the details of that formula to be debated, because they will have a big impact on how it works effectively, but for local authorities, and indeed schools, to understand the changes and then prepare. That is the balance that I have tried to strike today.

I also want to act responsibly by ensuring that we do not rush into making changes without being fully sighted of their ramifications. I know that the debates in Parliament on the fair funding formula have resulted in long-standing frustration, and I am committed to resolving that, but I want to be sure that we do this effectively so that we do not have to revisit it because we have not got it right the first time.

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): This Government's attitude to school funding is woeful. Talk about last minute! Schools are struggling to cope with a 5% funding shortfall as a result of the Chancellor's decision to increase national insurance and teachers' pension contributions. Does the Secretary of State not recognise that pupil numbers are rising and that the shortage of teachers is growing? Will she put money into helping schools in the new formula? Only this Government could have the audacity to deliver real-terms cuts to school budgets across the country and claim that it represented fair funding. Will the Secretary of State publish in the Library of the House the amount that each local authority has received under the existing funding formula and the amount that it will receive following today's announcement?

**Justine Greening**: The hon. Lady has asked a range of questions. In summary, I have made it clear in my written statement today that no authority will lose funding either for schools or for high needs. This will enable us to give authorities a firm foundation on which to start planning for next year. The reality is that we have seen funding for schools and across education rising. This has been one of the areas that this Government and the coalition Government have sought to protect, and that has been evidenced in the results. We now have 1.4 million more children in good or outstanding schools, and we want that progress to continue.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): Schools in Staffordshire are among the lowest funded in the country, and that is a matter of great concern for the headteachers I met last week. We understood that we were moving to a fairer funding formula from 2017-18, but it now seems that it will happen a year later. Will the Secretary of State make it absolutely clear that there could be transitional funding for 2017-18 for those authorities that are in a desperate position, as Staffordshire is?

**Justine Greening:** I recognise the pressures that my hon. Friend has just set out. This now gives us time to look at how we can deal effectively with those issues. We should also recognise that, while some schools are disadvantaged by the current formula, there will also be changes for schools under the new formula, and this gives us a chance to work effectively with them to ensure that there is a sensible and measured transition from the historical approach to the fairer, sensible approach that we are introducing.

**Mr Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op):** Prior to the Secretary of State's appointment, the noises coming out of the Department for Education suggested that London schools, in particular, would be seriously hit by the changes to the funding formula. Schools in Harrow have been advised that they will face a real-terms budget cut of between 3% and 8% as a result of the changes that her Department is considering. Can she offer any reassurance to the headteachers and parents in my constituency that that will not be the case?

**Justine Greening:** I have set out the details in my statement today of how we are going to proceed. As the hon. Gentleman says, some schools will see a change in the funding they receive as a result of our evening up the system and making it fairer, and these are important changes. It is therefore right that we should give ourselves the time to ensure that we can be effective in helping schools to deal with the changes well through a steady transition.

**Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con):** Given the optimism that schools in Chippenham felt on hearing the announcement of a fairer funding formula to rectify the ludicrous situation in which Wiltshire pupils receive over £2,000 less than pupils in other areas, will the Secretary of State confirm her commitment to the people of Wiltshire, including the 8,000 who signed my fairer funding petition?

**Justine Greening:** I can indeed; we are going to get on with this funding formula. To tie my hon. Friend's point together with that of the hon. Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas), we now have a school funding system and a funding formula, but we also introduced the pupil premium, so we have additional mechanisms to ensure that the funding follows disadvantaged pupils with additional needs. We are now trying to get a system in place that is sensible about the core funding that schools receive and not based on frankly very old data. At the same time, the system should take account of the fact that we are able to top up through the pupil premium and other funding mechanisms when we particularly want to tackle disadvantage.

**Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):** Will the Secretary of State confirm that, behind the warm words of fairer funding, school funding is still set to be cut by some 8% by 2020, as confirmed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and that is coming at the same time as we see the threat of falling teacher numbers? Over a third of the children in this country currently leave school without five good GCSEs. Will she also confirm whether my local authority in Hounslow will see a funding cut? When will it know?

**Justine Greening:** I have been clear that no local authority will see a reduction in funding for 2017-18. My announcement today was clear that we will ensure that we have the time to bring in the fair funding formula effectively. The hon. Lady should not forget that, as I have set out, the introduction of the pupil premium means that we now have an additional £2.5 billion that will be specifically targeted to ensure that disadvantaged children get an additional top-up so that their schools can provide additional support.

**Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con):** I am delighted by the Secretary of State's commitment to fair funding, which we clearly must get right, but I urge her to look urgently at transitional arrangements for counties such as West Sussex, which so desperately needs funding.

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend makes his point clearly. I assure him that we will look at a sensible approach for the transition period of 2017-18.

**Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD):** As a former Select Committee colleague, I am delighted to see the Secretary of State in her new place and congratulate her. I urge her not to follow the example of her two predecessors; she should build a strong relationship with headteachers and teachers.

Will the Secretary of State make it absolutely clear that the pupil premium, which is hugely important for targeting funding at the most disadvantaged, will be protected in real terms when the changes are actually made?

**Justine Greening:** I remember my time on the Work and Pensions Committee with the hon. Gentleman with real fondness; I very much enjoyed it and learned a lot over those years. He mentions headteachers and teachers, and one of the first things that I did upon coming into this role was to pick up the phone and call the teaching unions to introduce myself and to set up initial meetings. I saw them briefly yesterday and I hope that I can have a constructive, productive relationship. The most important people who helped me to get educated were my teachers, to whom I will be eternally grateful. It is important that that is recognised.

On the pupil premium, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the funding rates are protected for the entire spending review period at 2015-16 rates.

**Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con):** Like me, my right hon. Friend was educated in a comprehensive school in Rotherham, so I warmly welcome her to her new role. While we can adjust the school funding formula in the short term, does she agree that the only way to increase school resources in the long term is to have a strong and growing economy?

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend hits the nail on the head. I am proud that both of us went through the state school system in Rotherham. I hope to be able to go back up there in the coming weeks and months to revisit some of the schools that enabled me to have the education that gave me a platform to try to reach some of the goals that I set myself. As he says, a strong economy is vital for ensuring not only that we have the funding to invest in our education system, but that the

[*Justine Greening*]

children coming through our state school system have the opportunities to stretch themselves and to get the dignity of work.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I have written to the Secretary of State today and she will be receiving a letter shortly, so I hope that she will keep an eye out for it over the coming days.

Under the formula proposed by f40—the campaign for so-called fairer funding in schools—schools in north-east Lincolnshire suffer a £2.1 million cut, equivalent to over £100 per pupil a year. Does the Secretary of State agree that any formula that takes resources away from my constituency, in which no secondary school is currently rated outstanding, cannot be described as fair?

**Justine Greening:** I agree with the hon. Lady that, over time, the current formula had simply become out of date. It was based on statistics that needed to be updated but, in essence, could not be, so it was time to take a fresh look at how we could make it fair. Her second point about focusing our efforts on the remaining parts of the UK where our education system is simply not delivering for our children is vital, and I do plan to focus on this.

**Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): My constituency contains significant areas of deprivation where there is underperformance, particularly among white working-class boys. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that nothing in this formula will have an adverse impact on the urban and deprived areas in my constituency?

**Justine Greening:** I have set out how local authorities, including my hon. Friend's, will not be seeing a reduction in funding for 2017-18. Targeting the parts of our country where children are just not getting the start they deserve and need in order to do well in life will be central to my efforts, alongside making sure that we continue to lift outcomes for children overall across the rest of the country.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I warmly welcome the Secretary of State to her post and the other new Minister, the skills Minister, as well as some of the old team. I chair the advisory council of the Sutton Trust, and we look forward to working positively and creatively with the Secretary of State. May I remind her that England is a vast society that is changing all the time? Other Governments, including Labour Governments, have not cracked the problem of getting the funding to the right places at the right time, so will she consider having an independent group, even a commission, to look at this, year on year, month on month, so that we get it right? That is just a germ of an idea, but will she consider it, because we all get this wrong at some stage?

**Justine Greening:** I make two points in response to the hon. Gentleman's important point. First, we have to make sure that although we set policy at the Whitehall level, we understand how best to ensure it can have the impact we seek at the individual child level. That is not always easy. We can learn from examples such as city deals, where local areas have taken ownership of physical

infrastructure to make sure that there is a common plan that the Government nationally are investing in alongside a local plan. His point is a really strong one.

Secondly, I want my Department to be a central engine for social mobility more broadly. We need to challenge ourselves across government, and the Department for Education has a key role to play in this in saying that not only do we want children to be coming out of our schools better educated, but we want to make sure that the jobs and careers are there for them to be able to make the most of their potential. In the end, a country's most important asset is its people, which is why I am so delighted I am in the job I am in.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): May I highlight to my right hon. Friend that Kettering has 8,879 primary places, rising to 9,677 by 2021, and 6,700 secondary places, rising to 7,637 by 2021? The county council says that all places will be full by the 2017-18 academic year. Will she ensure that when she looks at the issue of fairer funding, counties such as Northamptonshire and places such as Kettering, which have some of the fastest rates of house building in the whole country, get the funding they need to make sure we have enough school places for our children?

**Justine Greening:** My hon. Friend raises the important issue that alongside many of the reforms we have introduced, a demographic shift is taking place which means we simply need to scale up our education system to keep pace with the number of children who need it. We have created 600,000 school places, but we need to do more. I assure him that the funding formula statement that I am setting out today means we are in a better position going forward as we introduce it to make sure fair funding follows the child, including in Kettering.

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): I warmly congratulate the Secretary of State on her appointment, and she is absolutely right not to rush this, because getting the new formula wrong would be a disaster. The previous Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for East Surrey (Mr Gyimah), offered at the Select Committee to meet me and my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns), who is in his place, to discuss the case for a rapid pupil turnover factor in the new formula. Will she confirm that that offer still stands and let us know which member of her team that meeting should now be with?

**Justine Greening:** That offer does still stand. I will get back to the right hon. Gentleman when we have worked out which Minister will attend the meeting.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Following on from my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone), more and more parents in many parts of my constituency are finding it difficult to get their child into the school of their choice. Just to give one example, there is a desperate need for more secondary school places in Wharfedale in my constituency. May I ask the Secretary of State, whom I very warmly welcome to her new role, to look at the need for school places in the Shipley constituency and ensure that my parents can get their children into the school of their choice, because at the moment, for many of them, that is a distant dream?

**Justine Greening:** Again, this is an incredibly fundamental and important issue. I simply assure my hon. Friend that I am well aware of the need to ensure that, alongside all the other changes that are rippling through the education system, we have enough places for the children of our country, that we have enough teachers who can be in those classrooms teaching them, and that those teachers are outstanding and excellent and able to excite children in the classroom, help them learn and give them that best start in life.

**Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab):** I, too, welcome the Secretary of State to her place. I am sure that she is looking forward to her appearances before the Education Committee, probably starting in the autumn.

Fairer funding inherently means a process of redistribution, and many schools, heads and governors whose budgets are already at the margins and who are possibly looking forward to a 1.5% per pupil cut will be looking at that with real trepidation, particularly if they are already in receipt of tight budgets. There is a great deal of social need in an awful lot of schools in constituencies such as mine. It is mainly a shire county appeal that has come from the f40, and an awful lot of schools in the inner cities are wondering whether they will be on the receiving end of a cut.

**Justine Greening:** I recognise what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I underline the rationale behind why we introduced the pupil premium in the first place, which was to address many of the points that he has made. His comments underline why I am setting out this statement today. It is a substantial change in funding for all schools and therefore, ultimately, we need to get it right.

**Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab):** I, too, welcome the Secretary of State to her role, and welcome the inclusion of skills in her brief, as it has been too far from the centre of education policy recently.

Following on from the question of my fellow Hounslow colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Seema Malhotra), will implementation of fairer

funding in Hounslow mean even greater cuts from 2018? Will the Secretary of State reassure the heads that we met a couple of weeks ago, as they are already having to make cuts to things such as A-level options, support for children with special needs, mental health counselling and support and so on?

**Justine Greening:** As I set out in my statement today, we will be launching a consultation on the detail of how we plan to introduce the funding formula. That will give both the hon. Lady and her local schools and teachers ample opportunity to be able to feed in their local perspective.

**Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab):** Representing as I do a cross-borough constituency, I know the unfairness of the current system. It cannot be fair that a child from Reddish in Stockport receives less funding than a child from Denton in Tameside—areas that share the same socio-economic characteristics, but are in different local authorities. Will the Secretary of State's new fairer funding formula ensure that those children in Reddish are not disadvantaged just because they are in a more prosperous borough overall, and that their funding will be matched to those of the children in Denton?

**Justine Greening:** I think that I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that the funding formula will start to iron out those sorts of inequities. Once we launch the second phase consultation, he will be interested to see the criteria and characteristics that we will incorporate to help ensure that we have a fairer approach on funding for schools in the future than we have had in the past. I will also set out for him the architecture of what we are trying to achieve. If we want to overlay significant additional resources in relation to deprivation, we want to do it in a smarter way and we want to use things such as the pupil premium to do it effectively. We recognise that we also need to have an element of understanding about the attainment, the eligibility for free school meals and other characteristics in the core funding formula too.

## Business of the House

11 am

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House give us the business for September?

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr David Lidington)**: The business for the week commencing 5 September will include:

MONDAY 5 SEPTEMBER—Remaining stages of the Finance Bill (day 1).

TUESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER—Opposition day (7th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER—A debate on a motion on scamming and its effect on vulnerable individuals, followed by a debate on a motion on the fourth industrial revolution. Both subjects were determined by the Backbench Business Committee.

FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER—The House will not be sitting.

The provisional business for the week commencing 12 September will include:

MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER—Remaining stages of the Wales Bill.

I should also like to inform the House that the business in Westminster Hall for 5, 8 and 12 September will be:

MONDAY 5 SEPTEMBER—A debate on an e-petition relating to EU referendum rules.

THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER—A debate on the missing Chibok schoolgirls in Nigeria.

MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER—A debate on an e-petition relating to South Korea and the dog meat trade.

As this is the last business questions before the summer recess, may I not only wish colleagues in all parts of the House a restful recess and plenty of scope for constituency duties, but thank in particular the hard-working staff of this House, who serve Members of all political parties professionally and with dedication? I thank especially those who are retiring or otherwise leaving the service of the House at this recess. I hope I speak for Members on all sides when I say that Members in particular want to say a big thank you to Noeleen Delaney, one of the stalwarts of the Tea Room staff, who is retiring from the House of Commons after 30 years of service here. That is a record of service for which we are all very grateful.

**Paul Flynn**: It is a great pleasure to echo the words of the Leader of the House, particularly concerning Noeleen Delaney, who we all know as a valued friend, adviser and comforter over many, many years, and all the other members of staff who serve us so faithfully. After the recent days, we might consider accelerating progress on making this place a habitable accommodation for staff, many of whom have suffered severely in the recent heat, and perhaps we are thinking of following your example, Mr Speaker, of having less formal dress, which members of staff are forced to wear and which must be very uncomfortable at this time of the year.

It is right to note that we have lost the previous Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), now the Secretary of State for Transport. I regard it as a bit of a challenge—I have

to pay tribute to his services, which were considerable over his period as Leader of the House. All these bouts of Question Time between Leader of the House and shadow Leader of the House have their own personality. We remember with fondness the number of questions that the previous Leader of the House answered; his answers were occasionally related to the questions asked. What we will miss is the rapier-like wit of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), striking against the steamroller solidity of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell.

It is, however, an undiluted pleasure to welcome the present Leader of the House, but I fear, as a long admirer of his, that his political career might not be on an upward trajectory in this appointment, because his career has been blighted by his solid devotion to the three R's—rationality, restraint and reasonableness—which are not attributes that go well in his party at the moment. He was a splendid spokesman on European affairs, and the voice of sanity on so many issues, and I am sure that we look forward to his continuing with his restrained and mature performances at Question Time.

The right hon. Gentleman is also, I am told by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), the supreme champion on the television programme “University Challenge”. Not only did he win splendidly in his own time, but when he came back for a challenge of challenges, he was the supreme winner. It is great to know that he is doing this job from the platform of his own scholarship and knowledge. I believe that it is going to be a vintage year and a vintage period for a leadership of the House.

We have the Welsh Bill returning. It is a great shame that we did not get it right the first time. Welsh Bills are not just for St David's day; they are for eternity, and we keep having them, and oh that we had got it right the first time. I am afraid that when the first Welsh Bill was introduced in the '90s, the attitude of this House to devolution reflected the fact that it was not then a popular cause; but although it is now universally accepted, devolution to Wales is still seen as a grudging gift—it is doled out in small parcels, a little bit at a time, and some is then pulled back. I hope that the generosity of the Government, in seemingly becoming completely converted to the idea of devolution, will be expressed in this Bill, with the support of all parties, and will help to serve the wellbeing of the people of Wales.

Baroness Altmann made a contribution this morning about her resignation, and I believe that all parties in the House should listen carefully to what she said. She gave as her reason for retiring that the parties—her party, which is the Conservative party, but this is also true of the Labour party—pay too much attention to their internal divisions, to the detriment of policy making. That is a very penetrating criticism of both the Conservative and the Labour party, which we would all do well to heed.

As we look forward to the new Session of Parliament, we should bear in mind the dreadful event that still casts a terrible shadow over this place. The family of Parliament was bereaved by the cowardly, brutal murder of one of our family members, Jo Cox, and the grief is still raw. We could do no better than ensure that our work here is illuminated and inspired by her thought: there are more things that unite us than divide us.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the shadow Leader of the House. The Leader of the House is indeed perhaps our most illustrious egghead.

**Mr Lidington:** Mr Speaker, I am not sure how I respond to that compliment. I have felt, as a student of Elizabethan history, that the last three or four weeks have been the closest thing to living through one of the crises of the 16th-century Tudor court that any of us is likely to experience, and I suspect that events in British politics this year will have given Hilary Mantel ample material for her next trilogy.

I thank the hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) for his warm welcome to me and for the deserved tribute that he paid to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who indeed did act as a champion of the House, not just in the Chamber, but in the many exchanges behind the scenes that fall to the Leader of the House. I, I hope on behalf of the House, wish him well in his new responsibilities.

Listening to the shadow Leader of the House, I felt that the three R's he laid out before us—reasonableness, rationality and restraint—summed up our Prime Minister's approach to Government and to politics. In fact he may have presented us with a motto for my right hon. Friend's Administration and approach to Government.

The shadow Leader of the House is a man of undimmed ambition who has leapfrogged on to the Opposition Front Bench after so many years of parliamentary experience, and for whom two shadow Cabinet roles are just a bagatelle—something with which he can easily cope. I think his ambition should not be restrained, even now. I have been studying his remarks and I note that he said of the Leader of the Opposition that it is very difficult to see how he can unite the Labour party, and he said:

“We're in the worst position we've been in the whole history of the...party”.

I think there is an embryonic leadership campaign there. I would encourage the hon. Gentleman to disregard any taunts and to throw his hat into the ring while there is still time.

On the serious point that the hon. Gentleman made about the legacy of Jo Cox, the security risks that Members face need to be considered very carefully and action needs to be taken. Without going into details on the Floor of the House, I can say that there has been agreement among members of the House of Commons Commission that new measures should be taken. We will be able to go into further details very soon after the House returns in September.

Finally, I hope that Members of every political party would look to Jo Cox and see someone—whether we agreed or disagreed with her on a particular issue—who was motivated above all by a drive to improve the lot of the people whom she served in her constituency, nationally and globally. In that sense, I think there could be few finer examples for us to follow.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his deserved promotion to the position of Leader of the House. May we have an early debate about the troubles of Southern rail, which are causing significant problems not only for commuters south of London, but for my constituents

coming in from Leighton Buzzard? Does he agree that the way to relieve the problems of commuters south of London is not to wreck the rail service north of London, but to pay attention to what needs to be done south of the river?

**Mr Lidington:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and the new Rail Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), have already met the operators responsible for Southern train services and Network Rail. They have emphasised the need for the operators to work with the trade unions to try to find a rapid and full solution to the current dispute, which is causing misery to many thousands of passengers every day. The Secretary of State is making the issue his personal priority and I hope very much that there will be a satisfactory resolution soon.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I thank the new Leader of the House for announcing the business for the week that we return after recess. I warmly welcome him to his new role. He comes with a huge reputation of working consensually across the House, and he is also known as one of the House's truly nice guys. Scottish National party Members are investing a lot of faith in him and we have great ambitions that he will be a reforming Leader of the House.

May I gently suggest a couple of places where the new Leader of the House might want to start? First, get rid of English votes for English laws. It is absolutely loathed in every part of this House other than in the confines of the Conservative party. It is totally associated with his predecessor. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to unite the House again around one class of Member of Parliament. Do not divide us by nationality or geography. That should be his first task.

Secondly, what about the procedures of this House? Did you know, Mr Speaker, that we waste one day a week by just voting in this House? That is an absurd waste of time. Bring this House into the 21st century.

Next, I turn to the circus down the corridor. What always gets me is that all these Tory Brexit dudes go on about imaginary unelected European bureaucrats, but down the corridor there are actual unelected Lords. Come on, new Leader of the House; let us make some progress towards abolishing them.

You will have noticed, Mr Speaker, all the small children with Scottish accents who have been kicking around the House recently. That is because the Scottish schools have been on holiday for almost three weeks. The Leader of the House saw an example of this recently, when he had to come to the Scottish Affairs Committee. He spent an hour in the charming company of Rebecca and Harris, the lovely children of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman), because she had nowhere else to put them.

We are in recess for almost three months of the year. Surely, it is not beyond the wit of a member of staff in the office of the Leader of the House to design the summer recess to accommodate all the school holidays of the United Kingdom, not just the Scottish ones. My hon. Friends had to leave their children at 10 o'clock on Monday evening so that they could vote against the evil

[Pete Wishart]

weapons of mass destruction, bringing to life our slogan, “Bairns not bombs”. Something has to be done about that.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, may I wish you and all the staff a fantastic recess? I pay tribute to Noeleen Delaney, who has served us all with such professionalism over, I believe, the past 30 years. I also say, “Have a happy civil war” to my friends in the Labour party over the summer. I do not know what we will be returning to—whether it will be just one Labour party, or whether a social democratic and Blairite party will emerge—but all I can say is that we will be back as the real and effective Opposition come September.

**Mr Lidington:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome, and I look forward to working with him and with members of his party in my new capacity. On English votes for English laws, as I said when I gave evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee earlier this week, the Government review promised by my predecessor will start 12 months after the introduction of the EVEL procedures. The Select Committee on Procedure has also said that it is undertaking a review of these arrangements. I think the sensible thing is to see how the new EVEL arrangements go for the first year, take stock of what the Government and the Procedure Committee conclude, and come to a decision at that point.

On the hon. Gentleman’s question about voting procedures, although I can understand the point that he is making—for those of us who went through the Aye Lobby on Monday, it took a lot longer than it would have done to go through the No Lobby with him—there are advantages, as well as drawbacks, to our current arrangements. I would not lightly want to lose the opportunity for Back-Bench Members from all parts of the House to grab hold of Ministers, at a time when no civil servants are present, to make representations on behalf of their constituents. Having looked at voting procedures in the European Parliament and elsewhere, I do not think that they are perfect either. I was told earlier this morning that in the New Zealand Parliament, the Government Chief Whip can cast a vote recording the votes of his entire parliamentary party. I suspect that such simplification would not command widespread support, although it might appeal to those who are sitting to my right.

On recess dates, I undertake to have another look at the matter. I understand the problems that the current arrangements cause for colleagues from Scotland and Northern Ireland, but even now it is not the case that our current recess arrangements suit parents with children at schools in different local authorities in various parts of England. I think it will be very difficult ever to craft a system of recess dates that gives everybody everything that they would like to see, but I will take a fresh look at that in view of what the hon. Gentleman has urged.

**Nick Herbert** (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend, but will he resist the attempt by SNP Members to urge less EVEL? Many Conservative Members would like much more EVEL.

I echo the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) about Southern. Will the Leader of the House ensure

that we have a debate in Government time about the appalling situation that my constituents and those of many other Members face because of the disruption on Southern? Will he urge our right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary to do everything he can to sort this out, and ensure that he is fully apprised of the real causes of the disruption at the moment? Although the causes include network failures, the principal one is what is in effect a work to rule driven by the rail unions, which are resisting perfectly sensible changes in the rail industry.

**Mr Lidington:** It is true that if the trade unions returned fully to work, that would ease the situation enormously to the benefit both of passengers using Southern services and, as our hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire pointed out, of passengers elsewhere whose services are being interrupted to try to give extra support to Southern. I undertake to contact the Transport Secretary and to make him aware of the points raised by my right hon. Friend. I hope that by the time we return in September, this dispute will be over and services will have been restored to an acceptable level so that we will not need to have such a debate. I am sure the Secretary of State will want to consider carefully the points my right hon. Friend has made.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Fear, pressure and unrealistic expectations are the words that workers at Sports Direct use about their employment. May we have a debate on zero-hours contracts and the exploitation of workers in the retail industry, where something is going badly wrong?

**Mr Lidington:** The management of Sports Direct have given evidence to one of our Select Committees, and its report will no doubt inform debate in the House in the future. I must say to the hon. Gentleman that this Government legislated to outlaw exclusivity clauses in zero-hours contracts. For all the protestations from Opposition Members, no such action was taken during the 13 years of Labour Government.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): A terrible school bus accident happened at the Cotterstock crossroads in my constituency last Thursday. Thankfully, everybody has now been discharged from hospital. Will the Leader of the House send his best wishes to the parents, pupils and teachers of Prince William School and Oundle Primary School? Will he join me in calling on Northamptonshire County Council to review the situation at the crossroads? At the same time, will he thank our remarkable emergency services for all they did? May we have a debate on our return to congratulate them on their efforts?

**Mr Lidington:** I am sure my hon. Friend’s constituents will appreciate the tribute he has paid to his local emergency services. I certainly send my best wishes to the two schools concerned and to all who were caught up in the accident. It is obviously for the county council to decide whether it wishes to review the highways issues involved, but in view of what has happened, it would be sensible for any local authority to take a fresh look at such things. With regard to a debate, I am sure my hon. Friend is already skilled enough in how to seek Adjournment debates to raise constituency issues of this type.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): Harold Wilson said that a week is a long time in politics, but with recent events in this place, it feels as though 10 minutes is a long time in politics. However, time is of the essence for the Backbench Business Committee. I welcome the Leader of the House to his place and thank him for confirming the business on 8 September. To be able to decide about Back-Bench debates on 15 September, if we are to be allocated time on that day, we will have to do so on Tuesday 6 September. Will he confirm that day through the usual channels—as soon as possible, please—so that we can do that on 6 September?

**Mr Lidington:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome. I will certainly make sure that the Backbench Business Committee gets proper notice so that it is able to plan.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I am somewhat worried about the Europe Minister—sorry, the Leader of the House. Since his appointment to that role, he has had a rather nasty gash on his forehead. A nasty rumour has been going around that when he was appointed the Prime Minister said to him, “I have some good news, David. You will no longer be the Minister for Europe,” to which he replied, “That’s great; I won’t have to answer questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers), for Kettering (Mr Hollobone), for Bury North (Mr Nuttall), for Shipley (Philip Davies) and for Wellingborough (Mr Bone),” but when she told him that instead he was going to be Leader of the House, he started banging his head against the wall. Will he confirm that that is not true? I warmly welcome him to his post.

**Mr Lidington:** I confirm that it is not true, and nor is the gash the product of a farewell visit to the European Scrutiny Committee. I am always overcome with joy in the company of my hon. Friend and our other hon. Friends whom he mentioned. Even where, as was the case over the issue of Europe, there are genuine principled differences between us, it is important that in this place we acknowledge that those differences are held honestly, honourably and on a principled basis. We should respect one another even when our views differ profoundly.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): I join in the hymns of welcome to the new Leader of the House. When might we have a debate about the Government’s new life chances strategy and how it might help children of alcoholics? Like many other hon. Members I am the child of an alcoholic and grew up knowing what that particular hell is like. But I was lucky. Overall, children of alcoholics are three times more likely to contemplate suicide and to become alcoholics themselves. This issue is no longer marginal. It affects 2.5 million children in our country, which means that one in five children are the innocent victims of drink. We could not change things for our parents, but we can change things for our children. This Government could help, and we should debate how.

**Mr Lidington:** The right hon. Gentleman raises a very serious issue. Like many other Members, I suspect, I have come across some of the very serious problems he has described in my constituency casework. I undertake to let my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for

Education know about the priority the right hon. Gentleman places on the subject and I am sure he will get a response from the Department.

**Mr David Burrowes** (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): Following on from the point raised by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Liam Byrne), will the Leader of the House send out a search party to find the updated drugs strategy, as it has gone missing in Government? May we have a statement to reveal how the Government will tackle the growing funding crisis in residential rehab across our country, with cuts of more than 50% to drug treatment budgets? Some areas, such as Birmingham, are not making any referrals to residential rehab, which means the end of the life chances of many vulnerable adults.

**Mr Lidington:** My hon. Friend makes his point powerfully, and I shall draw his comments to the attention of the Secretary of State for Health.

**Sue Hayman** (Workington) (Lab): The EU Referendum Act 2016, which we debated in the last parliamentary Session, contains no requirement for the Government to implement the result of the referendum or for setting a time by when we should trigger article 50. A lot of constituents have come to see me because they are concerned about the implications of that. This week I met local farmers, who are particularly concerned about EU funding streams and are asking for assurance on that issue. Will the Leader of the House clarify whether we will have an opportunity to debate those very important matters as soon as possible after we return from the summer recess?

**Mr Lidington:** The principle of parliamentary sovereignty means that it is ultimately for Parliament to determine our membership of the European Union but the Government have consistently said and have acted on the basis that the referendum outcome would be decisive and they would honour the result, whatever it turned out to be. That is the approach that the Government intend to take; the country would expect no less.

The hon. Lady raised a serious point about agriculture. That is very much at the top of the priority list for the new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Along with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my right hon. Friend the Environment Secretary will be considering how to address the question of the next few years of farm funding while we are still in the EU, in particular for those programmes that might carry over beyond the actual date of exit. I am sure that Parliament will have opportunities to debate that and other matters soon after the recess, and of course my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union will have a dedicated Question Time, when the hon. Lady and others will be able to press him on such matters.

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the distribution of funds by local enterprise partnerships? The LEP in our area had Southend as No. 4 on its list and we have dropped off the radar dramatically. Something needs to be looked at there.

**Mr Lidington:** My understanding is that that was an internal decision by the local enterprise partnership for south Essex, and I encourage my hon. Friend to make representations—I am sure he will do—on behalf of his constituents to the LEP. If that is not successful, I am sure that the relevant Minister in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will be keen to hear from him.

**Jim Dowd** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): May I too welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his new post? I well recall the many happy although fruitless hours we spent together on the original European Union (Referendum) Bill. Whatever happened to that? May I support the hon. Members who have raised the issue of Southern Trains and the appalling service that Govia Thameslink Railway is providing? The Mayor of London has written to the Secretary of State for Transport to say that he is prepared to take on the Southern franchise. In arranging a debate in Government time on that matter, will the Leader of the House prevail on the Secretary of State to accept the Mayor's offer or at least to look into it in great detail?

**Mr Lidington:** I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will want to consider all options, but it is not the transfer of the franchise that is the answer: it is for the management to get on top of the operational difficulties that do exist and for management and unions to sort out the industrial dispute that is aggravating matters at the moment.

**Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): I echo the words of many right hon. and hon. Members in welcoming the Leader of the House to his post. I also welcome his deputy, and I am sure that they will make an excellent team.

I understand that the newly appointed Secretary of State for Transport is visiting Derby this afternoon to discuss the midlands engine. May we have a debate not just on improving the roads in the midlands, but on ensuring that the rail industry is given the same level of investment? It is also important to note that "midlands" means east as well as west midlands.

**Mr Lidington:** I thank my hon. Friend for her words of welcome to my hon. Friend the Deputy Leader of the House and me.

Yes is my answer. The very fact that the Transport Secretary is visiting Derby today, so early in his tenure, is a visible demonstration that the midlands engine is about the east midlands just as much as the west midlands. The strategy that the Government plan to have in place by March next year is multimodal, in the jargon—it will cover rail as well as roads.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): When my constituent, Mrs Clark, became a kinship carer on the tragic death of her daughter, the backdating of child tax credit payments beyond three months was only done after a protracted process culminating in two appeals to the Adjudicator's Office, adding to the stress on the family. Will the Leader of the House set aside Government time for a debate on the payment of child and other relevant benefits to new carers after a lone parent dies?

**Mr Lidington:** The details that the hon. Gentleman has given about that particular case concern me, and I am sure that the relevant Minister in the Department for Work and Pensions will be happy to look into it to see whether anything went wrong in the system.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend to his place. I wonder whether he has had a chance to look at early-day motion 351 in my name regarding the persecution of religious minorities in Bangladesh.

*[That this House condemns the recent killings of innocent Hindu priests in Bangladesh; urges the government of Bangladesh to take strong steps to tackle the increasing levels of violence against minority Hindu communities in the region and ensure their safety and security; and urges the Government to encourage the government of Bangladesh to put perpetrators of violence against religious minorities in the region on trial as soon as possible.]*

This week, I hosted a meeting commemorating the Jagannath Hall massacre 45 years ago. Still we see Hindu priests murdered and other religious minorities massacred. May we have a debate in Government time on reordering the overseas development aid we give to Bangladesh, so that more money is aimed at the security of minorities rather than just capacity building?

**Mr Lidington:** I will draw the attention of the Secretary of State for International Development to my hon. Friend's last point. Bangladesh is experiencing a wave of violent terrorism driven by Islamist extremism that is targeting religious and ethnic minorities, as well as LGBT people and independent journalists and editors. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and his team at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are in regular contact with Ministers at all levels in the Bangladesh Government. We will continue to do everything we can to try to help the Bangladesh Government to bring about an end to these appalling incidents.

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I detect a new acronym creeping into Government language: PBO. That does not stand for the Public Bill Office, but post-Brexit opportunities. One of the most important tools for business is connectivity, whether from Scotland, Northern Ireland or the regions into London, or from London to international markets. If we are going to maximise Britain's opportunities, we need the Government response to the Davies commission. It is long overdue and the Prime Minister ducked it yesterday. Will the Leader of the House—I welcome him and his deputy to their new positions and wish them success—tell us whether he has had any indication from No. 10 or the Department for Transport that we might have a statement in September, rather than later?

**Mr Lidington:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome. The new Transport Secretary and the new Prime Minister will obviously want to brief themselves thoroughly on the Davies commission conclusions and the other issues around this very important decision. I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister believes it would be right to take the decision as soon as possible. As soon as the Government are in a position to make a statement to the House, we will do so.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): I am delighted that my right hon. Friend is in his post, as I am that the Deputy Leader is in his post. I welcome him to the Front Bench. May we have a debate on the welfare of dogs? There is much material that could be used in such a debate, such as: the appalling practice of dogfighting; the terrible distress caused by the theft of dogs, which has happened to a number of my constituents; and the great deal of distress experienced by dogs left in cars during very hot weather. Last weekend, the RSPCA's 24-hour emergency helpline received 106 reports of dogs left in hot environments. I suspect that that figure will be much higher for this week, which has been unseasonably hot. May we have a debate to draw attention to the welfare of dogs and how such things can cause unnecessary distress?

**Mr Lidington:** My hon. Friend raises an important issue for those of us who are concerned about animal welfare. In his reference to how people sometimes leave pet dogs in cars in hot weather, he alighted on the fact that often for such issues it is not a matter of a need for new legislation, but a matter of people recognising that they have a responsibility to care for the animals they own. If a debate enables my hon. Friend to highlight that, I can see the benefit of such a debate taking place. I would direct him towards either the Adjournment debate process or the Backbench Business Committee, where he might find those opportunities.

**Mark Durkan** (Foyle) (SDLP): I congratulate the Leader of the House, and may I congratulate him on winning next year's prize for the most reduced carbon footprint? May I also join in the tributes to Noeleen Delaney who, like all the staff in the House, serves us with dedication and discretion. She is ready with consideration and chat, but—typical of Donegal decency—never gossip.

Will the Leader commission a study of how many amendments and groups of amendments this Chamber discharges without any debate whatever, leaving it to the unelected fur-ocrats up the building here to get the enhanced reputation as the revising Chamber and the key amending Chamber? In this age of taking back control, can this Chamber take more control of the legislation that passes through Parliament?

**Mr Lidington:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome. He raises an important point. Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that Bills brought to the House are technically sound, that the policy has been properly worked out and that there is no ambiguity about the intention of particular clauses. The House collectively then has a responsibility, through the programming process, to ensure that Bills are properly debated and that we do not waste time simply scoring party political points, particularly in Committee and on Report. It then has a responsibility to allocate time fairly so that all aspects of the Bill can be properly considered. There are lessons for the Government but also for the House collectively on how we might do our job better.

**Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): Many constituents have raised with me the awareness and treatment of Lyme disease, with which I was recently diagnosed after a constituent came to my surgery and

raised my own awareness of the symptoms. There is a stark issue here concerning both awareness and clarity about the treatment that is available and should be used. Will the Leader of the House please consider a debate in Government time on this important issue?

**Mr Lidington:** I am aware from a constituency case of my own of some of the uncertainties regarding the available treatments. I will make sure that the relevant Health Minister is aware of my hon. Friend's concern and responds to her.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): I congratulate the Leader of the House on his appointment. There seems to be a growing consensus across the House in opposition to the proposals by the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne) to privatise Channel 4. Most recently, we heard the right hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), the former Culture Minister, on Radio 4 yesterday. When will the Secretary of State come to the House with a statement confirming that this valuable asset will be kept in public ownership?

**Mr Lidington:** This will be one of the many items on the agenda of my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. I am sure she will want to spend the summer considering this and other matters and then report her decisions to the House as soon as she is able.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I also welcome the Leader of the House and his deputy. May we have a debate on the better care fund and, in particular, how it applies in Staffordshire? We have seen £15 million not given to the county council, as a result of which services such as drug and alcohol services—already referred to by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Liam Byrne) and my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes)—and numbers of health visitors are set to be drastically reduced.

**Mr Lidington:** A balance needs to be struck between the responsibility of central Government to set the overall budget for local authorities and the national health service and those of local authorities and NHS managers to ensure that their services are structured in a way that maximises the value received for each pound spent. That sometimes means a need for significant reforms in how services are delivered, but I take note of what my hon. Friend says about Staffordshire. I am sure he will want to seize the opportunity during Health Question Time and Communities and Local Government Question Time, after we return, to make those points directly to the responsible Ministers.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I welcome the new Leader of the House to his position. He has the respect of the entire House because of the courteous way he always operated in his previous ministerial positions. I also pay tribute to Noeleen Delaney. Her 30 years of service in the House epitomise everything that is good about public service.

May we have a debate about the personal independence payments legislation? My constituent Caroline Davie was refused PIP because she had been out of the country for 54 weeks, when the legislation states that someone cannot be out of the country for more than 52. She was

[*Ian Murray*]

out of the country for 54 weeks because she was involved in a serious car accident in Australia seven months into a trip to Australia on a year-long visa. It took a long time in intensive care, a long time in the spinal injuries unit and a long time to co-ordinate both the specialist spinal unit in Glasgow and landing certificates in Dubai to get her home. This meant she was 54 weeks out of the country. This, surely, is not fair, and a reasonable person would see that it was not fair. She is now in a wheelchair, requiring additional support, so I hope that the Minister will be able to look at the situation.

**Mr Lidington:** I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks. Clearly, there have to be rules that govern the payment of all kinds of welfare benefits. The hon. Gentleman describes a case in which he felt there were powerful extenuating circumstances. If he writes to me with the details of the case, I shall refer it to the relevant Department for Work and Pensions Minister and ensure that he gets a response.

**Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con):** The Leader of the House is clearly enjoying his new role, and I warmly congratulate him on his appointment. The future of health care in Shropshire has been on hold for three years while a programme board, known as "Future Fit", deliberates on possible closures to A&E. It continues to be unable to reach a decision and seems to be in a state of near paralysis. This has cost over £3 million and caused real anxiety to my constituents and poor morale at the Princess Royal hospital in Telford. Please may we have a debate on the issue?

**Mr Lidington:** On the basis of my hon. Friend's description of the situation in Shropshire, it seems to me that what is needed is certainty that the local NHS management, including the senior clinicians who will be part of those teams, will decide on what they want and provide justification for any changes. As for a debate, this strikes me as something that might well fall within the scope of an Adjournment debate that either a ballot or Mr Speaker might be able to make available to my hon. Friend.

**Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab):** Today's Order Paper shows a written statement on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, although I do not think it has yet been published online. The Education, Skills and the Economy Sub-Committee has already expressed regret at the closure of the commission. Will the Leader of the House join me in commending its achievements, since its establishment in 2008, under its two chairmen, Sir Mike Rake and Sir Charlie Mayfield? In view of its record of independent analysis and advice to successive Governments, is it not a shame that the enthusiasm for independent analysis and advice of the Government who set up the commission is not shared by the current Government?

**Mr Lidington:** I am happy to join the right hon. Gentleman in expressing thanks to the commission and its leadership for all the work that they have done. It is also a fact, however, that from time to time, Governments

of all political colours need to review the institutions through which policy is delivered, and this is one of those occasions.

**Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con):** I welcome and congratulate the new Leader of the House and the Deputy Leader of the House on their well-deserved promotions. I look forward to my right hon. Friend's appearance before the Procedure Committee. May we have a debate on the ministerial statement issued by the Prime Minister on Monday about the changes to the machinery of government and, in particular, the establishment of the new Government Departments? This would give Members across the House an opportunity to consider what consequences flow from these changes. The Leader of the House briefly mentioned that time would be set aside for questions, but will it be a Question Time for one Department or each Department and how long will it be for? Are the Government going to create new Select Committees so that Back Benchers can scrutinise these new Departments? May we have a debate in Government time as soon as possible?

**Mr Lidington:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. I look forward to the opportunity of appearing before the European Scrutiny Committee—I mean the Procedure Committee.

**Mr Nuttall:** The right hon. Gentleman has been released from the European Scrutiny Committee.

**Mr Lidington:** I have indeed.

I have had a meeting with the Chair of the Procedure Committee, our hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker), and I hope that there will be a fruitful dialogue between my office and the Committee. I can confirm that there will be dedicated question times for the new Departments, and that a schedule of those question times should be available very soon, if it has not already been published. We shall also need to establish new Select Committees, and I hope that we can proceed with that as soon as possible in the autumn. Ultimately, however, it is a matter not for the Government, but for the House.

**Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP):** I, too, welcome the Leader of the House. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), who must be the longest-serving spokesperson for matters concerning the Leader of the House in this Parliament.

Will the Leader of the House take a fresh look at the Procedure Committee's report on private Members' Bills? The current system is completely discredited, despite the massive success of Scottish National party Members in the ballot. We urgently need a debate and a vote on reform, in Government time.

**Mr Lidington:** That is one of the issues that the Chairman of the Procedure Committee raised with me. I said that, as a new Leader of the House, I would take a fresh look at it, but, as I think the hon. Gentleman will understand, I am not going to make any commitments either way at this stage.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend and his Northamptonshire deputy, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton North (Michael Ellis), on their promotions.

As one of his first acts in office, will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement when we return from the recess on the financial situation of hospitals in high-growth areas? Kettering General Hospital is fantastic, and the directors, clinicians, nurses and ancillary staff do a tremendous job, but its financial deficit was £6.7 million last year, it is £11.2 million this year, and it is projected to be £15 million next year. Last year almost 400,000 people went to our local hospital for treatment, and the number of houses being built and the rise in the local population are placing an incredible strain on it. Something needs to be done, so will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State to make that statement?

**Mr Lidington:** I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome. As a Member who represents another high-growth area, I am very familiar with the issues that he has raised. Such issues need to be viewed holistically, because it is a question of looking not simply at the provision of hospital services but at the treatment of health services as a whole. Sometimes the pressures can be eased by some sensible reconfiguration of services overall, but account must be taken of the way in which medical science has moved on, and the fact that more people can now be treated as out-patients or day patients rather than having a long in-patient stay. However, I will draw my hon. Friend's points about Kettering to the attention of the Health Secretary.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): I, too, welcome the new Leader of the House.

In 2012, my 14-year-old constituent Elly Blacknell was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, and her treatment included having her leg amputated above the knee. Recently Elly relapsed and asked to re-access Mifamurtide, a drug that she had been prescribed but could not tolerate when she was younger. Her oncologist, Professor David Walker of Nottingham Children's Hospital, has acted as an advocate for her, but has been unable to find a way through the NHS system of funding, although Mifamurtide is the first drug to be launched specifically to deal with such tumours for 30 years. May we have a debate on the difficulties involved in introducing new drugs to treat rare tumours in children, which are so badly needed by remarkable young people like Elly?

**Mr Lidington:** For obvious reasons, I am not familiar with the case or the drug, but I will draw the hon. Lady's remarks to the attention of the responsible Health Minister. I also suggest that this is precisely the sort of subject for which an Adjournment debate in the autumn might be suitable.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): I, too, join in the congratulations to the Leader of the House and the deputy on their new roles. Earlier this week a critical report from the Care Quality Commission was published branding a care home in my constituency inadequate. This is a continuation of a number of serious and critical reports, some of which have resulted in the closure of care homes. May we have a debate about the criteria CQC operate and whether it has become more rigorous, or whether there has indeed been a decline in the standards in these care homes?

**Mr Lidington:** My hon. Friend makes a good case, and I hope he might want to take this subject to the Backbench Business Committee because the questions he raises will concern a large number of constituencies and many Members from all parties.

**Philip Boswell** (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP): Given the frightening rise in bigoted and racist incidents against EU nationals in the UK, will the Leader of the House call a debate on granting EU nationals living and working in the UK before 23 June the right to remain so we can push this Government to make the right decision and defeat growing racism and bigotry in this country?

**Mr Lidington:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been very clear indeed that our objective is that we should ensure there is indeed a legally binding agreement that people who are here lawfully are able to stay, and equally that British citizens who are lawfully resident in other EU member states should be able to continue living or studying or working there after we leave the EU. These are things that will have to be dealt with, I hope early on, in the forthcoming negotiations.

The physical attacks and the abuse—directed not just at EU nationals, but sometimes at people from other ethnic or religious minorities in this country—bring shame upon this country. All of us have a responsibility to denounce such behaviour and make it clear that it has no place whatsoever in our society, and I have always found that those hon. Members who have, for principled, honourable reasons, taken a stance opposing the UK's membership of the EU have also been vehement in saying this sort of behaviour has no place in the kind of society they want to see.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): May I also warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend and his deputy on their new appointments?

May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the manifesto commitment, which ought to now be honoured, on the 15-year rule for overseas voters? It is reckoned that 1 million people are disfranchised by this exemption, and it is a particularly sore subject among those living in the EU at the moment who were denied a vote in the referendum.

**Mr Lidington:** The Government remain committed to new legislation that will lift the 15-year bar, which was introduced by Mr Blair's Government. It is a complex matter because we would have to not just extend the franchise but establish a new system of voter registration, which is not straightforward given that voter registers no longer exist for periods that go back longer than 15 years. We have to find some way of allocating those individuals to constituencies and verifying a previous place of residence, but my hon. Friends at the Cabinet Office are at work on these matters already.

**Mr David Winnick** (Walsall North) (Lab): In view of what the Leader of the House said earlier, may I remind him that it was a Labour Government who introduced the national minimum wage against strenuous Tory opposition? I remember it well because I voted for the change.

[Mr David Winnick]

In view of the further situation in Turkey—the state of emergency, the thousands more teachers, academics, judges, journalists who are now being suspended from work, as well as the travel ban and all the other measures, apart from those who have been arrested—may we have a statement today on the situation, bearing in mind that the House will not be meeting again until 5 September? Will the British Government make it clear to the Turkish authorities that what is happening is causing deep concern in this country? It does not seem to be the most effective way of dealing with those who plotted the coup last week.

**Mr Lidington:** I would say to the hon. Gentleman that it was a Conservative Government who introduced the national living wage, and the Conservative-led coalition and the Conservative Government who have taken very large numbers of the lowest paid people in our society out of tax altogether. It was also a Conservative Government who led us to a situation in which there are 2.5 million more people in work than there were when the Labour party left office.

On Turkey, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. None of us would have wished to see a military coup succeed in that country. Equally, the political wellbeing of Turkey will be strengthened if it sticks by the principles of a plural society, multi-party democracy and respect for human rights. Those are principles to which the Turkish Government have committed themselves, not least through Turkey's membership of the Council of Europe and its participation in the EU accession process. That will be the approach we take in our partnership with Turkey.

**Steven Paterson** (Stirling) (SNP): I am organising a consultation in my constituency on the targeted reduction of VAT for businesses operating in the tourism sector. The policy operates in most parts of the EU, including Ireland, and it is very successful in drawing tourists to those areas to spend their money there. May we have a debate on this matter soon after the recess to discuss ways of helping to boost our tourism businesses?

**Mr Lidington:** The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make those arguments to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his team at Treasury questions. I understand the case that he is making, but the reality is that a VAT concession in one area means that the money has to be found from some other source of taxation.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): On behalf of the Democratic Unionist party, I also welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his new ministerial position and wish him well for the years ahead.

The death of the young soldier Joshua Hoole while on a training exercise in the Brecon Beacons has again raised the issue of the welfare of our soldiers. May I, on behalf of the whole House, convey to his fiancée and family our sincere sympathy? He was a soldier of immense courage, strength and ability, and we sorrow at his death. As the Leader of the House will know, the Defence Select Committee, of which I am a member, has recently made recommendations for training that included the establishment of a defence safety authority,

the introduction of a duty holder concept across the armed forces, and the recommendation that the Ministry of Defence should undertake to publicise these measures widely so that families can have confidence that, while military training might be hard and dangerous, the organisers of that training are known and accountable. We recommended that the changes should be put in place by 2017-18. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a ministerial statement on this matter in order to bring forward the timescale for implementation by the MOD?

**Mr Lidington:** I will report the hon. Gentleman's concerns to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. The death of that young soldier on 19 July was a tragedy, and the thoughts and sympathies of everyone in the House are with his family, friends and colleagues at what must be an appallingly difficult time for them. A civilian police investigation and a service inquiry into the tragedy are taking place, and it would clearly be wrong for me to speculate on the lessons to be learned until we know the outcome of those reports.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I recently convened a support and campaign group for the Women Against State Pension Inequality Campaign in West Lothian and Livingston. One of my constituents said that her divorce settlement was predicated on the age at which she would retire and get her pension, but that has now been moved by several years. Will the right hon. Gentleman, whom I welcome to his place, perhaps have a discussion with his colleague the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions about taking a fresh look at the issue in the hope that fresh eyes will not bring the same stale, old ideas but some justice for the WASPI women?

**Mr Lidington:** That is something that the House debated and voted on relatively recently, and I do not in any way want to suggest that there is likely to be a change in policy. Nevertheless, I will report the hon. Lady's concerns to my right hon. Friend at the Department for Work and Pensions.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I will just gently say that everybody will get in. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman), who is a very, very, very fine man, is the human equivalent of a smouldering volcano as he sits waiting to be called with ever-growing frustration at the fact that he has not yet been called. I simply say that the hon. Gentleman will get in. He has been here long enough to know that it did not always use to be that way and that people did not always get in. Much as I enormously admire the hon. Gentleman, he has—if I may politely say so—a slightly underdeveloped sense of others, and I cannot help but think that if he spoke three times in the day, he would think, “Why on earth didn't I get called to speak a fourth?” He will get in, but he will just have to be a bit patient. We are saving him up—he is a specialist delicacy in the House.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): I, too, welcome the new Leader of the House to his place.

Dr Kate Granger, an inspirational 34-year-old, is in a West Yorkshire hospice dying from terminal cancer. She started the “Hello, my name is...” campaign, a worldwide

initiative to encourage health professionals to introduce themselves and to treat all patients with dignity. This week she achieved her aim of raising £250,000 for a Yorkshire cancer charity, but her dying wish is to have the new Prime Minister endorse her campaign. Could the Leader of the House use his considerable powers of persuasion to facilitate this amazing lady's dying wish?

**Mr Lidington:** The case that the hon. Lady describes strikes me as inspiring, and I immediately want to pass on both sympathy and admiration to the young lady's family and friends. If the hon. Lady would like to write to me with the details, I will be in touch with the Prime Minister.

**Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): I found it positive to hear the Leader of the House condemn the racist incidents that have taken place since the EU referendum. It was unfortunate, however, that the Prime Minister did not take the opportunity on Wednesday to condemn the unforgivably racist language used in the past by the new Foreign Secretary. May we have a debate in Government time on the importance of reflecting carefully on the language that we use in our roles here and the impact that it has on other people?

**Mr Lidington:** As you regularly remind us, Mr Speaker, we must all bear in mind the impact that the language we choose has outside this building—even if the impact may sometimes be not what we intended. I have been genuinely shocked by the way in which in recent weeks decent, law-abiding people, who have been living here for 20 or 30 years in many cases, have been subjected to abuse or even worse. It is important that all of us, whichever political party we are from and whichever side we supported during the referendum campaign, come together to say that that type of behaviour has no place in our society.

**Mr Speaker:** I must tell the House that I have just been advised by a distinguished bewigged counsellor to the Chair that alternatives to “smouldering volcano” are “pregnant volcano” and “imminently explosive volcano”. I call Mr Barry Sheerman.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): As a genuine, authentic Back Bencher, may I welcome the Leader of the House to his position? I hope he will be a good force for making sure this is about business questions, rather than about some of the things that go on under the name of business questions. Mr Speaker called him an egghead earlier, and I hope that did not cause offence. Those who worked on the European private Member's Bill and watched him in action believe he must have had some training in acting and drama, as his gestures and everything he does at the Dispatch Box suggest that that is the case.

I was a smouldering volcano, Mr Speaker, because I wanted to say it is about time we had a major debate in this House on the barriers to people with autism living a full life. I chair the autism commission and we have just produced a fantastic report on the barriers in the health service to autistic people living a full life. Surely an early debate when we get back on that subject would be welcomed, even by the Speaker.

**Mr Lidington:** First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. I agree with him that, as a House and as a country, this question of giving greater opportunity to people with autistic spectrum disorders is something to which we should turn our attention. I hope this might be a matter that the Backbench Business Committee would see as a priority.

**Christina Rees** (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): I am more of a slow burner than a smouldering volcano, but I am still very passionate.

I welcome the new Leader of the House to his place. May I ask him for a debate in Government time, or a statement, on the effectiveness of the assessment process, the stability of mandatory reconsideration and the cost to the taxpayer of the tribunal appeals process for personal independence payments, because all of these things are causing great distress to claimants in Neath, in Wales and across the UK?

**Mr Lidington:** I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome. These are clearly matters that my colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions will wish to consider, and I will draw her remarks to their attention. I think that the quickest way to bring these matters before the House would be for her to raise them during the first DWP questions after we come back.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Last September, the Government announced that they were likely to publish the childhood obesity strategy “in the autumn”. Autumn came and went, as did winter and spring. At an urgent question you granted me kindly in May, Mr Speaker, the public health Minister stood at that Dispatch Box and she intimated to the House that the strategy would be published before the summer recess, giving Members the opportunity to debate thoroughly the contents therein. Where is it?

**Mr Lidington:** This is undoubtedly an important issue, but one or two other political events in the past few weeks have meant that a number of announcements have been postponed. We have a new public health Minister in place now, who, I am sure, will want to give urgent attention to this point.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I, too, wish to welcome the new Leader of the House to his post. As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I pay tribute to his wisdom at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which I fear will be much missed in the future. I also pay tribute to Noeleen Delaney, a very long-serving person in this House, for her service and kindness.

There are cat lovers as well as dog lovers here, so I wish to ask the Leader of the House about the cat at No. 10, who looks in a sorry situation, limping with one paw in the air. Is that because he is missing the old Prime Minister? Does the new Prime Minister care for the welfare of cats as much as the old Prime Minister did?

Finally, I want to ask for a statement or a debate as soon as we get back in September on the very serious situation in Turkey, where some of my friends have been arrested in this first round of arrests, and the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Syria. Nearly 100,000 people

[Ann Clwyd]

are in detention, some of them in very bad conditions, and I ask that the Foreign Office keeps its eye on the ball as far as Syria and Turkey, in particular, are concerned.

**Mr Lidington:** First, I thank the right hon. Lady for her kind remarks. On the two foreign policy questions she raised, even though the House will be in recess the work of government will go on, and the Foreign Office will be maintaining a close watch on events in both Turkey and Syria. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development will also maintain a key interest not only in the humanitarian disaster to which she alluded, but in making sure that the pledges made by this country and by other countries to put money down to help those in such enormous need in Syria and neighbouring countries are delivered in practice and that the aid gets through to them. I am sure my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will wish to keep the House updated when we return from recess about what is happening in that region.

On the other matters the right hon. Lady mentioned, I can completely reassure her about the Prime Minister's good intentions towards Larry the cat. I saw some reports in the media that he had been involved in a fracas with the Foreign Office cat. I hope that they have now established a *modus vivendi*.

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): I welcome the Leader of the House and his deputy to their posts. Eagle-eyed Members will have noticed some 30 written statements to be made by the Government on today's Order Paper. A cynic could be forgiven for drawing the conclusion that the Government are trying to bury bad news before the summer recess. Does he wish to dispel this cynicism by giving Members a debate to discuss and consider the contents of these statements on our return?

**Mr Lidington:** I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome, but she is misconstruing the Government's intention, which is to put the information before Parliament. She would have had much more cause for grievance had Ministers withheld this information, which instead is being made available. The opportunity is now there for all Members to look at the announcements being made in those written ministerial statements, to come to a considered view about them and then to return to the

fray in September ready to question and challenge Ministers on the basis of some time for analysis and reflection.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP): Another fine ending, Mr Speaker! I confess that when the right hon. Gentleman was Minister for Europe, I used to feel sorry for him, given that he was sent out here like a lamb to the wolves every so often. I still do, because he has left behind the finest salons of Europe to come here every Thursday to fend off requests for debates on Southern bloody rail, which I am fed up with hearing about. None the less, I welcome him to his position.

This week, the Transport Committee heard evidence from Vauxhall about the fact that despite recalling almost 300,000 vehicles, almost 300 have spontaneously burst into flames, putting families and consumers in danger. We have also had the Volkswagen scandal over the past 12 months. May we therefore have a debate on the car industry, so that we can push it to get its act together and stop conning consumers, putting people's lives at risk and endangering public health, and so that we can urge the Government finally to get their finger out and bring this industry to book?

**Mr Lidington:** The right sequence of events would be for us to see the report from the Transport Committee, which will doubtless make recommendations to the Government and to other parties, and then to have the benefit of the Committee's findings and the evidence it has taken when the House comes to debate this subject. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are opportunities during the parliamentary year for Select Committee reports to be debated, either on the Floor of the House or in Westminster Hall. If there is a strong body of support for this report to be so debated, that seems to be a good opportunity. Finally, I say to him that although I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent serving in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it is to this House that I sought election in the first place and I regard having been asked by the Prime Minister to serve as Leader of the House of Commons as an enormous privilege and an enormous opportunity. I have no regrets whatsoever. It is amazing after one is elected to this place on behalf of one's constituents, but to be asked to serve as Leader of the House is a privilege indeed.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the Leader of the House and all colleagues who took place in those exchanges. I wish colleagues a very enjoyable and stimulating, but restful—we hope—recess.

## Point of Order

12.20 pm

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Government rushed out some 21 ministerial statements today, right on recess day, which is appalling in itself, but not one was on fixed-odds betting terminals. The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 application, which sits in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and which was made by Newham council, 95 other councils and the Local Government Association—it is the biggest application under the Act—to lower fixed odds betting terminals' stakes from £100 to £2 was lodged in December 2015. More than six months have now passed and we are at the summer recess. I understand that the deadline for this was 14 July and only one meeting has taken place, and that was the preliminary meeting between the Department and the LGA. The Minister has failed to update the House on the meetings with the LGA and to indicate what that first meeting was about, which is implicit under the conditions of the Act. The Act requires that the Government must try to reach agreement by constructive negotiation between the LGA and the Government, who must act in good faith with the provision that all DCMS support evidence is provided, including researchers' advice. What advice will you give me, Mr Speaker, on this matter, which shows an appalling dereliction of responsibility?

**Mr Speaker:** My first advice to people who raise points of order is that the point of order should be brief. Secondly, I say to the hon. Gentleman that it is not a matter for the Chair, but that he has registered his dissatisfaction very forcefully through his point of order. Fortunately for him, he has done so, as he knows, in the presence of the Leader of the House and of the Deputy Leader of the House together with a number of representatives of the Patronage Secretary as well. My further observation is that if the hon. Gentleman is able to contribute to the second Adjournment debate this afternoon—it is up to him whether he seeks to do so—he might elicit a response from the Government to the points that he has raised. Admittedly, he will not have a responsible departmental Minister to answer today, but he might, as there is collective responsibility in Government, be able to attract some sort of response. I can tell that he is extremely dissatisfied, but we cannot let the best be the enemy of the good. In a pragmatic sense, I think that that is the best that he can hope for today.

## BILL PRESENTED

CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACT 2004 (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Tim Loughton, supported by Mr Graham Brady, Frank Field, Mark Durkan, Greg Mulholland and Caroline Lucas, presented a Bill to amend the Civil Partnership Act 2004 to provide that opposite sex couples may enter a civil partnership; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 13 January 2017, and to be printed (Bill 58).*

## Backbench Business

### Snares

12.23 pm

**Jim Dowd** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House notes the indiscriminate and cruel nature of snares, the failure of previous attempts at voluntary and self-regulation amongst operators, and the continued suffering caused to thousands of animals every year by these traps; and calls on the Government to implement a full ban on the manufacture, sale, possession and use of snares at the earliest opportunity.

First, my thanks go to the Backbench Business Committee for giving me the opportunity to bring this motion to the House. I am keenly aware that, because of the urgent question on school funding, we are running late and that the summer Adjournment debate is generally oversubscribed, so I shall attempt to be brief and hope that we can conclude this matter in a reasonable time. I do not propose to push this matter to a Division, but let me assure the House that if there is a Division I will defend the motion.

Motions arising from Backbench Business debates have a somewhat uncertain pedigree—the status of them is disputed. They are not binding or mandatory. A number of motions have been passed in recent months urging the Government to take action, but the Government have declined so to do. Therefore, I have no illusion that, were this motion to be successful, Government action would swiftly follow; I suspect that it probably will not.

I will attempt to outline as briefly as I can what I believe to be an extremely compelling case for the prospect outlined in the motion. There is widespread support across the House for such a ban. I remember the late Eric Forth who used to be in the Chamber on Fridays meticulously—more so than just about anybody else. Whenever someone said that their Bill had widespread support from Members, he would wave his arms magisterially and say, “Where are they then?”

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): Well, where are they then?

**Jim Dowd:** They knew you were coming! No, that is not true.

I am deeply grateful to the League Against Cruel Sports, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Cat Protection League and other animal welfare organisations that have assisted me in this matter. I also know that there are Members who are ideologically opposed to bans of any kind. Obviously, I do not share that view myself, but we need to exercise caution and judgment. The legal framework in this country under the rule of law is generally about regulating what behaviour is and is not permissible and what should and should not be punished.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): On that point, is not one of the issues with the use of snares now that they simply are not being used for the stated purpose? Often, the species that is targeted is not the species that is captured.

**Jim Dowd:** I fully agree with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful to him for his point. I hope to go on to elaborate on that in a bit more detail. The thrust of the

[*Jim Dowd*]

motion is about not just the inherent cruelty and barbarism of snares—the single snare that is currently legal—but the gross inefficiency of them. They are not even useful in what they do, and they cause unacceptable consequences.

We have to exercise our responsibility as legislators when we are acting on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves—whether it be children or animals. I believe that there is an imperative here for us to take action. Snares are thin wire nooses set to trap animals seen as a pest or a threat, usually foxes and rabbits. They are intended to catch animals around the neck rather like a lasso. There are two types of snare. The self-locking snare, which is not legal, tightens around the animal the more it struggles. Even when the animal ceases to struggle, the device is still tightened and causes serious injury and death, but, as I said, that is illegal under the current regulations. This motion refers to the free-running snare, which is still currently legal. If it is operating properly, it should tighten as the captured animal struggles, but relax when the animal stops pulling. It is intended to hold the animal live until the snare operator returns to kill it, usually by shooting, or release it if the snare has not caught the right target creature. The disadvantage of a legal free-running snare is that it can in many circumstances act like a self-locking snare, which is illegal, when it becomes kinked or rusty.

Although their purpose is to immobilise target animals, most snares cause extreme suffering to animals and often lead to a painful, lingering death. Animals caught in snares suffer huge stress and can sustain horrific injuries. Snares can cause abdominal, chest, neck, leg and head injuries to animals. Some animals get their legs caught in snares and end up with the wire cutting through to the bone. Such animals may attempt to escape by gnawing off their own limbs. Others are caught around the body.

The number and diversity of animals that fall victim to snares is immense. It is not possible to control which animals will be caught in a snare. A snare set to catch a fox is just as capable of catching other species. Cats, dogs, badgers, otters, deer, hares and livestock have all suffered terrible injuries or been killed by snares.

In 2012 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs produced an extensive report on snaring in England and Wales, which suggests that up to 1.7 million animals are trapped in these primitive devices every year, which equates to almost 200 animals caught each and every hour. Moreover, because snares capture any animal that happens to step into them, little more than a quarter of the animals trapped were found in DEFRA's field studies to be foxes, the intended victims. The other three quarters included hares, 33%; badgers, 26%—both of which are protected species—and a further 14% described as “other”. That is almost a quarter of a million animals, including deer and domestic pets such as cats and dogs, captured every year. That goes to the heart of the inefficiency of snares as a device for animal control.

DEFRA's independent working group on snares concluded in 2005 that it would be difficult to reduce non-target catches to less than 40%. According to DEFRA's 2012 report, 260,000 snares are in use in England and Wales. The report reveals that 95% of landholdings do not use snares, with the use of both fox and rabbit

snares being far more likely on landholdings with game bird shooting. I will not go into detail about my attitude towards shooting as a so-called sport. That is an argument for another day, but in common with more than 62% of the population of this country, I am opposed to shooting as a sport and cannot see what possible pleasure can be derived from blasting a living creature to smithereens.

**Richard Benyon** (Newbury) (Con): I refer hon. Members to my entry in the register. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the piece of scientific research called “Waders on the Edge”, which shows that the place to see species such as curlew and lapwing, where their numbers are rising rather than falling, is on managed shoots in the uplands?

**Jim Dowd:** I am aware of many things; I am not aware of the hon. Gentleman's entry in the register and I am not sure what relevance that has. Perhaps we can have a look later. There are all kinds of conflicting arguments, but the snare and the way it is used is inherently cruel and barbaric. If the price of seeing a curlew or a lapwing is the considerable suffering of tens of thousands of innocent creatures, I do not think that is a price worth paying.

**Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): In all the matters that the hon. Gentleman has just laid out, the key concern for me and for the many constituents who contacted me is the welfare of wildlife. Does he agree that we should put that at the top of our priority list?

**Jim Dowd:** Exactly. Animal welfare more generally is a widespread concern. I am sure every Member of this House knows that it is one of the subjects on which constituents most regularly contact us.

**Richard Benyon:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jim Dowd:** I will not for the moment. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will catch the Deputy Speaker's eye at some stage, and then he will be able to tell us what his entry is.

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate through the Backbench Business Committee, and on the compelling case that he is making. Will he accept from me on behalf of the constituents who contacted me that most people are appalled by the barbarity of the practice and the cruelty inherent in it? More power to his elbow for raising this important issue.

**Jim Dowd:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support and that of his constituents.

Snares are currently completely legal in only six European countries—Belgium, France, Ireland, Spain, Latvia and the United Kingdom. In all other countries in the EU they are banned, strictly controlled or are not used at all, so the idea that they are an essential means of animal control clearly is not true. Large numbers of European countries do not use them at all. The predominant legislation in this matter covering all parts of the United Kingdom is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which prohibits the use of self-locking snares, as I have already mentioned, lays out the requirement to inspect

the snare once in every 24 hours, and prohibits the use of snares to catch various protected mammals, including otters and badgers.

The code of practice acknowledges the welfare problems associated with snaring. DEFRA introduced a voluntary code on the use of snares in 2005 which was designed to reduce the suffering caused by snares through the adoption of best practice. Gamekeepers have shown themselves to be incapable of complying with DEFRA's recommended code of practice on the use of snares. In its 2012 report, which I mentioned previously, DEFRA found that although 95% of gamekeepers surveyed were aware of the code of practice and some—38%—had also been trained in the use of fox snares, not a single fox snare operator visited during the study was fully compliant with the code of conduct a full seven years after it had been introduced.

Among farmers there is a lack of knowledge of the code of practice, with a shocking 36% of farmers unaware of its existence. It was clear from the report that, whether people were aware of it or not, the code of practice was not being adhered to. Most snare operators use snares which are not compliant with the code of practice. Some 60% of snare operators had at some time caught non-target animals in fox snares. The majority of snare operators set snares in sites where entanglement was likely. Most rabbit snare operators took no measures to avoid the capture of non-target animals and nearly 30% had caught a domestic cat. Snares must not be used as killing devices. However, according to the DEFRA study, 19% of snare users set snares to kill the target animal. Over 30% of snare operators visited during the study were found to be using snares which were rusty or where the cable was distorted.

The League Against Cruel Sports has always questioned the likelihood that snares would remain smoothly free-running when used in an outdoor environment, and has warned of the potential welfare impacts of rusty wires, which can prevent the snare from slackening off.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, much of this issue is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, but it remains a concern to many of our constituents and has been the subject of many complaints. Since 2013 it has been an offence to set a snare in Scotland unless the operator has successfully completed a snaring training course run by an approved body. Does the hon. Gentleman consider that an appropriate measure to help counter some of the issues that he has identified?

**Jim Dowd:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing that out. I was going to come on to it later. The devolved Assemblies have made far more progress on the matter in recent years in Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as Scotland. Tightening the code of practice is one route, but after examining the case, my strong feeling is that it is ineffective and impossible to implement. The only humane response is a ban, but I am aware of the progress that has been made in Scotland, in particular.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on obtaining this debate. I have had many letters from constituents who all say the same things. They think this method of killing is obscene. Every 20 seconds an animal is caught in a snare somewhere in

the UK. Around 1.7 million wild and domestic animals are killed by snares each year. Snaring is cruel, lethal and a sop to the commercial shooting industry, as we well know, so all power to my hon. Friend's elbow.

**Jim Dowd:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those words and the support of her constituents. The point about snares is that they are not supposed to kill. They are supposed to be a disabling device, if they have worked correctly, to allow the target animal to be humanely disposed of, and if it is not the target animal, as in the majority of cases, to allow it to be released. Snares are not supposed to kill, but in far too many cases they do.

Additionally, during field trials in which fox snares were set in accordance with the code of practice, non-target species were still captured, illustrating that it is impossible to eliminate the risk to non-target animals.

A recent investigation, again by the League Against Cruel Sports—incidentally, I should say in passing that I am delighted to be an honorary life member of the League Against Cruel Sports—has provided further evidence that the code of practice cannot prevent animals from suffering in snares. In February 2015—just last year—investigators captured graphic scenes of foxes and rabbits caught in snares. Despite Government guidelines stating that snares must be used only as restraining rather than killing devices, all the animals filmed were dead when found.

The footage exposed a large death pit—a purposely dug pit filled with the carcasses of livestock and wildlife—designed to lure foxes into snares set along the edge. A dead fox was found hanging from one of the snares, clearly strangled to death. Placing snares alongside a pit or hole violates the Government's code of practice on the use of snares, yet a snare operator admitted that he caught 50 to 100 foxes this way every year, demonstrating—this is point I was making earlier—that attempts to regulate a clandestine activity that takes place primarily on private land in remote locations is futile, hence my conclusion that we need to introduce a ban.

At a second location, the soaking-wet bodies of several rabbits were discovered in snares. Two of them were trapped in snares set along a fence, in which the rabbits had become heavily entangled during their struggle to escape. The placement of these snares again clearly violated the code of practice. The league has brought forward plenty of other evidence to show that, where the code is not being flagrantly ignored, it is completely and utterly ineffectual.

Most people are opposed to snares. According to a 2014 Ipsos MORI poll, 77% of British people think snares should be banned. According to a Dods poll taken last year, 68% of MPs would support a ban. Veterinary opinion also firmly supports a ban on these cruel and indiscriminate traps. A 2015 poll of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses across the UK found that 87% of respondents believed that snaring is not a humane method of pest control. The figure was even higher—92%—among those who had experience of treating animals that had been snared.

In testimony to the Scottish Parliament—this relates to the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady)—Professor Randal Munro, a leading veterinary pathologist, stated:

[*Jim Dowd*]

“From the veterinary perspective, snares are primitive indiscriminate traps that are recognised as causing widespread suffering to a range of animals. At their least injurious, snares around the neck can result in abrasion and splitting of the skin. However, being caught in a snare is extremely distressing for any creature and vigorous attempts to escape are natural. These efforts cause the snare wire to kink, thereby changing a free-running snare to a self-locking one. Strangulation and choking follow. It is commonplace for snares to lodge around the chest, abdomen or legs rather than the neck. In such instances the stop restraint is ineffective and the wire cuts through skin and muscle and, eventually, bone. Badgers may be eviscerated when the abdominal wall is cut through. Amputation of the lower limb and foot by a snare is well-documented in deer. These unfortunate animals suffer immensely.”

**Simon Hart** (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. May I just help a little? I am sure the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (*Jim Dowd*) is very close to the end, but he is now past the 20 minutes, and I am very bothered that we have a lot of Members and a busy afternoon. If he could wind up shortly, I would be grateful.

**Simon Hart:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government and, indeed, his sponsors in this debate—the League Against Cruel Sports—have occasionally used snares for research and tagging purposes. All the descriptions he has just attached to this practice apply when it is used for those purposes, which could be construed as important.

**Jim Dowd:** I would say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I thought I had been rather generous with my time, as the expression has it.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. What I would say is that you have been very generous—maybe over-generous. The fact is that it is normally 15 minutes for the opening of a debate. I have been very generous and very tolerant—quite rightly, because this is a very important subject—but I do want to get other Members in because we have another debate to follow.

**Jim Dowd:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept your direction implicitly. I shall draw my remarks to a conclusion.

This motion is overwhelmingly supported by animal welfare organisations—not just the League Against Cruel Sports, but Animal Aid, Cats Protection, the RSPCA, the International Fund for Animal Welfare and many others. If a medical product was as ineffective as snares are in achieving their purpose, and if it had the same hideous and detrimental side effects as snares, it would be banned, and I believe that snares should be as well.

I will leave the final word to Mr Chris Packham, a naturalist and well-known TV broadcaster, who said:

“Indiscriminate and inhumane, they should be illegal—there is not much more to say about snares.”

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. There is now a six-minute limit.

12.45 pm

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to have caught your eye. I draw attention to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests—in case the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (*Jim Dowd*), who introduced this debate, is interested, I am a farmer. I also draw attention to the fact that I am chairman of the all-party group on shooting and conservation, which has an interest in this matter. I respect a lot of what the hon. Gentleman said, but I want to put my remarks into context and disagree with much of what he said.

The use of snares is an important tool in wildlife management, which benefits conservation. I was a little bit disturbed to hear the hon. Gentleman paying so little attention to species, such as curlew and lapwings, that are severely endangered—to the point of extinction in some areas—by fox predation. Therefore, it is necessary to control foxes in such situations if we want these important species to survive and thrive.

There is often no practical and effective replacement for snaring at crucial times of the year. That is particularly the case during summer and spring, because there are heavily leafed areas on trees and that is a time of year when lambs, piglets and other farmed animals are at their most vulnerable, yet at the same time, foxes are having their cubs and therefore become the biggest predators of those farmed animals. Snares are therefore an important part of fox control.

As the hon. Gentleman said, well-designed snares, used properly, are humane and effective in fox control. As he rightly pointed out, it has been illegal throughout the United Kingdom for over 20 years to use self-locking snares. DEFRA-commissioned research in 2012, which he referred to, identified how snaring can be improved through snare design and operating practices.

I want to quote the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust—the GWCT—which is widely respected for its independent research. It says:

“Foxes kill young lambs, piglets reared outdoors, and free range and domestic poultry...Foxes also prey on vulnerable wild ground-nesting birds like black grouse, partridge, lapwing, curlew and stone curlew, and on brown hare. Several of these are species of conservation concern...There are several methods to control foxes but none of them are effective in all circumstances. One method widely used for foxes is snaring. Snares are particularly effective for foxes in places and at times of the year when rifle shooting is not possible because of dense cover but when fox control may be critical for”

wildlife prey.

Indeed, the hon. Gentleman’s own colleague, the hon. Member for Brent North (*Barry Gardiner*), when he was Under-Secretary of State at DEFRA, said:

“The Government consider that, where there is a need for wildlife management, the proper use of snares is one of a range of control methods. Used according to best practice, snares can be an effective and practical means of wildlife management and are needed where other forms of pest control are ineffective or impractical. In these circumstances, snares restrain rather than kill and may prove to be more humane than other methods. If snares were to be banned entirely it”

may

“encourage the use of more dangerous and illegal alternatives such as poisons.”—[*Official Report*, 28 November 2006; Vol. 453, c. 495W.]

In the time available—I accept your strictures, Mr Deputy Speaker—I will try to rebut one or two of the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge. The 2012 DEFRA study set out to estimate the scale of the perceived problems. Inevitably, the resulting figures are an approximation, with considerable uncertainty attached, and I think that is where the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) got her figures from. It is important to realise that some organisations have constructed figures by extrapolating from small samples, which are unlikely to be representative of all the situations in which snares are used, or of current working practices.

For instance, the humaneness assessment in the DEFRA study involved a single operator working in one set of circumstances, while the assessment of the extent of use was made across a random sample of landholdings. If we multiply those figures, we get the sort of figure to which the right hon. Lady referred, which is most unlikely to be true.

Let us look at some of the evidence. An extensive field study involving 429 fox captures showed that, given good practice, less than 1% of snare-caught foxes were injured or killed as a result. Some believe that animals held in snares may seem all right at the time of release but go on to develop life-threatening necrotic conditions—the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge referred to that—but there is no evidence that that commonly occurs. On the contrary, foxes and badgers caught in snares by scientists for radio-tagging have typically not shown any abnormal behaviour or higher mortality. In GWCT studies, some individual foxes have been recaptured in snares, with no apparent ill effect.

How much time have I got?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order.

12.51 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): May I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) on making a very strong case in support of the motion? I am usually pleased to follow the hon. Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown). He was making an argument, but sadly he ran out of time and we did not get to hear whether his case was as strong as that made by my hon. Friend. It certainly did not appear to be from where I am sitting.

I thank the League Against Cruel Sports, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National Farmers Union for their briefings for this debate, and I especially thank Nikki Sutherland and Oliver Bennett from the Library for their very useful briefing to Members.

The RSPCA writes:

“In 2005, Defra introduced a Code of Practice on the use of snares. The Code sets out best practice in the use of snares, including guidance on where and how to set snares for different species and possible steps to take to avoid trapping ‘non-target’ species. It should be noted that compliance with the Code is voluntary and a 2012 report produced for Defra found that although awareness of the Code was very high (eg 95% of gamekeepers and 65% of farmers) the levels of compliance with the best practice it contains was very low.”

That was one of the strong arguments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge.

The League Against Cruel Sports writes:

“The League believes that snaring is terribly cruel, indiscriminate and wholly unnecessary and leads to untold suffering and horrific deaths for wild, domestic and farm animals throughout the country...Most snares are used by gamekeepers to protect quarry, which are bred and protected to act as targets for blood sports.”

That is not the same as the farmer argument that we have heard previously.

I apologise to the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey), for not welcoming her to her new position when I opened my speech. I did not get a chance to do so during yesterday’s sitting of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, because I was not there for all of her evidence, but I wish her success in her new job. Will she respond to the point made by the League Against Cruel Sports that most snares are set by gamekeepers, not farmers?

The League Against Cruel Sports states that the 2012 DEFRA report on snaring

“confirms that it is not possible for snares to be species specific and that non-target animals are still captured, even when the code of conduct is strictly adhered to...It is not possible to regulate the use of snares through a non-statutory code, as adherence to the code is low and there is no incentive for operators to obey it...It is clear that due to the cruel, unnecessary and indiscriminate nature of snares, primary legislation is the only viable option to ban their use.”

Will the Minister comment on that?

Not surprisingly, the NFU—an organisation for which I have high regard—says that

“the use of snares for fox and rabbit control is an essential part of wildlife and conservation management,”

and that

“in certain situations they can be the most humane method of pest control.”

As my hon. Friend has said, however, this issue is not so much about control and then humane destruction, but about animals dying in snares and not being dispatched as humanely as everyone would want them to be.

The Library briefing states:

“Snares are commonly used in the UK to catch certain animals prior to their killing. They can be legally used, subject to certain conditions, to catch animals including foxes, rabbits, rats and grey squirrels.

While snares can restrain animals without causing injury, they have the potential to cause injury and death”,

as my hon. Friend has said. The briefing also repeats another point that he made:

“They can also catch non-target animals such as badgers and cats. Their use is therefore controversial.”

To save time, I will not refer to the additional regulations for Wales and Northern Ireland, because my hon. Friend has covered those, but the briefing goes on to note:

“In recent years Scotland has tightened regulations on snares beyond the situation in England and Wales. Snares must have safety stops fitted and users are required by law to now attend a training course and register for a personal identification number. This ID number is required to be displayed on all snares which are set.”

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): Snare users in Scotland are required to have approved accreditation and must receive a personal identification number from the police, so snaring without

[Margaret Ferrier]

an ID number is an illegal activity. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that prudent measure should be implemented south of the border?

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge has also made that case, although obviously we would prefer a complete ban on these things. It has been demonstrated by the devolved Assemblies and the Scottish Government that improvements can be made to the present situation in England and Wales. I am certainly impressed by the fact that each snare has to have an ID number and that, where it can be proven that snares are not being used in the way in which people have been trained to use them, the number can be used to trace the person involved. That is an additional safeguard.

In conclusion, my hon. Friend has made a very strong argument for a complete ban on snares. Even if the Government do not accept that argument, there is also a very strong case, as the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier) and I have just agreed, to amend regulations in England. Internationally, we appear to be in a small minority of countries. Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have all seen fit to move on this issue, and I hope the Government will tell us that they agree with the devolved Assemblies, and that they will improve the situation and move towards, I hope, a full ban. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response in due course.

12.57 pm

**Simon Hart** (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): May I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests?

I want to focus on the farming angle, if I may. It was slightly worrying to hear the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd), who is no longer in her place, refer to this as a sop to commercial shoots, and the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) refer to the distinction between farmers and gamekeepers. The reality is that shooting takes place on farmland: there is no distinction when it comes to managing wildlife, whether it be on a shoot or on a farm. Most upland hill farmers in Wales, who rely on this as one of few methods to control foxes, will be pretty offended by the argument that it is a sop to shooting interests. It is a vital method that they use for commercial and economic purposes in the management of their farms.

I want to stress—because I think this has been lost in the debate—that nobody goes out and sets a snare with any sense of glee or pleasure. It is a practical requirement for people whose job it is to manage wildlife populations for the protection of either gamebirds or agricultural animals. Everybody who does it does it to the best of their ability. Nobody derives pleasure from it. If it was as inefficient as the hon. Gentleman claimed in his opening remarks, those people would not use it as a means of control.

I could not quite ascertain from what Labour Members said whether they accept that some wildlife management or control is necessary. If their answer is “Yes, we accept

that some degree of wildlife management is necessary,” it is a case of how, not if. Other speakers have referred in brief to the alternatives. It is easy to say, “If there is a problem, why not use cage traps?” We know that cage traps work quite well for foxes, particularly in urban areas, but cage traps, too, have a non-target-species problem. All sorts of stuff, including raptors, ends up in cage traps designed for foxes. Cage traps may be inspected once or even twice a day, but they have the potential to cause as much suffering as snares do to animals captured and restrained in them. The idea that cage traps are a simple, alternative solution that nobody has thought of yet simply does not add up in practical land management terms.

The use of rifles and shotguns to control foxes has, as we know, numerous limitations. It intrigues me that Labour Members who have been vociferous in their opposition to the badger cull argue that it is difficult to get clean and humane shots of badgers when using high-powered rifles, but they appear to recommend exactly the same method—in the same areas, operated by the same people—for the control of foxes. I do not think they can have it both ways.

All these methods of control have their place. No single one works perfectly, but the proper, professional—often reluctant—use of snares must be part of the mix available to land managers. Hon. Members will not be surprised to hear me say that it is ironic that one other available method of controlling foxes, which is to use dogs underground to flush to waiting guns, is permitted only for the protection of game birds. It is not permitted for the protection of agricultural animals—a matter that was included in the Hunting Act 2004, which the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge supported.

We can cut out a lot of the debate by simply referring to the code of practice published by the Welsh Government in Cardiff. They have listened to all the arguments, they have heard from both sides of this heated debate, and they have come up with a proposal that is largely practical and has the confidence of land managers, sensible wildlife conservationists and politicians. If the Welsh Assembly can come to a conclusion that satisfies all those conflicting interests, I do not see why achieving the same thing here should be beyond the wit of man.

1.2 pm

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) on securing this debate, which is long overdue. I can only apologise for the fact that I was not able to hear all of his speech, because I was otherwise occupied. As a former vice-president of the League Against Cruel Sports, I pay tribute to the league's tireless work to expose the cruelty associated with the use of snares, and to the many constituents who have contacted me to call for a ban. As has been said, 77% of the public support a ban.

Free-running snares—the supposedly humane option—can, as we have heard in graphic and horrific detail, strangle trapped animals or cut through their fur, muscle and bone. Snares are meant to be checked daily, but often they are not, so animals die from exposure, from dehydration, or because they have been rendered defenceless against predators.

The League Against Cruel Sports reports that 69% of animals caught are not the target species. We have heard how hares, badgers and even cats and dogs can be caught in them. I saw pictures yesterday of Scottish wildcats—Britain's rarest mammal—being killed in snares. It is illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to set a trap or snare intended to injure a protected animal such as a badger, otter or red squirrel. It cannot be right that people can escape prosecution simply by arguing that they lacked the intention to catch those animals, when the likelihood of a protected animal, rather than the intended targets, being caught is so high.

Other countries have managed to ban snares. The UK is one of only five countries in Europe in which snares are completely legal. In countries where snares are not banned outright, such as Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden, their use is much more tightly regulated. We are always hearing from the Government that the UK leads the way in animal welfare, that we have much higher standards than anywhere else and that we are the best in the world. I wish that that was true. Iran has just banned wild animals in circuses, for example; we cannot even do that. Although we have much to be proud of, we need to recognise where we are not leading the way, and where we could take lessons from other countries.

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** My hon. Friend just mentioned a ban on wild animals in circuses. At least we won that argument. The Government accepted it, and it was a Conservative manifesto promise in the 2015 general election. We hope that the Government will deliver on it by 2020, but does she agree that the sooner they do so, the better?

**Kerry McCarthy:** As I will come on to say later, the Government have a track record of not acting on such things, even when they have notionally accepted the evidence and said that they will act.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, which I have met to discuss a range of issues, disagrees. It states that snares are

“an important tool for conservation and food security”.

I accept that farmers have a right to control predators, but that should not mean that we cannot look at whether there are more humane, effective ways of doing so. On conservation, the RSPB accepts there is sometimes a need to control foxes, but it has not found the need to resort to the use of snares on its reserves. Indeed, the RSPB will tell us that fox snares are known to kill capercaillie, the large woodland grouse that is at risk of extinction. Neither the Wildlife Trusts nor the Woodland Trust use snares. Utility companies, local authorities, Network Rail, Natural England, Highways England and the Forestry Commission all manage their land without using snares for pest control.

Despite the best efforts of the hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) to convince us that this is just about farming, we know that snares are mostly used on shooting estates. Snares are used to trap natural predators, in their natural habitats, in an often barbaric fashion. The birds are spared death by fox only to be shot by humans, in almost unimaginable numbers, not for food or conservation but for sport—as Chris Packham would say, not sport but slaughter.

We are here to discuss a ban on snares, not wider issues around shooting. However, I want to put on record the fact that, to date, more than 62,000 people have signed Dr Mark Avery's petition to ban driven grouse shooting, supported by conservation experts such as Chris Packham and Bill Oddie. They are concerned about the persecution of hen harriers, the environmental damage caused by heather burning and the increased flood risk caused by grouse moor management, as well as the use of snares. Those are serious, legitimate concerns, which Ministers should be working with conservationists and shooting estates to address, but the Government have so far only given a complacent, dismissive response, which verged on the rude, to the public petition.

There is also the issue of lead ammunition. There are viable alternatives to lead shot but, despite that, the Government have shelved the report of the lead ammunition group, which was submitted more than a year ago. There are concerns about the welfare of the millions of pheasants and partridges reared in cramped cages every year purely for the purpose of shooting. The last Labour Government introduced a code of practice and commissioned a study on cage-based breeding, but the coalition Government withdrew the code and failed to publish the review's findings.

A similar picture emerges when we look at efforts to address the flaws in the use of snares. As has been said, the previous Labour Government published a code of practice some 11 years ago. Subsequent research for DEFRA was concluded in 2010, but it took the coalition Government two years to publish it and nothing has been done. Some four years after the report came out, the then DEFRA Minister could tell Parliament only that

“officials worked with stakeholders to explore options in light of the report's findings. We are considering options and will make an announcement in due course.”

Last year, the League Against Cruel Sports documented evidence of animals found dead in snares and of pits filled with carcasses to lure foxes into snares that were placed along the edge, in violation of the code of practice. There is a clear need to act, but the Government do not seem willing to do so.

The same thing has happened all too often with animal welfare issues under this Government. We have talked about wild animals in circuses; on that and on many other issues, the Government have been too slow to publish research, failed to commission reviews that would give them the evidence necessary to support the policy, and dismissed expert advice, as we have seen with the badger cull. We can only conclude that neither animal welfare nor evidence-based policy is a priority for the Government; that Ministers are in thrall to vested interests and allowing their own ideological aversion to any form of intervention or regulation to hold sway; and that preventing unnecessary suffering is simply not something they care about.

Given the new Secretary of State's enthusiasm for repealing the foxhunting ban, I fear that today's debate may not meet with her approval. The Minister, whom I congratulate on her appointment, supported efforts last year to weaken the hunting ban, which is disappointing. I hope that on this issue she will prove more receptive. I hope that she does not stand before us today and tell us that the code of practice is working. From all that I have heard today from my hon. Friends, and from all

[Kerry McCarthy]

that I have read and watched in recent days—that has included video evidence of the graphic slaughter of these animals—it seems all too obvious that the voluntary approach and code of practice are not working, and that very little progress has been made. Unless the Minister is very persuasive today, I believe the obvious conclusion is that a ban is necessary.

1.9 pm

**Sue Hayman** (Workington) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) on bringing this debate to the House. It is an important debate, and it is time we had it.

A large part of my constituency in Cumbria is rural, and its landscapes and habitats need to be managed. I was born and bred in the country, so I understand and accept that such management includes the management of some wildlife. The hon. Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) went into that in some detail. However, I do not accept that this management has to cause suffering either as a direct result of or as a consequence of the methods used. I urge the Government to look at proper, detailed research on alternative methods that could be used. I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) praise the Welsh Government, and I hope this is the start of a trend for him.

I believe that we have a moral duty to treat animals in a humane and compassionate way. To that end, I have been a member of the Labour Animal Welfare Society for many years, and I am proud of the work that LAWS has done. The previous Labour Government achieved much towards ending the cruel and unnecessary suffering of animals. For example, they introduced the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which for the first time embedded in statute clear standards relating to the welfare of animals and made it a criminal offence to subject any animal, including those caught in snares, to unnecessary suffering.

In 2005, the Labour Government issued guidance—my hon. Friends have mentioned it—including information about how snares should be maintained and set to reduce the pain inflicted. In addition, the guidance detailed the steps that must be taken to reduce the chance that a non-target animal is caught. My hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) went into the detail of that and demonstrated just how indiscriminate snares can be. As has been said, they are mainly designed to catch foxes and rabbits. However, DEFRA's own figures, which were cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge, are worth repeating: 33% of the animals caught are hares, 26% are badgers and 14% are other animals, including pet cats and dogs.

In 2008, the Labour Government commissioned research on how often snares are used in England and Wales, and on the level of suffering they inflict on the animals they catch. As we have heard, this was published by DEFRA in 2012. The report recommended increasing education for people who use snares, improving the uptake of the code of practice on snaring and encouraging the use of code-compliant snares. The Government could be doing that right now.

The coalition Government said they were considering options for improving welfare standards, but, as we have heard, we have not as yet had any proposals. I was pleased earlier this year when my fellow Cumbrian the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart), the then DEFRA Minister, said that the Government were considering options and would soon make an announcement. As we know, however, there has been no announcement. I ask the Minister to look at this urgently so that the concerns raised in the report can be addressed and there can be an announcement as soon as possible after the summer recess.

We have heard about the petition from the League Against Cruel Sports, so we know that there is huge public support for a ban. As the petition has 66,000 signatures, it surely has to be listened to and taken into account when the Government carry out any review of this situation. The League Against Cruel Sports describes snaring as

“a cruel, indiscriminate, and wholly unnecessary practice that has no place in modern society.”

I ask the Minister and the Government to work with farmers, gamekeepers and animal welfare groups to develop a coherent and effective package of measures to prevent illegal snaring and the unnecessary suffering of animals. I also ask them to consider working towards a ban.

1.14 pm

**Christina Rees** (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) for calling this important debate. Despite many parliamentary questions, fierce campaigning from groups such as the League Against Cruel Sports and much work on implementing policy, snares remain a persistent problem.

The situation seems to be becoming a war of attrition. In March 2015, we were told that Ministers were considering options for improving guidance on snares. A date for publication was at that time unknown. This February, the Government were again asked to make it their policy to introduce stricter regulations and a ban on the use of snares. Once again, the answer was that they were considering all options and would make an announcement in due course. How many options are there to consider, and how long is “in due course”?

Much is made of the DEFRA code of practice. It is undoubtedly commendable in its promotion of good practice, but it is not statutory and its enforcement remains by voluntary compliance. The National Anti Snaring Campaign has argued that the code “serves no useful purpose.” In March 2014, the then Government stated that it had no plans to put the code on a statutory basis.

Current legislation prohibits the use of self-locking snares, outlaws the setting of snares in places where there is an increased likelihood of catching non-target animals and requires snares to be checked daily. These requirements are all welcome and I am pleased that there is such a clear framework, but it is quite evident that the law needs to go further. In Scotland, it does go further. In recent years, there has been a tightening of regulation so that snares must be fitted with safety stops, and users are now required to undertake training as well as to register for the personal identification number that needs to be displayed on any set snares.

In 2012, DEFRA published research on “Determining the Extent of Use and Humaneness of Snares in England and Wales”. In February 2016, the Government said:

“Following publication of the report, officials worked with stakeholders to explore options in light of the report’s findings. We are considering options and will make an announcement in due course.”

As a result of this research, the Welsh Government have not legislated, but they published “The code of best practice on the use of snares in fox control” in September 2015. This aimed

“to deliver higher animal welfare standards, increased efficiency in terms of fox control, and ensure that fewer non-target species are being caught.”

The productive relationship that the Welsh Labour Government have forged with the agriculture sector and its supporting organisations has allowed stakeholders to communicate why a code of practice is so important. This in turn makes enforcement much easier, as users of snares see the benefit of self-policing and of implementing best practice that improves the effectiveness of a snare.

I fully appreciate the divisive nature of this subject. Indeed, I acknowledge the calls from organisations such as the British Association for Conservation and Shooting for a reasoned and reasonable analysis of the activity that is both accurate and measured, and takes account of the need for these tools for conservation and food security. However, I condemn the sometimes barbaric suffering endured by animals, both those that are targeted by the snare and those that are not; quite clearly, it is not the purpose of snares to catch such animals. I appreciate the measured responses from organisations such as the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, the National Farmers Union and the National Gamekeepers Organisation in calling on their members—in Wales, certainly—to adhere to best practice and use snares properly. I call on the Government to make the code of practice statutory and, by doing so, improve efficiency of use, while minimising risk and unnecessary harm. Surely we all agree that we must do all we can to reduce unnecessary suffering and use more humane methods, such as box traps.

1.19 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Thank you for calling me to speak in this debate, Mr Deputy Speaker. I declare an interest as a member of the Countryside Alliance and of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation.

I have a different opinion from my colleagues on the Labour Benches. I agree with them on many things, as they know, but I have a different opinion in this debate. I know that we will still be friends at the end of it no matter what happens, which is important. *[Interruption.]* Well, I will still be their friend no matter what.

If modern snares are used strictly according to best practice, they surpass international standards for restraining traps. Snares must be checked at least once a day, but best practice recommends twice a day, with the first check at sunrise, or as close to it as is practical, as that is when most catches are made. The Animal Welfare Act makes it an offence for a person to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal under their control. If snares are used correctly, they are humane.

Snares make it possible to control wild predators such as foxes, which have no compunction whatever about what they kill. Some of us in this House will be aware of the fox’s predation. When a fox gets into a hen coop, it does not simply kill one hen; it takes great enjoyment in killing them all, but eats only one. There has to be some control of foxes, and well-designed snares, used properly, are humane and effective.

Legislation is already in place about the use of free-running snares. Modern snares used by responsible people are not a danger or the source of evil and death some would have us believe. I respect the differing views of others in the Chamber, but I ask them to consider the point of view that I am putting forward. To give some examples, a modified foot snare is being used to catch snow leopards as part of research by the World Wide Fund for Nature. That shows that the answer lies not in banning snares, but in ensuring people cannot and do not use them inappropriately. As I have said, they must be used correctly.

Modern snares are greatly different from old styles of snares. Nowadays, a snare is similar to a simple dog lead, but made with a thin wire loop. As well as being free running, modern snares have several design features to improve welfare for the foxes caught and allow the self-release of non-target animals such as badgers, hares and deer.

I am absolutely sure that those seeking change have very good intentions, but we must look at the unintended consequences should their desired outcome prevail. For example, foxes are prolific predators of ground-nesting birds, domestic poultry, game birds, small mammals and young livestock such as lambs. To give an example in the short time I have, the loss of fox snaring, a key method of control, would result in unintended consequences including but not limited to the loss of biodiversity and of income to farmers and other land managers.

The brown hare is a biodiversity priority species. How much pleasure I take in seeing hares in abundance in the fields and across my land back home. That is very much down to fox control, properly carried out by us on the farm and by neighbouring farmers. We need predator control. The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust has shown that predator control explains some 46% of the variation in the hare population. Having predator control is advantageous.

Ground-nesting birds are also affected by fox predation. Across the UK, curlew numbers declined by 42% between 1995 and 2008. Earlier in the debate, some Members referred to snaring that takes place in grounds owned by the National Trust & GWCT, as well as snaring by other landowners and organisations. Curlew and lapwing numbers have increased where there is snaring, as other hon. Members have mentioned.

On hill farms foxes can impact on lamb numbers. Data collected from two Scottish hill farms over four years identified 16 lambs as having been killed by foxes, with a further 53 going missing. Fox predation is a matter of concern for the vast majority of Welsh farmers. Foxes also have the potential to destroy entire free range poultry flocks.

All those examples show that we need a system in place. Free-running snares are the most effective and humane, and conserve mammals on the ground. Without snares, foxes would pose an increased threat to vulnerable

[*Jim Shannon*]

wildlife populations, biodiversity and habitat conservation. They would also cause significantly greater damage to a diverse range of economic activities including shooting, agriculture, forestry and eco-tourism, which all rely on managed countryside. Sometimes shooting foxes is not possible and so the only way to control them is by snaring—land may be inaccessible at certain times of the year, for example, in summer time in particular.

Some Members have referred to the change to legislation in Northern Ireland. This issue concerned the Northern Ireland Assembly during my former life as a Member of that Assembly. The changes intimated here are more than acceptable. I will put the details of the matter on the record. The Northern Ireland Assembly decided to put the relevant order on hold while further consultation was conducted, owing to the strength of feeling there was on this issue. That being the case, although Northern Ireland has made some changes, which I believe are welcome, it has also recognised the great surge of opinion both in favour and against on this issue. We have to have a balance. I therefore have concerns over what is being put forward in the motion today.

1.25 pm

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is good to see you in the Chair this afternoon, Mr Deputy Speaker. I welcome the Minister to her place. I look forward to debating important issues such as this with her. I trust we will see a new progressive approach, in particular on animal welfare and other issues within her brief. I hope that today she will be supporting the 77% of people who want us to take action on a ban of the manufacturing, sale, possession and use of snares.

I start by thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) for bringing forward this motion and enabling the House to debate the indiscriminate and cruel nature of snares. He is not only an expert on animal welfare in this place but a real champion of it beyond here. He did not make the argument alone; it was echoed across these Benches.

Today, I will set out four key areas: the law, the issues, the research and the alternatives. I will start with the law. In 1981 the Wildlife and Countryside Act prohibited self-locking snares, specifying that snares must be free running. But there has been no definition in statute or in the courts of what self-locking actually means. We have heard today of the challenge caused by the fact that free-running snares turn into locking ones as a result of wires becoming twisted or rusted.

The Act also requires that snares should not be set to catch non-target animals, yet only 25% of animals caught in snares are target animals, meaning that 75% are not. Clearly, it is not possible to uphold legislation on that in practice. It also says that snares should be inspected daily, yet we know that only 77% are, meaning that 23% are not. There is clearly poor policing and poor practice on that. Basically, the law is not working.

Countries have recognised that. My hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Christina Rees) talked about the Welsh Government's "Code of best practice on the use of snares in fox control", published in 2015. The Northern Ireland Government brought forward the Snares Order

(Northern Ireland) 2015, which requires snares to have stops and swivels and to be staked in the ground. We also heard from the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier) about the progress Scotland has made on the issue, by looking at training and registration, as well as the provision of personal ID numbers to ensure better regulation of snares. In 2005, Labour brought forward a code of practice to upgrade the 1981 Act, stating that snares should pose no risk to other animals. Labour then commissioned a research report, "Determining the extent of use and humaneness of snares in England and Wales", which as we have heard came out in 2012.

There are five nations where snares remain legal: the UK, Ireland, Latvia, France and Belgium. Today we can take a step forward and join progressive nations in outlawing snares and recognising their real cruelty. We should also recognise the fragmentary nature of legislation on snares; the voluntary code is not working and the legislation is not being properly enforced.

Moving on to the issues, as we heard so clearly from my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), snares are mainly used in relation to blood sports and the protection of game birds. We have heard that 95% of large landowners do not use snares. We have also heard that snares capture, maim and kill 1.7 million animals every year. During the course of this debate today, over 200 animals will have been snared.

We know that snares deteriorate over time—a point made powerfully today by hon. Members—with 30% becoming rusty or getting stuck. They are then no longer free-running, but dysfunctional and the cause of additional animal cruelty. We have also heard that catches are indiscriminate because snares do not identify the animal about to put its head, body or part of its body through the noose. Only 25% of snared animals are foxes; 33% are hares; 26% are badgers, and 14% are deer, otters and domestic animals such as cats and dogs. It is a criminal offence to harm domestic pets, but they also fall foul of snares. So do humans—fell runners and ramblers get caught up in and injured by snares. We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) about the lack of intent, but that is no defence. The evidence is before us today.

We have heard from so many hon. Members on these Benches about the extensive cruelty. As my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) said, it is barbaric how snares cause such harm and cruelty, with animals suffering for hours as they are trapped. If we claim to be a progressive country, we must have progressive legislation and bring in a ban. Today would not be soon enough. That view is supported by 87% of vets. As we have heard, 95% of landowners do not use snares and nor do 250 municipal authorities. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East set out, the RSPB, Network Rail and many other authorities no longer use snares. The reason is that they are indiscriminate, inhumane and the law covering them is not applied properly. It does not work and it does not address the issue. That is borne out by the research, as my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Sue Hayman) highlighted.

It is important to look at the behaviour of foxes. They are very competitive and territorial, so if space is vacated because a fox has been killed, other foxes will

move into that area and breeding will increase to fill the space. That has been proven over 40 years, with our fox community remaining consistent at 250,000 adults. The hon. Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) mentioned a response from my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) about wildlife management. We recognise the importance of that issue, but that response was before the DEFRA report in 2012, which moved forward on the evidence. It is important that we look at the most up-to-date evidence, rather than looking back to parliamentary questions asked before that report.

The report talks about the need for increased powers in the code, because it is not working. We need to move the whole framework forward and to recognise that inspections are not working. The report goes on to say that inspections should happen not once, but twice a day. If that is part of the voluntary code, my question is how that would be implemented. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said that once a day was enough, but it is not and we need to go further. We know that 36% of farmers are unaware of the contents of the code—or even of its existence—and only 3% have had any training on snares. Clearly the code is failing. It is failing animals and wildlife, and we need to get real about that. We also know that even stops on snares do not prevent animal cruelty, as so much evidence has now come forward on that point.

We need to move forward on the principles of how we uphold our wildlife, our animals and their welfare, to ensure that they have freedom from hunger, thirst, pain, injury and disease, freedom from discomfort and to express normal behaviours, and freedom from fear and distress. The psychological impact is also important.

What are the options for the future? More training and licences would follow the Scotland model, but we have heard that the take-up of training is low, so that in itself is not enough. Training manufacturers is also recommended, but the problem with that is as soon as snares leave the factory, they get old, rusty and out of date, and therefore do not work. Stops and swivels work to an extent, but injury is still caused to wild animals. The report recommends research on the design of snares. That is one option—research is always good and progressive and we always welcome it—but the reality is that snares are inhumane and cause harm to animals.

**Simon Hart:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Rachael Maskell:** I will press on because of the time.

We know that only 1% to 3% of pheasants are killed by foxes, so we are not looking at huge communities of animals that fall prey to foxes. There are alternatives that can be used. If we bring in a ban, we can make progress in the use of alternatives that the evidence suggests can be incredibly effective—

**Simon Hart:** Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

**Rachael Maskell:** I am sorry, but I will move on. Other hon. Members have already spoken.

On alternatives for foxes, electronic fencing can be used, as can fencing set deep into the ground so that animals cannot burrow under it. Such methods are used by landowners who do not use snares to trap animals so

cruelly. Scare devices can also be used, and if they are moved around it can stop habituation so animals continue to be scared off by them. Other alternatives include chemical repellents and cage trapping, which means that animals can be released unharmed instead of injured. Fencing is also recommended for protection from rabbits. So there are alternatives.

What I would say to the Minister this afternoon is that the work has been done, the research is complete and the evidence is weighty in favour of a complete ban, like most of our progressive friends across Europe. It is time that the Government brought forward legislation, no longer making excuses or delaying. We know that 68% of MPs would support it, as would 77% of our constituents, and it would be the right thing to do for animals as well as the wider nation. I say: do not delay. Labour would bring in a ban: will the Government ban the manufacturing, sale, possession and use of snares?

1.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):**

It is a huge privilege to stand at the Dispatch Box for the first time as a DEFRA Minister and I thank hon. Members for their kind words. I congratulate the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) on securing this debate. It is a devolved matter, but I welcome the contributions from all four parts of the United Kingdom, which show the level of interest in this topic.

I thank the hon. Members for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), for Workington (Sue Hayman), for Neath (Christina Rees) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and my hon. Friends the Members for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) and for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) for their contributions, as well as the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell)—it is a pleasure to debate with her today.

I fully understand the passion that hon. Members have—as do our constituents—in wanting a high regard for animal welfare. As the hon. Member for Workington pointed out, it is accepted that wildlife needs to be controlled. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) and the hon. Member for Strangford pointed out, culling of certain prolific species actually assists the conservation of endangered species. I reassure hon. Members that the Government share the public's high regard for animal welfare and we are proud to have the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We also recognise that the welfare of our wild animals can be protected even further and more can be done to improve snaring practices.

Snaring is just one part of a range of measures that have to be used to manage some species, the control of which underpins agricultural production, farm animal husbandry, the sustainable harvesting of wild game birds and the conservation of wildlife. At crucial times of the year, especially spring and summer, vegetative cover often makes other measures impractical, leaving snaring as the only effective form of management. When practised to a high standard and in adherence to the law, snaring can provide land and wildlife managers with an effective means of restraining target animals before they are humanely managed. There is no question,

[*Dr Thérèse Coffey*]

however, but that if used incorrectly snares are capable of causing injuries and suffering to the animals for which they were set and, through accidental capture, to non-target species for which snaring is entirely inappropriate.

**Kerry McCarthy:** The Minister says—I have heard this many times from Ministers—that the UK has the best animal welfare standards in the world. I gave some instances in my speech where I do not believe that we do, so where is the evidence? Will she publish something that shows why she is so confident that we have the best animal welfare standards in the world?

**Dr Coffey:** Off the top of my head, I cannot quite remember the exact phrase, but there is something like an international index. The UK, alongside, I believe, countries such as Austria and Switzerland, is reckoned to be in the top five. I also believe that that is an independent assessment. I will let the hon. Lady know what I am referring to in the usual way, if she is agreeable to that.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** I congratulate my hon. Friend—I am sorry I failed to do so in my speech—on her new elevation. We are very pleased to see her in her current position. Does she agree that nobody wants unnecessary suffering from snaring or anything else? Will she therefore agree to provide a new updated code, so that best practice can be followed?

**Dr Coffey:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. I would just ask him to be patient and wait a few minutes.

Returning to the recognition that snares are capable of causing injuries, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibited the use of inhumane self-locking snares. I recognise what the hon. Member for York Central said: that they are accepted to be in law mechanisms that tighten and cause asphyxiation. The 1981 Act requires trappers to check their snares at least once every 24 hours. Hon. Members will also be aware that the Act prohibited the use of snares to take certain species, including badgers, otters, red squirrels and hedgehogs. The Deer Act 1991 offers similar protection to any deer. Under the Animal Welfare 2006 Act, there is a legal responsibility to prevent unnecessary suffering to any animals under human control, including any animal restrained in a snare.

The hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge refers to the inefficiency of snaring, but I am not aware that he has suggested other methods that would be more efficient in wildlife management. I recognise that the hon. Member for York Central referred to several alternatives, including chemicals. As yet, I am not aware that they are shown to be more efficient or effective. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) referred to efficiency. I think that is borne out, although I recognise some of the issues addressed.

The hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge and other Members referred extensively to the 2005 code of practice issued by DEFRA, and to the 2012 study. He mentioned a number of issues he would like to see addressed. That is a view shared by many people.

Land management organisations and gamekeeping associations around the country have developed a new code of best practice on the use of snares for fox control in England, which would also be suitable for the control of rabbits. Designed and written by a number of stakeholders, including the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the National Gamekeepers Organisation, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, the Moorland Association and the Countryside Alliance, of which I note the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) is a member, this new guidance builds on the previous DEFRA code of practice, but draws on reliable research conducted by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust by setting out principles for the legal and humane use of snares.

The capture of non-target species can be reduced by appropriate setting, taking into account the behaviour of the target animal. The new code of practice emphasises this very clearly, stating that if non-targets are likely to be caught, snaring should not be used. Improvements in snare design mean that it is far more likely that non-target species, even if caught, can be released unharmed.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Cotswolds talked about well-designed snares and started to explain, before he was cut off in his prime, how best practice can tackle a lot of these issues—a point reinforced by the hon. Member for Strangford. The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse drew attention to the fact that snares are mainly used by gamekeepers, rather than farmers. I would point out that snares are used by different groups, including gamekeepers and farmers. These different groups operate in very different environments and have different pressures. Snares are often the most appropriate mechanism for gamekeepers. Upland areas have a different habitat and environment, with more unrestricted areas than farmland.

There have been many references to practices in Scotland and the Welsh code, which the hon. Member for Neath (Christina Rees) said should be made statutory. I think we should give the new code of practice, which I understand is very similar to the Welsh code, a chance to come into effect before even considering any further regulation.

If people do not believe the law is being enforced they should report such incidents to the police. Many forces have rural and wildlife crime units. The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse said that the wild animals in circuses prohibition will be delivered in this Parliament. I point out gently to the hon. Member for Bristol East that the Labour Government were in power for 13 years and the Ministers of the day were not persuaded to legislate on a ban.

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** I would not want the Minister to inadvertently mislead the House. After the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was passed, proposed legislation on circus animals was left to one side. Between 2007 and 2009, the Labour Government were persuaded of the case and the 2010 Labour party manifesto committed to legislating on wild animals in circuses. The lobby was successful, but she is correct that at that point we did not have time to legislate.

**Dr Coffey:** The hon. Gentleman is right. I am not questioning what was in his manifesto, but his party was not re-elected in 2010. I was referring to the practice of snares, rather than wild animals in circuses.

I am confident that the new code will improve the situation. It is different from the 2005 code, in that the new code has been designed and owned by the sector, rather than Government—although we have, of course, brought people to this place and had conversations. By showing leadership in this area, the sector will undoubtedly have more success in promoting good practice with their members and changing behaviour than the Government could achieve on their own. I cannot announce today exactly when the code will be published, but I am confident it will be very soon. I am on day four in this role as a Minister. I am really looking forward to the code's being published and put into practice.

We have had an excellent debate. It is crucial that we all take responsibility and continue to work together to ensure that best practice is recognised, shared and followed by everyone who uses snares. We support measures that improve animal welfare, including the new code of practice. We are all looking forward to its being published very soon.

1.47 pm

**Jim Dowd:** I have listened to what the Minister said. Unfortunately, I am not assuaged by it because, to coin a phrase, I have heard it before—now it will be “very soon”. It took the Government two years to publish the DEFRA research and development unit report. It began in 2010 and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) pointed out, took until 2012 to produce it.

I apologise for my appalling bad manners in not welcoming the Minister to her new position. I hope she makes a success of it and enjoys her new responsibilities.

The one unifying factor across the House is that everybody accepts the need for animal pest control and decent standards of animal welfare. Nobody disputes that. The question is always one of means, not ends. If the means deployed involve exceptional cruelty and

barbarity, that is not a price worth paying. The Minister mentions there being no alternatives. There are plenty of alternatives—unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker stopped me from getting on with my speech—including adequate poultry housing, fencing, scare devices and shooting.

I was delighted to hear what the Minister said about wild animals in circuses. Members may recall that that started as a resolution from this Chamber in a Backbench Business debate. I hope that that is an omen and a precedent. I hope the House will adopt the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House notes the indiscriminate and cruel nature of snares, the failure of previous attempts at voluntary and self-regulation amongst operators, and the continued suffering caused to thousands of animals every year by these traps; and calls on the Government to implement a full ban on the manufacture, sale, possession and use of snares at the earliest opportunity.

**Mr Gordon Marsden (Blackpool South) (Lab):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This morning, the Government sneaked out, alongside 29 other written statements, confirmation of a major increase—2.8% in 2017-18—in tuition fees. Two days ago in the House, when we debated the Higher Education and Research Bill, Ministers made no reference to this. Is it not disgraceful that they should use this cynical last-day-of-term mechanism? Have you had any indication that a Minister is available to answer questions from colleagues before we disappear for five and a half weeks?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I should point out that we are coming to the pre-recess Adjournment debate. If he would like to mention that in the debate, he is more than welcome to do so, and I am sure that the Treasury Bench will take it to the relevant Minister. If he would like me to add him to the list or if he wishes to catch my eye, I will see what I can do.

## Summer Adjournment

1.50 pm

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the forthcoming adjournment.

The hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns) sends his apologies; the time taken by the urgent question meant that he could not stay but had to leave to attend to constituency business.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on some local issues and matters concerning this House that might benefit from a mention. I am pleased to report that during the recent London mayoral election in Harrow East, we managed to secure an overwhelming majority for our mayoral candidate, our constituency candidate and the party vote. Regrettably, the rest of London did not follow the same line. I am also pleased to say that we secured a strong majority vote in my constituency to leave the EU, which was of course echoed across the country.

On transport, the dreadful performance of Southern Rail was mentioned in business questions this morning. This affects my constituents as well. The service from Harrow and Wealdstone station to Gatwick airport and Brighton has already been cut, and now Southern proposes to cut the service to Croydon. I wrote to the outgoing Rail Minister about this, and I trust that there will be strong action from the new Secretary of State and the Rail Minister to combat this disgraceful service.

Flooding is a particular issue in my constituency. Many Members from rural constituencies might not realise this, but constituencies like mine have seen deep pools of water and sewage emerging as a result of recent flash floods and heavy rainfall. I have had consequential correspondence and held a series of meetings with the council, Thames Water and the Environment Agency, and it is a great source of frustration that none of them is taking any action to remedy the problem. As a result, many homes have been flooded unnecessarily, which has caused immense problems with insurance.

I had hoped to report today a satisfactory outcome to the ongoing saga of the redevelopment of the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital. This has been going on since before I was elected: my predecessor and his predecessor attempted to get the hospital rebuilt. The only thing that seems to have changed is that the NHS Trust Development Authority has changed its name to NHS Improvement. Still the bureaucracy continues and still the £20 million funding that is required is being "considered carefully" by the bureaucrats. I trust that the Health Secretary and his team will reduce these levels of bureaucracy and that we can get a reasonable and quick decision on a proper, business-like service. This is a service on which we all rely.

I am receiving complaints about the planning service in Harrow. The local authority is struggling to deal with enforcement notices and the grey areas around permitted development and retrospective planning approval. I warned about this when the Government changed the rules and regulations on planning. It is now causing immense problems, not only in my constituency but throughout London.

I have also received numerous complaints about the rejection of legitimate visa applications submitted for weddings, religious ceremonies, education and other

visits to this country. My office is referring every case either to UK Visas and Immigration or the Immigration Minister. We are seeing mass rejections of visas for families travelling to my constituency for legitimate reasons. This needs to be rectified.

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. At their advice surgeries, many MPs see people complaining about legitimate entry clearance applications being refused. At the same time, is the hon. Gentleman aware that the high commission in Islamabad recently granted entry clearance to two hate preachers, including one Muhammad Qureshi? Why does he think that permission is being granted to people who are seriously dangerous to our country yet not to those who are not?

**Bob Blackman:** It is quite clear that the problems in the visa system need to be resolved. People who want to cause harm and damage to good community relations in this country should be barred from entering. The new Immigration Minister has a task to review this process. I have proposed that visitors from India have the option of a two-year visitor visa, just as visitors from China do. It might be possible to consider other countries as well, but if we have friendly relations with countries, we should allow people from there to come and visit on a reasonable basis. We should also bar those we do not want here, and that includes barring from our mosques messages from hate preachers who preach over the internet or via satellite television. That causes religious and other concerns.

I wish to take up the vexed issue of the garden tax in Harrow. The council decided in 2015 to charge for the collection of garden waste. Having contacted every London borough, we have established that Harrow is charging more than any other borough in London, and probably the country, for garden waste collection. Residents were rightly outraged by this imposition, but the policy has been approved and 10,000 addresses in my constituency have now been registered for this tax. We have had 168 complaints of poor service and 3,080 missed collections out of 128,000 since the service was introduced. The service is poor yet the most expensive in the country. It is outrageous.

I was pleased recently to visit Bentley Priory museum, where we were buzzed by a Spitfire as part of the celebrations of our winning the Battle of Britain. I also received an interesting request. After successfully securing from the Chancellor a £1 million grant towards an education centre for the museum, I received an email asking for an invoice for £1 million and details of the person to whom the cheque should be payable. I had to check that it was not coming from Nigeria or some other country, rather than a civil servant. I am pleased to say that I was able to pass it on to the relevant people and to make sure they got the money they deserved.

I am pleased to say that the first state-sponsored Hindu Secondary School in this country has now received planning permission. It will be built in my constituency and will open as soon as possible. I look forward to the new Secretary of State for Education coming to open it in due course.

After the break, I will be introducing a private Member's Bill on homelessness reduction. It is supported by national charities such as Crisis, Shelter and St Mungo's and by

the National Landlords Association and other local charities in my constituency, such as the Firm Foundation night shelter charity and Harrow Churches housing association. Although we cannot eliminate homelessness, we can try to reduce it as much as possible. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee will be publishing a report on measures to combat homelessness across the country. My Bill will go through pre-legislative scrutiny by the CLG Select Committee, which I understand will be a first for any private Member's Bill. This may be an ordeal for me and others.

I would like to tell Members wishing to support my Bill that Second Reading is on 28 October. I look forward to gaining cross-party support for the Bill, and I have already secured co-sponsors from Conservative, Labour, SNP and DUP Members, but unfortunately I could not find a Liberal Member to help. No doubt the Liberals will also support it, however.

I raised the issue of caste legislation at Women and Equalities questions this morning. The all-party parliamentary group for British Hindus is actively lobbying to repeal clause 9 of the caste legislation as it approaches the end of its sunset clause. The consultation time with communities has been fully exhausted over the last two years, and now is the time to take a decision. British Hindus deeply resent this unnecessary, ill thought out, ill-considered legislation, which was foisted on us by the other place. I look forward to its being repealed as soon as possible.

I had the privilege of celebrating the second international day of yoga this year. We had a very well attended meeting here with researchers, practitioners, parliamentarians and representatives from the NHS. The key point is that the NHS is considering putting yoga into the wellbeing aspects of the health service. I would recommend it for all Members. I start my day with a short period of yoga exercises and stretches and meditation, and it has served me extremely well. I thus strongly recommend it for all colleagues—[*Interruption.*] No, I will not demonstrate it here and now! I have held two meetings with the Minister of AYUSH—Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy—in India. The aim was to get Indian Ministers to inform the Government here and all who would like to listen that this can be utilised to assist people's wellbeing, as well as ensuring that people can relax and live a proper, decent and long life.

This morning I also raised the plight of religious minorities in Bangladesh. I would like to highlight early-day motion 351 for Members to sign if they so wish, with the aim of ensuring that we get some action. At the moment, we spend £157 million on overseas development aid to Bangladesh, and I am proud of the fact that this country spends 0.7% of its gross domestic product on overseas development. It seems to me that at a time when religious minorities are being victimised and persecuted in Bangladesh, we should spend more of that money on improving security over there for all people of all religions rather than on some of the areas where the money has actually been spent.

I have also raised the plight of Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir. This is an integral part of India, and it shall remain so. The area illegally occupied by Pakistan must be repatriated to India. I have spoken on a regular basis against the continued attacks on Hindu minorities in Kashmir. As a result of the assassination of the terrorist

Burhan Wani, the situation in the valley has erupted, with Pandits and Government establishments attacked by Kashmiri Muslims and other terrorists.

I visited Jammu and Kashmir to gain a first-hand understanding of the situation. I met many members of civil society, politicians, lawyers, traders and residents to understand the situation in both Jammu and Kashmir. I met senior cabinet Ministers in Delhi, and it is quite clear that there are huge opportunities for tourism and infrastructure improvements and for the whole of society to come together, provided that the terrorism ceases.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab):** I thank the hon. Gentleman for telling us about his experiences in Jammu and Kashmir. I have been there, too, and I would like to say that the terrorism runs both ways. It is important for us to acknowledge that. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that there is a long way to go, and that there are opportunities to be had for creating greater community cohesion. It is important to register the fact that the acts of terrorism, as I say, go both ways. I have seen that at first hand myself.

**Bob Blackman:** The reality is that under UN resolutions, Pakistan is illegally occupying part of Kashmir—and it should leave. I am also concerned about the link-up between China and Pakistan on the illegal silk route that is being followed, and the threats to security that result from it.

Let me deal now with the costs to the NHS that come from smoking. At the moment, treatments for people who choose to smoke amount to £2 billion a year, while smoking causes 79,700 unnecessary deaths every year. Smoking rates still remain stubbornly high, but I am delighted that the numbers of young people taking up smoking are dropping considerably, which is good news for the longer term. I shall be hosting a round table event in September to discuss progress on the tobacco control plan, and I urge the new Health Minister to ensure that this control plan is introduced as quickly as possible. Our meeting will bring together key stakeholders interested in the development of the plan, and is intended to ensure that we give appropriate recommendations to the Department of Health on this issue. This has been delayed over the summer, and the change of Ministers might bring a need for further consideration, but I urge the Department to get on with this quickly.

In conclusion, I wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and all members of staff, who serve us so well, a very happy recess. Personally, I shall be working in my constituency on behalf of my constituents, as well as having a very short and brief holiday to allow me to recover from this year.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** Order. There will be a seven-minute limit on Back-Bench contributions.

2.7 pm

**Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab):** I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a number of important issues on behalf of my constituents. Next Wednesday, I shall join residents of the Horn Park estate in my constituency to lobby the clinical commissioning group to urge it not

[Clive Efford]

to take the decision to cease funding of The Source, which is a nurse practitioner-led health centre on the estate. We do not want to lose any form of health service provided locally. The estate has no pharmacy and no GP practice. In fact, the nearest GP practices are almost two miles away.

One of the reasons given for taking this service away is that many of the patients treated by The Source, which is funded by Greenwich CCG, are patients of Lewisham doctors. I campaigned against the closure of the GP practice on this estate 25 years ago, when it first lost its practice. As part of the single regeneration budget 5 funding, in 2007 facilities for the introduction of a nurse practitioner-led service were funded, but now, because public health has been separated off from the previous primary care trust, the service falls between two stools. Local GP practices refer people to this service, and they appreciate the quality of it. No one disputes the fact that it provides good value for money, but because of this split in the funding between public health and primary services funded by the CCG, no one is prepared to continue funding it.

Last year, this service treated 5,332 patients, and 4,489 in the previous year. The annual cost is about £142,000, which is minuscule in the scheme of things. The average cost per visit is about £26.63. This is really good value for money. Everyone recognises that it is really good value for money, and everyone recognises that this is a deprived community which needs direct access to health services, but because of the bureaucracy, people are being penalised. Although all those people are Greenwich residents, some of them were forced to join Lewisham practices because the estate was on the border, and now they are being penalised. Having lost their own general practice years ago, they are now being told, "We are not prepared to fund this service", because a fifth of the people who use it are Lewisham patients although they are Greenwich residents.

That is completely unacceptable, and I will be there with my constituents lobbying very hard for all the health managers—general practices, the CCG and the local authority—to come together and maintain the service on the estate for my local residents. It provides vaccinations and treats people who need dressings renewed, so that they need not undertake arduous journeys to other places. It has been said that many of those services will be replaced by home visits, but at a cost of £26.63 per visit to the centre, it cannot be cost-effective to travel all the way to the far end of the borough to treat people in their own homes when those people are asking for the service to be maintained because they use it for many purposes. I hope that a health Minister will hear my appeal and intervene, bang some heads together, and ensure that we do not lose that vital service on the estate.

Another issue that I want to raise is the quality of service that is being provided by Southeastern. It is utterly appalling. We have had some truly hot weather this week, for the first time this summer, and what has it resulted in? A minor change in the weather for a short time has resulted in major disruption to the service. It seems that no matter what sort of weather we have—whether it is heavy rain, severe cold, a bit of snow, or some hot weather—Southeastern cannot run the trains.

We in south-east London do not have direct access to the London underground, and we rely heavily on those rail services to travel to and from central London.

According to a recent survey conducted by Passenger Focus, passenger satisfaction is going down sharply. In autumn 2012, 83% of passengers were satisfied with the service, and punctuality stood at 91.4%; in spring this year, the satisfaction rate was down to 70%, and punctuality stood at 87%. That is just not good enough. According to a Passenger Focus survey of Southeastern passengers, only 53% were satisfied with its services. It was one of the worst performers.

One problem that confronts my constituents is overcrowding. Our platforms have been lengthened to accommodate 12-car trains, but we have yet to see those trains. We know that rolling stock will become available when the Thameslink upgrade has been completed, and that existing rolling stock will be available to Southeastern if the Government give their approval. Let me appeal to the Government again. We have lengthened the platforms, and we have told people that they will have longer trains. We have no underground, we rely heavily on those train services, and we must have that additional rolling stock to improve the quality of the service.

I have only a few moments left, but I want to raise one more issue. I have written to the Minister about a planning application for the site at the Gaelic Athletic Association. The planning inspector has recommended approval, but I urge the Minister not to set such a precedent. There is a viable plan for that sports ground, and we should not be building on it.

2.14 pm

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate and to have an opportunity to welcome my colleagues on the Front Bench, who are serving—I think for the first time—as Deputy Leader of the House and duty Whip. I congratulate them on their new responsibilities.

In a summer when a decade seems to have passed in the last month—indeed, so much has happened since the ghastly murder of Jo Cox that it seems a long while ago, although in reality it was a very recent tragedy—and at a time when Brexit and the how, when and in what way we leave the European Union seem to be the dominant theme of so much media focus, I want to concentrate on issues over which we have always had complete control in this country. At this time, the emphasis is on the need for us—Government, Members of Parliament, local government and other agencies—to come up with answers and deliver them, so that life in our country and our constituencies, in my case the ancient city of Gloucester, gets better from year to year.

Let me begin with transport, because that is how we Gloucester residents travel to and from our city, how visitors arrive, and how our investors gain their first impressions. Two improvements could be made at Gloucester railway station—in the frequency of the trains and in the infrastructure. It still seems extraordinary to me that Arriva CrossCountry's inter-city service between Birmingham and Bristol, which runs 63 trains a day, stops only three times at the city of Gloucester. My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Claire Perry) worked on that problem diligently when she was the trains Minister. I hope that the new Minister will pursue

with the same enthusiasm the business of enabling more CrossCountry trains to stop at Gloucester as the Department for Transport completes its programme for a new franchise in the west of England.

As for the infrastructure, Great Western Railway is making good progress with a new station car park, which will open up the southern side of the station for the first time in its 150-odd years of existence. However, there is more work to be done. I hope that the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will look favourably on the bid from the Gloucestershire local enterprise partnership, which includes a significant amount of money for a general station infrastructure project that will undoubtedly be one of the drivers of growth in our city in the future.

Of course, it is also important for our bus, road and cycle infrastructure to be in as good a state as possible. Our new bus station is well under way, and I know that the city and county councils will ensure that it is delivered on time and within budget, but the road situation is more complicated. The so-called missing link on the A417 between the M4 and the M5 is a major blockage to growth, not just in Gloucestershire and in the city of Gloucester but more widely, between the south and the north of the country. I hope that my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Transport will take the same interest as his predecessor in ensuring that the first spade goes into the ground for that important new project before April 2020.

As a keen cyclist—only marginally put off by a promising black eye, which those with keener vision will spot, resulting from an incident this morning—I hope very much that the county council's £3.5 million project for a new cycle lane between Gloucester and Cheltenham will receive approval from Highways England in due course. I am also separately pursuing longer-term improvements on the towpath between the city centre and Quedgeley. I can tell colleagues who have never had a chance to visit Gloucester that that is a wonderful cycle journey. They would be excused for not realising at any stage, even before visiting the Pilot Inn at the end of their journey, that they were cycling in the middle of a city rather than in a particularly glorious bit of the English countryside, because that is, in fact, what they would be doing.

Finally, I want to refer to two education projects which, in the longer term, will make a huge difference. First, there is the bid that we are preparing for a new Gloucestershire health university technical college, which will serve the people of our county and, possibly, people from wider afield who could travel by train from Swindon or even from Worcester. It will give 14 to 18-year-olds great opportunities to gain BTEC qualifications in either health or care, and also to gain significant work experience with the three NHS trusts in the county, as well as in the private sector. It is to me quite wrong that we should need 400 new nurses a year and that we are only training about 120 and are having to import them from as far afield as the Philippines. Excellent though our nurses from Portugal, Spain, the Philippines and elsewhere are, we should be training them at home; we should be giving them those opportunities to take up the 12,000 jobs in the health sector in Gloucestershire and training them in our own county. I hope very much that that bid goes ahead and is successful.

The other education bid we are making is for a new RAISE academy, which will be for excluded pupils from our secondary schools. This is also important. Everybody deserves a second chance and the opportunity to get back into learning and get the qualifications and skills they need to get good jobs later on, and I hope very much the Department for Education will look favourably at that.

**Dr Tania Mathias** (Twickenham) (Con): I note what my hon. Friend says about the great training going on. Does he agree that with over 300 different careers in the NHS, that new training establishment for excluded pupils might do well to see if there is a place for each one of them in our great NHS?

**Richard Graham:** Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right to stress that. She has experience of the NHS herself as a doctor, and it is right to point out that there are huge opportunities both on the technical level and the care side and on the course she took through university.

I should finish my contribution today by drawing attention to two exciting things happening in Gloucester during this great summer period. The first is our summer of music, art and culture, which is already well under way. The world's longest running and I think longest festival of all, the Three Choirs festival of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester, starts on Saturday. There will be spectacular concerts for the next couple of weeks around that. We will then come to the Gloucester history festival, which I created with many other friends and partners some six years ago, and this year is looking to be even bigger and better than usual. That will be in the first two weeks of September, immediately after Gloucester day, when we celebrate the moment when the city of Gloucester refused to open its gates and surrender to King Charles I, thereby preventing the King from succeeding in his mission in the civil war and ensuring the supremacy of Parliament, which I am sure we all celebrate, as I wish all colleagues a very happy summer recess.

2.22 pm

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): The vote to leave the EU a few weeks ago is a great indication that there are millions of people in our country who feel that they are being left behind, not sharing in the growing prosperity of others. And they are right.

Unemployment may be down according to certain definitions, but poverty certainly is not. For one of the first times in UK history, low wages mean most of Britain's poor families are in working households. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has found that two thirds of children living in absolute poverty have at least one parent in work.

Even the introduction of the new national living wage, intended in the words of the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), to give Britain "a pay rise", has fallen short. It has become a vehicle for reducing the take-home pay of thousands of long-standing, loyal employees in the retail, hospitality and care sectors.

Back in February of this year, I was approached by an employee of B&Q who had been given proposed new terms and conditions and thought he might be worse

[Siobhain McDonagh]

off as a result. In these new contract terms, the employee's basic per-hour pay was going to be increased, but his overall pay would be reduced by £2,600 per year. This is because B&Q planned to cut Sunday and bank holiday pay, as well as other discretionary bonuses—in short, everything that made B&Q an attractive employer and allowed it to retain its staff.

I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) was able to speak in my place during the debate on the national living wage in this House back in April, where dozens of Members voiced their concerns regarding B&Q's plans. I was pleased that after the press attention in the debate, a great deal of lobbying, and a meeting between me and the B&Q CEO, the company extended its period of compensation for employees for two years, promising that no one would lose out for the next 24 months. But B&Q is just one of many.

Over the course of my campaign, I have been approached by employees from around the country, and from all sorts of different companies doing exactly the same thing. There were the factory employees working for subsidiaries of Samworth Brothers in Lincolnshire who are facing cuts to their overnight pay. I was delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) met with Samworth workers to hear their concerns. There were young baristas at Caffè Nero and EAT whose free lunches had been scrapped. Most recently, there are 7,000 staff at Marks & Spencer who will be losing out by thousands of pounds each year because the company is cutting overall pay to fund an increase in basic pay.

I have had well over 100 M&S employees from around the country coming forward to me with M&S's new proposals, with staff terrified for their futures. M&S is cutting Sunday and bank holiday pay, redefining unsocial hours and scrapping its pension scheme, leaving staff with over 20 years of experience at M&S significantly worse off.

Let us consider Elizabeth, whose story was reported yesterday in the *Evening Standard*. Her name has been changed to protect her identity. Elizabeth used to have great wages and perks at M&S, which she was proud to work for, but now she says:

“Everything is being taken away from us. I wanted to see my kids through university but now I'm not sure I'll be able to. It really frightens me.”

In a meeting with its head of retail, M&S confirmed that 2,700 M&S employees will lose over £1,000 per year, and 700 will lose over £2,000 a year. Some of the employees who have got in touch with me are going to lose—this is hard to believe—up to £6,000. To be clear, that is after their basic pay is increased.

M&S maintains that this is just a proposal. It cites its “compensation package”, which compensates staff members for 30% of their projected losses not including how much they will lose in terms of pension cuts. From the paperwork I have seen and the experience at B&Q, I think M&S's plans are a foregone conclusion. To be clear, it is not as if head office staff are getting the sort of pay cut they are dishing out to long-standing shop-floor staff.

There were a number of options M&S could have pursued. Other companies have invested in skills to improve the productivity of their employees. Ultimately, M&S has decided to offset a basic pay increase for some staff by cutting the pay for others.

There are many more examples of UK industrial policies letting down hard-working loyal employees. Just consider the recent discovery of Hermes, the delivery company, using self-employed workers and paying them less than the legal minimum wage, and HMRC's investigation into Sports Direct's working practices. Both companies are undermining the integrity of Government policy. These are huge institutions we are talking about, not small local businesses; their profits are in the millions of pounds, and they employ thousands of people.

I was delighted that the Chancellor committed to look very carefully into the case of M&S earlier this week, but I want to tell the Minister today that it is not good enough to introduce a policy like the national living wage without policing it. If Britain has been promised a pay rise by this Government, then Britain deserves to get a pay rise.

Will the Minister write to the M&S chief executive, Steve Rowe, to express the Government's concerns, calling on M&S to reverse its plans? I absolutely endorse the Prime Minister's commitment to building a UK economy that works for all, and her Government must start by addressing the causes of low wages. People who work hard and play by the rules need a defender in national politics. Both the Government and those on these Opposition Benches have a responsibility to be that champion.

2.28 pm

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): Like many Members who have already spoken, my contribution centres on rail services, in particular the recent decision by the Office of Rail and Road not to approve an application for direct services from Cleethorpes through to London King's Cross.

To provide historical context, I happen to have an Eastern Region timetable for 1964, and Members should be aware that there were at that time two direct services from Cleethorpes to London King's Cross. But before Opposition Members get excited and say, “That was in the nationalised British Rail days,” I should also point out that actually in 1992 British Rail announced it was scrapping the direct services from Cleethorpes.

Since then, although the service has improved in the sense that it is more regular, it does involve a change. The Government have repeatedly pointed out that if we are to improve the local economy and extend growth, we will need greater transport connectivity. The Humber region has the largest port complex in the country and it is developing the offshore renewables sector. Calls for regular direct services are supported by business and industry, the chamber of commerce and the two local enterprise partnerships to which the local authorities belong.

Two years ago, GNER lodged an application with the regulator to operate four daily trains between Cleethorpes, Grimsby and King's Cross via Scunthorpe and Doncaster. I recognise the need to regulate capacity on a network that is already overcrowded, but I question

whether the rules and regulations that govern the regulator actually work in the best interests of passengers. Perhaps they work more to protect the market share of the train operating companies.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): The direct line to London from Cleethorpes that my hon. Friend has mentioned, which was scrapped in 1992, ran through Market Rasen in my constituency. Since 1992, therefore, the good people of the town of Market Rasen and its catchment area of nearly 60 square miles have had no direct service to London at all. Is it not incumbent on the Government and the rail regulator to consider the interests not only of the big operators but of the local people? Can we have a delegation to the new Secretary of State to try to impress on him the need to serve rural lines?

**Martin Vickers:** I thank my hon. Friend and neighbour for his intervention. He has stolen one of my lines: I was going to conclude by asking for a delegation to go to the new Secretary of State and to the rail Minister.

The rail regulator operates under criteria set down by the privatisation legislation, which state that the regulator must promote improvements in railway service performance, protect the interests of users of railway services, promote the use of the network for passengers and goods and promote competition for the benefit of rail users. The criteria go on to state:

“We would not expect to approve competing services that would be primarily abstractive of the incumbent’s revenue”.

In other words, it is there to protect the market share of the big franchise holders such as Virgin East Coast. I understand that the franchise holders pay an enormous fee to the Government for the privilege of operating the east coast main line or any other line, but I question whether the present criteria operate in the best interests of the passenger.

The regulator, in its decision letter, goes on to state:

“We have a long-standing policy of not approving new open access services that we consider are ‘primarily abstractive’”—.

that is to say, services that would abstract funding from the main operator. I repeat that this sounds far more like protecting the operators than providing better services for passengers. In the decision letter, the regulator refers specifically to the application to run services to Cleethorpes, stating:

“These financial impacts would have been reduced had the application focused on serving...just the Cleethorpes line”.

Because the application included additional services into Yorkshire, serving the Bradford and Halifax area, that would have impacted too greatly on other operators. The letter continues:

“On balancing our statutory duties, particularly those to promote improvements in railway service performance, protect user interests and promote competition against our duty to have regard to the Secretary of State’s funds, we saw the abstraction as a significant adverse impact for this option.”

New rolling stock is coming into the network, thanks to the improvements and investment that the Government and the train operators are making in the coming years. That will release rolling stock that is currently in use elsewhere for use on secondary main line services. Services through Market Rasen and Lincoln going through to Grimsby and Cleethorpes suffer because they are not part of the electrified network, and there is only a

limited number of diesel units available to serve those routes. However, some new bimodal units are becoming available that will be able to run the last few miles under diesel power. This is an ideal opportunity to extend services to places such as Cleethorpes.

Hints from the rail regulator suggest that it sees the difficulties in the present system and would like to accept more open access operations, but as I have said, the criteria are restricting it at the moment. The new rail Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), successfully campaigned for direct services to his Blackpool constituency, off the west coast main line, so he ought to be sympathetic to the requests from my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), me and others in northern Lincolnshire for improved services.

When the Secretary of State for Transport introduced the privatisation legislation in 1992, he said:

“Our objective is to improve the quality of railway services by creating many new opportunities for private sector involvement. This will mean more competition, greater efficiency and a wider choice of services more closely tailored to what customers want.”

I think that that has been achieved in part. As I have said, the services into my area have been vastly improved compared with the British Rail days, but we have a long way to go. Customers are rightly demanding more and better services. I urge the Department for Transport to drop its opposition to new long-distance open access services on routes that are not currently served by direct services. We need not only better access to the London network but improved east-west connections, and I urge the Minister to pass my concerns on to the Secretary of State for Transport and tell him that it is time to put passengers ahead of the train operating companies.

2.36 pm

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I should like to start by thanking the Backbench Business Committee for the return of this popular general debate. I want to emulate the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), who always gives us a tour of his constituency in these debates. It is good to see him in his place. Most importantly, I want to welcome the Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, the hon. Member for Northampton North (Michael Ellis), to his post. Behind every great Prime Minister stands the hon. Gentleman, and I am sure that he will do a fantastic job.

I want to raise the concerns of my constituents, and my themes today will be Walstead Road, Great Barr and the Broadway campus of the University of Wolverhampton. They might not mean anything to other hon. Members but they mean a lot to my constituents. Walstead Road is a long, leafy road in Walsall South, and in the summer of 2012, Walsall Council decided to have a consultation to see whether the residents wanted humps on the road. Many people were concerned that they had not had an opportunity to respond, and they raised their concerns with me. The council interprets a non-response as a response in favour, so let that be a warning to everyone: always respond to surveys! As a result, the road is littered with humps.

The council is not listening to the residents. One of the residents, Tracey Clifford, undertook a survey and found that 73 households, out of the 97 responses

[Valerie Vaz]

she received, were having difficulty in dealing with the humps. They had problems when they were exiting their drives, there were personal injuries and their cars were damaged. I have had three meetings with the council, and I am coming up against a brick wall. When I asked for the evidence that speeds were being reduced, I was given a pile of traffic logs 2.5 inches high from 2014 to go through. In 2015, the residents spoke to a police officer who said that people were exceeding the speed limit of 30 mph.

According to the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002, as amended in 2011, a repeater sign cannot be placed in an area when the lamp posts are situated within 200 yards of each other. I was not aware of that, and I think it is slightly strange. The residents have asked for a watchman sign, just like the one on Sutton Road, so that drivers can see their speed flashing up on the sign. Ideally, my constituents on Walstead Road want what the Faculty of Public Health has recommended. Cutting the speed limit to 20 mph cuts road deaths and injuries and is safer—the perfect solution. I hope that the Deputy Leader of the House will agree that residents should be listened to, and that the speed limit should be cut to 20 mph to make them safer.

The other great saga is that of Great Barr park and hall, which has been going on since 2014 and relates to a planning application on green-belt land that goes against both local and national policy. The former Planning Minister, the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis), wrote to Members on 7 July, stating that the Government had put in place the strongest protections for the green belt, and that the green-belt boundary should be adjusted only in exceptional circumstances through the local plan process and with the support of local people.

There is no demand for housing at Great Barr, and yet residents are left with this planning application and planning officers have to sift through mounds of paper to decide whether it should go through—despite the whole thing going against local and national policy. It should either be refused or withdrawn. Does the Deputy Leader of the House agree that my constituents require certainty about this application? Otherwise, they will have to wait until the council decides whether it will have a meeting and then push the application through without residents knowing about it.

The hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) mentioned nurses and the importance of nurse training, which leads me on to the third big issue in Walsall South—the Broadway. The University of Wolverhampton has been told by the council that it must build a road costing £1 million to provide an exit from its Walsall campus on to the Broadway, leading to two sets of traffic lights within 50 yards of each other and then an exit on to one of the busiest roads in Walsall South.

What was the evidence for building the road? At every meeting that I have had with the University of Wolverhampton, it has said that the council is insisting on the condition, but the council says that no officer has said that they want it. Following the first consultation, the evidence to the planning committee included 22 letters of objection and a 67-signature petition against the proposal. After the re-consultation, there were 60 letters of objection, a 450-signature petition and just six letters

of support. However, the council decided that the condition should be imposed. The £1 million should be spent on the nurse training that the university does so well, and on providing bursaries to invest in local skills, not concrete.

I want to end on rubbish. Some hon. Members may think that that is what I have been talking all the time, but it really is an issue in my constituency. I was at Caldmore Green on Saturday and saw the detritus of takeaways, bottles and paper, but just one bin. Members may not remember the Keep Britain Tidy campaign, but it was started by the Women's Institute and had that lovely logo of a person with pointy feet and arms putting litter in a bin. Will the Deputy Leader of the House kindly ask the Government whether we may restart that campaign? Many people who visit this country or form part of new communities—and even those who live here—are not aware of the law on litter. We need to keep Britain tidy.

I wish you a great recess, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank Noeleen Delaney, who is retiring, for looking after us Members in the Tea Room. I thank all Members, the Library and everyone else. It has been a momentous, historic time, and I hope we all have a good rest.

2.43 pm

**Dr Tania Mathias** (Twickenham) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) for her well-made points. I absolutely believe in keeping Britain tidy and would be happy to join any such movement. I am lucky in my constituency and applaud the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks. Everyone knows that they should always take their litter home when out in the parks over the summer—rubbish is particularly damaging to the parks' wildlife. I am grateful to those in the community who do regular litter-picking in addition to the good job done by the council. I also welcome the new Deputy Leader of the House to his post.

Like the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) and my hon. Friends the Members for Gloucester (Richard Graham) and for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers), I have concerns about rail services. I absolutely agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes when he said that passengers must come ahead of rail companies. I have had many meetings and have been in communication this week with South West Trains. I note that the franchise is coming up for renewal, and when I met South West Trains and other bidders I made clear what standards are expected at the eight stations in my constituency, including Twickenham, and on the network.

The problems are both chronic and acute. The chronic problems include the lack of regular and frequent trains at all our stations, which is appalling considering that many passengers travel into London to work. That lack has economic consequences. Trains are not frequent enough at any of the stations on Sundays. This is the 21st century and we should be appreciating passengers and the different lifestyles that require regular services every day of the week. Unfortunately, every single station in my constituency suffers from cancellations and delays and from overcrowding. Those are the chronic problems between the temperatures of 5° C and 25° C.

We are in the 21st century and have predictable weather. We were all told about the high temperatures this week—one does not have to be a climatologist—and that leads me to South West Trains' acute problems.

This week, the line has not been functioning properly and conditions have been unhealthy. When the temperature is over 25° C, a code of conduct should apply—I hope the new Rail Minister will take that on board—and adequate supplies of water must be given out free on platforms when there are delays or overcrowding. We can predict temperatures for the next few years—the next generation—and they will persist, so there must be a plan for air-conditioned trains on our suburban network for people who regularly travel into London.

The previous Mayor of London, my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), introduced the Oyster card system into my area, which is great for commuters who do not have much time, but there must be a way of refunding to Oyster cards following delays. Like many of my constituents, the service that I experience when getting home is not good enough—sometimes 2 hours instead of a 40-minute journey—but it is impossible to navigate the website to try to get a refund, and it is even harder when using Oyster. Like most people, if I cannot do it within two clicks, I give up. There must be a way of putting the passenger first and making refunds easy.

There must also be a better way of communicating. There was no information this week on the platforms or at station information points about the duration of delays, which is critical for people if they have medical problems, are tired or need water.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): There is also a big problem for people such as me who use their bank card instead of an Oyster card to get on a train, as trying to get a refund on a bank card would be even more difficult.

**Dr Mathias:** I thank my hon. Friend for that important point, as more and more people will be getting rid of the Oyster and so we also need a tap-and-refund system there, putting the passenger first.

If Ministers or any of their family are travelling by air over the summer—I will not be, but I know many people will—I ask them to give a thought to the three quarters of a million people suffering from levels of more than 55 dB Leq or to the quarter of a million people suffering from levels of 57 dB Leq. I ask them to give a thought to the fact that if there is expansion of Heathrow, it will particularly affect my constituency; more people under that flightpath will be affected than are affected around the Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, Frankfurt and Madrid airports combined. On a medical level, I do not think this Government wish to inflict that on their residents. I hope that Ministers, including Transport Ministers, will be aware, every day during the recess, when the nitrogen dioxide levels are above European Union or World Health Organisation standards—I do not mind which are used, because both show this is unhealthy. We need a better, not a bigger, airport for such a populated area.

Nevertheless, I wish everybody a peaceful and well-deserved recess. I shall be spending it in my constituency, because we have the best parks and the best stretch of the River Thames; people do not need to go away to have a wonderful time.

2.50 pm

**Mr Graham Allen** (Nottingham North) (Lab): Madam Deputy Speaker, you and I played a part in the creation of the Backbench Business Committee in its early days.

I am very proud of that and I hope you are, too. I am equally proud that it has restored the ability of Back-Bench Members of all parties to raise issues of concern to their constituents that other people may often think go unremarked. Even more importantly, when Members of Parliament are berated and abused regularly for failing to do their duty or for not doing what they should do, members of the public watching or reading these debates can see the absolute variety of work that Members of Parliament do which is unsung but vital in their constituency.

This debate is therefore very important, particularly for someone who represents one of the five most deprived constituencies in the UK, where there are very low incomes. This is not a competition, but Members in those constituencies have a high number of cases, and those cases deserve to be brought into the cold light of day so that people understand how many others live. I say that without any side, but it may be more difficult for some to understand the impact on individuals and on families of economic crises and of the swathe of policies and politics we discuss in here; it is much harder to ignore that when one represents a constituency that has very great difficulties if we get it wrong in this House.

I want to talk about a number of constituency cases, but one thing I ought to get on the record first—I do this without delving back into an issue decided in the recent referendum—is why people vote the way they do. I can hazard a guess about how some of my constituents voted. Of course they were concerned about the European Union and many were concerned about immigration, but many also used the vote in the referendum, as they rightly use votes in general elections and local elections, almost as a cry for help; they were almost saying, “We have problems. You need to look at us. You can no longer ignore us.” People do that in different ways. I am not saying that that influenced the outcome of the recent referendum, but I am saying that we here, and the people in and around constituencies like mine—people in the city of Nottingham, in my case—ignore that cry for help at our peril if we continue to feel that people can be marginalised or alienated from our politics and our politicians. That will not apply to many Members in here now; by definition, they are assiduous constituency Members by the very fact that they are here for this debate. I hope very much that we all take that lesson to heart; there is a divide in our society and in our country, and it is incumbent on all of us to do something about it.

I wish quickly to raise three cases to demonstrate the breadth of the things that Members of Parliament deal with and as an excuse to thank people who have been involved, as we all know, in helping us on our casework and helping us to be good Members of Parliament. Like everyone, I want to thank my staff, both in Westminster and in the constituency; across the House, these people make us the Members of Parliament that we are. I want to place that very much on the record.

I wish to highlight one particular case. My constituency staff worked incredibly hard to help a young man called Max Buxton, who has a severe hearing impairment. He was on an apprenticeship, and his employer made glowing comments about Max’s energy and dedication at work, but, in order to progress, Max had to climb the

[Mr Graham Allen]

apprenticeship ladder. To do that, he had to pass an English qualification. Unfortunately for Max and for many other young men and women, their first language is British sign language, and it is very difficult for them to understand English, particularly written English. At my request, my staff raised this matter over and over again with the relevant Ministry. I will not go into all the details of the case, but, after many months, it fell to me to do something that has changed the rules around qualification for climbing that apprenticeship ladder. After a visit to the Minister recently, he said that he would look at, and indeed change, the rules around British sign language so that it is equivalent to the English qualification.

That is wonderful news for Max Buxton and for colleagues in other constituencies who have similar problems, and that is the way that we work. When you—if I may use that expression, Madam Speaker—and colleagues around the House win a case for a constituent, they are also winning it for many other constituents, particularly when we help Governments of all colours to see the light and change the rules.

By working closely with people from another constituency—it happened to be Hull—I helped children in my own constituency to take up the free dental check that is there for all children. It was something that we had tried to do locally, but found that we could not do it as well as we wanted to, so we used an example of a practice called Teeth Team. Chris Groombridge and his team came to help us, and are still helping us. The moral of this story and this brief intervention is that if we continue to work together in this House, across parties, on the big issues and on the small, we can change our society and the lives of our constituents for the better.

2.47 pm

**Chloe Smith** (Norwich North) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) and to hear in this case—forgive the pun—how he has been getting his teeth into his local constituency issues for the good of us all.

Today, I would like to speak for my constituents of Norwich North on the subject of exiting the European Union. Brits have just taken part in a giant democratic exercise about that relationship, and I thank people for that, however they voted, and whatever lies ahead. The result was clear, and hard work now has to follow to put the country's wishes into practice. We all want what is best for Britain, so we should all work together in a calm and thoughtful way.

Our membership of the European Union is a fundamental constitutional question, and one that could not have been ducked forever. I am a democrat first and foremost, and it was right to use a referendum as the means to settle that kind of question. The result does raise arguments about what it means for the future of our parliamentary democracy. If we can hold a referendum on this, then why not on everything else? Do we even need a Parliament? There is a very clear distinction to be made, though, as there are fundamental constitutional questions. In such cases, it is right to put those decisions directly to the people. The detail and practical implementation of the decision is then the job

of the Executive, scrutinised by Members of Parliament. The majority wish in this referendum is a clear instruction to Parliament.

Like many MPs, I have had hundreds of people getting in touch since the referendum, reflecting on the result. Most of my constituency mail comes from those who voted remain and who are understandably worried about the future. Norwich voted by a majority to remain, but that refers only to the Norwich City Council area. My own constituency is not the same as that area. It is never a simple maths job to speak in this place for all constituents on this or on any other issue. Before the poll, most constituents who got in touch wanted to persuade me to vote out. After the poll, I am hearing most from people who want to persuade me to vote against going out. It is funny how that happens, but it reminds us that there is a silent majority that never gets in touch with its Member of Parliament. Counting all those people who have been in touch on either side of that debate still numbers only a few hundred of the 67,000 I represent.

I welcome any tool, such as a referendum, that encourages so many more voices to be heard. However, it is clear to me that the point of a referendum is that the whole electorate counts together—in this case, the whole of the UK. As an MP, first, it is my job to support the best for Britain after this clear instruction, and secondly, it continues to be my job to work for everyone I represent in Norwich North, whichever way they voted on this issue or any other.

Some of my constituents are reflecting on how the poll was run, concerned that just a simple majority was used to define the result on a complex question. There is clear precedent here. Referendums are decided on simple majorities. Consistency is important and allows a legitimate process. In a healthy democratic society both sides accept the result, recognise the concerns that the other side might have, and then come together in unity. I recognise this in my constituents. While some are celebrating, others who have been in touch are unhappy. What we cannot do is deny the result or denigrate fellow citizens.

Norwich is a proud and old city, but with a youthful population. Some constituents share my own deep concern in particular about the generational rift exposed by the referendum. What happened, in age terms, at this referendum is quite clear. A large majority of younger voters opted in, and a large majority of older voters opted out. Bluntly, the younger generation was outvoted, and many are now contemplating the result with some concern for their future. But, again, democracy is democracy. We live by it and we accept the result.

I am always concerned by turnout rates, in which younger people generally vote less than their elders in Britain. Never mind whether this is a new or an old battle, a new or an old issue, what we are seeing is that younger voters are not coming out in sufficient numbers to fight any battle. Democracy works thanks to those who take part, so if people care about something, they simply have to be there. There are not many excuses in a major democratic event, and considering that many people around the globe still literally die for one person, one vote, we should appreciate the robust lesson that politics actually means something.

I therefore call on the next great reforming Conservative Prime Minister to heal this division. The health of democracy depends on all being represented, and it

must balance the needs of different generations. It is the duty and the opportunity of the new Government to reach out to young voters now and offer them a future.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** On that point, and given the hon. Lady's position on the all-party parliamentary group on voter participation, will she look seriously at automatic registration so that we get young people to the point where they can use their vote?

**Chloe Smith:** The hon. Lady knows that I look seriously at all these issues. Indeed, I have chaired that APPG and helped to produce a report that goes into that option and a number of others for ensuring that as many people as possible are registered to vote. I know that that is an issue that the hon. Lady has worked on in some detail.

Let me press on to the situation of EU nationals in my constituency—that is, several thousand constituents, friends, colleagues and family members. I welcome the Government's early reassurance that there has been no change to the rights and status of those people, and confirmation that when we do leave the EU, the Government fully expect their legal status to be protected, alongside our goals for our citizens living in the other European countries.

I very much welcome the contribution made by immigrants in Norwich and across the UK to our economy, history and society. Norwich is a friendly and welcoming city. I was concerned, like many in our city, by an arson attack on the shop and home of a Romanian. It is still too early to rush to any conclusions about the motives for the attack, but whether it was racist or just plain criminal, it is hateful behaviour and it has no place here. The response of the community has been impressive. Norwich does not welcome racism or any form of aggression. Let us be clear that those who have made Great Britain their home are respected and valued.

Looking ahead, the referendum result provides a clear instruction to the Government that the majority wish is for a change in the way that Britain handles immigration from Europe. However, leaving the EU must not mean leaving behind a strong economy or a strong cultural exchange. In the east of England, almost one in every 10 jobs is linked to trade with the EU. We want to build on that, not to lose it. The case for remain, perhaps, was to maintain the rules for half of our global trade, and we need the best deal possible for that half. The case for making a success of leaving involves looking now to the other half, and I welcome the early appointment of the relevant set of new Ministers who are focused on that.

Norwich, in particular, needs a good deal on financial services. The financial services sector makes the largest single contribution to the economy of Norfolk and Suffolk. Norwich is the largest general insurance centre in the UK, with a heritage going back more than 200 years, and it is going strong today, employing thousands of people. Firms will now be looking for a technical environment of regulation that allows them to thrive in the UK and to thrive outside London, too.

In Norwich, we expect to be able to do the same in our exciting digital and technology sectors so that we can attract investment and talent. We also enjoy an ambitious science sector, a thriving cultural scene and a

strong tourism industry. All of this requires an outward-looking attitude. Britain must remain a successful economy—jobs and livelihoods in my constituency depend on it.

3.6 pm

**Steven Paterson** (Stirling) (SNP): Following on from the comments of the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen), I want to raise an issue that is of extreme importance to my constituency.

Gillies hill is a beautiful area of woodland to the south of Stirling. Its spelling gives a clue as to the origin of the name—it is the gillies hill, and its historical association with the battle of Bannockburn gives it its heritage importance. It is reputed to be where the gillies—the sma' folk who followed the Scottish army to the battle behind the enemy lines—were camped. At the turning point in the battle, that was where they rattled their pots and pans. They acted as if they were reinforcements coming down the hill, and the English army turned and broke. I will leave it for historians to argue about the truth of that, but the hill has been called Gillies hill for 700 years, and that in itself says there must be something in this tale, and it is extremely important.

Why is the hill controversial now? An application for quarrying of Gillies hill has been made. Regrettably, there was quarrying of a large chunk of this historic and spectacular area in the 1980s, and it was controversial then. I remember well, when I was growing up in the village of Cambusbarron, which is on the side of Gillies hill, that massive trucks would carry the aggregates away on a daily basis, driving up and down through the village. There were instances of bits of rock landing on people's houses and causing damage.

The quarrying stopped in the early '90s. We understood that permission was to finish in around 2007 or 2008—that was when the extent of the permission would be up. It was therefore really disappointing when, in January 2007, as I was out knocking on doors down in Causewayhead in my constituency, we felt the ground shake—literally—because of test blasting about five miles away for renewed quarrying. What had happened was that the local council—Stirling Council—had extended the permission to the 2040s because of a new European directive, and nobody was aware of the change. In essence, virtual permission had been granted right through, and we had the prospect of this historic, spectacular hill being destroyed, as a large chunk of it already had been.

**Bob Stewart:** Is planning with regard to this quarry the responsibility of the Westminster Parliament, or is it a Scottish national responsibility?

**Steven Paterson:** Planning legislation is now devolved to Scotland. The original quarrying planning legislation—and indeed some of the stuff that is still enforced in Scotland—is Acts of this Parliament, because it goes back a number of decades. So, yes, strictly speaking, planning is now with the Scottish Parliament, but most of the Acts of Parliament on which these things are based were formed down here.

That is not intended to be a criticism of this place. Quarrying has its place, and it is important, but this hill is the wrong place for it, and there is a massive local community campaign against it, involving hundreds of

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people. For example, just a few weeks ago, I joined the march of the gillies, an event in which several hundred people walk from Cambusbarron to the Bannockburn battlefield to protest against quarrying of this area.

I am sure that Members will be very interested in the Save Gillies Hill website—[savegillieshill.org.uk](http://savegillieshill.org.uk)—which gives information about why the campaign is important. It outlines the history of the hill and gives information about the flora, many of which are endangered species. Protected wildlife such as red squirrels, badgers, pine martens and peregrines also live on the hill, and it is used heavily for pleasure and recreation, including running, bikes, motorbikes and even horses. It is a fantastic resource. From the top of Gillies hill, people can look down on Stirling castle several miles to the north and over the castle to the Wallace monument. That will give anyone who knows Stirling an idea of what I am describing.

The campaign is ongoing. I want to highlight two things in the time remaining. Unfortunately, a planning application has been made for permission to begin the re-quarrying of the site, which would take a huge further chunk out of it. That will have to be dealt with in the usual way. An appeal has been made to the Scottish Government on the grounds that Stirling Council did not determine the application—which is regrettable, to put it mildly—and it has been referred for that reason. That process is ongoing.

When I was a local councillor I was very concerned about the issue, for the reasons I have given, and we investigated every avenue we could think of to find a way to stop the quarrying of this historic and significant area. We considered using the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to designate the area as a local nature reserve, which would prevent quarrying from taking place there. Two years ago, I tabled a council motion, which was unanimously agreed by all parties, asking the local council to come back with options and the costs involved, because a compulsory purchase order might be required for all or part of the hill in order to make it a local nature reserve and give it the protection it needs. Two years later, I am a Member of this place and not of the council, which, unfortunately, appears to have taken no action, which is a matter of extreme regret.

I have asked the council to get the information to the councillors so that the wider public can be made aware of what would be involved in granting Gillies hill the protection to which it is entitled. I hope that the council will take my remarks on board and acknowledge that it has been asked by every council member from every party, unanimously, for that information. I hope that it will be made available sooner rather than later, particularly given that the live planning application will be determined later this year. Given that the council has had two years to get the information to the councillors and, therefore, to the public, I very much hope—in fact, I demand—that it puts the information in the public domain so that we can have a proper debate in the time that we have left.

The good thing about the planning application is that designating Gillies hill as a local nature reserve would not impinge on it—it would stand separate from it—so it is something practical and tangible that we could do

to offer Gillies hill protection. I hope that that happens and I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to raise this important issue for my constituency.

3.13 pm

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Stirling (Steven Paterson). Given that Staffordshire is often used as the quarry for much of the midlands, I very much sympathise with him. It is also a great honour to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith), who made a very thoughtful speech.

On Monday, I saw two reasons why there is great hope in Stafford for the economic future. One was the almost-completed General Electric factory on the Redhill business park, which Staffordshire County Council set up a few years ago and which will be an extremely important source of employment and innovation for the future. General Electric will base its automaton division there. The second was Biomass Power, a manufacturing and design company that makes biomass equipment. I visited its gasification plant, which will assist the Bombardier works in Belfast in Northern Ireland. That will help Bombardier reduce its energy costs, which is one of the reasons why it will be successful in Belfast. As a result of these and many other initiatives, the percentage of jobseeker's allowance applicants in Stafford has fallen from 3.2% to 1% over the last six years. During that time, we have welcomed two new Signals regiments, 1 and 16, and they are already playing a major role in the life of our communities. They have been a welcome addition to our community.

A new retail development is due to open in the coming two months on the edge of the town centre, and we need to ensure that it does not suck the life out of the middle of our town centre. The borough council is working with many people, including me, to see what we can do to bring more life into our beautiful town centre.

Stafford is a great centre for volunteering. The proportion of volunteers per head of population is one of the highest in the country. One of our excellent local volunteering organisations is Staffordshire Women's Aid, which has just opened a new refuge. I very much hope that a Home Office Minister, or my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, who is a Staffordshire MP, will come and open it formally at some point.

Stafford is building large numbers of houses. We have an excellent local plan, which means that the houses are, by and large, being built in the right place, but I would like to point out the problems that speculative development brings. With a good local plan, there is absolutely no need for speculation, because we have planned the number of houses that we need. Speculative development simply wastes everybody's time.

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for his support following the closure of Rugeley B power station. Will he join me in trying to get all parties—national and local government—to do everything they can to get the site redeveloped as quickly as possible?

**Jeremy Lefroy**: Of course. My hon. Friend has done incredible work on that and I will support her in whatever way I can, because the site is on the boundary of my constituency as well.

I want to make two other quick points about housing and planning. First, I have already raised in the House issue of the lack of enforcement. It is so important to ensure that when planning permission is given, development is carried out in accordance with it, and that developers do not try to take bits away or add bits that have not been approved. Secondly, could we find a way of ensuring that the new roads that are put into new housing estates are quickly available on maps, especially electronic maps and satnavs? For many months, if not years, those roads do not appear on such maps, so people do not know how to get to the new houses that are being built.

I want to talk briefly about health. The county hospital, about which I spoke many times in the previous Parliament, is now doing well. The accident and emergency department is seeing more people in 14 hours a day than it did in 24 hours a day at its peak, although I continue to urge the restoration of a 24-hour service, which I believe is vital. Many of the wards in the hospital are being refurbished. The stroke unit—a rehabilitation ward—is under review. Many of my constituents have pointed out how important it is. It is all very well talking about helping to rehabilitate people at home. If that is best for the patient, that is fine. In many cases, however, such patients are better served by going to the rehabilitation ward as day cases or for a few hours in a day.

I raised this morning with the Leader of the House the question of drug and alcohol treatment in Staffordshire. We face a cut of up to half in the funding for such treatment and the closure of some excellent units. That cannot be right, and it has to be stopped somehow. I have also raised the question of health visitors. The amount of money dedicated to health visitors is under review, if not being cut. Health visitors play an absolutely vital role in Staffordshire, as they do across the country. Reducing their numbers will be counterproductive, and it will lead only to more pressure on acute hospitals.

The funding of the NHS is a long-term issue, which is why I have joined the right hon. Members for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) and for Birkenhead (Frank Field) to look at the ways in which we could have a much longer-term funding picture for the NHS and social care. It is quite clear that after 2020, even if the current plans go ahead—I fully support them—we will have some major holes in health service funding.

On transport in our area, I asked about the four-lane running of motorways in questions to the Leader of the House last week. The Transport Committee wrote an excellent report on that, and I ask the Government to look at this matter most carefully. I believe that some of the four-lane running is dangerous. It has now been proposed for junctions 13 to 15 of the M6 in my constituency. Before that goes ahead, I want the Government to look at the system that operates on the M42 smart motorway, which is much better than the permanent four-lane running elsewhere.

As far as rail is concerned, the Norton Bridge viaduct has been put in at the junction on the west coast main line, and it is bringing great improvements. I am very much in favour of that, just as I am against HS2. I continue to be against HS2 because, in my opinion, there are much better alternatives. I am in no way a nimby on this, but there are alternatives that would be cheaper and would provide greater connectivity to far more cities across the country.

Finally, there is a proposal for a massive rail freight interchange in my constituency, which would take up many acres of the green belt. We must look at that most carefully. The proposals brought forward by the developers consortium are simply not acceptable at the moment, and they must be looked at very carefully. This is a national issue, and I urge Ministers to look at this most carefully to see whether there are not alternative sites for this rail freight interchange.

3.21 pm

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): I wish to speak about a very important matter that affects many people in Scotland. It is certainly not the first time the issue has been raised in this place, but, unfortunately, in the light of the circumstances, it needs to be brought to the Government's attention again.

Yesterday, when giving evidence to the Defence Committee on naval procurement for the Type 26 frigates, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, Tony Douglas, replied in response to a question on when the Type 26 design would be approved, "I can't give you a time or a date. It could be next year." This suggestion could in effect place the Type 26 programme on the Clyde on an indefinite delay. That would be wholly unacceptable and nothing short of a betrayal of the workers on the Clyde.

The Ministry of Defence needs to come forward and be absolutely clear, open and honest about the level of uncertainty that the Type 26 programme faces. The new Minister with responsibility for defence procurement, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), could give none of the assurances on the future of the contract that were promised to the Clyde shipyards. Yet again, the future of the programme has been cast into very serious doubt.

That news came less than 48 hours after the Tories trooped through the Division Lobby—accompanied, unfortunately, by many of their allies on the Labour Benches—to vote en masse for the renewal of Trident. A blank cheque has in effect been written for weapons of mass destruction. On Monday, my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Brendan O'Hara) asked the Defence Secretary whether the massive expense of Trident and the recent analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies showing that UK GDP might be reduced by up to 3.5% as a result of the Brexit vote would result in a black hole in the public finances of up to £40 billion in 2020, and what that would mean for defence procurement. The Defence Secretary could not give an answer.

**Bob Stewart:** Economists seem to get it consistently wrong. They got it wrong on Brexit. They cannot talk about 2020 when, as far as I can see, they cannot even get it right for next week. Their forecasts are always wrong.

**Margaret Ferrier:** It does not matter what the figure is; we are going to spend up to £205 billion on a weapon of mass destruction that could kill hundreds of thousands of people worldwide—it is based in Scotland—so I am sorry, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman.

The UK's nuclear weapons programme has a major knock-on effect for the rest of the defence procurement budget. Other massive projects are in the pipeline, including

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the Type 26 frigates, but the ring-fencing and generous contingencies for Trident are no doubt affecting that project. The workers on the Clyde appear to be paying the price for the obsession on the Government Benches with Trident and Brexit.

I cannot stress enough how much of a betrayal this represents for those shipyard workers, their families and the communities that depend on this work. They have had assurance after assurance from the UK Government, both in this place and from the Scottish Tories, but are now suffering from the continuing uncertainty over and mismanagement of the Type 26 programme. Every penny spent on Trident is a penny less for conventional defence, including the Type 26 frigates.

GMB Scotland organiser Gary Cook admitted in April that £750 million had been removed from the Type 26 programme's budget. On several occasions during Monday's debate, the issue of jobs was brought up—when we voice our concern about weapons of mass destruction we are told to shut up and be grateful for the jobs. Without doubt, those jobs come at the expense of other people's livelihoods. It seems the Government care about defence jobs only when it suits their agenda.

Leaked emails have shown that delays in the delivery of the Type 26 global combat vessels will cost the taxpayer more money than proceeding with the work would. The Type 26 frigates were due to be built by BAE Systems, with work beginning in December. The Ministry of Defence then asked for savings of £500 million over five years, refusing BAE's Systems' offer of saving £275 million while still beginning work on time. The delays have put jobs at risk, and the suggestion in the leaked emails that those delays will end up costing the taxpayer more money in the long term has been echoed by former First Sea Lord Admiral Lord West. The delays show the Government's ideological obsession with making cuts, no matter the cost. By going back on the original deal and rejecting BAE Systems' offer, the Tories have confirmed that they are prepared to put jobs at risk and waste taxpayers' money by pursuing cuts across all sectors of Government.

**Steven Paterson:** The point that shines through all this is that assurances were given to workers on the Clyde in 2014. Promises were made that have been betrayed. In a week when we have committed to a 40-year programme on Trident, it really sticks in the craw that those workers are still waiting for the promises made in 2014 to be delivered.

**Margaret Ferrier:** My hon. Friend takes the words right out of my mouth. I was just about to say that Scotland has come to expect cuts and broken promises from this Government. We remember the pledges that were made just a couple of years ago. The Tory Government told us during the independence referendum that jobs in shipbuilding would be safe if Scotland voted no. If the very clear promises made to workers on the Clyde by the UK Government before the referendum were to be broken, it would be an unforgivable betrayal of that workforce, and people in Glasgow and across Scotland would not be quick to forget.

Now that I have got that out of the way, on a lighter note, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Mr Speaker, his deputies and all Members of the House

of Commons a very enjoyable, relaxing and safe summer recess. I thank all the estate staff, including those at the Table Office and the House of Commons Library, the Doorkeepers, and all the people who serve us in the Tea Room and other cafeterias, including Noleen, who I wish all the best. A special thanks must go to the Clerks and staff who look after me and other hon. Members on the Scottish Affairs Committee—I wanted to get that on the record. I will be spending my time during the recess as we all will, back in my constituency, working hard. However, we have to have a break to recharge our batteries before returning to Parliament in September. I wish everyone a happy summer.

3.29 pm

**Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): A little over a year ago I had the privilege of delivering my maiden speech, during which I set out my pledges to my constituents. I emphasised that the point is not where people come from but where they are going, and that our duty in this House is to create opportunities. I would like to use this debate to discuss the engineering skills gap and the work I have done to open up opportunities in my constituency.

One of my key pledges was to back businesses—to help them to create and retain jobs and to encourage more apprenticeship schemes—and ensure that local people, young and old, are aware of the fantastic opportunities available in Wiltshire. I also want to inspire them with the knowledge that we have some leading companies, such as Siemens, Hitachi, Good Energy and the Moulton Bicycle Company—the list is endless. In the past year I have visited more than 100 local businesses to learn more about what they need and what the Government can do to support them.

Despite the importance of this House, I must stress that it is the businesses that are the job creators that put food on the table and money in the pockets of local employees, not the politicians. We are blessed in Wiltshire with record levels of high employment, boosted by the figures that were released yesterday, and record numbers of apprenticeship schemes, but there is still a lot more to do to make sure that our disadvantaged get opportunities and to tackle the problem that we have with long-term unemployed.

The real issue in the Chippenham constituency is found by looking a little deeper. The real problem is the skills gap in technical, design and engineering roles. In September this year I will hold the inaugural Wiltshire festival of engineering, with more than 40 local manufacturing, design and engineering companies. They will meet more than 1,200 local school pupils, with the aim of addressing the local science, technology, engineering and maths skills gap, inspiring the next generation to consider those career options and dispelling any misconceptions. It is also designed to showcase the impressive array of businesses I have mentioned across the region and highlight the fact that Wiltshire is a hub for this sector.

I pledged also to address the infrastructure problems that we have locally, to help to tackle our skills gap. Owing the time constraints, I cannot explore the issues of Corsham station, how I have worked to protect the TransWilts railway service, or what I have done to address Bradford on Avon's long-term traffic problem.

I will, however, explore the topic of the letter sent to the new Prime Minister and Secretary of State today, signed by me and 86 colleagues from both sides of the House, about a slight tweak to the English baccalaureate that we believe would dramatically improve the qualification. I have developed a reputation in the House for banging the drum on—some might say, banging on about—this topic, but it is crucial. The campaign is for the inclusion of the new, vastly improved design and technology GCSE in the English baccalaureate qualification. It is supported by the James Dyson Foundation, the Design and Technology Association, the Royal Academy of Engineering and a host of other businesses and organisations across the country.

Earlier this year, I had a Westminster Hall debate on the topic, which was well attended and supported. Many of our constituents suffer from the skills gap that threatens our businesses and fuels the local and national productivity crisis. The UK faces several challenges, with the annual shortage of 69,000 trained engineers and only 6% of the engineering work force being female. As I have stressed, businesses have told me that they cannot recruit adequately. That means that they might leave not just Wiltshire but, potentially, the country and that would turn our market towns into dormitory towns, threatening the very fabric of our communities. It is, therefore, the Government's responsibility to ensure that our education system serves our businesses and our economic needs, as well as ensuring that students are encouraged into areas that can actually get them jobs.

Despite the fact that the EBacc has been reformed, its current form still threatens to undermine any progress being made and does not address the stigma associated with careers in engineering and STEM. There has been a massive drop in the uptake of design and technology courses, and in the schools offering them. Students do not have the opportunity to taste such careers, so how can the stereotypes be dispelled to let them understand what such careers are all about?

There has been a great deal of investment in design and technology as a course, and the new course will be launched in September 2017. It has been designed over years in partnership with business. It is robust, science-based, academic and a valuable option as a GCSE. However, it comes a little too late and will not really stop the growing trend of high uptake of EBacc subjects and five more, meaning that the credible design and technology course will be squeezed into a single or double subject option box. I hope the new Prime Minister and the Secretary of State will bear that in mind. There is currently a unique opportunity to include the new robust and rigorous design and technology course within the English baccalaureate certificate as one of the science qualifications, and as an either/or with computer science. This opportunity must be seized. The skills shortage is a ticking time bomb and we must get to grips with it if we are to remain at the forefront of global product design and tackle our productivity crisis.

We have a duty and an economic need to plug the skills gap on both a local and national level, and to address our productivity crisis. It is also, as I have said, threatening the very fabric of the market towns in Wiltshire, as well as the country as a whole. I have touched briefly on what we can do to improve the situation in just a few areas, in particular reforming the EBacc to include design and technology. We must address

this issue to encourage and enable opportunities. If we do not, rest assured that the ticking time bomb will one day explode.

3.35 pm

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab):** Today at the High Court, a group of junior doctors asked the Government to clarify their position on the implementation of the new contract for junior doctors. The High Court decided that the Secretary of State may have a case to answer and has given them more time to prepare their case. As if this situation could not get any worse, yesterday the Secretary of State for Health demanded £150,000 in legal fees from those junior doctors.

Hon. Members may ask themselves why the new Member for Tooting, in the three weeks since she was sworn in, has been jumping up and down to speak on this subject. This is not an issue of party politics; it is simply about doing the right thing. Not once has the Secretary of State for Health had the best interests of patients or doctors at heart. His seven-day-a-week proposal has been fundamentally flawed from the start.

**Bob Stewart:** Surely the Secretary of State for Health is thinking of the patients when he says we ought to have a seven-day-a-week NHS and the ability to see a doctor seven days a week? He is surely thinking of the patients. One may disagree with him, but that is the case.

**Dr Allin-Khan:** Not once has the Secretary of State for Health had the best interests of patients or doctors at heart. His seven-day-a-week proposal has been fundamentally flawed from the start. The Secretary of State will not be let off. The junior doctors' dispute will not be brushed under the carpet. The facts in the dispute remain the same and he cannot charge me £150,000 if I speak out, so I will make the facts known in this House again and again.

Our hospital departments are terribly underfunded. Staff morale is low. The Government are hellbent on breaking them. I have met hospital doctors who have finished night shifts after working 12 hours and gone straight on to the next day shift simply because there have not been enough staff to cover. I will answer the question from the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart). If you are a doctor in 2016, you are constantly faced with a decision: finish your night shift and go home, leaving your already overstretched team and risking patient safety; or stay and work the extra shift, knowing you will be working dangerously long hours without a proper break—again, risking patient safety. I say to the hon. Gentleman that that is not putting patients first.

The procedures set out by the Department of Health are not being followed. The rule book set up to safeguard the women and men working on our NHS frontline is not being followed. What will it take for the Government to realise the NHS is already in crisis? The imposition of the new contract will turn the crisis into a disaster. From the very outset, the junior doctors' dispute has been based on a false premise with a lack of robust evidence. If the Secretary of State for Health goes into any hospital this weekend, he will notice it is already open and providing the best possible service that resources will allow. When I was working as an A&E doctor at

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St George's hospital in Tooting, I worked night shifts and weekends. My department operated seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Many of us left very young families at home to serve our communities. I want to put on record my appreciation and admiration for all the doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, receptionists, admin staff and hospital porters who work hard to make this happen, and who already keep our hospitals open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Government are attempting to open more NHS departments at the weekend—something most of us would support. What we do not support, however, is the attempt to create a fully seven-day NHS with a stretched five-day team. The type of seven-day NHS being advocated cannot be delivered on a cost-neutral basis. That is a fact. It will overstretch staff, leaving dangerous rota gaps in the week, and significantly undervalue the evening and weekend time of our junior doctors. If the Secretary of State goes ahead with imposition without adequate resource, it will be patients who will pay the dangerous price. He expects the current pool of staff to fill a bigger rota, but the rota already has significant gaps, and they will only worsen, but in the week instead of at weekends.

Before changing everyone's contract, the Secretary of State must look at the recruitment and retention crisis. The NHS already struggles to recruit doctors into acute specialties such as mine—emergency medicine. Young doctors start full of high hopes and then leave, and imposition of the contract will only exacerbate the situation. Junior doctors want protection from their employer and to know they can report illegal working hours before they become fatal, but they still do not have that, because the new guardianship role outlined in the contract means they would be expected to report to the very people who can influence the progression of their training and who might be applying the pressure to work longer and more dangerous hours, thereby putting patients' lives at risk. Overseeing this process is Health Education England, a group not covered by employment law in the UK. Until this changes, junior doctors will fear speaking up.

The Secretary of State, by his own admission, thinks that gender equality can be sacrificed to meet a manifesto commitment. Not only does he not acknowledge the deep sacrifices made by parents who leave their own young families to serve others on the frontline; he wants to further punish those who do. How much more must they endure? I was a junior doctor for 10 years. I have worked in an acute specialty, leaving behind my own babies to go and help other families in times of need. This is not a political soap box upon which I stand. I am talking from experience and representing all those who choose to serve in our NHS. The Secretary of State should have the guts to face me and answer my questions.

On a different topic, I am proud to come from and represent Tooting. The extension of Crossrail 2 to my constituency would bring huge regeneration and economic development benefits to Tooting Broadway—Tooting High Street, Mitcham Road and Tooting Market, in particular, would reap the benefits—including the creation of new jobs in the local economy and the opportunity to build hundreds of genuinely affordable homes. The latter would help the many local residents who, like me, have to rent because they cannot afford to save for a deposit to buy their own house.

Balham has already seen many regeneration benefits. It has a strong local economy and local residents have voiced many concerns about the upheaval that building a new station would create. I have spoken to many businesses in Balham and Tooting Broadway and I am clear that Crossrail 2 needs to come to Tooting Broadway. I will do everything I can, as MP for Tooting, to ensure that this happens. The transport benefit would be greater in Tooting Broadway. Building the station there would enable direct access to Wimbledon and Clapham Junction and offer many new routes into central London. I call on the Mayor of London and the Department for Transport to bring Crossrail 2 to Tooting Broadway.

I wish everyone an enjoyable summer recess.

3.43 pm

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Deputy Leader of the House on his new role.

To start with, I will stick with the theme of trains this afternoon. I recently joined council leaders and the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), who is not in her place right now, at an event looking at the progress of the Chase line electrification. I have to say that the engineering works in Walsall town centre are truly impressive—I have been amazed at how they have been undertaken under the shops in such a way that the shops did not have to close—but while they are due to be completed, as planned, by the end of 2017, it has recently come to light that the class 323 electric trains required for the line might not be available for up to a year. This news emerged following various questions and letters I had been writing. I was somewhat concerned about the gap in time between the completion of the electrification engineering works and the trains being run on the line. Once the electrification of the line is up and running, it will mean faster trains and a more regular service, which will alleviate many of the problems faced by current passengers, particularly overcrowding. Without the 323 trains, however, passengers will not be able to enjoy the benefits of a faster and more regular service.

I recently wrote to the previous Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Mr McLoughlin), about this particular issue. As a former Cannock resident and councillor, he is very familiar with the Chase line and has always been incredibly supportive of the electrification project. I hope that the new Secretary of State for Transport will be equally supportive, although I doubt whether he could possibly know the name of every bridge along the line, as his predecessor did. I will, of course, raise specific issues with the new Secretary of State because I want to ensure that Chase line passengers can enjoy the benefits of the electrified line soon after the engineering works are complete.

I have spoken several times about Rugeley B power station, including mentioning it once this afternoon. Last month saw the end of electricity generation at Rugeley B. My immediate priorities have been about helping and supporting the workforce to find new jobs. I was particularly pleased to see so many people at my jobs fair last month, and I do hope that everyone working at Rugeley B is successful in finding new roles.

One of the other consequences of the power station closure is the loss of business rates to Cannock Chase District Council, equating to around £1 million a year—not an insignificant sum for a council of its size. Although, in time, this gap will be met by the income from the new Mill Green development—for those who do not know, it is a designer outlet village, similar to those in Bicester and Chester Oaks, that will be coming to Cannock soon—the council faces a short-term financial problem, with a gap to be filled. I recently attended a meeting with the Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr Jones), and leaders from the council. We called on the Government to provide some transitional funding to help manage the short-term problem; I take the opportunity to put that on the record.

With the phasing out of coal-fired power stations by 2025, and with several announcing closure or part-closure in the coming years, Cannock Chase District Council is unlikely to be the only one facing financial difficulties as a result of the loss of business rates. I urge the Government to consider ways of financially supporting councils that are affected by the closure of coal-fired power stations.

**Bob Stewart:** I would like to make one other point, slightly flippantly. For generations of soldiers, that power station has been vital to learning the art of resection, or working out where we are. The power station can be seen from miles away, so soldiers can take a bearing on it, go on the back bearing and work out where they are. It will be sad not to have that aid for teaching our soldiers how to map-read.

**Amanda Milling:** I totally agree with my hon. Friend. Those iconic cooling towers can be seen from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) and right down to Tamworth and Lichfield, although we do not necessarily all agree about their beauty.

Finally, I shall move on from power stations and talk briefly about the fantastic work of the Newlife Foundation for Disabled Children—a charity in my constituency that provides specialist equipment for disabled and terminally ill children across the UK. Last week, I was proud to sponsor its incredibly impactful exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall.

New Department for Work and Pensions figures show that the number of disabled children has risen dramatically to roughly 1 million—an increase of 20% over the last 10 years. For some time, the Government have been calculating public funding for the provision of paediatric equipment on the basis of the outdated statistic of 0.8 million. I support the calls from Newlife for the Government to review the statistics that they use to calculate public funding, and I look forward to raising the issue with the new Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work when we return to the House in the autumn.

Let me say one last thing. My office manager will not forgive me if I do not mention Watchman V. Watchman V is the Staffordshire regimental mascot, and is also the Staffordshire MPs' entry to the Parliamentary Dog of the Year competition. I urge everyone to vote for Watchman V.

3.50 pm

**Mr Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling). As the proud owner of a collie-Staffie cross, now sadly deceased, I wish Watchman V well.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about something that happened today, and to which I alerted the House earlier in a point of order: the Government's announcement, via a written statement—alongside 29 other written statements—of major increases in tuition fees for the year 2017-18. I want to speak in particular about the impact that it will have on students who either study in my constituency or come from my constituency and study elsewhere.

I think that the way the Government have dealt with this matter is thoroughly reprehensible. Only two days ago, we spent five or six hours in the Chamber debating the Higher Education and Research Bill. We engaged in a vigorous discussion of whether it was right to link fees to the Teaching Excellence Framework, but at no time during that process did Ministers take the opportunity to say anything about the issue. Today, however, it has been announced that from 2017-18, students at universities and colleges that pass a test, which I shall say more about in a moment, will pay £9,250 a year.

That underlines the fact that, as I said in the debate on Tuesday, the Teaching Excellence Framework is being used as a cash-in coupon. It demands no evidence of excellence in year 1; instead, it demands that providers achieve a “rating of Meets Expectations”. I think it would be mangling the English language to say that “Meets Expectations” is the same as achieving excellence, which is what the Teaching Excellence Framework is supposed to be about.

The Minister himself—the Minister for Universities and Science—spoke about the potential for increases in the debates on the Queen's Speech:

“I can confirm that the rate of inflation applying to maximum fees for institutions demonstrating high-quality teaching is 2.8%.”—*[Official Report, 25 May 2016; Vol. 611, c. 559.]*

I am not suggesting that the Minister has been economical with the facts, or that the statement has been economical with the facts, but I think that making the link in that way could be regarded as being economical with the truth.

I said that I wanted to talk about the impact that the increase would have. It is not just a question of increasing the fees; it is also a question of increasing the loans by 2.8% to match that increase in the fees. That will, in due course, hit all the students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are about half a million of them in the country, of whom nearly 34,000 are at further education colleges that provide higher education courses. Those colleges include my own excellent local college, Blackpool and the Fylde, whose higher education institute was built in 2008 with funds from the Labour Government. More than 2,800 students are now studying at the institute. Those students are now going to be hit by a double-whammy: not only will they have their grants taken away—and future students will as well—from 2017-18, and have to pay, as they knew, a fee of £9,000, but they are now going to have to pay 2.8% on top of that. If we are interested in getting young people from disadvantaged

[Mr Gordon Marsden]

backgrounds into higher education, and in getting their contribution to local regional economies like the north-west's, this is not the way to go about it.

Let me quote some other figures about students doing HE at FE colleges: there are 1,800 students in that position at Blackburn college, and 1,000 at the Manchester group of colleges. With regard to universities catering to large numbers of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, there are 14,000 students in this position at Manchester Met and 8,000-plus at Manchester University.

I have chosen those examples because they are all within the catchment area that young people in Blackpool who might not be able to go to a university or FE college further away are likely to choose. It really is not satisfactory to proceed in the way the Government have done. Apart from anything else, it will tarnish the reputation of the Teaching Excellence Framework, and it is not good for this House's processes. This should have been discussed and voted on—it will be eventually—later in the year. Instead, the Minister had a golden opportunity to discuss it on Tuesday but failed to do so. Clearly, the Government did not feel that they had a very strong case.

I ask Members to reflect on not only the damage this is going to cause to the sorts of young people I am talking about, but the dangerous slope that we go down, and which we went down earlier this year, when major issues that are going to affect people are dealt with by statutory instrument. That is what is being indicated in the small print of the Government's statement today.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Is my hon. Friend aware that another announcement sneaked out by the Government today was the decision to abolish the student nurse bursaries, which again is going to have serious implications for social mobility in higher education and the health service?

**Mr Marsden:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent and very germane point, because the abolition of NHS bursaries in the round and their replacement by loans will have a similar dampening effect on social mobility, particularly in the north-west where there are large numbers of students and institutions—Edge Hill University and others in Chester and elsewhere—where students have been turned out very successfully for the benefit of our national health services, including in Blackpool. I can think of one member of my constituency Labour party who has gone down that route.

I want to end by juxtaposing all those issues and lives and careers I have talked about with the necessity to do proper process in this House. If we are going to make decisions like this, they should not be sneaked out in a written statement when Ministers do not have the opportunity to deal with any discussion or debate for at least six weeks.

I put this on the record to the duty Minister on the Front Bench: when this matter comes to the House for proper decision, I and, I am sure, many of my colleagues will expect it to be dealt with on the Floor of the House, not squirreled away in some statutory instrument along the Corridor.

3.58 pm

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton North (Michael Ellis) on becoming Deputy Leader of the House. There are a number of issues I wish to raise before the House adjourns for the summer recess.

London City Airport has been a great success, and I urge the Government to approve the City Airport development programme. The CADP will result in 32,000 extra flight movements and 2 million more passengers, and will double the airport's contribution to the national economy.

I recently met Ferrero UK to learn more about its sport and move programme, and the work in partnership with local football clubs like mine in Southend, Southend United. So far it has been responsible for 200,000 hours of activity and education in over 250 schools over the last school year. I support its activities—and its chocolates are delicious.

A 12-year-old boy called Oliver King suffered a fatal cardiac arrest during a swimming race in March 2011. A trust was set up in his name, and, as a result, more than 800 defibrillators have been placed in schools and other organisations. We have one in Southend. I do hope that colleagues will support the Oliver King Foundation.

About 54% of the population of the United Kingdom experience a skin condition in any 12-month period, ranging from eczema to skin cancer. I urge my colleagues at the Department of Health to ensure that a dedicated lead for dermatology is appointed within NHS England to address the training of general practitioners and nurses in this vital area of healthcare.

The Fit For Work UK Coalition recently came to meet with me to discuss its work in helping people with long-term conditions such as arthritis to return to work. I support its work.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has revealed to most colleagues in the House that every year more than 3,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer. It should therefore be a matter of great concern to us that screening rates are falling. We need to do something about that.

I recently visited Edinburgh zoo because I had had complaints from a few of my constituents about the way in which the animals were being kept. I am delighted to report to the House that I thought Edinburgh zoo was absolutely marvellous and that the animals are very well kept there.

Southend University Hospital rheumatology department is a centre of excellence, and I recently had the privilege of being shown round it. I was told about the tragic consequences for people with a condition called giant cell arteritis—GCA—not being diagnosed. I am delighted to say that the department has devised a fast-track pathway for the diagnosis and treatment of this devastating condition, which will prevent people from losing their sight.

I recently re-opened a business—if that is possible—in Leigh-on-Sea. It started up in 2004, and I am going to make the claim that it is the best fitter of kitchens in Leigh-on-Sea.

Over and over again, we in the House talk about what we are going to do for people who suffer from mental health difficulties. Many people are placed in the invidious

situation of having to get a loved one sectioned, and it is a very upsetting process. Rather than just saying that we are going to do something about this, we really need to improve the care of people with mental health conditions. As a Member of Parliament, I certainly see many more people with such conditions than I used to.

I hope the House already knows that Southend will be the alternative city of culture next year. We had a launch on my balcony overlooking Westminster Square last week, and it will be the best gig in the country next year.

I have said in the House on a number of occasions how disappointed I am about the re-timetabling of trains run by C2C. More needs to be done, and we need new rolling stock.

Last week, we held our second responsible pet ownership competition on the green by Victoria Tower, and I am delighted to say that it was won by my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Rebecca Harris) and her lurcher, Milo.

There have been too many instances of dogs' food being poisoned in Southend. Apparently it is because the dogs' owners are not picking up the mess. I hope that we can turn that round.

I am delighted that this country voted on 23 June to leave the European Union, but my goodness, aren't there some sour grapes? I really hope that the country will come together and make the most of the opportunity we have been given.

I am disappointed that the Chilcot report has been overshadowed. I look forward to the Scottish National party's Supply day debate, because there must be consequences as a result of the Chilcot report.

Last weekend I was in Paris for a rally in support of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. I hope that Madam Rajavi will be allowed to come and speak in this country.

The Conservatives took back control of Southend Council a month ago. We have inherited an absolute shambles, particularly in the area of waste management, and something needs to be done. The hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) also mentioned waste management.

All Members have a nightmare with school catchment areas. I do in Southend, and I hope that the new Education Secretary can provide some guidance.

I am not very happy with Atos assessments, which are very poorly conducted and need improvement.

I am disgusted with National Grid for deciding that it will undertake all sorts of roadworks in Southend, gumming up the town.

I hope that the national lottery will give some support to the wonderful Southend Festival Chorus.

I am not very happy with South Essex Homes, which should certainly allow the King's Money Advice Centre to remain.

Finally, I visited the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths on Monday. It does fantastic work.

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am very surprised that he said "finally" without having mentioned that our football club West Ham United will move into

the Olympic stadium and play its first match there during the recess. I am sure he will want to wish them well for the seasons and years ahead before he sits down.

**Sir David Amess:** I absolutely do; not to have done so would have been a great faux pas. I meant to say that London City airport is a wonderful supporter of West Ham United. Our old manager is now running the England team—good luck with that one!—but I very much hope that West Ham will win the premier league next year after the wonderful achievements of Leicester.

I congratulate the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, which is a fantastic livery company—one of 12 in the City of London—with a charter that dates back to 1327. It gives a huge amount of money to charity and is excellent on apprenticeships.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you, Mr Speaker, the other two Deputy Speakers, all the people who work in the House and colleagues a very happy summer.

4.6 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): There have been several notable contributions today, many of which have touched on the issues that I want to raise, so I hope that mine will match the quality shown thus far. I intend to talk about what I consider to be the holy trinity—not Law, Best and Charlton, but three of the most important pillars of my politics: jobs, homes and health. I believe that if people are confident that they have security and fairness at work, that they will have a roof over their head and that they will be cared for if they fall ill, we have the essential preconditions, foundations, and building blocks for creating a fair and equal society. I should make it clear that those principles are only the start and that there is clearly so much more beyond them, but I want to address them today because we cannot hope to address anything else unless we get the basics right.

I have said previously that a jobs policy does not just mean aiming for full employment; we should value the quality of the jobs that are created. Jobs must be permanent, secure and properly paid. We saw during the EU referendum campaign that telling someone on a zero-hours contract or in agency work that there is a risk to their job from Brexit just did not cut it. There is a culture in this country that views employment as a flexible, disposable concept, with people not knowing from one week to the next how many hours they will work or whether they will work at all, and yet some still wonder why millions of people chose to reject the status quo.

Even for those who have secured permanent employment, this country's workplace protections are pathetic. How can someone give nearly two years of their life to an employer, not putting a foot wrong, and still find themselves cast aside without reason and without recompense? How can we build a country in which people feel confident enough to plan their life and for the future, if we have such a casual attitude towards the means by which they can build that future? I want a country where people have the security of knowing that if they do a good job and if their employer runs the business well, they will be rewarded properly and are likely to stay in work. What we have instead is a hire-and-fire

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culture in which workers are seen as disposable commodities—figures on a spreadsheet—rather than real people with lives that matter.

The prospect of replacing people with machines has always been with us, but the future looks bleak for the millions of jobs that are set to become automated. Artificial intelligence will decimate skilled jobs, and we have the ever-present threat of jobs being exported to lower-wage economies. I am sorry to say that many politicians see that as progress and others are blissfully unaware of what the future will bring, but nobody has yet come up with a compelling strategy for how to respond to what amounts to a huge challenge for every country in the western world. If we do not start thinking seriously about how to tackle the problem, the wave of resentment that led to the Brexit vote will look like a small ripple in a pond.

Turning to homes, in every surgery I hold there will always be constituents who cannot get on the council waiting list, cannot afford private sector rents and, because of their circumstances, cannot countenance owning a home of their own. Even those in secure employment find themselves unable to match that with a secure home of their own. Successive Governments have failed to address this issue, but the current Administration seem determined to decimate social housing in this country. My constituency has plenty of sites where planning permissions have been granted for new homes, but almost every one of those has, at one stage or another, been amended to remove the obligation to build affordable housing. The situation is unsustainable, and insecurity at work being matched for many by insecurity at home is leading to the resentment I have referred to being magnified.

The final pillar of the three that I wish to talk about is health. It may be trite to say it, but we are incredibly fortunate to live in a country where no matter who you are and no matter what your means, you can be assured that if you fall ill you will receive, free of charge, some of the very best medical treatment in the world. But the Labour party's proudest achievement, the NHS, is in mortal danger under this Government. In what has been the most unpredictable time in recent political history, with so many resignations, sackings and job changes, some would say one of the biggest surprises of this whole period is that the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt) is still in his job as Secretary of State for Health.

Put simply:

“The NHS is in a mess”

and there have been

“five years of decline on all of the things that people would worry about.”

Those are not my words, but the words of the chief executive of NHS Improvement, Jim Mackey. The NHS is arguably facing its biggest challenge since its creation. It is failing to meet key performance targets month after month. NHS trusts and foundation trusts had a combined deficit of £2.45 billion in 2015-16, and the situation continues to deteriorate, yet the Secretary of State is still in his job. I know I have talked about employment security today, but that is surely taking things a step too far.

Only this week the Health Committee confirmed what we knew all along: the Government's claim that they are putting an additional £10 billion into the NHS does not stand up to scrutiny. The Committee put the actual figure at less than half of that and went on to say that “accounting devices” are being used to “balance the books”, which

“give a false impression that the current financial situation is better than it is.”

These devices include moving hundreds of millions of pounds from an already stretched capital budget to plug holes on the revenue side, depriving the NHS of the infrastructure investment it urgently needs and storing up problems for the future. They also include moving funds over from the public health budget, a move the Health Committee describes as

“a false economy, creating avoidable additional costs in the future.”

In addition, there is a workforce crisis, with 15% of clinical posts vacant in some parts of London and a shocking £3.3 billion spent in the last year on agency staff, a situation that will only worsen with the announcement sneaked out today about the abolition of nurse bursaries. This toxic cocktail is only going to get worse. How long before we see a Minister say that the current situation is unsustainable and the principle of free treatment at the point of use has to be sacrificed? If that is taken away, one of the pillars critical to a stable and just society is taken away.

I consider the three pillars needed for a decent society that I have described to be crumbling at an alarming rate. My party will be spending much of the summer discussing the relative merits of our two leadership candidates, but I hope that there will be an opportunity during this debate to consider how we tackle the challenges ahead that I have referred to, so that at the end of the process we are able to present to the country a united front and a compelling answer on these issues. If we can do that—if we can look and sound like a Government ready and waiting to rebuild our fractured society—we will have half a chance of actually being able to do that.

4.13 pm

**Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): I warmly congratulate the Deputy Leader of the House on his well-deserved appointment to his Front-Bench role. After a rollercoaster few weeks in UK political history, this is a wonderful opportunity to come together to talk about the needs and concerns of our constituents; it has been a great pleasure to have a canter around the UK visiting many constituencies this afternoon.

I represent an expanding new town built on the historic east Shropshire coalfield. It is the birthplace of the industrial revolution and, throughout its proud history, it has embraced change and made the most of every opportunity that has come its way. It is a fantastic place to live and work, and it continues to attract new investment. It is fair to say that it is playing its part in the fourth industrial revolution with relish. With its unique urban and rural mix, Telford has an identity all of its own. It has a spirit of determination and aspiration and it always makes the best of the cards that it is dealt.

Naturally, Telford faces a number of challenges—they range from a lack of basic infrastructure to pressure on doctors' waiting lists and school places, and issues relating to broadband—but they are often seen in any

rapidly growing new town., Back in early 2013, when I first set out my stall to be Telford's next MP, I pledged to bring down youth unemployment, which was blighting the future of Telford's young people. I was as delighted as anybody here by yesterday's job figures, which show, according to the House of Commons Library, that Telford's youth unemployment claimant rate continues to fall to record lows.

I also pledged to fight to get Telford better connected with improved rail services and adequate mobile and broadband connections, which are essential to ensure that those involved in investment and in buying new homes can go about their business. Another pledge was to fight for a new critical care centre to be located at the Princess Royal hospital. A further one was to protect green spaces.

One pledge that was particularly dear to my heart was the challenge to keep Telford moving. We have a plethora of traffic lights at roundabouts that have sprung up overnight when no one could see any need for them, causing frustrations and delays. In the past few years, there has indeed been progress in almost all of those areas, and I am very proud to keep on chipping away at these local issues that really impact on people's lives. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) so eloquently said, that is what we are here to do.

One area that I can safely say is of the most importance to my constituents is the future of healthcare in Shropshire and what is to become of the A&E at the Princess Royal. I have long championed a new critical care unit to join the existing women and children's unit, and it is, regrettably, the one issue in which there has been no progress. As time has ticked by, there has been one missed deadline after another and no explanation for the delay. A final decision was due to be taken in November 2015. That was deferred to June 2016, and now I learn this week—July 2016—that it has been deferred again to some unspecified date.

Back in November 2015, NHS England was brought in to keep the project on target, but to no avail. The whole process seems to have become paralysed, with clinical commissioning groups and clinicians completely unable to make a decision. By failing to act, they are, in effect, choosing to do nothing about the future of healthcare in Shropshire, and that is no answer for my constituents who have told me time and again that this is the most important issue to them. While residents worry that they might lose their A&E provision, services deteriorate and there is a negative impact on the morale of healthcare workers in the hospitals affected, not to mention the £3 million of cost that the Future Fit programme has absorbed as a result of this inability to come to a decision.

In Telford, we have a rapidly growing population, and we also have extreme health inequalities. People come to Telford all the time, and it is absolutely right that, when they save up and buy their new dream home, they should expect fundamental services to be available to them. There has been great progress on broadband and on train services, and fantastic news on jobs, but we also need a healthcare provision that is fit for our thriving new town. I want to use this debate to highlight my constituents' concerns and frustrations that they write to me about on a daily basis. We need a clear timetable for the completion of the Future Fit programme

and we need an absolute determination to stick to it. If NHS England cannot make that happen, surely the next stop must be the Secretary of State.

I am looking forward to my summer in Telford and the opportunity to spend time with my constituents whom I am so proud and fortunate to represent. I give huge thanks to the Backbench Business Committee for enabling all of us, on both sides of the House, to come here today to focus on our constituents. After all, that is what we all do every day of the week, but perhaps we do not talk about it quite as much as we should. This is a fantastic and very welcome opportunity to highlight that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you a wonderful holiday. I hope that everybody here can get some rest from what has been a frantically busy period in all our lives.

4.19 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I welcome the Deputy Leader of the House to his new position and wish him well for the times ahead. We look forward to working with him and speaking to him on many issues.

I am going to bring something completely different to the House on this occasion. I want to speak about some of the history of Northern Ireland and, in particular, the Loyal Orders, and one of those especially. Those not associated with the Loyal Orders will immediately think of the Orange Order, and as it is the largest fraternal Protestant association in the world, that is understandable. However, there is more to the Loyal Orders than meets the eye. We have other associations, some linked to and some not linked to the Orange Order. The Loyal Order that I wish to speak about in order to enlighten Members and anyone watching about its illustrious and too often unknown history is the Apprentice Boys of Derry, of which I am a member and have been for 39 years. I am also a member of the Orange Order and of the Royal Black Preceptory.

The Apprentice Boys of Derry is not linked to the Orange Order. However, membership overlaps, as indeed it does in my case. The Apprentice Boys of Derry has a membership of some 10,000 in Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, England and Canada, with supporters and affiliates in many other Commonwealth countries. The institution seeks to commemorate and celebrate the siege of Derry, recognised as the longest siege in British military history. It goes back to the Glorious Revolution. It is called the Glorious Revolution because, as many people know, it was a rather bloodless revolution. In that revolution James II was ousted from power by Parliament in 1688, and Parliament subsequently offered the English throne to James's daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange. In Scotland, the then ruling body, the Privy Council, asked William to assume responsibility for the Government in January 1688, and in March that year King William and Mary assumed the throne.

The different situation across the Irish sea is what ultimately led to the siege of Derry, the creation of the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the famous battle of the Boyne. In November 1688, there were two garrisons in Ulster that were not loyal to James. They were Enniskillen and, of course, Londonderry. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Stirling (Steven Paterson), who referred to the gillies. He said they were small in stature,

[Jim Shannon]

but when the Earl of Antrim was trying to recruit some soldiers, he went to Scotland because he wanted men who were six feet-plus. He managed to get a force from Scotland, the Scottish Highlander Redshanks, who set off for Derry. On their way they made sure to strike fear into the hearts and minds of the resistance by being merciless to any opposition.

On 7 December 1688, as the King's forces approached the city of Derry, they were met not with the welcome that they expected, but with shots and cries of "No surrender". The Brave Thirteen, the 13 apprentice boys, as they were, are one of the central pillars of symbolism and significance within the institution to this day. In April 1689 hope arrived, in the form of reinforcements from England led by Colonel Cunningham, a native of the maiden city. The governor of that city, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Lundy, called a meeting with his most loyal supporters to discuss the surrender of the city. News of the meeting spread, however, and the citizens were furious. Lundy had to flee the city in disguise with his supporters. The impact of Lundy's betrayal is that Unionists and loyalists across Ulster and in Scotland to this day refer to a perceived traitor as a "Lundy". His name went down in history for the wrong reason.

On 18 April the Jacobite army reached the city, expecting the inhabitants to be overwhelmed by the presence of the king and to admit them to the city. James repeated his attempt to enter the city three times, but on each occasion he was refused with cries again of "No surrender" and with many shots. Hamilton's forces on behalf of King James rounded up hundreds of Protestants from nearby villages, proclaiming "Let your fellow Protestants in or let them die." The act horrified King James himself, because he had given no instruction for that to happen and in no way approved.

On 28 July two armed merchant ships, the *Mountjoy* and the *Phoenix*, sailed towards a boom protected by HMS *Dartmouth*. The *Mountjoy* rammed and breached the boom and the ships moved in and relieved the city. After 105 days the siege was over, with some 8,000 of the 30,000 inhabitants dead. The *Mountjoy*, like those who oversaw the siege, has become iconic in the remembrance of the siege in the Apprentice Boys and in wider loyalist and Unionist circles. Today, the siege is commemorated by the Apprentice Boys of Derry, named after the Brave Thirteen.

We have in Londonderry a week-long Maiden City festival, which culminates in a parade around the city by members of the Apprentice Boys of Derry. Our colours are crimson red, commemorating the blood of the 8,000 who died in those battles. The institution is now widely commended for how it conducts parades, which have been peaceful and successful over the years. The parade this year will be on the second Saturday of August, which is 13 August.

What is good about the parade is not just the history, but the fact that this is the one place in Northern Ireland—well, there are lots of places in Northern Ireland—where there was contention before, and now there is not. The agreement to parade in the city of Londonderry is a catalyst for other parts of the Province to have a loyalist parade in a mainly nationalist city and to have the tolerance that is needed to make that happen.

If Members want an example of how things can happen in Northern Ireland, that is the example I would give, and that is why I wanted to speak about it today.

The parade has become a tourist attraction for many people. People from Northern Ireland, from the Republic and from across the world come to watch the historical enactment that takes place on that day, and I would like to commend the Apprentice Boys of Derry for all they have done to make that happen.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank you, the other Deputy Speakers and the Speaker of the House for your kindness to all right hon. and hon. Members in giving us a chance to participate in debates in this Chamber. I would also like to thank the Backbench Business Committee, which also makes it possible for us to come here and speak in debates. I am told I have a season ticket for the Backbench Business Committee, and whether I have or not, I am very pleased to participate in the debates in this Chamber and in Westminster Hall. I thank the House staff for all their kindness to us, and I thank the *Hansard* staff, who have told me they can now understand my accent and my writing, and they do not need any more help with what it should say. I thank the people of Strangford for giving me the privilege of representing them in the wonderful political and democratic institution we have here in the House of Commons. It is a pleasure to be here, it is a pleasure to represent Strangford and it is a pleasure to have so many friends in this Chamber.

4.26 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I am very pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)—I call him my friend despite having been on different sides of the argument earlier, and despite having been brought up in Glasgow, where the Apprentice Boys and the Orange Order were not as affectionately remembered by my community—as it was, my maternal grandfather was a member of the lodge and the order. My hon. Friend brings to the Chamber an important message about the tolerance, understanding and mutual respect of the peace agreement in Northern Ireland. That is really important, and we need to make sure it is absolutely solid. If there is anything we can do to help, we ought to do that.

I have welcomed the Deputy Leader of the House to his place. I welcome the hon. Member for Tamworth (Christopher Pincher) to his new place as well, and I wish him success in his role.

I want to raise a few issues. The first is London's new cruise terminal, which is very welcome as part of London's tourist infrastructure. It is being built at Enderby Wharf in Greenwich, and it is causing a bit of controversy. One of the big issues in London, as we know, is air quality, and Mayor Sadiq Khan has made it a priority of his administration. The one deficit in the planning application for the cruise terminal in Greenwich is that there is no shore-to-ship power supply, which means that cruise ships will be parking in Greenwich, in the middle of London, and having to run their big diesel engines 24/7 to provide their electricity. There is no planning requirement or planning regulation in that respect from the Port of London authority, the London boroughs, the European

Union or the UK Government, although other European ports do make it a requirement and Southampton would want it.

I had a long-standing meeting planned for Monday with the then Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook), but I got an email from the Government on Sunday saying that the Minister had been reshuffled and that the meeting was postponed. I would therefore be grateful if the Deputy Leader of the House would feed back to DEFRA that we really need that meeting to be reorganised as quickly as possible.

There are a whole number of major issues on leasehold reform. England is one of the few countries in the world that still have leasehold—it does not exist in Scotland—resulting in unfair ground rents, excessive service charges, retirement home rip-offs, restricted lengths of leases and expensive dispute resolution procedures. It took us two and a half years to get the Department for Communities and Local Government to recognise that there were not 2.5 million leaseholders in Britain. It has now recalculated the number at 4.1 million, but the leasehold reform MPs who are active in the Chamber think there are more like 7 million, and those people are being ripped off.

This area of legislation urgently needs reform, and I am grateful to the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership—the charity campaigning on this area—which helps the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and me. We are forming an all-party group on the issue in September, and I invite all colleagues to join it to ensure that we can put pressure on the Government and get leasehold reform.

Bangladesh was raised during business questions by the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman). He may have raised it again during this debate, but I missed his speech. There is great concern among many friends of Bangladesh in this House about the recent terrorist activity and murders of secularists, intellectuals, academics and bloggers. The hon. Gentleman organised a very good meeting earlier this week about attacks on members of minority communities. I would be grateful if the Government could do all that they can to help the Government of Bangladesh to address the question of terrorism and intolerance in that country.

On the Chennai 6, I commend the work of the all-party group, especially its chair, the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Kirsten Oswald), which recently held a meeting in Portcullis House. I am wearing my shipwrights tie—I am a member of the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights—and, as a former shipping Minister, I know a thing or two about shipping. There are six Brits in jail in India. They were armed security guards protecting a ship against piracy when it left India, but they breached security regulations. The courts in India cannot make up their minds—they were convicted, freed and then convicted again—and they have been languishing in jail for 1,000 days. I urge the Deputy Leader of the House to impress on the Foreign Office the need for it to redouble its efforts to get them released. The Mission to Seafarers and Rev. Canon Ken Peters have been working really hard to look after the families.

I have already mentioned West Ham United playing their first game in the Olympic stadium. Like the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), I wish them well in their new home. They will go from strength to strength.

I congratulate the 31 Tower Hamlets air cadet training corps in Mile End. I am its honorary president. Lieutenant Rex Nichols and his volunteers have been responsible for another fantastic year for the young people in the air cadets.

Secondary schools in Tower Hamlets were on the floor 20 years ago, but they are now all punching above the national average in the educational performance league tables. That means that our young people in east London, who are as bright and smart as kids anywhere else in the country, are having a great start in life. East London is sharing in the wealth of this great city for the first time in history, and a very important generation is coming through.

I congratulate all of my constituents who received honours in either the new year's honours list or the Queen's 90th birthday honours list on their achievement, especially Dr Sheila Fitzpatrick, who I declare happens to be my wife, on being awarded an MBE for her work as a national trustee of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets and as a trustee of the Sreepur village orphanage in Bangladesh, as well as for other activities. That is obviously very important to her and to me. I am very proud of what she has achieved.

In conclusion, I wish you, Mr Speaker, and your team, as well as every other colleague and all the staff of the House, a very restful recess. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

4.33 pm

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): It is heartening to end on a climactic point and to congratulate Mrs Fitzpatrick on her award. This has been a splendid debate. It is one of the joys of Parliament that we have a day on which we can discuss these matters. It is politics in miniature, as we discuss matters that are of protozoan importance nationally, but of vast, gigantic importance in our constituencies.

I have the pleasure of welcoming the new Deputy Leader of the House to his post. We have jostled together on the Home Affairs Committee, where his ferocious skills as an interrogator terrified witnesses, who were subject to a cross-examination that would be worthy of a mass murderer in the High Court. Many of them, when they left the Select Committee room, went out seeking the number of the Samaritans or a trauma counsellor.

The hon. Gentleman has already reached the peak of his parliamentary career, which he cannot overtop. During our debate to congratulate Her Majesty earlier this year, he told an anecdote that will live long in the legends of this House. It concerned the vital matter of the positioning of a chain around the unicorn's neck in the stained-glass window in Westminster Hall. This anecdote was described in *The Daily Telegraph*, by a writer who uses the traditional and admirable English gift for understatement, as

“the single most boring anecdote of all time.”

I ask you—where can he go with his career after that major achievement?

[Paul Flynn]

We have had a fascinating list of possible holiday destinations laid before us today. For anyone who is interested in yoga, Harrow is the place to go; it is the yoga paradise of the world. But they should watch out, because it is a hellhole for those who accumulate garden waste; it has the highest collection charges in the whole of the United Kingdom. We have heard about the joys of the Gillies in Stirling. Gillie is the Gaelic word for a servant, and we heard about the magnificent occasion when the Gillies came out and banged their saucepans and drums and convinced the English Army that reinforcements were on the way. We have heard about the joys of Bushy Park in the constituency of Twickenham, where, we were told, the airport should not be bigger but should be better. And for those with exotic tastes, there is a festival of engineering in Chippenham, which will set all our pulses racing.

A theme that ran through the debate was transport, and at least seven Members bemoaned the deficiencies of the privatised rail service. I commend to all of them a report on privatisation, published in this House in 1993 on the advent of privatisation, under the great parliamentarian Robert Adley—who tragically died on the Sunday before the Wednesday on which the report was published—which forecast in minute detail the problems that we are talking about today. Of course, Robert Adley was a great expert on railways, and I believe that is the supreme report of any published by a Select Committee in my time in the House. We are seeing the legacy now. The problems that we face spring from the difficulties of privatisation, rather than from any disputes that have taken place.

To his great credit, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool South (Mr Marsden) cleverly used the debate to point out that today the Government have published 29 statements, which cannot be scrutinised in the House. He brought attention to the very important increase in the level of fees, and ultimately loans, that students will suffer, and to the withdrawal of bursaries for student nurses. Those vital matters are the subject of just two of the 29 statements that have been published today—in order, presumably, to bury bad news.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) made an impassioned plea on behalf of those who are suffering from Government policy on poverty. We often talk about the state of the economy generally, but she talked about what happens at the level of the family—the difficulties that they face. I think that we will all read her speech with great interest and learn a great deal from it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) and the hon. Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith) raised the crucial problem that worries us a great deal: the alienation of young people post Brexit. We realise that we have a legacy from the referendum and the deficiencies in our electoral system, for which we will pay a high price unless we tackle them with major reforms.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier) raised, quite legitimately, the problems of the defence budget. Spending on conventional weapons is being delayed, while spending on the useless symbol of national virility has, sadly, been approved by this House.

I offer great congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan). I noticed from her maiden speech that she has the good luck to be married to a Welshman, which is rather like being upgraded on a plane. She made the very powerful point that what the Government are doing with their plans for the health service is trying to stretch the funding for a five-day health service over seven days. She pointed out that key weakness, and spoke about this matter with great knowledge and experience. Again, she is a great asset to this House, and I am sure she will have a great career. It is disappointing that the former Prime Minister's forecast that she would be in the shadow Cabinet within a day has not been fulfilled, but perhaps it will come true during the next few weeks.

I thank everyone for what they have said today. I cannot go into all the details of what was raised, but I am sure this is Parliament at its very best—doing the work not on the great issues we pontificate about, but the bread and butter issues that concern our constituents. I believe all the issues raised will have the attentive ear of the new Leader of the House and his Deputy, and we look forward to instant results before we return in September.

4.41 pm

**The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Michael Ellis):** It is a pleasure to make my first appearance at the Dispatch Box before you, Mr Speaker, and opposite the shadow Leader of the House. I believe the hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) is also the shadow Deputy Leader and holds other positions. I am very reliably informed that he holds no fewer than four shadow positions. I am reminded of the classic film “Kind Hearts and Coronets”, in which Sir Alec Guinness played all the different roles. I invite the hon. Gentleman to consider taking on more responsibilities, because the main character in that film ended up as a duke. He alluded to Her Majesty's 90th birthday—I did not know he was a royalist—and if he does want to hear any more about heraldry and the story of the unicorn, when he next has a couple of free days I will give him more details.

We have heard a lot from Members in this debate, which has clearly been a very good opportunity to expound on constituents' and constituency activities, and the issues and difficulties they face.

**Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab):** May I add my congratulations and those of other members of the Home Affairs Committee on the hon. Gentleman's ministerial appointment? Two former members of the Select Committee are at the Dispatch Box opposite each other today and, as he says, occupying six jobs between them. Through him, may I also congratulate the Leader of the House—whom I first met when he was chairman of Cambridge University Conservative Association over 40 years ago? He was destined for high office, and he has got to the Cabinet at last.

**Michael Ellis:** If it were not for the Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee we would no doubt still be in our original positions. Where we will be in due course is another matter altogether. I thank him for his support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) spoke about flooding in his constituency, which is clearly of considerable concern. He raised the

difficulties involved with flash flooding and sewage coming through, and I know his constituents will be very grateful to him for doing so in this place. He is very impressive in his representation of all communities in his constituency, and he is well known and recognised for that in the House.

On a lighter note, my hon. Friend also spoke about the advantages of yoga. I know you, Mr Speaker, have often recommended Members to take up yoga in certain circumstances. I do not know whether you and my hon. Friend would like to get together on that subject, but we await further developments with interest.

The hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) spoke about the problems on Southeastern trains. He was not the only Member who spoke about train issues. There clearly are some issues, and the fact that he has raised them will have been to the satisfaction of his constituents and of others'.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) spoke about the railway station and the fact that there are insufficient rail services. He also mentioned his cycling expertise. I had noticed that he has a rather painful black eye, which I was sorry to hear about, but I am reassured that the Whips had nothing to do with it. I hope he is well. I know that the summer of music, arts and culture is coming up in Gloucester. People will no doubt want to visit for that.

The hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) spoke of her success in dealing with B&Q, and I congratulate her on that. Reducing wider remuneration packages and blaming the national living wage would be short-sighted and would yield only a one-off gain. Doing so is not in the spirit of the national living wage, and I am sure that B&Q and others are acting accordingly.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) that ultimately open access decisions are for the Office of Rail and Road to determine, and we respect its independence in doing so. However, I recognise the potential benefits that open access competition can deliver for railway passengers and others.

I understand that the Queen's handbags are made in the constituency of the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz)—so another quality product from Walsall. The hon. Lady indicated that the local authority was not listening to her or her residents about road humps. No doubt that authority will want to be rejuvenated, shall we say, in its attention to her representations. She also spoke about litter, a topic that resonated around the House, with Members on both sides speaking about it. It is a major problem. She wants to restart the Keep Britain Tidy campaign, and I will ask the relevant Department to write to her about that.

One could hear the medical expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Dr Mathias) coming through in her remarks. She spoke about the importance of having water provided on platforms when it is too hot on crowded trains. She also spoke about aircraft noise and other pollution issues. Her expertise brings a great deal of richness to the House.

I think I am right in saying that the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen) helped to create the Backbench Business Committee, so it is apposite to credit him with that this afternoon and say how much we appreciate it, as so many Members have taken part

in the debate. He spoke of disadvantaged areas in his constituency and the casework that he deals with. I was struck by the way in which he thanked his staff and by the wonderful success that he and they have achieved for Max and, no doubt, many, many others. I congratulate him on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith) spoke about Brexit. I know that she is particularly alive to the issue of young voters, and is on the all-party parliamentary group on voter registration. The value of her work in respect of young voters is recognised in this House, and that issue will not be forgotten about. It is very important indeed.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Steven Paterson) spoke about quarrying on Gillies hill. I wish him well with his lobbying on that. It is a devolved matter, but he will no doubt get the requisite attention from the local authority. The wooded area he described sounds very pleasant indeed.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) for welcoming the military regiments he spoke of which have come to his area. He spoke also of the county hospital doing well. The House knows him to be a powerful advocate for his area.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier), whom I had the pleasure of debating with in Westminster Hall yesterday. I can tell her that the Type 26 warships are certainly not indefinitely delayed. My information is that that is not correct. It struck me that she took particular care to thank the Clerks and staff on the Scottish Affairs Committee and to wish them well over the summer recess.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chippenham (Michelle Donelan) spoke of the engineering skills gap. The Wiltshire festival of engineering that she is arranging in her constituency sounds very impressive, and I know that there are wonderful opportunities in Wiltshire. She said that she had visited 100 local businesses in the past year—what a superb ambassador for job creators in her constituency.

I welcome the hon. Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan) to her place and congratulate her on her by-election success. She was a vocal advocate for junior doctors in her remarks, but I can assure her that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health cares deeply about the national health service, its patients and its staff. No doubt the hon. Lady will agree that legal action is expensive, unnecessary and unwarranted, and we hope that the matter can be resolved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling) spoke about Rugeley B power station, and some allusion was made to its beauty or otherwise. That is no doubt a matter for extensive debate, but she did indicate that she had held a jobs fair in her constituency. No doubt that was welcomed by those who worked at the Rugeley B power station and by many others. I was also interested to hear about Mill Green, Cannock's own Bicester village in the making, and look forward to my invitation. She also mentioned Watchman V who is, I believe, the dog of the year. We wish Watchman V well as the mascot in her constituency.

The hon. Member for Blackpool South (Mr Marsden) spoke about tuition fees. I am pleased to be able to reassure him that the statistics show that more disadvantaged young people are now going into university

[*Michael Ellis*]

education than ever did under the Labour Government. I would have thought it right to welcome the written statements that have been released today, because Members will have a considerable opportunity over the next six weeks to study them and to return to the matters fully refreshed in the autumn.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) gave his usual extremely impressive performance. He mentioned dozens of separate items, and, if I may, I will write to him about his remarks. I was not able to write them down fast enough by hand. I will, if I may, send my best wishes to his mother, who is 104 years of age. He mentioned Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, and I am sure we are all fully supportive of its work raising awareness of cervical cancer and the importance of cervical screening—just one of the matters that he mentioned, among many other important subjects.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) was concerned about housing, employment security and the NHS. He will be reassured, one hopes, to hear that this Government have built more housing than Labour did in its 13 years in government. This Government also introduced the national living wage and are supporting the NHS to the tune of £10 billion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) spoke passionately about her constituency. It is an expanding town, and she is rightly proud that youth unemployment is now at a record low. So much is being done to continue and ensure business investment in the town. She did say there were too many traffic lights, certainly at one junction. No doubt many Members will have some sympathy with that.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) can be reassured that not only can *Hansard* understand him but so can everybody in the Chamber, too. He spoke passionately about the history of Northern Ireland and the Orange Order. It was a fascinating, if brief, history lesson. No doubt we will hear more in due course.

The hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) spoke of the air quality in London, which Members from across the country no doubt take an interest in, as we in the House of Commons are subject to it. It is not quite as bad as the great stink in the Victorian period, when the curtains of the Palace of Westminster had to be draped in lime to try to disguise the aroma, but there are still pollution issues. No doubt he will continue to be alive to those issues and to represent his constituents accordingly. I will ask the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to write to him about the rescheduled meeting. He will

appreciate that, with the changes that have occurred in recent days, his meeting had to be postponed. That is regrettable, but it can be rearranged. He mentioned the Company of Shipwrights, of which he is a proud member, and made a very important point about those who are detained in India. I will ask the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to write to him about that.

I take this opportunity to wish everyone well over the summer recess, in particular the staff of the House, you and your Deputies, Mr Speaker, and the Chairs of all the Committees—not only the Home Affairs Committee, although perhaps with particular good wishes to that one. Like many other Members, I would like to send my best wishes to the retiring member of staff, Noeleen Delaney. I understand she is approaching the thirtieth anniversary of her employment here. She has, no doubt, served generations of Members of Parliament with the same excellence, warmth and kindness of spirit throughout the past three decades. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

It is an honour and privilege to serve in this House. It is a duty that is borne with great humility and service by everyone on all sides. To be a servant of this House and to appear at the Dispatch Box for the first time is a great honour for me. I thank everyone for their good wishes. I wish everyone well over the recess.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful, on behalf of the House, to the Deputy Leader, whose warmth and good grace have been hugely appreciated. The same goes for the shadow Leader. It seems a fitting conclusion to our proceedings and I wish everybody a very relaxing and revitalising summer break.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the forthcoming adjournment.

## **Business Without Debate**

### **COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS**

*Ordered,*

That Jo Stevens be discharged from the Committee on Standards and Susan Elan Jones be added.—(*Christopher Pincher, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

### **COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES**

*Ordered,*

That Jo Stevens be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and Susan Elan Jones be added.—(*Christopher Pincher, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

## Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Christopher Pincher.)*

5 pm

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I wish those Members departing the Chamber a good summer and thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting me the final debate before the summer recess. I also welcome the new Minister to the Dispatch Box.

I called this debate, following the one brought a few months ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Paula Sherriff), because she, I and many Yorkshire Members are deeply concerned about the staffing levels not just at the Mid Yorkshire trust but at other hospitals across Yorkshire and the serious effect they are having on our health service. We have warned Ministers before about this, but we are deeply concerned that nothing is yet being done. Things will get worse if action is not taken.

Last year, I was contacted by a constituent, Mr Fanshawe, whose mother-in-law, Edith Cunningham, had recently died at the end of a short illness in Pinderfields hospital. As well as dealing with the grief and bereavement, Mr and Mrs Fanshawe were having to cope with the deep distress and anger caused by the way in which Mrs Fanshawe's mother was treated and the care she received, in her final days and hours, because of serious staff shortages at the hospital.

Nursing staff were so overstretched that, at one point, Edith Cunningham had to wait two hours for a bed pan—two hours for an elderly lady in distress—and one weekend she had to wait 25 hours to see a doctor. It became clear to the Fanshawes that the staffing shortages on the ward were such that they could not leave her, so they stayed; they did her bed pans, they fed her, and when the pressure mattress they had requested was brought up, they changed it themselves, because there was no one else to do it.

I have met the Mid Yorkshire trust and the Fanshawes, and the chief nursing officer has given them a full apology and made it clear that it was an unacceptable level of care and that it was the result of staffing shortages on ward 43 at the time. Since then, the trust has continued to work on a wide range of recruitment and staffing initiatives to improve the situation.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): I thank my right hon. Friend for calling this important debate. As she alluded to, I had a debate on this issue in March, but sadly it appears that little progress, if any, has been made. Last week, I attended a patient safety walkabout on ward 2 of Dewsbury hospital, and once again patients raised issues of short staffing. Several patients had been told not to ring their alarm bell at night because there was only one member of staff on duty. The number of beds on the ward had been increased from 24 to 30, but sadly no extra staff had been brought in to accommodate the extra patients. I plead with the Minister: we need tangible progress to ensure patient safety.

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is exactly right. We hear continually from constituents often saying the same thing: the nursing staff are wonderful, look after

them and work immensely hard, but are overstretched; there are simply not enough of them to do the job they want to do.

The trust has recruited not just locally but from across Europe and India, which has sometimes raised language issues. It is looking at new ways to recruit from the local area, and in some areas, the number of vacancies has fallen. It has also put in place processes to switch staff around to make sure that gaps are filled every day. I welcome the commitment by the chief nursing officer and the chief executive to do everything they can to fill the staffing gaps, but it is still not enough.

We agreed with the trust that the Fanshawes and the local health watch should be able to do an unannounced visit to ward 43, talk to parents and report on what they found. I quote from their report:

“Patients... reported kindness and very good care. Patients generally agreed that staff are lovely but are ‘run off their feet’”.

They found that staffing levels were better than last year,

“but it is still often a struggle and only rarely does the ward have the right quota of staff”.

Just this week, I received another email from another family with a relative in ward 43 raising serious alarms about the level of staffing on the ward and the level of care that their relative was being given. There were not enough healthcare assistants or nurses to provide the basic care and support needed. That fits with the findings last year of the Care Quality Commission, which also raised concerns about safe staffing levels. Once again, we cannot pay sufficient tribute to the kindness and hard work of the staff at the trust. However, when they are stretched in all different directions, it is in the end the patients who lose out and the staff who are deeply concerned because they are not able to provide the level of care that they want.

I am concerned, too, about the financial pressures on the Mid Yorkshire trust. It is not the only trust where the money received is simply not enough to meet rising demand. I suspect that the Minister will have been briefed on some of the financial pressures and the squeeze facing the Mid Yorkshire trust. There is a risk of services being cut not for sensible medical reasons, but simply because it does not have the funding or the staffing to provide them safely.

It is even worse than that. Even where the Mid Yorkshire trust has budgeted for the staff, it cannot recruit or retain enough to deliver the services in the way it wants and the way our communities need. The latest figures from the trust list 150 nursing vacancies: that includes healthcare assistants and safety support workers, and amounts to about 12% of budgeted posts. The vacancy rate for nursing staff in the theatre department is 17%, and it is 20% in intermediate care. If we take account of holidays, maternity leave, sick leave, stress, and temporary secondments to other departments, the gaps are bigger. Monitoring by department in May, which looked at the actual staffing relative to the planned levels wanted, showed cardiology at only 76%, stroke rehab at 65% and short stay at 70%.

The trust also measured unavailability, which encompasses the percentage of contracted hours lost owing to staff absence, including for sickness and stress. When some staff are working so hard, and some are

[ Yvette Cooper ]

also being moved around from one department to another in order to cope with gaps elsewhere, facing further stress and uncertainty, it leads to higher levels of absence.

**Paula Sherriff:** I shall try to be briefer in this intervention. I was recently contacted by Dewsbury hospital, and was told that, on any given day, the minimum staffing level in the A&E department is eight qualified nurses and four healthcare assistants or unqualified nurses. On this occasion, there were three nurses and one healthcare assistant. I think that speaks for itself; clearly, it will have an impact on patient safety.

**Yvette Cooper:** My hon. Friend is right, and these are the sort of individual examples that we increasingly hear about from our constituents—from both staff and patients. I have heard from staff in intensive care and in paediatrics who are deeply worried about the pressures and responsibility on them lest something should go wrong on their watch as a result of understaffing. They are deeply concerned that they will be unable to provide the care that is needed and are worried about the implications.

The trust's planning guidance suggests that it can cope with up to 22% of the contracted hours not being provided and still provide a safe service. Beyond that, it shows that significant problems are likely to be encountered in delivering the right level of care. Overall, however, the gap is not 22%, but 26% for registered nurses and 30% for registered midwives. In A&E, the average shortfall in contracted hours is 30% and there is a similar 30% shortfall in children's services. On some wards, the proportion of temporary staff from agencies and the NHS banks is particularly high. On acute assessment wards, 20% of the nursing staff are agency staff. On the short-stay wards, 11% of the nursing staff and 33% of the healthcare assistants are from agencies and the bank.

It is not just about the pressures on nursing staff. Senior staff at the Mid Yorkshire trust say that they are doing a huge amount of work to address the nursing shortages, but they are even more worried about the shortage of doctors—not just at Mid Yorks, but across Yorkshire. According to the Royal College of Physicians, 14% of the consultant posts at the Mid Yorkshire trust are vacant. In A&E and neurology, there is a particular problem, and there are regular and significant gaps in the contract rota for junior doctors. Some 15% of the acute medicine rota is not filled by contracted staff, and it is 18% for the emergency medicine rota, 20% for the anaesthetics rota and 20% for the surgery rota.

In practice, the trust is having to fill the rotas either with consultant staff acting down in more junior posts, or with locum staff. It is a choice between doing that and cancelling operations, or turning ambulances away. The trust is, of course, committed to providing the best service that it can provide and not letting patients down, but locum care means that medical staff do not have the relationships or the knowledge of the system that would enable them to do the best possible job, and it costs far more as well. Because the trust cannot recruit enough contracted staff, its average spend on agency doctors in the first three months of the current

financial year was £1.5 million a month—and, as we know, it is a trust that faces significant financial pressures. So what is it supposed to do?

However, this does not apply only to Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust. In the country as a whole, two in five vacant consultant posts went unfilled last year, according to the Royal College of Physicians. In the north of England, there are serious staff shortages in our hospitals. That is what we hear from our constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury spoke of appointments being cancelled and waiting times being affected. What troubles me particularly is the fact that there is now a 20-week wait for the pain clinic. Because of staffing problems, patients who are suffering pain and could be supported and helped are having to wait 20 weeks to be seen.

What are the Government doing about this? All too often Ministers shrug their shoulders and think that it is someone else's problem, or that someone else will sort it out. I contacted the Secretary of State in 2010 and 2011 saying that the training numbers that were being set by the Yorkshire and Humber Deanery, particularly for A & E, were not enough, and were certainly not enough to meet rising demand, but nothing was done. Given the scale of rising demand for healthcare and given our ageing population, far too few doctors are being trained. There is also a significant and serious regional disparity, with bigger shortages in the north and the midlands.

It is incomprehensible, given all those pressures, that the Government should choose this moment to pick a major fight with junior doctors that ends up demoralising them, and drives many of them to consider either going abroad or leaving the profession altogether at a time when we need every doctor we can get.

The Department of Health is also taking a massive risk when it comes to nursing staff. It is ending nursing bursaries, although in areas like ours that means that many people who could have become great nurses will be put off because they are worried about the debts that they will incur, and about not being able to afford the training. It is also refusing to give a proper assurance to the thousands of European Union citizens who work in the NHS—our trust has often recruited such people because of the shortages at home—that they can stay and fill those crucial posts.

Referring to nurse training, the Minister who responded to the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury a few months ago said:

“Within the current spending envelope...it is simply not going to be possible to achieve the numbers that we wish to see.”—[*Official Report*, 21 March 2016; Vol. 607, c. 1354.]

That is not good enough. We need enough nurses, and enough doctors, to provide the care that our constituents need and deserve. That cannot simply be left to Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS trust, or to any individual trust in the country.

So many of the issues are linked, whether we are talking about the training numbers on which the deaneries decide or decisions made by the Department of Health that have an impact on morale, pay or incentives throughout the country. We now need a regional action plan setting out what the Government are going to do, and what NHS England is going to do, to address the serious shortages of both nurses and doctors in Yorkshire, because unless something is done, something serious

will happen to patient care. I do not want to warn again about this, as I did some years ago, but it still has not been sorted out, and that is not fair on patients in Yorkshire and throughout our area.

In the case raised by Mr Fanshawe, Edith Cunningham had a family who stepped in and looked after her while she was in hospital, but many more patients do not have families who can fill the gaps and step in. So for the sake of all of those patients, and for all of those who we—all of us in all parts of the House—will want to get the best possible care, I urge Health Ministers to get a grip on this and get us the regional action plan we need, before patient safety is affected.

5.15 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip Dunne):** May I start my remarks by saying what a pleasure it is to be here this evening for my first opportunity at the Dispatch Box in my new role at the Department of Health?

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) on securing this debate on a subject that I know is close to her heart and that of her neighbour, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Paula Sherriff), who it is good to see here supporting her in the Chamber this evening. I congratulate the right hon. Lady in particular on securing this debate, the last opportunity to raise a subject in the House this side of September.

I am well aware that this is a matter of significance to Members of Parliament and obviously to the local populations they represent. I think the hon. Member for Dewsbury recently persuaded the Mid Yorkshire trust to have a public meeting to discuss these issues locally, and I congratulate her on doing that, and hope it was helpful in at least raising some of these issues.

The problem of staff shortages at Mid Yorkshire is well known, and it is recognised not just by local Members of Parliament, but was demonstrated by evidence recorded by the CQC through its inspections over recent years, not just the most recent one. Having said that, there are of course examples of good care within the trust, and I would like to add my voice to that of the right hon. Lady who acknowledged that from the comments of, I think, the Fanshawe family, who pointed out that the quality of care provided by the nursing and other staff in the hospital is very high where they are in a position to do that. I pay tribute to everyone who works in the trust—in the hospitals there—in the admittedly somewhat challenging circumstances they find. I draw attention in particular to the maternity services and children's services, where the standards are acknowledged to be high.

There is no hiding the fact that there are problems, however, and I am not here to do so. Unsafe care was found in the most recent CQC inspection last summer, published in December last year. That is clearly the most potentially serious of its findings. This is a long way from being a high-performing trust, which is what we would all like our trusts to be. While the CQC report shows the trust had responded to previous staffing concerns and is actively trying to fill posts, there are acknowledged areas of significant nurse staffing shortage affecting patient care and treatment, particularly on the medical care wards and in community in-patient services and specialist palliative care.

The right hon. Lady may not appreciate hearing this, but the fact remains that responsibility for staffing in hospitals in her constituency sits squarely with the board of the Mid Yorkshire trust. Trusts have a duty to ensure they have the numbers and skill mix needed to deliver quality care, patient safety and efficiency, taking into account local factors such as acuity and case mix.

**Yvette Cooper:** But what if there just are not enough A and E doctors or neurology doctors to fill the posts? If they advertise them, charge around the country recruiting for them and they still cannot get the doctors in, what are they supposed to do?

**Mr Dunne:** I will come on to what we are doing nationally to try to make sure we have an adequate number of trained professional clinicians to meet the needs around the country.

It is important to recognise that while nationally some standards are set for safe staffing ratios, which were referred to by the hon. Member for Dewsbury, these are not a hard-and-fast rule and never have been. They are guidance rather than statutory requirements, and this position has not changed. Trusts have to use their judgment and focus on quality of care, patient safety and efficiency, taking into account local factors such as case mix rather than just numbers and staffing ratios. It is not a case of meeting a particular staffing ratio or getting to a particular figure and thinking that the matter is resolved. There must be enough staff—as both hon. Members are saying—to meet the needs of the patients, and it is a matter for the clinicians on the spot to make a judgment on that.

Nationally, demands on our staff across the NHS are rising, and more patients are being cared for than ever before. That is as true of Mid Yorkshire as it is of anywhere else in the NHS. Last year, across the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, 232,966 patients were seen, compared with 194,119 in 2009-2010. That is an increase of more than 15% over the past six years. There were also some 4,685 more diagnostic tests carried out in May this year than in May 2010. Activity levels are therefore rising considerably.

**Paula Sherriff:** I thank the Minister for his constructive tone in responding to the debate. Does he acknowledge that the significant increase in the tendencies is partly down to a crisis in primary care in the area? That sector is struggling to attract GPs and practice nurses, and people are therefore sometimes attending A&E inappropriately, instead of being seen in primary care.

**Mr Dunne:** It is well recognised across the country that the tendencies in A&E include a significant proportion of people who should not be there and who should be being dealt with elsewhere in the system. The reasons for that are legion; it is not all down to pressures on GPs. Much of it is down to members of the public increasingly seeing their hospital as the place to go. We have a big educational job to do across the country on that, and it behoves all of us to help to relieve the pressure on A&E by encouraging patients to get their health needs seen to in the most appropriate place, whether through a pharmacy or a GP, or through other community services.

[Mr Dunne]

I want to touch on the question of funding. It is not all about money, but money plays a part. As a result of the funding settlement that we have secured for NHS England, the Wakefield clinical commissioning group will receive £488.8 million in 2016-17—the current fiscal year—which represents a cash increase of just over 3% compared with the previous year. In cash terms, that is a £21.7 million increase—a significant increase compared with previous years. For North Kirklees, the other CCG that commissions the work of the trust, there was also an increase in the current year to £237.1 million, representing a 2.49% increase compared with 2015-16, or just a shade under £12 million. That increase is substantially greater than the deficit reported by the Mid Yorkshire trust for last year. Of course, the commissioning funds do not all go to the trust, but the health economy in the area has received a significant cash injection.

Ensuring that we have the right number of nurses—I shall start with nurses—is a vital move towards achieving the Government's objective of having a fully seven-day NHS by 2020. Nationally, we already have 11,800 more nurses, midwives and health visitors than we did in May 2010. The number of nurse training places has increased by 14% over the past three years alone, with further increases planned in the current year. More than 50,000 nurses are currently in professional training, which includes working and learning in hospitals through placements. However, the current funding system means that two out of every three people who apply to a university to do a nursing degree are not accepted for training. That is one of several reasons why trusts such as Mid Yorkshire find it difficult to recruit.

In 2014, the last full year for which I have statistics, universities were forced to turn down 37,000 nursing applicants. As a result, the NHS suffers from a limited supply of nurses and must rely on expensive agency staff and overseas workers, as referred to earlier. That is one reason why, earlier today, the Government announced their response to the public consultation on plans to place trainee nurses in the same system as all other students, including teachers and doctors. That response has been placed in the Library.

**Yvette Cooper:** I thank the Minister for his generosity in giving way. Will he confirm that the reason universities were forced to turn down so many would-be nurses was that the Government did not fund enough places? I realise that he is new to the Department and will not have had a huge amount of time to investigate staffing levels around Yorkshire, but when he goes back to the Department I urge him to look at whether there could be a Yorkshire action plan on recruitment. We have a regional problem that is worse than the national problem—although it will be replicated in other regions.

**Mr Dunne:** I will come to how we will respond when I conclude my remarks, but the right hon. Lady is quite right to point out that the problem is not unique to this particular trust and must be seen in a regional context.

**Paula Sherriff:** I also thank the Minister for his generosity. I just want him to know that the public meeting unfortunately did not go ahead owing to the

tragic death of our colleague from Batley and Spenningsdale. However, given the staffing crisis and the fact that Mid Yorkshire is still undergoing a significant downgrade programme that will see Dewsbury hospital reduced to a minor injuries unit and many patients having to go to Pinderfields Hospital in Wakefield, will the Minister please reconsider the plans?

**Mr Dunne:** The short answer is yes. I intend to honour a commitment to meet the local trust—I would be happy to facilitate a meeting for the local MPs as well—to talk about the reconfiguration plans that are afoot.

I am conscious that I am in the unusual position of winding up an Adjournment debate at this stage of the parliamentary calendar and in danger of running out of time, so I will turn to the reconfiguration plans before I conclude.

We have to look at staffing issues, wherever they are, and at all the nursing specialisations in the hospital that were referred to earlier in the context of the wider reconfiguration of services currently going on within the trust and the sustainability transformation plans within the region later this year. The reconfiguration is driven by the need to address long-term systemic problems, some of which I touched on earlier. The current service changes were agreed back in 2013 and were supported by the Secretary of State in 2014 following the advice of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.

Implementation of the agreed service changes at the trust is a matter for the local NHS, which is undertaking detailed work to assess fully the benefits and risks of bringing the changes forward. The process will look primarily at safety and quality, as well as capacity across the system, and will take local stakeholder views into account. Local commissioners will make the decisions about precisely what is to happen, and it is for the local NHS to keep all service change under review in line with its role in ensuring that the services provided are high quality, safe and sustainable. Staffing levels at the trust, particularly in nursing, remain a concern, and are regularly identified by the trust's regulators and commissioners.

The trust has taken some action to address those concerns, including recruitment of additional nurses and non-qualified support staff as well as strengthening safe staffing policies and increasing board level scrutiny. Clearly, that has not solved the problem, as we have heard so graphically this evening, and more needs to be done.

The trust believes that benefits could be realised in bringing forward implementation of the service changes with improved clinical safety, efficiency and patient flow. I am aware that concerns are being expressed about the knock-on effects of the proposal for changes nearby in Calderdale, of which the hon. Ladies will be aware, and that is currently under consultation.

Change at each of these trusts should not be looked at in isolation, particularly in an area such as this with so many interdependencies and challenging geography and local public transport. Following the meeting of my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Ben Gummer), with the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Paula Sherriff) and the late hon. Member for Batley

and Spen (Jo Cox) earlier this year, he agreed to facilitate a meeting in September with the regulators—NHS Improvement, the CQC and the NHS providers and commissioners. I will undertake to ensure that that meeting goes ahead.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.30 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Westminster Hall

Thursday 21 July 2016

[MR ADRIAN BAILEY *in the Chair*]

## EU Exit: Devolved Governments

1.30 pm

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered devolved governments and negotiations on the UK leaving the EU.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. One of the great privileges of being back on the Back Benches is that I can not only participate in these debates, but apply for them. I am grateful to the House for allowing me this debate. It follows on the back of early-day motion 325. One of the other unenviable privileges of being on the Back Benches is that I can now table early-day motions. I hope that all Members will sign my EDM once they have heard this debate.

Normally, I would say it is a great pleasure to hold this debate, but in many ways I would rather we were not. The repercussions of our vote to leave the EU will be profound and far-reaching in Scotland and across the United Kingdom and the European continent as a whole. We are already beginning to see the impact on our economy. The value of sterling has fallen against the euro, the dollar and most other international currencies, and remains highly volatile. Many businesses have predicted that Brexit will have a negative impact on their fortunes. The International Monetary Fund has revised down its forecasts for UK growth and said that Brexit risks throwing

“a spanner in the works”

of the global economy. Those of us who campaigned to remain in the EU warned of those obvious consequences and others as a probable outcome of our vote to leave. What was dismissed as “Project Fear” by many, we are now seeing as “Project Fact”, emphasised by today’s survey of German businesses, which concluded that 56% of them would want a hard bargain when negotiating with the UK.

We have to deal with what is in front of us and get the best possible solution for the UK and, for the purposes of this debate and my responsibilities, for Scotland. The evidence suggests that support for leaving was strongest in the most deprived areas of our country. I witnessed that myself at the Glasgow counting centre. In my constituency, the more affluent the area, the larger the remain vote. We have a responsibility and a duty as politicians to reach out to those who voted leave to strive to understand why and to respond to their concerns. I suspect that increasingly they feel that they have no stake in society. In general terms, although this is not necessarily always true, these are communities where the ravages of deindustrialisation have hit the hardest and where the economic recession has bitten deepest.

In many ways, there are pronounced similarities with the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, where some of the most deprived communities in Scotland voted to leave the UK. They also felt disillusioned and disfranchised in large numbers. Many of them had not

cast a vote in many years, if at all. There is a clear problem for us to address, and we must find an amicable solution that reconnects communities to the political process and proves that politics can and will be a power for good in their lives. We must not let the Conservative Government or the Scottish Government—or any Government, for that matter—abdicate their responsibilities and abandon those who need help the most.

Immigration is an issue that came to dominate the EU referendum debate, and that concern must be addressed, but is immigration the true cause of the deep dissatisfaction felt in communities, or is it other things? There are six years of public sector austerity, the lack of a proper house building strategy, the failure to recruit adequate numbers of GPs, a dearth of well-paid, progressive, highly skilled work and crushing pressure on schools and hospitals. Those are failures not of the EU, but of national Governments north and south of the border. As such, they can all be resolved by a sea change in UK and Scottish Government policy. We should not allow the UK Government in particular to hide behind the EU over those public policy failures.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): We in Scotland have a demographic challenge that can only be aided by people coming to live and work in Scotland, and we need to encourage people to do so, perhaps with the post-study work visa, and there are EU citizens who still wish to come. We need to talk about how immigration enriches us and not demonise those who wish to come here to live, work and make a contribution to our society.

**Ian Murray**: That is precisely my point: immigration enriches society. Politicians have to be much braver about making the positive case for immigration. The arguments are not mutually exclusive; they all have to be set alongside the fact that if we have an influx of people, whether through migration or for other purposes such as work, public policy has to respond. The previous Labour Government had the migrant impacts fund, which was precisely that kind of response for local communities in need of additional resources to deal with the impact of the movement of people, whether immigrants or otherwise. That was scrapped in 2010 by the Tory Government, and we should look seriously at bringing it back. None of these issues is mutually exclusive, and I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. He was not only wonderful at intervening, but has successfully made me lose my place. I will get used to being back on the Back Benches shortly.

I was saying that we should reassure those who voted to leave and those who voted to remain that we are listening to them by demonstrating not just through speeches, but by our actions, that we are firmly on the side of everyone who voted in the EU referendum. In doing so, our first priority—it is a priority that needs to serve the interests of people across the entire country—should be to secure the best deal possible in the Brexit negotiations. That means adopting a negotiating stance that takes into account all views: those of people who voted to leave and those of people who voted to remain. The building blocks for the negotiations must be what we want to retain from the European Union.

As Scottish Labour’s Westminster spokesperson, my focus today is obviously on Scotland, but I am sure many people from the other devolved Administrations,

[*Ian Murray*]

such as Northern Ireland, which voted to remain, and Wales, which voted to leave—my hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) is here—will have their say in the negotiations. I am sure Members from Wales and Northern Ireland will make those points.

Let us reflect on the vote in Scotland for a moment. Some 62% voted to remain, and 38% voted to leave. In my constituency, 78% voted to remain. I assume that was in no small part due to the contribution of the significant financial services sector to the economy in Edinburgh, the large number of businesses that export and the world-class universities that rely on EU funding for some of their world-leading research. Those factors all have to be taken into account as we set out our negotiating stance, so I will go through Labour's priorities and principles.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman mentions his voters and the financial sector in Edinburgh. Does he accept that Scotland remaining within the EU would provide an opportunity for businesses to look north to Scotland, particularly in the financial sector? For those who are considering leaving London, there is an opportunity for his constituents, for Edinburgh, other cities in Scotland and Scotland overall.

**Ian Murray**: When I conclude my remarks, I will say that we should be looking at this as an opportunity, not only for Scotland, but for the whole United Kingdom. We are where we are. We need to ensure that the Government's negotiations reflect what has happened, not only in Scotland but across the component parts of the UK, and make those arguments. I hope the financial services sector in the UK and in particular in Edinburgh reflects on where we are and makes those decisions accordingly. The uncertainty brought about by the decision to leave the EU is similar to the uncertainty that comes from any constitutional change that we have to deal with. I am delighted that the hon. Lady intervened, because she gave me an opportunity to mark my paper when I sat down. I am getting the hang of it.

I will go through the founding principles from which everything else in these negotiations should flow. We must be mindful of respecting and upholding the will of the Scottish people, not just in this referendum, but in the 2014 independence referendum. Those results have shown that Scots wish to remain part of the United Kingdom and retain the advantages of European Union membership. I understand that that is not a particularly easy thing to achieve, but they should be the founding principles of what we want to achieve in these negotiations. That is Labour's starting point and forms the basis of what we believe should be Scotland's negotiating platform.

That platform is informed by an excellent and aptly named paper written by Professor Jim Gallagher of Nuffield College, Oxford, entitled "The Brexit shambles: charting a path through the rubble." Hon. Members can probably guess from the title where he is coming from on the issue. The paper identifies and delineates four priorities that should guide the Scottish and UK Governments—I have added one to make it five, because it does not mention the role of EU nationals and it is important to put that on the record as well.

As matters stand today, Scotland belongs to two Unions and gets significant advantages from both. The people of Scotland recognise that and have recently voted overwhelmingly for both Unions to be continued. The result of the referendums should be respected, but instead, they are being ignored. The political context in Scotland at the moment is that the Conservatives want Scotland in the UK but out of the EU, and the Scottish National party wants Scotland in the EU but out of the UK. Only the Scottish Labour party is clear that we want Scotland to remain in the EU and in the UK. The UK and Scottish Governments have an obligation to pursue every avenue in pursuit of that outcome, and to facilitate that, we should look at the priorities that should be put in place. Scotland's first priority should be to urge the UK Government to accept a Norway-type option, if I can use that terminology.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP): I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way—he is a decent man. He said that he does not want to see referendum results ignored but went on to state that Scottish Labour's position is to keep Scotland in the UK and the UK in the EU. Given that that is not what people voted for across the UK, does he perhaps consider that his party is behind the curve on the issue?

**Ian Murray**: When giving way, I should have asked the hon. Gentleman whether he would sign my early-day motion—he probably will not, given its content. If he had been listening properly, he would have heard me say that what the people of Scotland have voted for in the two referendums is a position where Scotland is in the UK and retains the advantages of being in the EU. I did not say that the UK will remain in both, because that is quite obviously not so.

**Hannah Bardell** *rose*—

**Ian Murray**: I will give way to the hon. Lady if she confirms whether she will sign my early-day motion.

**Hannah Bardell**: I will need to read the hon. Gentleman's early-day motion before I make a decision; it would not be appropriate to make a comment either way without prior knowledge. I have a brief point. Does he not recognise that many people in Scotland voted for independence on the basis that his party and other UK parties said that the only way to retain Scotland's place within the EU was to vote against independence?

**Ian Murray**: I am sure that you will rule me out of order, Mr Bailey, if we rehearse the well-trodden paths of the arguments about the Scottish referendum. If the hon. Lady does not mind, I will touch on some of them as we go through my contribution. Knowing the time, that it is the last day of term and that everyone is desperate to head to the shores of Spain—without a visa—to enjoy the sunshine with their families, I will get on to that as we go through.

The first priority—the Norway-type option that I referred to—is that we would have membership of the European economic area. UK, and hence Scottish, membership of the EEA would mean maintaining much of the same conditions of trade and freedom of movement as currently exist. I am not sure whether the Government's position in the negotiations is to maintain the free

movement of people, but the Norway-style option would allow that to continue. It is worth putting in context why that is important.

The value of Scotland's unfettered access to the EU single market is well established. The Scottish Government's figures value Scottish exports to EU member states at around £12 billion annually, but it is worth reflecting on similar figures that show Scottish exports to the rest of the UK, which is why this is such an important debate. Those exports are worth four times that amount at £49 billion a year, which is why I think that the Scottish people have voted twice to stay with the advantages of being in both Unions. It makes scant economic sense to prioritise the EU market over the UK market. In this debate, it cannot be an either/or—we should strive to maintain full access to both.

UK membership of the EEA would allow Scotland to continue to trade undisrupted with both the EU and the UK. If that becomes impossible, a separate trading deal would have to be negotiated and nobody knows what that would look like. The other option at the other end of the spectrum, which I think unpalatable, would be to abide by World Trade Organisation rules. That would have significant impact on UK and Scottish trading capacity.

The second priority should be to protect Scotland's public services and public spending by securing a continued fiscal and political union with the UK. These are the building blocks for the negotiations. The Scottish Government attach huge importance to the fiscal relationship with the UK; in his own words, the former Finance Secretary strained "every sinew" to protect it during the negotiations on the fiscal framework underpinning the Scotland Act 2016. The Scottish Government's accounts and independent analysis show that Scotland is carrying a substantial budget deficit. It is incredibly important that Scotland's position in the UK is maintained through the block grant and the Barnett formula.

Without those mechanisms, the Scottish Government would have to undertake dramatic spending cuts or increase taxes to balance the books, based on their current annual accounts. That point was reflected on by the hon. Member for East Lothian (George Kerevan), the SNP's representative on the Treasury Committee, who said that not having those fiscal transfers would be incredibly difficult—I think that the word he used was "catastrophic"—for Scottish public services.

The third priority is the protection of Scotland's currency union with the rest of the UK. Many of these arguments were covered in 2014, as we have just discussed in the intervention by the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell), but it is worth revisiting them in this context, because it is incredibly important for the debate on how the negotiations with the EU proceed. If the first principle is to ensure that Scotland remains in the UK and with the benefits of the EU, we know that the euro is a non-starter, so that should come off the table—we owe the former Prime Minister and Chancellor Gordon Brown a debt of gratitude for keeping us out of that—but what of the other currency options that may be available? We know that the best available currency option at the moment is the current settlement. As part of the Scottish and UK Governments' Brexit negotiations with the EU, we must make sure that Scotland's position in the UK is protected, because Scotland's fiscal and economic union with the rest of the UK is beneficial for

the currency argument. I am conscious of the time, so I will not go through the currency arguments, but they are all on the record. The preferred arrangement in terms of Scotland's fiscal, currency and economic position is the current arrangements, and the negotiations must underpin that point and reject all other arrangements.

I will quickly skirt through the fourth priority, which is to explore all options for Scotland's future relationship with the EU. If we view this positively, it could turn the Brexit negotiations on their head, transforming a vexatious trial into an unprecedented opportunity. The hon. Lady mentioned that earlier. No one has ever suggested that the EU is a tremendous success and there are elements that Scotland may wish to relinquish. Equally, there are parts that Scotland may wish to retain. One aspect of the Brexit debate rarely mentioned is that it will greatly empower the Scottish Parliament. Many of the competencies, such as control over fisheries, agriculture, university research funding and environmental policy, will transfer directly to the Holyrood Parliament.

**Hannah Bardell:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being so generous; I promise this will be the last intervention. He makes the point about the EU not being perfect. Does he accept that, with a seat at the top table, Scotland could have a greater voice and influence in reforming the EU as an independent country within the European Union?

**Ian Murray:** That flies in the face of the arguments of economic, currency and political union with the United Kingdom; that is essentially Scotland turning its back on a much more successful Union, to be part of the European Union. What people have said quite clearly is that they want Scotland to be part of the UK and part of the EU. If where we want to get to in the negotiations is an independent Scotland—I am sure that it is for the hon. Lady; if it was not, I would be incredibly surprised—the journey and the pathway to get there are slightly different from the pathway and journey towards an outcome that keeps the UK together and keeps Scotland with many of its current advantages within the UK as a member state of the EU. That should be the genesis of the negotiations. I appreciate that the Labour party perspective and the Scottish National party perspective on the outcome of that journey are different, but my contention is that it has to be about keeping both Unions together.

Michael Keating recently observed that, given the new powers that will fall within the competence of the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government could choose to align themselves with the EU and the directives that currently exist, rather than the UK, and that they can have either an informal or a formal relationship. The key thing is that there will be new and interesting opportunities. For example, the responsibility for delivering air quality lies with the Scottish Parliament but falls under the EU directive. The inter-governmental working between the UK and Scottish Governments means that the English and Welsh policy and the Scottish policy to deliver that directive can be different, but they are under the same umbrella. Strong inter-governmental working will be needed to ensure that example and many others are delivered across the UK.

Lord Falconer, the former Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, commissioned a piece of work in the other place to set out options for a federalised

[*Ian Murray*]

membership structure. Many people say that that is impossible to achieve, but we are in uncharted territory and everything should be on the table when we examine the possibilities for protecting the component parts of the UK and the advantages they get from membership of the EU.

The fifth and final principle that should guide these negotiations, particularly from a devolved perspective, is that we must protect the rights of EU nationals who live, work and contribute to the UK. Conversely, we must protect the right of UK nationals to work, study and live in other EU countries.

The UK's political landscape is changing rather rapidly. A week is certainly a long time in politics these days. Brexit is perhaps the reckoning that the political system has been needing for a long time. It enables us to readdress where we are in the political landscape and think about how we respond to the big issues for communities. There is no doubt that the basic things that people took for granted—a job, a decent wage, a home of their own, a secure pension in old age and the idea that the next generation will do equally well if not better than the current generation—are increasingly becoming unattainable. Whether that is fact or perception, it is what people tell us. They are working harder and doing the right thing, but they are not receiving the benefits. I think that is the genesis of why the UK voted to leave. That is a failure not of the EU but of national Government.

Let us reflect on where we are. I would like the Minister to address some of these issues. The principle that the UK should come out of the EU but Scotland should stay in the UK and retain many of the advantages of being in the EU should guide the Government's negotiations with the devolved Administrations and the EU. The Minister has the opportunity to set out the UK Government's position on the devolved nations and Administrations today and be clear that the Brexit negotiations will protect their interests. He should reaffirm that the UK Government will recognise that Scotland voted to be in the UK and to keep the advantages of the EU. Those will be the foundation stones and building blocks for the negotiations. If we are optimistic about this, and if we all want the same journey and outcome, those should be the conclusions that we seek.

The former leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband), said last week in his Tony Benn memorial lecture:

“This can be a progressive moment. In any case, there is no point in the left sinking into gloom. The only answer is to rise to the challenge. The optimists have always been the people we need at times of greatest adversity. Today we need them more than ever.”

I hope the Minister is indeed an optimist and will respond positively to this debate.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** Order. I should make it clear that I intend the Front-Bench contributions from the SNP, Labour and the Government to start at 2.30 pm. I will give the Front Benchers 10 minutes each, and I would be grateful if they were flexible, so that the

hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) has time to sum up briefly at the end. It would be helpful if speakers confined their remarks to a maximum of eight or nine minutes; otherwise, I shall start getting rather agitated.

1.55 pm

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Mr Bailey. I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray). It is a pleasure to see him on the Back Benches, and it is always a considerable pleasure to listen to his erudite exposition. There is much in what he said that I can agree with; there are some parts that, as he will understand, I would not. I would describe it as a bit of a curate's egg. I hope he will take that in the spirit in which it is intended.

**Ian Murray:** Pot, kettle, black.

**Ian Blackford:** You will get your chance later.

On 28 June, the First Minister of Scotland secured a mandate from the Scottish Parliament to seek to secure options for protecting Scotland's relationship with the EU. I am glad to say that it was supported not only by the Scottish National party, but by the Labour party, the Greens and the Lib Dems, working in consensus for Scotland's interests. Scotland's Parliament came together to affirm its view on Scotland's place within Europe.

We in the SNP argued ahead of the referendum that we should not be dragged out of Europe against our will. In the referendum, Scotland voted to remain in. Although England voted for Brexit, 62% of those who voted in Scotland voted to remain within the EU. We proclaimed our historic position as a European nation and our belief that our country is part of a wider family of nations.

Prior to the Act of Union in 1707, Scotland had for centuries established strong trading links with much of Europe, particularly northern Europe—the low countries, France, Germany, the Baltics and Poland, to name but a few. The Dutch town of Veere was essentially a Scottish trading port in the Netherlands. The Dutch conferred rights to Scotland, from a diplomatic point of view, in Veere. It was a two-way street. There was a significant European influence on Scotland. A walk through many Scottish towns, particularly on the east coast, shows the important influence of European architecture on our towns and cities. Dutch gable ends, for example, are prevalent in many parts of Scotland.

The point is that Scotland has long been at peace with itself as a European nation, predating the European Union by centuries. It is little wonder that many of us proudly define ourselves as Scottish and European. Alyn Smith MEP, speaking in the European Parliament, said this to Europe:

“please remember this: Scotland did not let you down. Please, I beg you...do not let Scotland down now.”

When we woke up on the morning of 24 June to find that the Brexiters had won in England, we recognised that there was a real threat that Scotland could be dragged out of the EU against its will. That is why it is important that we are having this debate on the issue of

devolved Governments and the negotiations on leaving the EU. There must be respect for Scotland's position of having voted to remain. For us, remain means remain.

We often hear about parliamentary sovereignty. I am minded of the words of Lord Cooper's judgment in the Court of Session in the case of *MacCormick v. Lord Advocate*. He said that

"the principle of unlimited sovereignty of parliament is a distinctly English principle and has no counterpoint in Scottish Constitutional Law."

We hold to the principle that the Scottish people are sovereign. If that is the case, we cannot be dragged out of Europe against our will. The people of Scotland have spoken. The people are sovereign, and the UK Government must recognise that legitimate position in their deliberations and negotiations on Brexit. The UK might be leaving, but Scotland's future remains as a European nation.

In the days after the referendum, there was a failure of leadership in the UK Government, who sought to come to terms with the circumstances they had created. I was proud that on 24 June, when we were looking for leadership, it was our First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, who spoke for many when she said:

"Yesterday, Scotland—like London and Northern Ireland—voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. We voted to protect our place in the world's biggest single market—and the jobs and investment that depend on it. We voted to safeguard our freedom to travel, live, work and study in other European countries. And we voted to renew our reputation as an outward-looking, open and inclusive country.

Indeed, I want to take the opportunity this morning to speak directly to citizens of other EU countries living here in Scotland—you remain welcome here. Scotland is your home and your contribution is valued."

Nicola went on to say:

"I want to make it absolutely clear that I intend to take all possible steps and explore all options to give effect to how people in Scotland voted—in other words, to secure our continuing place in the EU and in the single market in particular. We will also be seeking direct discussions with the EU institutions and its member states."

Nicola was speaking for so many of us and, crucially, to the 173,000 citizens of Scotland who come from the EU—our friends, our colleagues and our neighbours, now fearful of their rights to remain living in our country, their country.

The Prime Minister has still failed to guarantee the rights of all EU citizens living here, with the suggestion that their rights will be used as a bargaining counter. What kind of society are we when we allow that level of fear to lay on the heads of many of our people, living in our country? It is immoral, wrong and something that the Government should deal with immediately, by protecting the rights of all EU citizens living not only in Scotland, but throughout the UK.

That message about exploring all options to give effect to how people voted in Scotland, to secure our place in the EU, has broad all-party and non-party support. What steps will the Minister take to reflect the votes and wishes of the Scottish people? Will he recognise the sovereignty of the Scottish people, and that we cannot be dragged out of the EU against our will? What will he do to recognise our rights? Will he agree to the Scottish Government, on behalf of the Parliament and people of Scotland, being given a full and formal role in negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU?

We are often told that our position within the Union is one where we are respected. I say to the Minister: how are we to judge this? Actions speak louder than words. He should show us that his Government are respectful and will give the Scottish Government their rightful place. It is crucial that the Scottish Government are not only consulted, but at the table when negotiations are ongoing, to ensure that the voice of the Scottish people is heard.

We have been put in a position where our vital interests—businesses, jobs, universities, freedom to travel, workers' rights and much else besides—are all at risk. A Conservative Government have put us into that position, so the onus is now on them to prove that our interests can be protected within the UK, because the fact is that the EU referendum has placed a big question mark over that.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh South spoke about the existing fiscal position, but the critical point about the fiscal position is that what we have today is a legacy of the UK Government. The fact that we want independence, ultimately, is not because Scotland is such a success story within the UK; it is because we know we can do much better. A crucial difference post-23 June is that one of the consequences of retaining our place in Europe is that Scotland becomes a destination. It is about us fulfilling our potential, creating opportunities for jobs and investment, growing the Scottish economy and, therefore, creating the tax revenues that will allow us to deliver on the social policies that we want. It is about a new Scotland, with its own place in the world—a bright, bold and optimistic Scotland, which is at peace with itself. That is what we seek to deliver.

The Scottish Government are committed to maintaining Scotland's reputation as an outward-looking, open and inclusive country. We will look at all options to protect Scotland's place in the EU. Today, independence is not the only option on the table. Our guiding principle in all our actions is to protect Scotland's interests and our place in the EU. We will work with all parties to achieve that—I extend the hand of friendship to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South, if I may call him that, and to others, because we must ensure collectively that Scotland's place is protected.

If it becomes clear that Scottish independence is the best and only way to achieve that, then it is an option that Scotland has to have. The Scottish Parliament must be fully involved in that consideration, and it is not something to be hurried. However, if the Scottish Parliament judges that a referendum on independence is now the best option to secure Scotland's continued place in Europe, the Scottish Government have a duty to act. Will the Minister give a commitment today that if the Scottish Parliament calls for a referendum on Scottish independence, the UK Government will respect it? That is a simple question, which requires a simple answer. Do the UK Government accept that it is for the Scottish people to determine their own destiny?

The First Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government will now begin to prepare the legislation required to allow a referendum to take place if and when the Scottish Parliament so decides. The context for a second independence referendum is very different from that in 2014. A second referendum would not be a re-run of 2014, and it would be fought on entirely different grounds. The UK that we voted to stay in in

[*Ian Blackford*]

2014 no longer exists. Independence could be the best option to provide security for our economy and society, and to keep Scotland in the EU. It would be about preserving the status quo—independence would not be about Scotland wanting to leave, but about wanting to stay with what we have.

The Scottish Government are focused utterly on protecting Scotland's interests and on doing all they can to ensure that Scotland remains in the EU. We consider that the process to exit the EU requires Holyrood's consent and we cannot foresee circumstances in which the Scottish Parliament would give that without the guarantees that we asked for. Our focus is on protecting Scotland's interests and remaining in the EU, not on frustrating England's will to leave—it would be for Westminster to deal with the consequences of that situation. For us, remain means remain. We must not, we cannot and we will not be dragged out of Europe against our will. Westminster must respect the people of Scotland.

2.6 pm

**Nia Griffith** (Llanelli) (Lab): I welcome the Minister to his place, in particular because of his knowledge of devolution in Wales and because he was a remain campaigner. I very much hope that he will be successful in the Brexit negotiations, because a successful outcome matters to all of us.

The Prime Minister and her predecessor have made it clear that devolved Administrations should be fully involved in negotiations as part of the UK team. That is happening at an official level, but the commitment must remain when things move into the next phase, beyond the initial consultation. There needs to be a real recognition that in certain areas—in particular, agriculture and fisheries for example—there is no UK position. Those matters are devolved entirely, which heightens the need for the Welsh Government to be at the top table.

Access to the single market is absolutely vital for Welsh business. Welsh exports are worth some £5 billion a year, and we have a trade surplus with the EU, unlike the UK as a whole. It is vital that everything is done to keep that marketplace open for us, because some 200,000 jobs in Wales are in effect dependent on that export market for Welsh business, industry and agriculture. Anyone looking to set up a business in Wales must have reassurances about what sort of access they will have to the single market.

We are not talking only about local people setting up businesses in Wales; people from other EU regions do so too. We already have some 500 companies based in Wales that are from other areas of the EU, creating jobs and opportunities for Welsh businesses. They need some immediate reassurance about their situation and what it is likely to look like in the future. We have had statements from the big companies, such as Tata and Airbus, about the challenge that Brexit will pose for them. They will need as much reassurance as possible to stop them pulling out. We want to ensure ease of trade and competitive conditions for them to operate in the UK.

Let me turn to agriculture, on which we have our own devolved policy in Wales, as I have mentioned. Overall, the EU accounts for 40% of exports from Wales, but the

figure for agriculture is far higher. The EU accounts for 93% of the lamb that we export, 35% of sheep, 92% of beef and 98% of dairy products—all going to the EU. Those Welsh beef exports are worth £52 million and the Welsh lamb exports £122 million. As I understand it, the EU imposes an average tariff of some 14% on agricultural imports from non-EU countries, with higher rates for individual items. I have even heard of rates of between 58% and 70% on beef products. It is essential that Wales is at the top table and we get the best deal we can for the continued export of our agricultural produce. We all accept that the common agricultural policy needs reform, but we must ensure that we support farmers—particularly those in the so-called areas of natural constraint, which are more challenging to farm.

Before the referendum, Brexit campaigners promised that Wales would not lose out. The Minister for Farming, the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), said:

“If we vote to leave on 23 June, the UK government will continue to give Welsh farmers and the environment at least as much support as they get now.”

But the new Environment Secretary said during the referendum debate:

“It would make so much more sense if those with the big fields do the sheep, and those with the hill farms do the butterflies. That would make a lot more sense for the UK and it's perfectly possible but only if we leave the EU and sort it out for ourselves.”

Although we take conservation seriously and have an excellent record on that, I really do not want Wales to be reduced to one great big butterfly park, because active, vibrant farms are the lifeblood of our rural communities. It is essential that the Environment Secretary clarifies her position on these issues and the Welsh Government are right there at the negotiating table, finding out exactly what that statement means. I really hope that the Minister will ensure that support for Welsh farmers will continue.

To turn to other areas of EU funding, Wales benefits enormously from the European regional development fund and its vital expenditure on upskilling and infrastructure projects, particularly in the valleys and west Wales. Again, we want to ensure that Wales does not lose out in any way. I am particularly concerned, because in response to my question during Welsh questions last week, the Secretary of State for Wales implied that there would be a complete rethink of that funding. He said that

“simply replacing what are currently EU funds with another source from Westminster misses the point: the EU referendum sent out a number of messages, and those areas that receive most EU funds were the areas, sadly, that voted most strongly to leave the EU. We need to look at models of regional aid in a different way.”—[*Official Report*, 13 July 2016; Vol. 613, c. 278.]

I am really quite puzzled about what he meant by that. Did he mean that he is thinking of cutting the money that goes to the poorest areas of our country?

That £600 million comes to Wales through a needs-based formula. Remember that the Holtham commission said that the Barnett floor was only a temporary measure and funding for Wales needed to move to a much more needs-based formula. Will we lose even the part of our funding that is already needs-based? As I say, the Secretary of State is not giving any reassurances on that. We need to know exactly where we stand, and it is extremely important for the Welsh Government to be at the table.

I know that other Members want to speak, but I want briefly to mention our universities. Because of the differences in funding for universities in Wales, significant decisions are being made. We want to have collaboration, as we can do 10 times more when we work together, and I hope that many cross-border projects will be able to continue.

I would like to say a quick word about EU nationals. Health policy is devolved to Wales, and we are extremely dependent on EU nationals and extra-EU nationals coming to work in Wales—particularly in rural areas, because many of our specialist staff like to stay near the big centres, where they perhaps feel that they have better promotion prospects. Those EU nationals need certainty. We have had two messages: the message that people from the EU would be able to stay was quickly followed up with the message that, “We are not quite sure whether they can.” We do not want them to hop off and apply for jobs back in their home countries because they do not have the security of knowing that they can stay and settle in Wales. We need that certainty urgently, and we also need guidance on what will happen in future. There have been delays in the past—visas have not been available for doctors from outside the EU—and we need to know what will happen with EU nationals. Will there be a fast-track system, and how will that work? Another related but different area is the slaughterhouses and meat-packing factories, which are largely staffed by EU nationals. We need to know what their position is and how that can be taken forward.

No contribution of mine on Wales would be complete without a word on steel. We must make it really desirable for any investor in steel to be in the UK, and that will be so much harder now. There can be no excuses now about the EU causing delays. The Government have to act on energy prices, keeping out Chinese imports and ensuring that the conditions are absolutely right for our steel industry to stay here. For all those reasons, I want the Welsh Government to be fully involved in all the Brexit negotiations.

2.15 pm

**Alistair Burt** (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) on securing the debate; it is a real pleasure to see the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker) in his place. It is 33 years since I was secretary to the Back-Bench energy committee when his father was Energy Secretary—that was my first official position here—and it is a great pleasure for many of us that my hon. Friend is in his place.

I make no secret of the fact that I am a reluctant Brexiteer. I am not even sure whether I can actually be classed as that. I campaigned to remain in the EU and I am very disappointed with the result, but like all of us here, I am a democrat and—to use those wonderful words—we are where we are. As we have heard today, the referendum result is clouded, because it has raised so many more questions than have been settled. I am also here because I am British—mother from Dundee, father from Fife; I am classic British.

Although some of the questions that hon. Members have raised will be settled in relation to their own territories, how they are settled does concern Westminster.

Over the years, I have been as much a plumber here, interested in the mechanics of how things work and how questions are settled, as I have been concerned with the results themselves. There are some questions that will not be for us to settle, but ensuring that in this process Westminster speaks clearly, effectively and fairly with the devolved Administrations will be really important. The bulk of my remarks relate as much as anything else to that process and how we get it right.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh South focused rightly on the key issue in relation to Scotland—its vote to remain in the EU and how that is to be taken into account—but the exchange between him and the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) makes it clear that the Minister will have to give us some idea over time of how the conundrum of the Scottish position, with the issues that have been raised in relation to independence, will be taken into account by Westminster in the negotiations.

There are clearly regional distinctions in how matters affect different parts of the UK. The hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) spoke about the issues affecting Wales, including agriculture and the balance of exports. Scotland has its own sectoral interests, which are powerfully important. Will that in any way dictate the order in which the United Kingdom tries to deal with trade negotiations, for example? Some countries are more important to some parts of the UK than others. Will there be an order of preference for trade negotiations? We already know that we have a shortage of negotiators. As we start to get more, will all the countries that we are seeking trade deals with be dealt with at the same time and under the same conditions, or will some be seen as more important than others because of their importance to different parts of the UK? If so, precisely how will that be handled?

It would seem that there was no comprehensive planning for how to deal with that by either those who advocated a leave vote or the Government. Is that true? Was there more planning than we were made aware of? There has been no manifesto setting out quite what model we are after and what model will suit not just England but the different devolved Administrations. Will it be the Norwegian model, or will it be the more bilateral Swiss model? Will the World Trade Organisation model benefit certain parts of the UK? If so, how will we all handle that?

As the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber and I think also the hon. Member for Edinburgh South mentioned, immigration is seen differently in Scotland from in England because of the numbers and the ways in which people have moved. Again, if we are to negotiate in relation to trade deals, and trade deals vis-à-vis free movement, will that be handled differently in relation to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales than it will be in England? If so, what is the mechanism for doing that?

What about the repeal of some legislation on the back of our EU negotiations? It was said during the course of the debates on leaving that some social legislation, perhaps affecting health and safety, and workers regulations would come into the negotiations. Really? Surely Parliament has a say on that. Can negotiations on that be conducted before Parliament has had a voice or even a vote on those matters, or are they to be conducted and then brought to Parliament for some sort of endorsement? If so, what happens if Parliament, which at the last count was weighted rather against leaving, does not feel that

[*Alistair Burt*]

that base of negotiation is actually in the best interests of all the British people? How is the process to be managed?

I will not dwell on that because time is short, but there are other sectoral issues to consider, such as manufacturing, which affects all of us. One of the phrases most commonly picked out during the debate was from Patrick Minford, who said, in effect, that the consequence of leaving would be that manufacturing would be all but eliminated,

“But this shouldn’t scare us”.

I suspect some people might well be scared of that. How is that to be taken into account in the negotiations?

The key for me is that all the options require detailed parliamentary scrutiny, certainly from a Select Committee, and possibly a measure of parliamentary action in terms of votes and legislation. Do we have any commonality among ourselves about how that will be taken forward and what the process will be? We need to start there.

I spent some years in the Minister’s position, so I will not say “Can the Minister answer this?” and “Can the Minister answer that?” because he cannot answer all the questions asked in the debate at present. However, the debate has been a very valuable first step, and I hope it is helpful to know that even though some of us are not physically located in the devolved Administration areas, we care very much about how the process is handled by Westminster as a whole. We are just as interested in the outcomes, and I want to ensure that the Westminster mechanism fairly and effectively covers all the ground that needs to be covered. I am sure the Minister has that in mind. If he cares to venture any answers to some of the questions I have raised, I will be pleased, but I suspect that some of the answers will come out over time.

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** I would not normally allow a person who was not here at the beginning to participate in the debate, but as Mr Fitzpatrick did submit an application to speak and I know he was participating in a debate in the Chamber, I will give him a maximum of five minutes to contribute. I want to give as much time as I can to the Front-Bench spokespersons.

2.22 pm

**Jim Fitzpatrick** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I hope I can stay inside that time and leave a few minutes for the hon. Member for Glasgow South (Stewart Malcolm McDonald), who is also standing. I am grateful for the opportunity to make a contribution on behalf of London. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) and I welcome the Minister to his new position. I wish him well.

Mayor Sadiq Khan is aiming to reach broad agreement for further devolution of London government in the aftermath of the EU referendum result. He wants to secure for City Hall and the boroughs significantly more control over the taxes raised in the capital and how public services are run. He wants to protect Londoners from the economic fallout of leaving the EU by creating more autonomy for London government. He says:

“This is essential to protecting Londoners’ jobs, wealth and prosperity.”

He believes that greater devolution for the capital will benefit not only London but the whole country.

Councillor Claire Kober, the chair of London Councils, said:

“We are united with the Mayor in calling for the greater devolution of powers from Whitehall.”

The Mayor says:

“I’m not asking for London to get a bigger slice of the British pie. That wouldn’t be fair. All I’m asking is that we get more control over the slice of the pie”,

referring to that which London produces.

The Mayor has made five demands of the Government. He calls on the Home Secretary to guarantee that EU citizens already in the UK can stay once Britain leaves. He asks for a commitment to make staying in the single market and the retention of passporting rights a top priority during talks with Brussels. He wants London to have a seat at the negotiating table. He asks for guarantees that key security and policing systems built up with European partners over many years are retained to help keep London and Britain safe, and he calls for discussions on more powers to London to start straightaway.

I recognise that many will have perceived this debate as being about Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, but London has very important, specific issues that need to be addressed. I am grateful for the opportunity to put the Mayor’s comments on the record, and I look forward to hearing the responses from the Front Benchers.

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** Stewart McDonald, I will give you three minutes.

2.24 pm

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP): I am very grateful to you, Mr Bailey. May I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) on securing the debate, welcome the Minister and say what a pleasure it is to follow a fellow south-sider from Glasgow? I think it was Winston Churchill who said:

“The trouble with committing political suicide is that you live to regret it.”

It feels as though we are living through a long political suicide at the moment.

The Brexit masochists have utterly ruined politics and turned it on its head. I will not allow my country—nor will my colleagues who join me on these Benches—to bear the brunt of that, because on the back of a Brexit result that Scotland did not vote for, the behaviour and response of the political establishment here in London has been shambolic. The Government and Opposition parties have decided to turn in on themselves and go on a back-stabbing regime that even Shakespeare would have thought had gone too far.

People not just in Scotland but in all parts of the UK—not least here in London—have looked on aghast at the abdication of responsibility, largely of people such as the new Foreign Secretary. They toured around the country on a big red bus, telling us to vote leave and take control, but when it came to it they could not get away from taking control far enough. And my goodness, what a sense of humour the new Prime Minister has in appointing who she has appointed to certain offices of state, such as our new Environment Secretary—now she will have to go and tell the farmers why Brexit was such a good idea. I would love to be a fly on the wall for that.

When I was first elected to this House, I made my maiden speech on the European Union Referendum Bill. I made the point back then that Tory Members had on glasses that were so rose-tinted that they could not see the problem they were walking into, so nobody can say they were not told that, in trying to kill one union, they may end up killing two, because all options are on the table.

I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) said. If it comes to a second independence referendum, that will have to be fought on different grounds and in a different way. We will have to give serious consideration to where we went wrong last time round, and I accept that we got some things wrong last time round. We failed to convince a majority of people to vote for independence. It was not the BBC or the *Daily Record* that managed to sneak in that result; we failed to convince enough people. But my goodness the mood has changed now, because my hon. Friend was also right that the UK that people voted for no longer exists.

I want to finish with an appeal to the Minister and to Members from other parts of the UK. Please try to understand the political mood in Scotland. That involves not just listening to what we in the Scottish National party have to say or what the hon. Member for Edinburgh South has to say. Try to engage with people in Scotland, because the farce that is Westminster politics is looking less and less appealing.

The farce that is Westminster politics is something that fewer people are willing to put up with, because as this place makes our country smaller and makes us look in on ourselves more, people will demand to do what was on the side of that big red bus, and that was to vote leave and take back control—to re-establish ourselves as a contributing European nation. We are in uncharted and potentially even dangerous waters, but nobody can say they were not told at the time. I hope the Minister can give us some assurance—

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** Order.

2.28 pm

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey. Like others, I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) on securing his debate and using his new found liberty—perhaps I should say independence—on the Back Benches so creatively in this last gasp before the recess. I also warmly welcome the Minister to his post. Westminster Hall has not been short of Brexit debates in the weeks since the referendum and that is likely to continue, so we will set up a tent, bathing facilities and so on for him, because I think he is going to be spending a lot of time in here. However, it would also be worth having a debate on the Floor of the House, now that there is a fully accountable Secretary of State. The House of Lords has spent an awful lot of time debating the Brexit result; we have yet to debate it on the Floor of the House. The attention in this and previous debates in Westminster Hall clearly demonstrates a desire on the part of Members to have a debate on the Floor of the House.

**Nia Griffith:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that should be in Government time and not simply a Backbench Committee debate?

**Patrick Grady:** I absolutely agree. The Government, to their credit, genuinely recognised the importance of the Chilcot inquiry and found two days to debate it, so they ought to be able to find time for us to debate the Brexit result. In that debate, what Members will hear from SNP Members is the start and end point they have heard today: that it is democratically unacceptable for Scotland to be taken out of the EU against its will. We have been consistent on that, before, during and after the European referendum, which is why we have a mandate to argue that point.

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** I am pretty sure I recollect the Leader of the House announcing this morning that in the September fortnight when Parliament sits there will be a debate on the petition on the EU referendum, but that will be in Backbench Business Committee time and not Government time.

**Patrick Grady:** Yes, and it will be here in Westminster Hall, so the point about the main Chamber still stands.

I will look briefly at how we got here in the first place, the responses of the devolved Administrations so far, the impact of Brexit and the way forward in negotiations and some of the possible outcomes, especially as they affect Scotland. It did not have to be this way. The Scottish National party moved an amendment to put in place a four-nation lock, so that all parts of the UK would have to vote to leave before the whole of the UK could do so. If that mechanism had been in place, we would not be in the Brexit situation we are in today, after the vote in Northern Ireland and in Scotland. In the 1978 referendum on the Scottish Assembly there was a 40% rule, which admittedly we disagreed with. Nevertheless, only 37% of the electorate voted to leave, and if that rule had been in place in this referendum, it would have meant that Brexit could not go forward.

One of the reasons for the divergent results was the divergent campaigns. The woeful campaign in England and Wales stands in contrast to the positive campaign that took place in Scotland, with unanimity among Scotland's MPs and party leaders and overwhelming support for remaining among our MSPs and councillors. Like the hon. Member for Edinburgh South, my constituency voted 78% in favour of remaining. I take some of his points about a divergence in areas of greater deprivation. Nevertheless, even areas of deprivation in Scotland have benefited from the EU, and that is visible. I have made the point several times, but the road I cycled to school on when I was growing up in Inverness was built with European money—it would never have been built by Thatcher's Government. I think that visibility of European infrastructure in Scotland added to the existing support.

We have heard from different Members about the responses from different areas of the UK. The Welsh leave result was a disappointment to many Members, including our friends from Plaid Cymru, who cannot be here today, and to the Labour First Minister. Much like the Mayor of London, he outlined a range of priorities to protect jobs and economic confidence and to ensure that the Welsh Government play a full part in discussions on the European withdrawal, retaining access to the single market and so on. Likewise, the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) has put on record the Mayor of London's demands. The hon.

[Patrick Grady]

Gentleman is welcome to maintain his European citizenship—as a Glaswegian by birth, he will be entitled to Scottish citizenship once we become independent.

**Alistair Burt:** I get it through my nan.

**Patrick Grady:** There we go. There are plenty of people in the House today.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Come one, come all.

**Patrick Grady:** There we are; it is an open invitation. Northern Ireland voted to remain, which would also have triggered the four-nation lock mechanism, had it been introduced.

But we are, as others have said, where we are. I take some of the points that the hon. Member for Edinburgh South raised about the potential impact on domestic policy and reform and on the broader need to re-engage our populations in the democratic process. I think we did that quite effectively in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, which may explain the different tone of debate that took place during the European referendum. On the question of more powers for the Scottish Parliament, our preference, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) said, is for Scotland to influence those powers as a full member of the EU at the top table, where those decisions are made. If that is the outcome and that is the only way of protecting Scotland's place in Europe, that is what we will have.

The right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) made some considered remarks and reflections. They were not necessarily direct questions to the new Minister, but the fact that he is asking those questions reflects the fact that the UK Government really are playing catch-up on the result. They were not fully prepared for a Brexit result, which stands in contrast to the initiative and the momentum shown in Scotland. The First Minister, who spoke so eloquently—she was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford)—was immediately out the hatch, reaching out to leave voters and welcoming European citizens and assuring them of their continued welcome in Scotland. She then travelled to Brussels, where the President of the European Union, Jean-Claude Juncker, said:

“Scotland won the right to be heard in Brussels”.

It therefore stands to reason we should also have the right to be heard in the UK. The First Minister had a mandate to do that, with the Scottish Parliament passing a resolution saying that it

“welcomes the overwhelming vote of the people of Scotland to remain in the European Union”

and

“mandates the Scottish Government to have discussions with the UK Government, other devolved administrations, the EU institutions and member states to explore options for protecting Scotland's relationship with the EU, Scotland's place in the single market and the social, employment and economic benefits that come from that”.

**Ian Murray:** The whole debate today is about which destination we wish for the negotiations. The Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), who is the

SNP's Europe spokesperson, said on “Good Morning Scotland” this morning—and I quote—“Untrammelled access to the EU's single market is much more important to Scotland than access to the UK's”. Does the SNP spokesperson today agree or disagree with his hon. Friend?

**Patrick Grady:** I heard the interview to which the hon. Gentleman refers; it was a useful preparation for today's debate. It is clear that we want to maintain our access to—exactly as the Scottish Parliament resolution says—

“Scotland's place in the single market and the social, employment and economic benefits that come from that”.

In order to help to prepare for the transition, the First Minister moved quickly to put in place a standing council of experts to provide advice to her Government on how best to achieve our EU objectives. It is chaired by my constituent, Professor Anton Muscatelli, who is the principal of the University of Glasgow. That council is made up of specialists in finance, economics and European and diplomatic matters. It encompasses a range of political and constitutional opinions and was designed to provide the Scottish Government with access to a wealth of knowledge that has been built up over the years. The council will consider the impacts of the proposed changes to the UK's relationship with the EU on Scottish interests and will advise Scottish Ministers throughout the coming negotiations on the best way to ensure that we achieve those Scottish objectives.

The Prime Minister met with the First Minister, and we welcome that willingness to listen and to commit, which she emphasised again at Prime Minister's questions yesterday, but there is some need for clarity over the UK Government's plans. The Prime Minister said article 50 would not be triggered until there is a UK-wide approach on the objectives of the negotiations, but the Secretary of State for Brexit has said that article 50 will be triggered early next year. It would be useful to have some clarity on that.

We have to recognise the result in Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber spoke about the sovereignty of Scotland, and we have a debate in Westminster Hall on the Claim of Right after the summer recess. If Brexit means breakfast in the UK—sorry, if Brexit means Brexit; I have made a bit of a dog's breakfast of that—then in Scotland, remain should mean remain. The former Prime Minister said in his statement to the House after the referendum that his county of Oxfordshire had voted to remain, and implied that was somehow comparable to the result in Scotland, but Oxfordshire is not a devolved Administration. Oxfordshire County Council did not sign an Edinburgh agreement with the UK Government recognising in principle Oxford's right to become an independent country should it choose to do so. Scotland did.

That is why the FM has said the option of a second independence referendum

“must be on the table”

for Scotland, and if independence is found to be the only way to secure Scotland's place in Europe, a referendum would be “highly likely”. Any such referendum would have to command cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament, which is why it would be unacceptable for the UK Government to stand in its way. But we are not there yet. The Scottish Government have signalled their

intention to work constructively with the UK and with EU institutions and member states during the negotiations following the referendum result, but the result in Scotland was not for Brexit. It was for remain, and that result must be respected.

2.39 pm

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): It is an honour to contribute under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey.

It is quite right today for the devolved regions of the UK to exert influence, particularly as the democratic mandate in favour of their remaining in the EU is so strong. I do not need to welcome the new Minister—we have already been in this Chamber debating Gibraltar this week, and some of the arguments are not dissimilar—but I would highlight the lack of planning in advance of the vote on 23 June. It seems rather irresponsible for a Government who knew a year in advance that they were going to have a referendum not to put any preparations in place. That is unforgivable.

May I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) for securing this debate? I am pleased that it will be followed by one in early September, as soon as we return, so that we can have the argument at greater length, once the team has had some time to establish itself and maybe recruit some negotiators. My hon. Friend was quite right to say that many of us are disappointed to even be having this debate. There certainly was not a “punch the air”, independence day feel following the result in my constituency, where 75% of people voted to remain in the EU.

We know what the impact has been on the economy, in terms of the volatility produced and IMF forecasts being revised downwards. The impact has been felt particularly in low-income parts of the UK, producing the opposite result to what one would have thought. There is a lot more political work for many of us in the House of Commons to do—not necessarily in this place, but in those communities.

My hon. Friend was also right to emphasise the importance of protecting public services and to comment on the currency options, about which there is a lot of uncertainty, and on our future relationship with the EU where young people are concerned, particularly in terms of university funding and in science, research and development. I am pleased that Lord Falconer, who is an expert in these matters, and Lord Kerslake will be trying in the other place to establish a way forward, to help our deliberations not only in the devolved Administrations but here in Westminster, so that we can move forward with some kind of consensus.

I was very pleased to hear the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) mention the 173,000 EU residents living in Scotland. Indeed, many Members of Parliament across the UK have been contacted by EU citizens who not only feel a lack of certainty about their jobs and livelihoods, but feel that they were used as a bargaining chip in relation to expats living abroad. This is a quite unsatisfactory situation and one that I am pleased we have debated twice in the Chamber. I am sure we will be debating it again in the autumn.

**Ian Blackford:** What has changed since we had those debates in the Chamber is that we have a new Prime Minister. It would be good if the Government now reflected on the debates that have taken place and the

uncertainty that exists for all EU citizens living throughout the UK. Can we not remove that cloud of uncertainty for them, so that they feel welcome, as they are, and can look forward to having a future as part of our communities?

**Catherine West:** The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent point. Sadly, it was the Prime Minister, when she was in her Home Office role, who failed to provide that clarity. It is down to us to put more pressure on the Government in order to create clarity. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we are seeing a slightly negative climate in relation to EU citizens and those who come from abroad?

**Ian Blackford** *indicated assent.*

**Catherine West:** I am an immigrant myself, and there is a slight sense that people are not welcome. Indeed, we have seen an increase in violent abuse against people from abroad. All Members of this House certainly would want to stamp that out; I think we are united on that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) made some excellent points about agriculture and fisheries. It is very important for Welsh farmers to be right at the front of these negotiations. I am sure that she, through her offices, will be making the point again and again about the importance of the tariff situation being clarified as soon as possible for basic products such as fish, beef, lamb and other exports. We know what a fragile situation many farming communities find themselves in. It is crucial that we in this House put their case again and again, because a lot of false arguments were made in the debate on the referendum. Farmers were told they were going to get part of the £350 million a week, as were the NHS and a number of other priority areas. We all know that money cannot be spent twice. We seek urgent clarification on agriculture, which is such a precious sector and yet is constantly being eroded and corroded. I look forward to the Minister clarifying his position on that.

I was also pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli speaking in support of universities in Wales. We know what a crucial area of the economy education is as an export for Wales. There is a question mark over the position of EU nationals throughout Wales, be they teachers, students or in the workforce, where security is desperately needed. There is a delicate balance needed between the workforce not only in slaughterhouses and in fruit picking, but in more skilled occupations—for example, for nurses and doctors in the national health service. In some areas, up to 50% of the workforce are EU nationals—the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) could probably tell me the exact figure. We have a very high number of EU workers across the UK, and their position needs clarification.

My hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli mentioned steel investors. We want to know exactly how the UK will replace the high-level negotiations that the EU undertakes on behalf of its members on steel. We would not want any sense of uncertainty to give an excuse to potential investors not to invest in our steel industry in Wales and other regions.

I know you want us to be brief, Mr Bailey, so I will be. The right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire made a number of important points and was super understanding of the Minister—I am not quite as

[*Catherine West*]

understanding; I want answers. The shortage of negotiators is appalling. That is what I meant by a lack of planning. If we know we will have to make changes, we should get people on board to do that. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is very hard-pressed, and I would like to see much more funding for it. I am worried about the separate Departments mushrooming, competing and all saying slightly different things. That is a risk for what the right hon. Gentleman called the plumbing—I used to call it re-wiring—in terms of the way things are done, not only in the Palace but across the piece in the senior civil service. This debate has led, I am afraid, to a shopping list of issues for the Minister, but I know he will be up to the task.

Finally, as a London MP, it was a delight to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick). We are very proud of our new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, who is quite right to say that taxes raised in London—or a small proportion of them, anyway—could be spent more effectively in London. London Councils, which is now chaired by Councillor Claire Kober from the Borough of Haringey, says that we need to see more money that is raised in London spent on vital infrastructure such as transport and housing, because we know it contributes in the longer term to the prosperity of the whole United Kingdom.

**Mr Adrian Bailey (in the Chair):** Minister, if you could leave a little time at the end for Mr Murray, that would be helpful.

2.47 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** I will do my best. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bailey—not for the first time. I well remember serving under you on the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee where, among other things, we visited Scotland to look into another referendum. I thank hon. Members present from all parties for their kind welcomes and congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) on securing this debate, which is both timely and extremely valuable.

Before I go into the substance of the debate, I want to make a few opening remarks on the role of this new Department, because this is only the second debate that our new Department has answered. I am delighted to be joining the Department for Exiting the European Union, working with three new Ministers, led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), who is our Secretary of State. Our Department will oversee exit negotiations and shape the new relationship between the UK and the EU. I particularly welcome the request from the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) for a debate in the main Chamber, which I will ensure is fed back, and I suspect he will not be disappointed when the House returns.

Our new Department has four main aims. The first is to lead the policy work to support the UK's negotiations to leave the EU and to establish the future relationship between the EU and the UK. The second is to work closely with the UK Parliament, devolved Administrations, overseas territories and Crown dependencies and a wide range of other interested parties on what approach we

should take to negotiations. I would like to reassure the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) that London will be certainly included in that. The third is to conduct the negotiations in support of the Prime Minister, including bilateral discussion on EU exit with other European countries. The fourth is to lead and co-ordinate cross-Government work, liaising with many Departments—including on agriculture, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith)—to seize the opportunities and ensure a smooth process of exit on the best possible terms.

The new Department will equip the UK to prepare to make a success of leaving the EU: to meet its challenges and to seize the opportunities it represents. In my role as Minister in this new Department, it is essential that I have a good understanding of the interests and concerns of Members, the constituents they represent and the devolved Administrations. I am grateful to have heard today from so many Members from such a variety of parties.

This debate is timely and has been informative. It is just the start of a long process of consultation and I look forward to many more such debates, but I hope that I will not have to camp out permanently in this Chamber, as has been suggested. We have heard from both sides of the Chamber. My right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) was extremely welcome with his enormous parliamentary knowledge. I suspect his plumbing skills will be much appreciated in the months to come.

Like 62% of the population of Scotland, 56% of the population of Northern Ireland and, I think, almost every Member in the Chamber, I voted for remain, but the decision has been made across the UK and we should no longer talk in terms of leavers or remainers. It is the responsibility of us all to secure the best possible outcome in the national interest of all UK citizens. We all need to work together to pursue this bold and positive agenda.

I recognise the point made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh South about least-affluent areas, which is certainly reflected in my constituency. Now, more than ever, we must work to make sure those areas can thrive.

The Prime Minister made clear her passionate belief in the United Kingdom and her commitment to engage fully with the devolved Administrations as we prepare for negotiations on the UK's exit from the EU. I wholeheartedly share those sentiments and I look forward to working closely with colleagues from the devolved Administrations and Members of this House representing their constituents as we shape the future for the whole UK.

I have touched on the points made by the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse. It is great that the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) spoke about respect. I assure him that whenever we have disagreements with his party, the Government have absolute respect for the Scottish National party and its role.

**Ian Blackford:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way; I know that he is short of time. I thank him for his remarks, but given that the Scottish Parliament has mandated the First Minister to negotiate on Scotland's behalf to secure its place in the EU, will the Government

respect that? If the Parliament in Edinburgh ultimately votes for a referendum, will the Government in London consent to that?

**Mr Walker:** I think the hon. Gentleman realises that my remit in this Department does not cover the full breadth of constitutional issues, but there is certainly respect for Scotland's position and the First Minister. The fact that the Prime Minister broke up a reshuffle to go to Scotland to meet the First Minister is an indication of that respect.

I repeat my personal commitment and that of the Prime Minister and the whole Government to involve fully the devolved Administrations in the preparations for the important and complex task ahead of us. There can be no doubt that we are working towards securing the best possible deal for the whole UK and that to achieve this we will need to work openly and collaboratively with colleagues in the devolved Administrations at official and ministerial level.

It has been useful to hear hon. Members' thoughts this afternoon on how the devolved Administrations can be involved in the negotiations, but I am sure that they understand that the format of the negotiations has yet to be decided.

**Ian Blackford:** Will there will be role for the Scottish Secretary? I am not sure what his role may or may not be.

**Mr Walker:** The Scottish Secretary, like many interested parties, will of course be consulted and, as part of the Government, feed into the Cabinet process to inform the Prime Minister in her negotiations. The Prime Minister said when she met the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales that, as we prepare for the process, we will fully engage their Administrations to ensure we achieve a shared understanding of their interests and objectives. Detailed discussions have already begun at an official level.

Although I am an inexperienced and new Minister, I am not a complete stranger to the devolved Administrations. As I said earlier, when I served on the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, we visited Scotland. I also served for a number of years on the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs with the hon. Member for Llanelli—I am grateful for her welcome—and, towards the end of the previous Parliament, I served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office. I am looking forward to renewing friendships in each of the devolved Governments over the coming months. I have also enjoyed engaging with Members for all three devolved legislatures as a member of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

Today, my right hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd West (Mr Jones), the Minister of State in our new Department, is attending the Royal Welsh show, where I have no doubt he will engage widely with the rural and farming interests of Wales mentioned by the hon. Member for Llanelli, and perhaps with some of the exporters she mentioned. The Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Wales, as well as the Minister of State in my Department and the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland, will be attending an extraordinary meeting of the British-Irish Council later this week. That demonstrates the UK

Government's commitment to understanding the priorities of the devolved Administrations, as well as our other partners in the Republic of Ireland and the Crown dependencies. There will be many more ministerial discussions and, I suspect—to reassure my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire—a great deal more parliamentary scrutiny of all sorts in the months to come.

It has been very good to hear hon. Members' thoughts on potential settlements for Scotland, but the Prime Minister has been clear that the Union is very important to her and to this Government. She was also very clear with the First Minister that some of the ideas being brought forward are, in her view, impractical, but she is willing to listen to options that are proposed, and we will be engaging fully with the devolved Administrations. A number of hon. Members referred to Lord Falconer's involvement. I can assure them that his suggestions will be given proper consideration.

I heard with interest the five priorities that the hon. Member for Edinburgh South set out. I can assure him that they will all be given consideration and that the Department recognises the urgency of responding on the EU nationals issue. If he consults *Hansard*, he will see that I asked questions on that before my appointment to this role. We all want to see, as he said, securing the position of EU nationals in this country and UK nationals in the EU right at the top of the list of priorities.

I would like to reiterate the words of the hon. Member for Edinburgh South in an article that he wrote on 4 July:

“We all need to pause and reflect whilst the picture becomes a little clearer in the coming weeks and months.”

There is a long and complex period of analysis ahead of us. That starts now, and there have been very useful contributions to it in this debate.

I want to touch on EU funding, which was particularly mentioned by the hon. Member for Llanelli. I know that many hon. Members have expressed concern about it. Let me reassure them that I recognise how sensitive and important that issue is, and it is one of the Department's top priorities. UK Government officials have already begun talks with devolved Administrations, and those discussions have started well. Of course, as long as we remain in the EU, those payments will continue, but I recognise that for the long term there is some uncertainty. For the longer term, a whole range of decisions will have to be made, including on funding. I am happy to commit to involving devolved Ministers and officials fully in that work.

I recognise also the points made by the hon. Member for Llanelli on steel. Very importantly, this Government are working closely with Tata, bidders, the Welsh Government and trade unions to support a sale and support a long-term future for the steel industry in Wales and across the UK. The former Prime Minister spoke with Carwyn Jones on 7 July about the situation, and we will continue to work as closely as we can with his Administration.

**Catherine West:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Walker:** I will not, as I have only one minute to try to sum up.

[*Mr Charles Walker*]

As the debate has demonstrated, a range of sensitive and complex issues are involved in the UK's exit from the EU. It will be the responsibility of myself and ministerial colleagues in the Department, working with colleagues across the UK and in the devolved Governments, to make this process work for all parts of our country. It remains the Government's position that it is in the best interests of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK. We are at the start of a process of consultation, analysis and negotiation. I reiterate my commitment to involve the devolved Administrations fully in our preparations. Together, we should be able to realise a bold, positive vision of the future for the whole UK.

I welcome the comments by the hon. Member for Edinburgh South about optimism. In wishing him and all hon. Members in the Chamber the very best for the summer recess, I can assure him that the Department will be setting out optimistically to work through the summer in the interests of all parts of the UK.

2.58 pm

**Ian Murray:** It was remiss of me not to welcome the Minister. Perhaps it was because of his charm and the way he is willing to work together that I thought he had been in his ministerial post for some time.

Let me reflect on the debate. It has raised many questions. The right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), in his contribution, raised

the competing challenges that we have. I would throw Scottish whisky into those sectoral challenges, which may be slightly different from other challenges.

The negotiations all go back to the building blocks and the destination. The destination for me, for the Scottish Labour party and for the Labour party as a whole is to ensure that Scotland's position in the UK is assured but we do not lose sight of the advantages that we get from the EU. Those are the two mandates that the Scottish people have given us, and to disregard one mandate for the other would be wrong.

I have mentioned a number of times in the debate my early-day motion. It now becomes clear that the SNP will not sign it, because it says at the end that we want the Scottish people's mandates to be upheld and to

“remain in the EU and the UK.”

The fact that the SNP does not want to sign that or to give us any indication—in the contribution from the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady)—of where it wants to go with this perhaps highlights the fact that our destinations are different. I hope that the Government reflect on that.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered devolved governments and negotiations on the UK leaving the EU.

3 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

# Written Statements

Thursday 21 July 2016

## DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Informal Competitiveness Council

**The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark):** My noble Friend the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) has today made the following statement:

The Informal Competitiveness Council, chaired by the Slovak presidency, took place in Bratislava on 18-19 July 2016. Baroness Neville-Rolfe represented the UK on day one (internal market and industry) with David Wilson, Deputy Director, International Knowledge and Innovation Directorate, on day two (research). There were major contributions from Gunther Oettinger, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society on the digital economy, and by Peter Ziga, the Slovak Economy Minister on the priorities of the Slovak presidency, including the Digital Single Market and principles of better regulation. In a break out session on digital skills, the UK highlighted the importance of working on digital skills in schools, in the workplace and in society, and of bridging the gap on expert skills. The UK confirmed that it would continue to play a full and constructive role in the Council while it remained a member of the EU.

On the second day, member states supported the general principles of the declaration to support young researchers. The UK underlined the value of increased co-operation, but also the need to respect the autonomy of national education systems. Collaboration and regulatory simplification were among the issues that were strongly supported in creating an ecosystem to support innovative SMEs. The UK joined a number of member states in emphasising the importance of further simplification of support programmes and following up on existing commitment to create a more innovation friendly environment.

[HCWS103]

## CABINET OFFICE

### Conflict Stability and Security Fund

**The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer):** I wish to update the House on how the Government have been supporting our national security interests through conflict prevention, peace building, stabilisation, peacekeeping and conflict resolution using the conflict stability and security fund (CSSF).

The CSSF replaced the conflict pool in April 2015, as part of a new, more strategic approach to enhancing the delivery of our national security interests. The CSSF is one of two funding instruments overseen by the National Security Adviser. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will be providing a parallel update to Parliament today on the prosperity fund, which operates on a similar cross-Government basis.

Last year the Government laid a statement before the House announcing the creation of the CSSF. As announced last November in the strategic defence and security

review (SDSR), for the current financial year CSSF funding has increased to £1.127 billion and it will increase by a further 19% over this spending review period, reaching £1.322 billion a year by 2019. The CSSF is now one of the world's largest mechanisms for addressing conflict and instability. Its programmes deliver against over 40 cross-Government strategies set by the National Security Council. Together, these activities help to secure the UK, promote peace and stability overseas and contribute directly to the SDSR's objectives. The CSSF is designed as a flexible resource. It is supporting the peace processes including that in Colombia, tackling organised crime in the Caribbean, helping Ukraine to build its resilience to withstand external threats, funding a doubling of British UN peacekeepers, and has supported reforming the police and militaries in some of the world's most challenging environments. Without the CSSF the UK and our international partners would be less secure.

Parliamentary accountability for taxpayers' money spent via the CSSF is provided primarily through the Joint Committee for the National Security Strategy. Each autumn, the NSC agrees overall annual allocations for the CSSF, though these may change during the year in response to crises. The NSC reviews strategies in the spring. Regional boards on which all NSC departments are represented are responsible for overseeing delivery of programmes against these strategies. A joint unit—the NSS joint programme hub—provides the secretariat, advises the NSC on funding and delivery against the strategies, and advises the regional boards and programme teams on financial management and monitoring and evaluation.

The Government have used the CSSF to mitigate the spill-over of the Syrian conflict into Jordan and Lebanon. We have supported Jordan's security agencies to maintain its stability in the context of an influx of refugees equivalent to 10% of its population. We have also established community police stations in Syrian refugee camps and trained Jordanian community police. This programme—funded initially by the conflict pool and now the CSSF—has had a tangible impact: security incidents in the camps dropped by two-thirds between 2013 and 2014. We continue to assist the Lebanese military in securing their border with Syria to prevent Daesh's attempts to infiltrate Lebanon. We have trained 5,782 troops and enabled Lebanon to secure 75% of the border. In Africa we are helping to tackle terrorist groups, including training the Africa Union peacekeepers in Somalia and capacity-building for the Somali military. We have also ensured women's participation in building Somalia's future through its state-building processes. In Nigeria we have used CSSF funds to work with the Nigerian armed forces in tackling Boko Haram.

The Government are using CSSF funds to promote a political process and save lives in Syria. This includes training and equipping over 2,700 volunteers across northern Syria to carry out search and rescue, fire-fighting and first aid. These "White Helmets" have saved over 50,000 lives since March 2013.

Gender equality is embedded throughout the delivery of the CSSF. Last year the CSSF spent £26 million explicitly on activities addressing gender equality and a further £159 million on programmes with elements which addressed gender equality.

CSSF funding is strengthening the multilateral system, supporting the UN and other international organisations, to develop more effective multilateral responses to instability. The CSSF funds our contributions to the UN peacekeeping budget. We are the sixth biggest contributor, spending over £300 million in 2015. We are also using CSSF funds to help reform the UN and UN peacekeeping, coordinating outreach to member states to secure pledges of personnel for peace operations and to assist with the transition from pledges to deployments.

The SDSR announced that the CSSF will incorporate additional programmes from 2016-17. These include the good governance fund for the eastern neighbourhood and western Balkans, the north Africa good governance fund, a migration fund and a programme for the overseas territories.

Conflict Stability and Security Fund resources, FY16-17

CSSF	2016-17 (millions)
Peacekeeping and multilateral	385.7
Regional/country strategies	577.8
Security and defence	150
Delivery support, including the stabilisation unit and National School of Government International	13.5
Total	1,127

Attachments can be viewed online at  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-07-21/HCWS123>

[HCWS123]

### English Language Requirement

**The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer):** The Government believe that the public should expect that all those with whom they interact, within the sphere of public services, have the language abilities required to respond to their needs.

A clear commitment in our manifesto was to ensure that all public sector workers in customer-facing roles can speak fluent English. I am delighted to announce that this manifesto commitment has now been fulfilled, with the Immigration Act 2016 receiving Royal Assent on 12 May 2016.

Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016 places a duty on all public authorities in scope to ensure that their customer-facing staff can speak fluent English, or in Wales fluent English or Welsh. This will assure citizens that there is not a language barrier that might prevent them from contacting or using public services or inadvertently put them at risk.

It is a clear priority for the Government to ensure public services are delivered to a high standard in spoken English, or in Wales in English or Welsh.

In support of this aim, the Government are today publishing:

A draft statutory code of practice which is intended to support public sector employers in complying with this new duty, while ensuring minimal burden. It provides principles

and examples for public authorities to consider when fulfilling their legal duties and obligations. It will also be available in Welsh.

A final impact assessment is available, which evaluates the impact of this duty. It details the problem under consideration, the rationale for intervention and the policy objective. It also evaluates the monetised and non-monetised costs and benefits of the preferred option, as well as considering risks and possible wider impacts of the policy.

The Government have worked with relevant employers throughout the development of the draft code of practice and will continue to do so to ensure that the duty is implemented in a way which ensures a positive impact for employees and service users in frontline organisations.

The code will be laid before Parliament and issued in October but the early publication of the document is intended to support organisations to be ready to adhere to the statutory duty once it comes into force.

All publications will be available at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and at: [www.parliament.uk/writtenstatements](http://www.parliament.uk/writtenstatements).

[HCWS112]

### Members' Correspondence

**The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer):** I am today publishing a report on the performance of Departments and Agencies on handling correspondence from Members and Peers during the calendar year 2015. Details are set out in the table. Correspondence statistics for 2014 can be found on 3 June 2015, *Official Report*, column 15WS.

Departmental figures are based on substantive replies unless otherwise indicated. The footnotes to the table provide general background information on how the figures have been compiled.

Attachments can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-07-21/HCWS118>.

[HCWS118]

## TREASURY

### Cross-Government Prosperity Fund

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke):** In the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) the Prime Minister announced the creation of a new £1.3 billion Cross-Government Prosperity Fund. I am pleased to announce the publication on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) of a short paper that details how the fund is operating. This paper can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/cross-government-prosperity-fund-programme/cross-government-prosperity-fund-update](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cross-government-prosperity-fund-programme/cross-government-prosperity-fund-update).

The Prosperity Fund is a key part of our aid strategy. Using primarily Official Development Assistance (ODA) resources the fund will promote economic reform in developing countries contributing to a reduction in poverty.

The fund supports global and UK prosperity by removing barriers to trade, building prosperity partnerships, and supporting UK business in seizing new opportunities. It enables the UK to deepen relationships in countries across the globe.

Thematic, country and regional priorities for the Prosperity Fund are determined by a careful design and economic diagnosis process. Project design, management and evaluation ensures a strong focus on results and value for money. The fund is investing in areas with the highest potential for inclusive growth, strengthening the golden thread of robust institutions, good governance and reduced corruption.

The fund is accountable to the National Security Council (NSC) and to a ministerial board made up of relevant UK Government Departments. The fund supports a fully joined-up approach to prosperity delivery across Departments and through the Government's overseas network.

All ODA projects and programmes under the Prosperity Fund comply with the International Development Act, meet the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) ODA criteria, are untied, and meet the UK Government transparency commitments on ODA spend.

The Prosperity Fund is one of two cross-Government funding instruments overseen by the National Security Advisor, Sir Mark Lyall Grant. An update to Parliament on the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) will be provided in parallel.

[HCWS104]

## ECOFIN

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke):** I attended this meeting in my capacity as the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. A meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council was held in Brussels on 12 July 2016. EU Finance Ministers discussed the following items:

### *Anti-money laundering*

The Commission presented its proposals to amend parts of the fourth anti-money laundering directive (4AMLD), on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, followed by an exchange of views.

### *Communication on further measures to enhance transparency and the fight against tax evasion and avoidance*

ECOFIN heard a presentation from the Commission on further measures to enhance transparency and the fight against tax evasion and avoidance. This was followed by an exchange of views.

### *Presentation of the work programme of the Slovak presidency*

The presidency presented its work programme, this was followed by an exchange of views.

### *Implementation of the banking union*

The Commission gave an update on the transposition of several dossiers linked to the banking union: the single resolution fund, the bank recovery and resolution directive and the deposit guarantee scheme directive.

### *European semester-country-specific recommendations*

The Council adopted the 2016 country-specific recommendations as part of the European semester process.

### *Implementation of the stability and growth pact*

The Council endorsed the draft decisions regarding the performance of Spain and Portugal under the excessive deficit procedure (EDP), based on recommendations by the Commission. The Council agreed with the Commission's recommendation that Spain and Portugal have not taken

effective action against their current targets. As these decisions cover euro area member states, the UK did not have a vote.

### *Third pillar of the investment plan for Europe—thematic discussions on investment barriers*

The Commission presented on the third pillar investment plan, this was followed by an exchange of views.

### *Preparation of the G20 Finance Ministers meeting in Chengdu on 23-24 July 2016*

The EU Terms of Reference (ToR) were presented to ECOFIN Finance Ministers for endorsement.

### *Convergence reports from the Commission and the European Central Bank*

There was an exchange of views on the convergence reports which concluded that none of the seven EU member states who are obligated to join the euro fulfil the conditions for adopting the euro.

### *State of play on finalising the Basel Committee's post-crisis banking reform agenda*

Council conclusions were adopted on the Basel Committee's post-crisis banking reform agenda.

[HCWS102]

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### **First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund**

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** I am today publishing the list of successful bidders to the First World War Centenary Cathedral repairs fund.

Cathedrals are powerful symbols of Britain's shared history and are important not only for their architecture, history and religious learning but also as a place for local communities to come together. This fund is helping to ensure that they are in a good state of repair and preserved for future generations.

Decisions on funding allocations are taken by an expert panel, which considers the grant applications against the published criteria for the scheme and decides which cathedrals should receive funding. The panel is chaired by Sir Paul Ruddock and includes senior figures from English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Church of England and the Catholic Church, as well as church architects, architectural historians and grant giving experts.

I am pleased to confirm that the panel has today decided to allocate funding of almost £14.5 million to 39 cathedrals. These are as follows:

#### *Results of the meeting of the Expert Panel, 23 June 2016*

<i>Cathedral</i>	<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>AWARD</i>
Bradford	CofE	Heating system and asbestos removal	£127,000
Canterbury	CofE	Library corridor roof	£250,000
Carlisle	CofE	Nave and nave aisle roof	£400,000
Chester	CofE	Repairs to flooring and emergency lighting	£120,000
Chichester	CofE	Cloister repairs	£160,000
Clifton	RC	Internal repairs and infrastructure	£700,000

*Results of the meeting of the Expert Panel, 23 June 2016*

<i>Cathedral</i>	<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>AWARD</i>
Coventry	CofE	Chapel of Unity exterior slate	£870,000
Derby	CofE	Nave roof repair	£750,000
Durham	CofE	Belfry repairs	£599,000
Ely	CofE	Emergency rewiring	£150,000
Exeter	CofE	N side drainage and W front apron	£170,000
Gloucester	CofE	High level repairs	£486,000
Guilford	CofE	Quire/presbytery roof, repointing, asbestos removal	£499,000
Hereford	CofE	North aisle roofs	£420,000
Leicester	CofE	South face stonework	£300,000
Lichfield	CofE	Chapter House stonework and roof	£690,000
Lincoln	CofE	Triforium roof and NW Transept	£480,000
Liverpool	CofE	Nave roof phase 2	£460,000
Liverpool Met	RC	Repairs to approaches and main entrance	£369,000
Newcastle	CofE	Crypt and east end damp investigation	£25,000
Norwich	CofE	Electrical infrastructure	£190,000
Nottingham	RC	Phase 2 drainage	£115,000
Peterborough	CofE	Repairs to four windows	£15,000
Plymouth	RC	Stonework and window repairs	£644,000
Portsmouth	CofE	North side windows and other works	£240,000
Ripon	CofE	Presbytery stonework repairs	£398,000
Rochester	CofE	Eastern roof repairs	£460,000
Salford	RC	High level repairs and access	£373,000
Salisbury	CofE	Trinity Chapel stonework	£500,000
Sheffield	CofE	Nave, South and North aisle roofs	£480,000
Sheffield	RC	Spire repairs-phase 2	£189,000
Southwell	CofE	South quire aisle roof	£291,000
St Albans	CofE	External stonework	£230,000
St Pauls	CofE	Stone Gallery repairs	£200,000
Wakefield	CofE	Nave windows	£456,000
Westminster	RC	Organ chamber roofs	£300,000
Winchester	CofE	Repair and conservation of major windows	£500,000
Worcester	CofE	Great West Window repairs	£390,000
York Minster	CofE	Quire south side and Lady Chapel stone repairs	£500,000
TOTAL			£14,496,000

The panel will meet again on 17 October 2016 to take decisions on applications to the final round of the First World War Centenary Cathedral repairs fund.

[HCWS122]

## DEFENCE

### Armed Forces' Pay Review Body

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mark Lancaster):** I am pleased to announce that I have invited Tim Flesher CB and Vilma Patterson MBE to continue to serve as members of the Armed Forces' Pay

Review Body, for a further three-year term of office commencing on 1 March 2017. This appointment has been conducted in accordance with the guidance of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

[HCWS109]

### Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Michael Fallon):** I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of a report into the condition of the reserves and delivery of the Future Reserves 2020 programme compiled by the reserve forces' and cadets' association external scrutiny team. This is the second report to be published under the statutory obligation imposed by the Defence Reform Act 2014.

I am most grateful for the work of Lieutenant General Brims and the other members of the team. I will take some short time to consider the report's findings and recommendations and will provide a full response to the team in due course.

[HCWS107]

## EDUCATION

### Higher Education Student Finance

**The Minister for Universities and Science (Joseph Johnson):** I am today announcing student finance arrangements for higher education students undertaking a course of study in the 2017-18 academic year beginning in August 2017.

#### *Teaching excellence framework*

As stated in the Government's White Paper "Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice", published on 16 May 2016, from 2016-17 the Government are introducing a teaching excellence framework (TEF) to provide clear information to students about where the best provision can be found and to drive up the standard of teaching in all higher education providers.

In year one of TEF (2016-17), all higher education providers who have met the eligibility criteria set out in the Government's White Paper will receive a rating of Meets Expectations. This TEF award will carry financial incentives, as detailed below, for 2017-18 which will last for one year only. A provisional list of providers achieving this rating in year one was published on 7 July 2016 on gov.uk<sup>1</sup>

The following sections provide details on the maximum tuition fee and fee loan caps in 2017-18 for higher education courses at providers that have been awarded a rating of Meets Expectations in TEF year one (2016-17).

#### *Tuition fees and fee loans for full-time higher education courses*

For all new students and eligible continuing students who started their full-time courses on or after 1 September 2012 and are undertaking courses at publicly funded higher education providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, maximum tuition fee

caps will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18. For publicly funded providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations and have an access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), the maximum tuition fee cap for full-time courses will be £9,250 in 2017-18. For publicly funded providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations but do not have an access agreement with OFFA, the maximum tuition fee cap for full-time courses will be £6,165 in 2017-18. For publicly funded providers that have not achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, maximum tuition fee caps for full-time courses in 2017-18 will be £9,000 and £6,000, the same as in 2016-17.

Maximum fee loans for all new students and eligible continuing students who started their full-time courses at publicly funded providers on or after 1 September 2012 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) to £9,250.

Maximum tuition fee and fee loan caps for students undertaking a work placement year of a sandwich course either in the UK or abroad will remain at 20% of the maximum applicable full-time fee and fee loan caps in 2017-18. Maximum tuition fee and fee loan caps for students undertaking an Erasmus study or work placement year or a period of study at an overseas provider that is not an Erasmus year will remain at 15% of the maximum applicable full-time fee and fee loans in 2017-18.

For continuing students who started their full-time courses before September 2012, maximum tuition fee and fee loan caps at publicly funded providers in 2017-18 will be £3,465, the same as in 2016-17.

*Tuition fees and fee loans for part-time higher education courses*

For all new students and eligible continuing students who started their part-time courses on or after 1 September 2012 and are undertaking courses at publicly funded higher education providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, maximum tuition fee caps will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18. For publicly funded providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations and have an access agreement with OFFA, the maximum part-time tuition fee cap will be £6,935 in 2017-18. For publicly funded providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, but do not have an access agreement with OFFA, the maximum part-time tuition fee cap will be £4,625 in 2017-18. For publicly funded providers that have not achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, the maximum tuition fee caps for part-time courses in 2017-18 will be £6,750 and £4,500, the same as in 2016-17.

Maximum fee loans for all new students and eligible continuing students who started their part-time courses at publicly funded providers on or after 1 September 2012 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) to £6,935.

*Tuition fee loans for higher education courses at private providers*

For all new students and eligible continuing students who started their full-time courses on or after 1 September 2012 and are undertaking courses at private higher education providers that have achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, the maximum fee loan will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) to £6,165 in 2017-18.

For private providers that have not achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, the maximum fee loan for full-time courses will be £6,000, the same as in 2016-17.

For all new students and eligible continuing students who started their part-time courses on or after 1 September 2012 and are undertaking courses at private providers that have achieved a rating of Meets Expectations, the maximum fee loan will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) to £4,625 in 2017-18. For private providers that have not achieved a TEF rating of Meets Expectations, the maximum fee loan for part-time courses in 2017-18 will be £4,500, the same as in 2016-17.

*Loans for living costs for new full-time students and continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016*

Maximum loans for living costs for new full-time students and eligible continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18.

For students living away from home and studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs for 2017-18 will be £8,430. I can confirm that the equivalent loan rates for students living away from home and studying in London will be £11,002; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £7,097; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £9,654.

*Loans for living costs for new full-time students and continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 who are entitled to certain benefits*

Maximum loans for living costs for new full-time students and eligible continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 and who are entitled to benefits will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18.

For students who are entitled to benefits who are living away from home and studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs for 2017-18 will be £9,609. I can confirm that the equivalent loan rates for students who qualify for benefits who are living away from home and studying in London will be £11,998; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £8,372; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £10,746.

*Loans for living costs for new full-time students and continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 who are age 60 or over at the start of their course*

The maximum loan for living costs in 2017-18 for new full-time students and eligible continuing full-time students starting their courses on or after 1 August 2016 who are age 60 or over on the first day of the first academic year of their course, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) to £3,566.

*Maintenance grants and special support grants for full-time students who started their courses before 1 August 2016*

The maximum maintenance grant and special support grant for eligible continuing full-time students who started their courses on or after 1 September 2012 but before 1 August 2016 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18 to £3,482.

The maximum maintenance grant and special support grant for eligible continuing full-time students who started their courses before 1 September 2012, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18 to £3,197.

*Loans for living costs for full-time students who started their courses before 1 August 2016*

Maximum loans for living costs for eligible students who started their courses on or after 1 September 2012 but before 1 August 2016, will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18.

For students who are living away from home and studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs will be £6,043. I can confirm that the equivalent loan rates for students living away from home and studying in London will be £8,432; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £4,806; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £7,180.

*Maximum loans for living costs for eligible students who started their courses before 1 September 2012 will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18*

For students who started their courses before 1 September 2012 and are living away from home while studying outside London, the maximum loan for living costs will be £5,440. I can confirm that the equivalent loan rates for students living away from home and studying in London will be £7,611; for those living in the parental home during their studies, £4,217; and for those studying overseas as part of their UK course, £6,475.

*Long courses loans*

The maximum long courses (living costs) loans for new and continuing students who are attending full-time courses that are longer than 30 weeks and three days during the academic year will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18.

*Dependants' grants*

Maximum amounts for dependants' grants (adult dependants' grant, childcare grant and parents' learning allowance) will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18 for all new and continuing full-time students.

The maximum adult dependants' grant payable in 2017-18 will be increased to £2,834. The maximum childcare grant payable in 2017-18, which covers 85% of actual childcare costs up to a specified limit, will be increased to £159.59 per week for one child only and £273.60 per week for two or more children. The maximum parents' learning allowance payable in 2017-18 will be increased to £1,617.

*Part-time grants and loans*

For those students who started part-time and full-time distance learning courses before 1 September 2012 and who are continuing their courses in 2017-18, maximum fee and course grants will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18. Maximum fee grants will be increased to £879, £1,054 or £1,321, depending on the intensity of study of the course. Maximum course grants will be increased to £288.

*Disabled Students' Allowance*

Maximum grants for full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students with disabilities will be increased by forecast inflation (2.8%) in 2017-18.

*Student support for part-time students starting a second degree course in STEM subjects*

Most students who hold a higher education qualification are currently not entitled to apply for additional fee loan for a second course if that course leads to a qualification that is equivalent or lower in level (ELQ) than their previous higher education qualification.

The Government have previously relaxed ELQ rules in order to help people who already hold an honours degree qualification but who wish to retrain in some science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. Students studying second degree courses on a part-time basis can already apply for fee loans for part-time second degree courses in engineering, technology or computer science.

I can confirm today that ELQ rules are being further relaxed to allow students wishing to start a second honours degree course on a part-time basis from 1 August 2017 onwards to apply for fee loans towards degree courses in the following additional STEM subjects: subjects allied to medicine; biological sciences; veterinary sciences, agriculture and related subjects; physical sciences and mathematical sciences.

*Student support for new students starting courses in nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions on or after 1 August 2017.*

I can confirm today that from 1 August 2017, all new undergraduate nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students on pre-registration courses will receive support for fee loans and living costs through the standard student support system, rather than through course fees and NHS bursaries for living costs paid by Health Education England (HEE). These students will therefore be subject to the same general student finance arrangements that apply to other undergraduate students in 2017-18.

I can also confirm today that students already holding an honours degree who want to start a second honours degree course in nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions from 1 August 2017 onwards will be able to apply for fee loans and living costs support for their course.

Further details on the undergraduate student package and support arrangements for postgraduate pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students from 1 August 2017 onwards will be set out in the Government's consultation response which is being published in due course.

These changes will enable universities to provide up to 10,000 additional nursing, midwifery and allied health training places by 2020, giving more applicants the opportunity to become a health professional.

*Student support for armed forces personnel serving overseas and their families*

Students who are undertaking a full-time or part-time distance learning course with a UK provider qualify for loans, and where applicable, disabled students' allowance if they were undertaking their courses in England on the first day of the first academic year of their course and are living in the UK. Students do not qualify for support for a distance learning course if they are undertaking their course outside the UK. This rule currently places armed forces personnel serving overseas

and their families who wish to undertake a higher education course by distance learning at a disadvantage as a result of their service.

I can confirm today that from 1 August 2017, UK armed forces personnel serving overseas, and family members living with them, will for the first time qualify for fee loans for full-time and part-time undergraduate distance learning courses with UK providers. They will also qualify for postgraduate masters loans for full-time and part-time masters degree distance learning courses with UK providers. Those students with disabilities will qualify for disabled students' allowance. This change will apply to students starting or continuing distance learning courses in 2017-18.

I expect to lay regulations implementing changes to student finance for undergraduates and postgraduates for 2017-18 later this year which will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. More details of the 2017-18 fees and student support package will be published by my Department in due course.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-framework-year-1-list-of-eligible-providers>

[HCWS117]

### Schools Funding

#### **The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening):**

The Government are firmly committed to introducing fairer funding for schools, high needs and early years. This is an important reform, which will fairly and transparently allocate funding on the basis of schools' and children's actual needs, rather than simply on historic levels of funding tied to out of date local information. Along with the record levels of funding for schools announced at the spending review, and our commitment to the pupil premium for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, a fairer funding system will set a common foundation that will enable schools—no longer held back by a funding system that is arbitrary, out of date and unfair—to maximise the potential of every child. It will provide a crucial underpinning for the education system to act as a motor for social mobility and social justice.

The first stage consultations on national funding formulae for schools and high needs, which were published in March, have been met with an overwhelmingly positive response from headteachers, teachers, governors and parents.

There is also a strong sense in the response to the first stage of the consultation that this is a once in a generation opportunity for an historic change and that we must get our approach right. I will therefore publish the Government's full response to the first stage of the schools and high needs consultations and set out my proposals for the second stage once Parliament returns in the autumn. We will run a full consultation, and make final decisions early in the new year. Given the importance of consulting widely and fully with the sector and getting implementation right, the new system will apply from 2018-19. I will set out our full plans for a national funding formula for early years shortly.

In the meantime, I understand the need for local authorities to have sufficient information to begin to plan their schools and high needs funding arrangements

for 2017 to 2018. Many of those who responded to the first stage national funding formula consultations emphasised that schools and local authorities need stability, and where there are changes need early notice, as well as a fair system.

In that context, I am confirming that in 2017-18 no local authority will see a reduction from their 2016-17 funding (adjusted to reflect authorities' most recent spending patterns) on the schools block of the dedicated schools grant (per pupil funding) or the high needs block (cash amount). As usual, we will apply an uplift for high needs later in the year. I am also publishing today detailed funding tables so that authorities can see exactly how this funding has been calculated.

Final allocations for schools and high needs blocks will follow in December on the basis of pupil numbers recorded in the October census.

I am setting this out now so that local authorities can begin the process of setting the budgets of schools in their area and that this can be concluded in time for the start of the coming financial year.

I am also confirming that, for 2017-18, we will retain the current minimum funding guarantee for schools, so that no school can face a funding reduction of more than 1.5% per pupil next year in what it receives through the local authority funding formula. To ensure that local authorities can start planning their budgets for next year with certainty, I do not intend to proceed, for 2017-18, with proposals to create a new central schools block, allow local flexibility on the minimum funding guarantee or to ring-fence the schools block within the dedicated schools grant. These will be covered, for 2018-19 and beyond, in my response to the first stage consultation in the autumn.

I will shortly publish the Education Funding Agency's operational guide to schools funding in 2017-18, and send the draft Authority Proforma Tool to authorities.

[HCWS98]

### Commission for Employment and Skills

#### **The Minister of State, Department for Education**

**(Robert Halfon):** As announced in the 2015 spending review, in order to prioritise funding to allow the core adult skills participation budgets to be protected in cash terms, Whitehall Departments will be withdrawing their funding for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) during 2016-17.

UKCES' work over the last Parliament has helped in setting the skills agenda for the future and their activities have created the conditions to move to the next phase of more devolution, greater employer ownership and the apprenticeship levy. It is important that we now have new structures to move onto that next phase and we have announced the establishment in England of a new Institute for Apprenticeships.

As a result of these decisions, Whitehall Departments have been working with the UK Commission to agree a way forward.

National occupational standards (NOS) will be managed by the devolved Administrations and transferred to another public sector organisation. Decisions on the detail of how NOS will be managed are the responsibility

of the devolved Administrations who are currently considering next steps. The contents of the NOS database will remain publicly available and employers throughout the UK can continue to use NOS if they so choose although they are not a mandatory requirement in England for either qualifications or apprenticeships.

The management of the employer skills survey, the employer perspectives survey and the LMI (labour market information) for All Portal will be moved into the Department for Education. The Investors in People function will continue and the Government are looking at arrangements to secure its future and growth.

All operational activities of UKCES will be concluded by the end of 2016 and it is expected the organisation will be wound up in line with the end of its financial year, 2016-17.

[HCWS121]

## DEPARTMENT FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

### UK Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Davis):** The UK had been scheduled to host the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2017. On 19 July the Prime Minister confirmed to President of the European Council Donald Tusk that the UK would be relinquishing the presidency of the Council of the European Union, noting that we would be prioritising the negotiations to leave the EU.

President Tusk welcomed the Prime Minister's swift decision which would allow the Council to put alternative arrangements in place. The Council secretariat will now put in motion the arrangements to allocate the presidency to an alternative member state.

The Prime Minister and President Tusk concluded by looking forward to a strong working relationship.

Attachments can be viewed online at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-07-21/HCWS119/>

[HCWS119]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Diplomatic Immunity

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** In 2015, 11 serious and significant offences allegedly committed by people entitled to diplomatic immunity in the United Kingdom were drawn to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by parliamentary and diplomatic protection of the Metropolitan police, or other law enforcement agencies. Six of these were driving-related. We define serious offences as those which could, in certain circumstances,

carry a penalty of 12 months' imprisonment or more. Also included are drink-driving and driving without insurance.

Around 22,500 people are entitled to diplomatic immunity in the United Kingdom and the majority of diplomats abide by UK law. The number of alleged serious crimes committed by members of the diplomatic community in the UK is proportionately low.

Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961, those entitled to immunity are expected to obey the law. The FCO does not tolerate foreign diplomats breaking the law.

We take all allegations of illegal activity seriously. When instances of alleged criminal conduct are brought to our attention by the police, we ask the relevant foreign Government to waive diplomatic immunity where appropriate. For the most serious offences, and when a relevant waiver has not been granted, we seek the immediate withdrawal of the diplomat.

Alleged serious and significant offences reported to the FCO in 2015 are listed below.

2015	
<i>Driving without insurance</i>	
The Commonwealth Secretariat	1
<i>Causing or permitting the driving of a vehicle without insurance</i>	
St Lucia	1
<i>Driving a vehicle without insurance or a MOT</i>	
Nigeria	1
<i>Driving under the influence of alcohol</i>	
USA	1
Kazakhstan	1
China	1
<i>Actual bodily harm</i>	
Gabon	1
<i>Human trafficking into the UK for the purposes of exploitation, specifically domestic servitude</i>	
Saudi Arabia	1
<i>Human trafficking; slavery or servitude/forced or compulsory labour</i>	
Saudi Arabia	1
<i>Taking an indecent photograph/pseudo-photograph of a child; and using threatening labusivelinsulting words or behaviour to cause harassment/alarm/distress</i>	
Mexico	1
<i>Causing a child aged 13 to 15 to watch/look at an image of sexual activity</i>	
Mexico	1

Figures for previous years are available in the Secretary for State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' written statement to the House on 16 July 2015, *Official Report*, column 36WS (HCWS128, HLWS112, HLWS112).

[HCWS106]

### International Criminal Justice: UK Support

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** Sunday 17 July marked the Day of International Criminal Justice, a perfect opportunity to look at the UK's support of the principles of international justice and its various institutions.

International criminal justice and accountability is a fundamental element of our foreign policy. We continue to voice our support for this principle, and are committed to working with the International Criminal Court (ICC) and international tribunals. This work helps to strengthen the rules-based international system, reduce conflict and promote stability. We firmly believe that there must be no impunity for the most serious international crimes.

In 2015 we showed our commitment to international justice by contributing £7.6 million to the ICC, £3 million to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), £1.4 million to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and £1.8 million to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals which has taken on the residual functions of the former Rwanda tribunal and will do the same for the former Yugoslavia tribunal when it closes. Furthermore, in financial year 2015-16 we made voluntary contributions of £1 million to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and contributed £225,000 to the international component of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The UK also provides practical support for the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone (RSCSL) as former Liberian president Charles Taylor is serving his sentence for war crimes in a British prison. In 2015, the UK worked with partners to secure United Nations authority to commit \$12.1 million and \$2.44 million to supplement voluntary contributions to the ECCC and RSCSL respectively in 2016. This work helps place the voluntary funded tribunals on a more secure financial footing.

The support we have offered the ICC and the other tribunals has contributed towards their valuable work in entrenching the rule of law, fighting impunity for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, including the use of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence as weapons of war and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Their work acts as a deterrent to atrocities, placing a spotlight on individual responsibility, supporting victims and helping to establish an historical narrative of accountability.

The ICC opened their new premises in The Hague in April this year—giving this permanent institution a permanent home. In these new premises, the ICC sentenced Jean-Pierre Bemba (Democratic Republic of the Congo) to 18 years in prison, following its first conviction of rape as a crime against humanity and war crime, on the basis of command responsibility; this also marked the first time in the history of international criminal law that sexual violence against men was charged as the crime of rape.

The ICTY delivered its verdict this year on Radovan Karadžić who was found guilty on one count of genocide, five counts of crimes against humanity and four counts of violations of the laws or customs of war; and was sentenced to 40 years in prison. Karadžić was one of the highest ranking officials to be tried by the tribunal and his trial marked the biggest war crimes trial in Europe since Nuremberg. The judgment was long-awaited following a trial that lasted over four years.

The ICTR finished its judicial work at the end of 2015. The ICTR's work over the last twenty years has been instrumental in developing international law and making sure that those most responsible for the genocide in Rwanda are held accountable. Its remaining functions were transferred to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals.

The FCO's support for international criminal justice requires close co-operation with a wide range of stakeholders including partners across Government, law enforcement bodies, international organisations and non-government organisations. Over the next 12 months we will continue to work closely with these partners to ensure that our assessed and voluntary contributions to the ICC and other tribunals are used for maximum effect in the fight against impunity.

This is the fourth annual update to Parliament on the FCO's work to support international justice.

[HCWS111]

### British Council

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Alok Sharma):** Copies of the British Council's annual report and accounts for the 2015-16 financial year have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The report can also be found at the British Council's website at: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org).

During the period the British Council received £161,650 grant-in-aid from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

[HCWS99]

### Parliamentary Questions and Westminster Hall Debates: Corrections

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Tobias Ellwood):** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has recently reviewed all correspondence and parliamentary proceedings on the subject of allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) in Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition. During this exercise it became clear that the drafting of answers to four written questions and two responses given in debates relating to allegations of breaches of IHL did not fully reflect HMG's policy as set out in numerous other written questions and debates on this topic. I would like to clarify these.

The responses given on 12 February to Question 24770 (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-01-28/24770>)

and on 15 February to Questions 24769 (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-01-28/24769>)

and 24771 (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-01-28/24771>)

stated "we have assessed that there has not been a breach of IHL by the coalition". However, these should have stated, as in previous PQs such as 27085 answered on 24 February, "we have not assessed that there has been a breach of IHL by the coalition".

The response given on 4 January to Question 15523 (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-11-09/15523>)

stated “I regularly review the situation with my own advisers and have discussed it on numerous occasions with my Saudi counterpart. Our judgement is that there is no evidence that IHL has been breached, but we shall continue to review the situation regularly”. However, this should have stated “I regularly review the situation with my own advisers and have discussed it on numerous occasions with my Saudi counterpart. Looking at all the information available to us, we have been unable to assess that there has been a breach of IHL by the Saudi-led coalition. The situation is kept under careful and continual review”.

During the Westminster Hall debate on Human Rights and Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia on 8 June (HC Deb, col WH138), the former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington) said, “In respect of the allegations about breaches of international humanitarian law, the Ministry of Defence makes assessments of how the Saudis are acting and whether the coalition is observing international human rights obligations. The MOD assessment is that the Saudi-led coalition is not targeting civilians that Saudi processes and procedures have been put in place to ensure respect for the principles of international humanitarian law; and that the Saudis both have been and continue to be genuinely committed to compliance with international humanitarian law.” This should have said, “In respect of the allegations about breaches of international humanitarian law, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) analyses how the Saudis are acting and whether the coalition is observing international humanitarian law. The MOD has not assessed that the Saudi-led coalition is targeting civilians. We have assessed that Saudi processes and procedures have been put in place to ensure respect for the principles of international humanitarian law; and that the Saudis both have been and continue to be genuinely committed to compliance with international humanitarian law.”

During the Westminster Hall debate on War in Yemen: First Anniversary from 22 March (HC Deb, col WH518), I stated that, “we make it clear that we are doing our own assessments to understand whether the equipment we sell has any participation in that and indeed whether the breaches are by the Houthis or the Saudi Arabians.” This should have stated “we make it clear that we are doing our own analysis. We encourage the Saudis to conduct their own investigations to understand whether the equipment we sell has any participation in that and indeed whether the breaches are by the Houthis or the Saudi Arabians.”

These corrections ensure the answers given in all written questions and debates now accurately reflect HMG policy in this area and consistent with other statements and questions answered.

The MOD monitors incidents of alleged IHL violations using available information. This is used to form an overall view on the approach and attitude of Saudi Arabia to IHL. This, in turn, informs the risk assessment made under the consolidated criteria (i.e. whether there is a clear risk that it might be used in the commission of

a serious violation of IHL). We are not acting to determine whether a sovereign state has or has not acted in breach of IHL, but instead—as Criterion 2(c) requires—we are acting to make an overall judgement.

It is important to make clear that neither the MOD nor the FCO reaches a conclusion as to whether or not an IHL violation has taken place in relation to each and every incident of potential concern that comes to its attention. This would simply not be possible in conflicts to which the UK is not a party, as is the case in Yemen.

We regularly encourage Saudi Arabia to investigate any allegations of breaches of IHL which are attributed to them; and for their investigations to be thorough and conclusive. Saudi Arabia has publicly stated that it is investigating reports of alleged violations, and that any lessons learned will be acted upon. We continue to believe that they have the best insight into their own military procedures, allowing them to understand what went wrong and apply the lessons learnt in the best possible way, if required. This is the standard we set ourselves and our allies. For example, when allegations have been made against us in Afghanistan and Iraq we have investigated these claims ourselves. We did not expect other states to do this and form judgements on our behalf.

[HCWS125]

### Unpaid London Congestion Charge Bills and Fines

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** The value of unpaid congestion charge debt incurred by diplomatic missions and international organisations in London since its introduction in February 2003 until 31 December 2015 as advised by Transport for London was £95,811,650. The table below shows those diplomatic missions and international organisations with outstanding fines of £100,000 or more.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of Fines</i>	<i>Total Outstanding</i>
Embassy of the United States of America	89,308	£10,626,970
Embassy of Japan	59,533	£7,072,020
High Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria	50,952	£6,045,440
Embassy of the Russian Federation	46,894	£5,485,360
Office of the High Commissioner for India	36,984	£4,489,825
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	35,706	£4,147,600
Embassy of the Republic of Poland	29,304	£3,533,290
Office of the High Commissioner for Ghana	26,482	£3,186,530
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	24,002	£3,016,760
Embassy of the Republic of Sudan	24,466	£2,830,520
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan	21,849	£2,665,255
Kenya High Commission	19,497	19,497
Embassy of France	16,639	£1,970,090
Embassy of Spain	15,246	£1,811,520

Country	Number of Fines	Total Outstanding
High Commission for the United Republic of Tanzania	15,020	£1,744,075
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	14,204	£1,740,700
Embassy of the Republic of Korea	13,418	£1,631,700
Embassy of Romania	12,812	£1,511,410
Embassy of Greece	11,820	£1,396,627
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba	11,435	£1,387,155
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	11,659	11,659
Embassy of Ukraine	11,503	£1,346,455
South African High Commission	11,556	£1,345,310
Sierra Leone High Commission	11,081	£1,283,745
Embassy of Hungary	8,680	£1,033,295
High Commission for the Republic of Cyprus	8,247	£986,445
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen	7,032	£831,735
High Commission for the Republic of Zambia	7,069	£828,520
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria	6,667	£772,275
Embassy of the Republic of Belarus	5,646	£661,180
High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon	5,594	£649,760
Embassy of the Slovak Republic	5,394	£629,100
High Commission of the Republic of Malawi	5,220	£617,700
Botswana High Commission	5,070	£609,330
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	4,900	£565,310
High Commission for the Republic of Namibia	4,886	£564,620
High Commission for the Republic of Mozambique	4,713	£553,885
Kingdom of Swaziland High Commission	4,739	£545,395
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe	4,816	£539,290
Embassy of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire	4,254	£500,510
Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea	4,204	£489,065
Malta High Commission	4,050	£486,065
Embassy of Austria	4,021	£479,410
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania	3,832	£468,765
Mauritius High Commission	3,971	£462,535
Uganda High Commission	3,707	£441,615
High Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho	3,754	£436,210
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey	3,411	£415,035
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	3,396	£410,100
Embassy of Belgium	3,430	£408,035

Country	Number of Fines	Total Outstanding
Embassy of the Czech Republic	3,432	£396,385
Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	3,140	£368,420
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	3,072	£366,690
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea	2,994	£345,870
Royal Danish Embassy	2,890	£344,395
Jamaican High Commission	2,700	£319,485
Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo	2,559	£315,380
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco	2,164	£274,320
High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	2,102	£263,795
Embassy of Portugal	2,139	£260,900
Embassy of the Republic of Latvia	2,111	£253,710
Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan	1,962	£252,535
Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia	2,037	£252,368
Embassy of Finland	2,095	£250,300
Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2,130	£243,340
Embassy of Tunisia	1,953	£240,380
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt	2,281	£240,320
Embassy of Luxembourg	1,909	£228,575
High Commission for Antigua & Barbuda	1,770	£210,385
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq	1,579	£199,490
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia	1,727	£188,250
Embassy of Estonia	1,342	£164,755
Belize High Commission	1,201	£149,420
Embassy of the Dominican Republic	1,139	£135,315
Embassy of the State of Eritrea	1,120	£131,710
High Commission for Guyana	1,010	£118,035

Figures for previous years are available in the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs written statement to the House on 16 July 2015, *Official Report*, column 39WS.

[HCWS134]

### Unpaid Parking Fines

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** In 2015, 4,858 parking fines incurred by diplomatic missions and international organisations in London were brought to our attention by local councils, Transport for London and the City of London. These totalled £477,499.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has held meetings with a number of missions about outstanding parking fine debt. In addition, in May this year we wrote to diplomatic missions and international organisations

concerned giving them the opportunity to either pay their outstanding fines or appeal against them if they considered that the fines had been issued incorrectly.

Subsequent payments (including amounts waived by the above authorities) totalled £161,328. There remains a total of £316,171 in unpaid fines for 2015.

The table below details those diplomatic missions and international organisations that have outstanding fines from 2015 totalling £1,000 or more, as of 21 June 2016.

<i>Diplomatic mission/international organisation</i>	<i>Amount of Outstanding Fines (excluding congestion charge)</i>
Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan	£53,708
High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria	£41,531
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia	£20,692
High Commission for the Republic of Zambia	£18,212
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	£13,795
Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan	£13,429
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	£11,885
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan	£10,950
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates	£8,425
Embassy of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	£7,421
Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	£7,305
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	£6,292
Embassy of Tunisia	£6,020
Embassy of the Republic of Angola	£5,775
Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman	£5,415
Embassy of Georgia	£4,871
Malaysian High Commission	£3,705
Embassy of France	£3,669
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	£3,352
Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	£3,255
Sierra Leone High Commission	£3,091
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	£2,935
High Commission of the United Republic of Tanzania	£2,460
Embassy of Libya	£2,457
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria	£2,095
Embassy of the State of Qatar	£2,065
High Commission of the Republic of South Africa	£2,062
Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo	£1,965
Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco	£1,944
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq	£1,929
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen	£1,920
Embassy of the Gabonese Republic	£1,910
Embassy of the Russian Federation	£1,887
Embassy of Brazil	£1,827
Kenya High Commission	£1,822
Embassy of the People's Republic of China	£1,490
Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam	£1,255
Embassy of Greece	£1,250
Commonwealth Secretariat	£1,235
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt	£1,150

Figures for previous years are available in the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' written statement to the House on 16 July 2015, *Official Report*, column 42WS (HCWS131).

[HCWS108]

### Outstanding National Non-domestic Rates Bills

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** The majority of diplomatic missions in the United Kingdom pay the national non-domestic rates (NNDR) due from them. Diplomatic missions are obliged to pay only 6% of the total NNDR value of their offices. This represents payment for specific services received such as street cleaning and street lighting.

Representations by protocol directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to missions in 2016 led to the settlement of outstanding debts by a number of missions.

As at 27 June 2016, the total amount of outstanding NNDR payments, due before 31 December 2015, owed by foreign diplomatic missions as advised by the Valuation Office Agency is £907,976, an increase of 22% over the 2014 figure, as reported in the 2015 WMS (£743,858). However, £40,838 of this outstanding debt is owed by Syria— which is not currently represented in the UK and we have therefore been unable to pursue this debt. A further £87,020 is owed by Iran, the majority of which was accrued during its embassy's closure between 2011 and 2015. The Iranian embassy has now reopened and the FCO will be requesting payment of what is owed. Four missions are responsible for just over a third of the remainder. We shall continue to urge those with NNDR debt to pay their dues.

#### *Missions listed below owed over £10,000 in respect of NNDR*

High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh	£100,762
Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan	£81,419
Sierra Leone High Commission	£62,478
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe	£57,636
Uganda High Commission	£36,885
Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	£35,257
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan	£30,154
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia	£27,170
Malaysian High Commission	£26,917
High Commission for the Republic of Zambia	£25,886
Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia	£22,924
Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	£22,688
Kenya High Commission	£21,352
Embassy of the Republic of Albania	£21,258
High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon	£19,281
High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	£15,765
Embassy of Ukraine	£15,675
Embassy of the Republic of Angola	£12,719
Embassy of the Gambia	£12,210
Embassy of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire	£11,987

Figures for previous years are available in the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' written statement to the House on 16 July 2015, *Official Report*, column 43WS (HCWS133).

[HCWS100]

## Foreign Affairs Council

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Sir Alan Duncan):** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 July. The Foreign Affairs Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The meeting was held in Brussels.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

A provisional report of the meeting and conclusions adopted can be found at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2016/07/18/>

The Foreign Secretary made clear to his counterparts that while the UK is leaving the EU, we have no intention of turning our back on Europe and will not any way be abandoning our leading role in European co-operation.

In the aftermath of the attack in Nice, Ministers discussed the fight against terrorism. They observed a minute of silence at 12:00 to pay tribute. The agenda for the Council was adjusted to allow time for Ministers to discuss counter-terrorism in the aftermath of the Nice attack and recent events in Turkey.

### *Fight against terrorism*

Ministers expressed their condolences following the Nice attack and underlined their determination to tackle terrorist threats and their readiness to continue supporting France. The Foreign Secretary emphasised his solidarity with France and made the argument for terrorism to be tackled at source across the globe. He confirmed that the UK would consider what further support could be offered in response to French requests.

### *Turkey*

Ministers discussed the recent events in Turkey. The Council adopted conclusions.

### *EU global strategy*

Ministers discussed the EU global strategy which was presented by HRVP at the European Council on 29 June. The Foreign Secretary set out the Government's view that the strategy correctly identifies a number of important priorities, including the central role of NATO in providing European security. Ms Mogherini confirmed that the EU External Action Service would produce a written proposal on the implementation of the strategy. Options would be presented to member states in the autumn.

### *China*

Ministers discussed the EU's strategy towards China following the recent EU-China summit; and adopted Council conclusions. The Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Mr Johannes Hahn, reported that the EU had conveyed clear messages to China on over-capacity and the need to improve access to the Chinese market for EU companies. The Chinese side had raised market economy status. Member states welcomed the strategy.

### *Latin America*

Ministers discussed EU relations with Latin America, focusing on Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba. Ms Mogherini underlined the importance of the forthcoming EU-Community

of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Foreign Ministers meeting that will take place in the Dominican Republic on 25-26 October. She also welcomed the finalisation of the EU-Cuba political dialogue and co-operation agreement (PDCA). The Council also took note of recent positive developments in the Colombian peace process. Council conclusions were adopted on Venezuela.

### *Migration*

Due to time constraints, Ms. Mogherini informed Ministers that she would provide an update in writing on the implementation of the migration partnerships envisaged in the conclusions of the June European Council.

Ministers agreed without discussion a number of measures:

The Council adopted conclusions on Somalia.

The Council adopted conclusions on Afghanistan.

The Council adopted conclusions on Pakistan.

The Council adopted conclusions on the recent outbreak of violence in South Sudan.

The Council adopted the agenda for the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Joint Council and ministerial meeting, held after the Foreign Affairs Council.

The Council approved two decisions on the conclusion of a protocol to the EU-Lebanon Euro-Mediterranean agreement to take account of the accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of a protocol to the EU-Lebanon Euro-Mediterranean agreement which enables Lebanon to participate in EU programmes.

The Council adopted a common position in view of the eighth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council with Albania, to take place in Brussels on 8 September 2016.

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of a protocol which enables Azerbaijan to participate in EU programmes such as Creative Europe and Horizon 2020.

The Council adopted EU priorities for the 71st United Nations General Assembly (September 2016 to September 2017).

The Council adopted amending legal acts which transpose into EU law the recent UN Security Council resolution renewing UN sanctions on the Democratic Republic of Congo until 1 July 2017.

The Council extended the mandate of European conference on antennas and propagation (EUCAP) Sahel Niger until 15 July 2018 and agreed a budget of €26.3 million for the period 16 July 2016 to 15 July 2017.

The Council adopted a decision on the EU position on the EU-Central America Association Council.

The Council adopted a code of conduct and discipline for EU civilian CSDP missions.

The Council adopted a decision concerning the staff regulations of the European Union Institute for Security Studies.

The Council approved a decision for a temporary relaxation of the rules of origin under the EU-Jordan-Euro-Mediterranean agreement so as to enhance Jordan's exports to the Union and create additional employment opportunities, especially for Syrian refugees.

The Council approved a decision on the signing and provisional application of a protocol to the EU-Egypt Euro-Mediterranean agreement to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU.

The Council adopted the EU and its member states' position for the ministerial conference of the Union for the Mediterranean on employment and labour, which will take place in Jordan on 27 September.

## HEALTH

### NHS England: Annual Assessment

#### **The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):**

Today, I am laying before Parliament my annual assessment of the NHS commissioning board (known as NHS England) for 2015-16. I am also laying NHS England's annual report and accounts for 2015-16 (HC311). Copies of both documents will be available from the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office.

NHS England's annual report and accounts includes a self-assessment of performance which describes an organisation that has experienced a year of both progress and challenge. NHS England continues to deliver high-quality care as it progresses with implementing the vision set out in the five year forward view delivering constancy of direction, consistency of leadership and effectiveness of delivery.

In response, my annual assessment welcomes the good progress that NHS England has made against many of its objectives including managing the commissioning system. Additionally it has continued to deliver the specialised services and primary care commissioning systems and improved the operation and management of the NHS. There does, however, remain much to do in order to achieve our agreed goals by 2020. In particular, I have drawn attention to the need to address year-round performance against the standards reflected within the NHS constitution, many of which have been routinely missed this year, as well as the need to make further progress on achieving parity of esteem between physical and mental health.

Although NHS England met its objective to deliver financial balance in the commissioning system this year, the provider sector remains financially challenged. To achieve its financial objective in 2016-17, NHS England must work with its system partners and the Department of Health to jointly deliver a balanced budget across the NHS as well as delivering its share of the productivity and efficiency savings identified in the NHS five year forward view.

Overall NHS England has made progress during 2015-16 but there remains much more to do. The extra real-terms investment of £8.4 billion agreed as part of the 2015 spending review is evidence of this Government's continuing commitment to the NHS. My Department and I will continue to work with NHS England and its partners to ensure that this investment is used to build on the good work seen so far and to deliver an NHS that provides safe, compassionate and reliable care for those who need it while living within its means.

Attachments can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-07-21/HCWS105/>.

[HCWS105]

### Healthcare Education

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip Dunne):** I am publishing today, following a 12-week public consultation, a Government response on how we will implement the healthcare education funding reforms. A copy can be found online.

The reforms, which are for England only, will mean that from 1 August 2017, all new undergraduate nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students on pre-registration courses will receive their student support through the standard student support system for fee loans and living costs support, rather than course fees and NHS bursaries for living costs paid by Health Education England. These students will therefore be subject to the same general student finance arrangements that apply to other undergraduate students in 2017-18.

Overall, the Government response will set out that the majority of these students, including those with children, will have access to more funds under the student loans system while at university; they will have access to at least 25% more living cost support and we are making additional offers on childcare, travel, dual accommodation and provision, in appropriate circumstances, for exceptional hardship funding.

The Government response also sets out transitional arrangements for pre-registration part time students, pre-registration postgraduate courses and dental hygiene and therapy courses applicable for new students commencing their studies in the academic year 2017-18.

The changes will mean we are able to accept more applicants for pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health degree courses who get the right grades than we have in the past. Currently two thirds of people who apply to university to become a nurse are not offered a place for training.

We have responded to feedback from key stakeholders, who took part in a constructive consultation, by providing extra funding to help cover additional expenses like travel and more support for students with children. We will work with nursing bodies, universities, hospitals and other partners in taking this forward.

These changes are only part of our plan to expand the NHS workforce—we are also opening up new routes into nursing support roles through apprenticeships for example, the new nursing associate role to widen access further to these professions. The Government are determined to ensure the NHS can adapt to the changing needs of our population, train more nurses in England and reduce the reliance on agency and overseas staff.

Attachments can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-07-21/HCWS126/>.

[HCWS126]

### NHS Shared Business Services

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** NHS Shared Business Services (SBS) has today published a statement regarding an issue with a mail redirection service which was formerly provided by NHS SBS on behalf of NHS England as part of the Primary Care Support Service.

This matter is also referred to in my Department's annual report and accounts, published today, copies of which are available in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office. I will of course keep the House updated in future

as investigations are carried out by NHS England and Shared Business Services and as they seek to determine the effect of this issue.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-07-21/HCWS120/>.

[HCWS120]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Cedars Pre-departure Accommodation

**The Minister for Immigration (Mr Robert Goodwill):** I am today announcing the Government's decision to close Cedars pre-departure accommodation, and replace it with new pre-departure accommodation near Gatwick Airport, as a discrete unit at Tinsley House immigration removal centre. This will maintain the required legal safeguards and focus on welfare for families with children whose return is to be ensured under the family returns process. The new pre-departure accommodation will be operated in line with the statutory framework established by the Immigration Act 2014, specifically in relation to the statutory time limit on stays at the facility and the requirement for the independent family returns panel to be consulted in advance in each case where it is proposed that a family should be placed there.

The Government met their commitment to end the routine detention of children for immigration purposes by fundamentally changing the way in which they deal with families that have no lawful basis of stay in the UK, and limiting the detention of unaccompanied children for removal. The new family returns model introduced in 2011 placed the welfare of the child at the heart of the process. Key parts of the family returns process, including the separate statutory status of pre-departure accommodation, were enshrined in the Immigration Act 2014. The new pre-departure accommodation will operate in line with both the statutory requirements and the wider family returns process, which will remain unchanged.

The low level of use of Cedars pre-departure accommodation over the last few years is a testament to the overall success of the family returns process and, in particular, to the fact that more families are accepting voluntary assistance to leave the UK when they no longer have a lawful basis to stay here. Cedars has from the outset only been intended to be used as a last resort, after all voluntary or other return options have failed, and following the advice of a panel of independent child safeguarding experts.

Stephen Shaw's review into the welfare of vulnerable people in detention, while recognising that Cedars was an exceptional facility, recommended on value for money grounds that the Home Office should draw up plans either to close Cedars or to change its use as a matter of urgency. The Government accepted this recommendation, and have reviewed the most cost-effective way of providing the necessary component of pre-departure accommodation for the family returns process, while ensuring that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children involved remain a key priority.

The Government are committed to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of those detained in their care, some of whom may be vulnerable. They are very grateful to Barnardo's for all its valuable work with families at Cedars and for working with us to ensuring that the new facility continues to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and builds on the learning and experience of Cedars.

[HCWS114]

## Countering Terrorism

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Amber Rudd):** Keeping our people and interests safe—both here and overseas—is the primary duty of Government. The horrific attack in Nice last week was the latest terrible reminder that the threat from terrorism is more acute and more complex than ever before.

Today I have published the annual report for the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST (Cm 9310). It covers developments in the terrorist threat and progress made in our counter-terrorism work in 2015. Copies of the report will be made available in the Vote Office.

The threat from terrorism to the UK and our interests continues to be driven by the situation in Syria and Iraq and, in particular, by Daesh, which has a dedicated external operations structure in Syria. The attacks in Paris in November, in which 130 people were killed, including one British national, demonstrated its ability to co-ordinate and direct complex mass-casualty attacks. The attack on tourists in Tunisia last June led to the death of 30 British nationals, the largest single loss of British life to terrorism since the London bombings in 2005. In March this year, 31 people were killed in the attacks in Brussels, including one British national. There have been further attacks in other parts of the world, including in Bangladesh, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Daesh continues to use propaganda to encourage individuals from around the world to travel to the conflict area, including approximately 850 individuals of national security concern who have travelled from the UK. Daesh is not the only terrorist threat we face: the al-Qaeda grouping in Afghanistan and Pakistan and affiliate groups elsewhere continue to aspire to attack western interests.

The police and the security and intelligence agencies successfully disrupted six terrorist plots to attack Great Britain in 2015 due to their hard work and commitment to keep us safe. We have continued to ensure they have the powers and capabilities they need to disrupt terrorist threats, through the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and increased investigative and intelligence resources announced in the strategic defence and security review.

The success of our counter-terrorism effort also depends on a much broader range of domestic and international activity. Through our Prevent and intervention programmes we have worked to safeguard people at risk and challenge the twisted narratives that support terrorism. We have made borders and civil aviation more secure. We have strengthened our existing response to marauding terrorist firearms attacks.

The nature of terrorism in 2015 has underlined the need to look beyond solely domestic solutions. We have worked to ensure that international collaboration on counter-terrorism is matched with co-ordinated action which has lasting impact.

The CONTEST strategy has proven to be successful over a number of years. But our approach must continue to evolve to deal with the changing threat from terrorism. That is why we are currently reviewing CONTEST to ensure the highest priorities are given the right resources and that Government Departments and agencies have a unified approach. We will publish an updated strategy later this year.

[HCWS116]

### Child Abuse and Neglect

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sarah Newton):** The Minister for Children and Families (Edward Timpson) and I have today launched a public consultation which considers whether statutory measures focused on reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect should be introduced in addition to our wide-ranging reforms.

Social workers, teachers, police officers, doctors and countless others across the country work together every day to protect our children, making difficult judgements under challenging circumstances. The Government are undertaking a comprehensive programme of reform to deliver better outcomes for children in the children's social care system. We are improving the quality of front-line practice so that professionals such as police and social workers can respond effectively to the needs of individual children—and we are legislating through the Children and Social Work Bill to strengthen multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children following a review by Alan Wood CBE. We continue to consider what more can be done to protect children from abuse and neglect and the launch of this consultation exercise fulfils the commitments made during the passage of the last year's Serious Crime Act and in the "Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation" report published in March 2015.

The consultation will run for the statutory maximum of 12 weeks and ends on 13 October 2016. We are seeking responses from anyone with a view on these important issues, from children and families to practitioners, academics and voluntary sector partners.

Copies of the consultation document have been placed in the Library of the House and are available on the Government's website at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=home-office&publication\\_filter\\_option=consultations](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=home-office&publication_filter_option=consultations)

[HCWS110]

### National Crime Agency/UK International Crime Bureau

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Amber Rudd):** The NCA was established to lead the fight to cut serious and organised crime, and to focus on the relentless disruption of serious and organised criminals.

It has the power to task other law enforcement and a capability that reaches from local to international serious and organised crime impacting on the UK.

HMIC have conducted two inspections; the first, a re-inspection of the NCA following its 2014 inspection whereby HMIC carried out a review into the efficiency and effectiveness of the National Crime Agency. The second report focuses on the work of UK's International Crime Bureau (UKICB) and its activities relating to identifying fugitives and extradition.

I have placed a copy of both reports in the Library of the House. I have asked HMIC to publish both reports on my behalf. They are available online at: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk).

HMIC find in relation to its re-inspection of the NCA, that the NCA's approach to prioritising, supervising and managing investigations is rigorous, but that they could support their officers better by investing in more sophisticated equipment. They found that the NCA had an effective leadership approach to build systems and processes, and that while strategic governance arrangements for threats are at an early stage of development, there is a clear commitment from the NCA and its partners to work together on shared priorities.

HMIC's second report examines the work of UKICB and its activities relating to identifying fugitives and extradition. This inspection, conducted between September and November last year and, picks up on themes from the last NCA report, focusing on the management of risks and the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the UKICB. Overall the report is very positive. HMIC find that UKICB are well led, that risks are assessed in a timely and prioritised manner, there are appropriate measures to mitigate the identified risks, and there is good and improving efficiency and effectiveness in the unit.

HMIC note that the work of UKICB is dependent on interactions with a wide range of stakeholders and that some matters are out their direct control. However, the report identifies a series of recommendations, many of which are in regard to better information gathering/sharing and building on improving/changing relationships with stakeholders all of which should lead to better risk management and efficiencies in the extradition process.

Both reports note a number of areas for improvement—where the NCA already has action underway to improve its capabilities and effectiveness—and makes several recommendations. It is for the director general to respond to these recommendations, in line with the requirements of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

[HCWS113]

### PRIME MINISTER

#### Machinery of Government Change

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** This written ministerial statement confirms the following Machinery of Government change.

The functions of the Office for Civil Society (OCS) have been transferred from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The transfer will include responsibility for youth policy and the National Citizen Service. It will integrate OCS's

work to grow a stronger civil society with DCMS's existing work to enrich lives. It will also simplify sponsorship responsibilities for the lottery providers.

OCS will continue its cross-Government work in support of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and their important contribution to public services and the social economy; and its work to promote social and community action, social investment, mission-led business and mutuals.

OCS's functions relating to policy innovation (the Policy Lab) will remain in the Cabinet Office.

A Cabinet Office note setting out further detail on this change has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

It can also be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements>.

[HCWS124]

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Councils

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds):** The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council met on 16 June 2016 in Luxembourg where Lord Freud, the Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions, represented the UK.

Ministers approved this year's country specific recommendations (CSRs) under the European semester and endorsed the joint Social Protection Committee and Employment Committee opinion. In discussion all member states welcomed the better focus of the CSRs and argued that fewer but more specific CSRs were helpful. The UK welcomed the more focused approach, the importance given to employment policies as well as the recognition that unemployment can be a structural rather than cyclical problem.

Ministers noted progress reports on amending the carcinogens and mutagens directive and the revision of the posting of workers directive. The Commission (Thyssen) confirmed its intention to respond to the yellow card on the posting of workers directive during July.

Ministers adopted Council conclusions on "Combating Poverty and Social Inclusion: An Integrated Approach", and on "A New Start for a Strong Social Dialogue" without discussion. Ministers also adopted a package of Council conclusions on gender and LGBTI equality. While there was some disappointment that the text was

not stronger from a number of member states, the Council's adoption of LGBTI conclusions for the first time was particularly welcomed by the UK among others.

The European Commission presented its new skills agenda followed by updates on the outcomes of this year's UN Commission on the status of women meeting, and on international meetings related to the international dimension of social and employment policies.

The incoming Slovak presidency gave an outline of its work programme. Progress reports on the anti-discrimination directive; the European Accessibility Act; and the social partner agreement on the ILO work in fishing convention were all noted without discussion. Italy also introduced its proposal for a migration compact. Over lunch Ministers discussed social protection for the self-employed.

The informal Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council then met on 14-15 July in Bratislava. Lindsay Fullarton, Deputy Head of EU and International Affairs at the Department for Work and Pensions, represented the UK on the first day. Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Minister of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, represented the UK on the second day.

The Slovak presidency used the meeting to discuss the social and technological challenges in the future world of work.

The first day involved a plenary session on ageing of populations and the challenges this creates for labour markets and social security systems. The focus of most member state interventions was on migration, demographics and the scope of social protection systems. There was a strong consensus on the need for life-long learning, flexibility in labour markets and recognition of new patterns of work. There were differing views on whether highly skilled migrants were needed and how new ways of working would be covered by labour law, health and safety and social protection.

The second day involved a plenary session on how to address the impact of technological development on the quality of jobs and future skill needs. The UK intervened to highlight the importance of improving digital skills at all levels and the need for policies to address the difficulties of those left behind in society. Baroness Neville Rolfe explained that the UK's flexible labour market aimed to not exclude these people and ensure their rights regardless of hours worked. Baroness Neville Rolfe's intervention was echoed and supported by many Ministers who also noted that more needed to be done to ensure that new ways of working had full social, health and safety and labour law protection.

[HCWS97]



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