

**Wednesday
7 September 2016**

**Volume 614
No. 33**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 7 September 2016

House of Commons

Wednesday 7 September 2016

The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

CABINET OFFICE

The Minister for the Cabinet Office was asked—
Government Estate (Modernisation)

1. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What progress the Government are making in creating a more modern and efficient Government estate. [906119]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer): Working collaboratively with Departments and local government, we are delivering a public sector estate that is cost-effective, supports the delivery of better-integrated public services, and exploits surplus land and property to help build homes and create jobs. In so doing, since 2010 we have raised £1.8 billion in capital receipts and reduced running costs by £750 million.

Sir Henry Bellingham: I welcome the Minister to his place and congratulate him on his well-deserved promotion. Does he agree that at a time when the country needs to build more housing on brownfield sites, it is essential that the Government lead the way in this? Have the Government done any audit that has ascertained the amount of land available and the number of houses and flats that could be built on it?

Ben Gummer: We have done some partial work, as my hon. Friend suggests. It is in the nature of the work that we are doing that there is not sufficiently good-quality understanding of public sector land, and that is why we are seeking to make it better. Despite that, we delivered 100,000 homes on public sector land in the previous Parliament, and we aspire to build 150,000 in this one. I shall provide him with further details as and when we discover them.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): I welcome the Minister to his post. He will know that in 2010 a report said that the changes to the civil service—the regionalisation of the civil service—would require political leadership. We have seen a reduction in the size of the estate in London but an increase in the number of top officials and civil servants in London. Under his tenure, will we finally see that political leadership and the regions actually having a voice?

Ben Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind comments. In my previous ministerial post, it was a great pleasure for me to work with civil servants,

especially in Yorkshire, including senior civil servants working there. I saw myself how it is possible to have senior civil servants around the country. I completely agree that the more we can get senior positions of all kinds around the country, the better we will be able to serve the people whom we were elected to serve.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): The speed with which the new Brexit Department has been established from scratch since 24 June has been truly impressive. Is not the key to a modern Government who can respond to modern needs to have as much flexible, open-plan office space as possible?

Ben Gummer: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. The way in which we have been able to set up the new Department and the other Departments of State so rapidly is a tribute to the work done by my predecessors as Ministers at the Cabinet Office in reforms to the civil service and to the Government Property Unit. He will have heard the comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of State for Exiting the European Union about the very significant support that he has received, in number and in quality, from the civil service so far.

Electoral Law Reform

2. **Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): What plans he has to bring forward proposals to reform electoral law. [906120]

4. **Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): What plans he has to bring forward proposals to reform electoral law. [906123]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris Skidmore): The Government are committed to ensuring that our electoral system is as transparent, accurate and effective as possible. We are working closely with the Law Commission to consider what reforms might be brought forward in the light of its report on electoral law published earlier this year. The Government are also considering the review by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir Eric Pickles) of electoral fraud, and we will respond to his proposals in due course.

Stuart C. McDonald: Smaller parties received almost a quarter of the votes cast in the 2015 election. While once 97% of the country voted Labour or Tory, that number is now less than 70%, and indeed falling, but none of that is reflected here. Is it not now time for a very serious and mature discussion on how we can make every vote count in UK general elections?

Chris Skidmore: The Government believe that first past the post is the best system for electing a Government at the same time as ensuring that the vital constituency link between a Member of Parliament and their constituents is retained. This is clearly in line with the public mood, reflected in the overwhelming majority support for first past the post at the referendum held in 2011.

Carol Monaghan: Many 16 and 17-year-olds feel disfranchised by Westminster. In 2007, Austria lowered its voting age to 16, and has found that turnout among

16 and 17-year-olds is higher than for older first-time voters. Will the Minister now commit to seriously examining the evidence for extending the franchise to our young adults?

Chris Skidmore: The Government believe that it is absolutely vital to our democracy that young people should be engaged in the democratic process, and we will continue our commitment to increasing participation. The current voting age of 18, however, is widely recognised as the point at which one becomes an adult and gains full citizenship rights. I note that the question of lowering the voting age has been debated in this House on several occasions, when it has been repeatedly defeated, including three times during proceedings on the European Union Referendum Bill. The Government therefore have no plans to reduce the voting age.

Sir Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box, and I thank him and his predecessor for the help that they have given in the compilation of my report. Is my hon. Friend alarmed by the fact that it is harder to take out a library card or collect a parcel from the post office than it is to vote or obtain a postal vote in our trust-based system? That places our ballot boxes at a peculiar risk. When will the Government respond?

Chris Skidmore: I thank my right hon. Friend for the work that he has undertaken in producing his report on electoral fraud, which was published in the summer. It made an excellent summer read. The Government take electoral fraud incredibly seriously. His report highlights that important issue, and as a result we are currently considering his proposals and will formally respond to his report in due course.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): I join in warmly welcoming the Minister to his new position. In the EU referendum *The Daily Telegraph's* Charles Moore voted twice, spoiling the ballot paper from his second home, to show how the system could, in theory, be cheated. As the Minister considers proposals to strengthen electoral law against voter fraud, would he therefore also consider a new legal requirement for people with more than one residence to choose one of them in advance as the only place where they wish to be legally registered to vote?

Chris Skidmore: I hope you do not mind, Mr Speaker, but I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor for the work he has undertaken. He has left me with a rich inheritance.

The incident involving Charles Moore is the subject of an investigation, and therefore it would be inappropriate for me to comment on it. I note, however, that the Law Commission report includes recommendations on electoral residence, which the Government will respond to in due course.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): I welcome the Minister to his position, and I look forward to working with him. I think there has been a frightening complacency in the answers to this question so far. The Prime Minister spoke recently on the steps of Downing Street about the disfranchised. Does the Minister not realise that the voting system itself disfranchises many

of our citizens, particularly 16 and 17-year-olds and those who vote for minor parties? Will he now commit, in this new Government, to reviewing our system to make it more fair and democratic?

Chris Skidmore: The Government are committed to ensuring that we have a democracy that works for everyone. Already, the introduction of individual electoral registration has made it easier to register to vote than ever before, with 20 million applications to register to vote online since 2014. The Electoral Commission's report from July 2016 found that thanks to IER, electoral registers are not only more complete than ever before, but, critically, more accurate than ever. The Government recognise that there is always more to do, and we are committed to a programme of boosting registration among certain vulnerable groups in order to build a more engaged democracy.

Constituency Boundaries

3. **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): When he expects the Boundary Commission to publish its initial recommendation for new constituency boundaries. [906121]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris Skidmore): The Boundary Commissions for England and Wales will be publishing their initial recommendations on Tuesday 13 September, and the Boundary Commission for Scotland will do so later this year. The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland published its recommendations yesterday. The conduct of the boundary review is a matter for the independent Boundary Commissions. The initial proposals will be the subject of extensive consultation with political parties and local communities, after which revised proposals will be published at a later date.

Lucy Allan: I thank the Minister for his response, and I warmly welcome him to his position, where I am sure he will do an excellent job. I represent a rapidly growing new town with low voter registration, where an additional 5,000 new voters have hit the electoral roll in the past six months. Does the Minister agree that if the boundary review is to achieve constituencies of equal size by the next election, those factors need to be taken into consideration?

Chris Skidmore: During every previous boundary review, Parliament has accepted that there must be a defined date and a set of registers to access. That was set down as a result of the delay to the 2013 review, which was voted for by Labour Members. Not only do those who now seek to delay the boundary review even further seek to overturn the accepted will of Parliament, but to delay the boundary review again would ensure that we have constituencies that are of dramatically unequal size, and that are based on data more than two decades old.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): The boundary review next week is going to be a sham. Nearly 2 million voters have not been counted. Why does the Minister not start again, so that our democracy is not undermined by next week's partisan gerrymandering?

Chris Skidmore: Without the implementation of the reforms, legislated for by a majority in the previous Parliament, Members will continue to represent constituencies that were drawn up on the basis of data collected over 20 years ago, disregarding significant changes in the population since that happened. The status quo cannot and must not be an option. In future, boundary reviews will take place every five years to ensure that constituencies remain up to date, as they should be.

10. [906129] **Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): The number of electors in Welsh parliamentary constituencies varies hugely: Cardiff South and Penarth has more than 72,000 electors; Arfon has fewer than 40,000. My constituency of Montgomeryshire sits roughly in the middle, with about 48,000. Does the Minister agree that it cannot be right for each of these constituencies to elect one MP when the number of voters within them is so radically different?

Chris Skidmore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We cannot continue with the historical injustice of allowing such unequal representation. That representation currently allows for the electorate of one seat to be twice the size of another's or, to put it in other words, allows one elector's vote to be worth twice that of another. This injustice, long recognised, must be resolved.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his well-deserved promotion to the Treasury Bench. In the past, Ministers have argued that cutting the number of MPs will save the taxpayer £12 million. That is exactly the same amount of money that the previous Prime Minister has just spent on his lavender list of resignation honours. Is it not the case that this boundary redistribution is proceeding on the basis of a register from which 2 million people are excluded, and is that not an absolute affront to democracy?

Chris Skidmore: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to recognise that cutting the number of MPs from 650 to 600 will not just save £12 million, but save £66 million over the course of a Parliament. At a time when many areas of public life have found savings, it is right that we should put our own house in order. Equally, it is right that we should finally establish the democratic principle of constituencies with an equal number of voters, which was first called for by the Chartists back in 1838 and recently endorsed by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Cross-Government Departmental Resourcing

5. **Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): If he will make an assessment of the effect on cross-Government resourcing of Departments of recent machinery of government changes. [906124]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer): All Departments are currently reviewing their own structures and resources to ensure that we get the best deal for the whole of Britain. The Cabinet Office is helping to co-ordinate that effort.

Gill Furniss: The shake-up of Whitehall comes as insiders fear that Whitehall may simply be unable to face up to the scale of the Brexit negotiations if resources stay as they are. With the negotiations looming, rather

than laying off civil servants and slashing budgets, is it not now time that our civil service was properly resourced and able to fight for the best deal for Britain?

Ben Gummer: I reject the hon. Lady's assertions. The civil service is one of the finest in the world. It has already risen to the challenge of the immediate opportunities that, with Brexit, face us as a country. That is why I am delighted that we have been able to resource the two new Departments so successfully, and their Secretaries of State are very content with the support they are receiving.

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend and the Parliamentary Secretary on their appointments, and say how much we on the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee look forward to working with them? As well as focusing on resourcing and machinery, our inquiry into the civil service will focus on civil service leadership. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we need to develop stronger leadership in the civil service to inculcate the right values, the right attitudes, and the trust and openness on which a high-functioning organisation depends?

Ben Gummer: I, too, look forward to continuing my long-standing relationship with the Chairman of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, my near constituency neighbour. I agree with him entirely on his point about senior talent. We need to get as much talent as possible into the civil service at all levels. I have recently met the senior talent team in the civil service, a very impressive outfit, who have their work cut out to make sure that we can do even better.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): In the context of the recent machinery of government changes, when will we know—or can the Minister tell us now—who will have responsibility for cross-Government co-ordination in respect of the work of the British-Irish Council, which relates to all eight Administrations in these islands?

Ben Gummer: I retain responsibility for the constitution as a whole, as does the Cabinet Office. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with a detailed reply so that he can have the satisfaction of that.

Anonymous Voter Registration: Domestic Violence Victims

6. **Marie Rimmer** (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): What steps the Government are taking to help domestic violence victims to register to vote anonymously. [906125]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris Skidmore): The Government are determined that those whose personal safety would be at risk if their details appeared on the register should be able to register anonymously. I have arranged to meet representatives from Women's Aid to discuss concerns they may have over the process of anonymous registration and have also written to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Women and Equalities to set out our plans to look at regulations on this important policy.

Marie Rimmer: I thank the Minister for the information he has just given me and am pleased with what he has said. He has to acknowledge that some domestic violence victims choose not to go to the police and do not have easy access to the qualifying officers or registrars at present. I am pleased that he is having meetings and look forward to his announcing the steps he is going to take—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. This is very unfair. The hon. Lady is asking a question about help for victims of domestic violence who wish to register to vote anonymously. I really think the House should be attentive to this matter.

Marie Rimmer: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am pleased that the Minister has acknowledged some of the difficulties these women have in registering. They are victims. I look forward to hearing the steps he will announce in the future. A very real barrier to registering to vote at present is the limited number of officers. The women do not have easy access to those people, which disfranchises them.

Chris Skidmore: I thank the hon. Lady for raising this issue with me. I recognise what she says. Those who have left domestic violence to seek a new life may be seen as some of the most vulnerable in society, but I believe that they are also some of the bravest. As I said, today I can announce that the Government will look closely at representations from Women's Aid and other domestic violence charities. I am happy to meet the hon. Lady, since we are determined that no one should be denied the opportunity to vote.

Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con): I warmly welcome the Minister to his position. He will find that his letter is a reply to one I wrote on this topic when I was Minister for Women and Equalities. I warmly welcome what he has said, but he could speed things up by adding domestic violence protection orders and domestic violence protection notices to the list of evidence needed. I urge him to do that speedily.

Chris Skidmore: I appreciated receiving my right hon. Friend's letter. It was one of the first things in my inbox that I was determined to act on straightaway. The situation is slightly more complex, because changing the regulations would require a change to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, but the Government will review all aspects of the policy.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): Most victims of domestic abuse never report the abuse to the police. Will the Government commit to reviewing the regulations, so that those women are able to register anonymously?

Chris Skidmore: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I have just given.

Digital Technology

7. **Victoria Borwick (Kensington) (Con):** What progress the Government are making in using digital technology to transform delivery of public services. [906126]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer): The Government are investing £2.25 billion in digital services over the next four years in order to recast the relationship between the people we seek to serve and the state. There is more to come. We are doing a lot, but there is a lot more to do.

Victoria Borwick: May I join in the congratulations to the Minister on his new role? How could we better use digital sharing services to reduce the number of events never and serious untoward incidents in the NHS?

Ben Gummer: My hon. Friend is entirely right that it will be a digital solution that brings the most advantage to the area of the health service that she identifies. I am glad that the close working of the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch, NHS Improvement and the NHS Litigation Authority, enabled through digital, will mean that we can reduce never events and serious untoward incidents.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): In ensuring that use of digital technology proceeds at a pace, what steps are the Government taking to ensure that hacking of digital technology decreases and is eliminated?

Ben Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right that hacking poses a serious threat to our national infrastructure. I will be able to make more announcements in the next few weeks that I hope will colour the detail that he is seeking.

Topical Questions

T1. [906044] **Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab):** If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Ben Gummer): The Cabinet Office is responsible for delivering a democracy that works for everyone, supporting the design and delivery of Government policy and driving efficiencies and reforms to make government work better.

Mr Hanson: At a time when the Government are reducing the number of elected Members of this elected House of Parliament by 50, is it right that we keep 100 hereditary peers in another place when they owe their place in Parliament to patronage in the middle ages?

Ben Gummer: It is not for me to revisit the arguments over the House of Lords, and as our manifesto made clear, that is not a first priority of this Government. The right hon. Gentleman will be glad to know that, over the past few years, we have reduced the cost of the House of Lords quite considerably. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. If the House were as courteous to the Minister as the Minister is to the House, that would be a great advance for all of us.

T3. [906047] **Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con):** Our electoral system needs to be both user-friendly and watertight if it is to command the respect of the British public. The Minister previously alluded to the report produced by my right hon. Friend the Member for

Brentwood and Ongar (Sir Eric Pickles). Will the Minister commit today to implementing at least the broad thrust of the report, so that trust in our system can continue?

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris Skidmore): My hon. Friend is absolutely right that we must take electoral fraud very seriously. The April 2015 election court judgment in Tower Hamlets exposed worrying electoral fraud and corruption. The Government are currently considering the recent review by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir Eric Pickles), which provides a range of measures to tackle electoral fraud, and will give a full response in due course.

Mr Tom Watson (West Bromwich East) (Lab): I welcome you back, Mr Speaker, and give a very warm welcome to the new ministerial team. I congratulate them all on their appointments. We look forward to a positive working relationship with them, holding them to account and making a difference where we can.

I apologise to you, Mr Speaker, for my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith), a new member of my team. She is on her honeymoon and cannot be with us today, but I am sure we wish her well in her marriage to Ben. My colleague may be on her honeymoon, but let me reassure the ministerial team that the honeymoon period for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is well and truly over. I have asked a series of questions about his responsibilities, but they have not been answered after 56 days in office. I therefore ask any member of the team: where is he today and what does he actually do?

Ben Gummer: The hon. Gentleman has asked a number of questions and I will ensure that I relay them to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but I can say that he is responsible for the chancellery of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr Watson: What departmental responsibilities does the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have, and how is he carrying them out?

Ben Gummer: The Chancellor the Duchy of Lancaster sits on a number of very important Cabinet Committees and has a number of responsibilities, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will find out in due course.

T4. [906048] **Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con):** Will the Minister tell the House whether the Cabinet Office will play an important role in co-ordinating and helping to co-ordinate the Brexit negotiations and the activities of the three Brexiteers? Will the Cabinet Office ensure that it helps them to reach agreement, perhaps playing the role of a latter-day d'Artagnan, helping them with their exploits and their mission?

Ben Gummer: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that my job is merely to serve. I will ensure that my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary, the International Trade Secretary and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union have all the resources they need to do their important job of work to ensure that we make a success of Brexit.

T2. [906046] **Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):** The Bathgate office of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which serves my constituency, is to close by 2020 as part of the modernisation programme, with services moving online. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The situation is intolerable. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to be heard and Ministers are struggling to do so. I want to hear the hon. Gentleman—he can be assured of it.

Martyn Day: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

During the recess, the Government Digital Service lost its second director general within a year and the Government received the resignations of the chief digital officers of two other Departments. As services are removed from local communities, what steps is the Minister taking to get the Government's digital provision under control and to ensure that people have access to reliable online services?

Ben Gummer: I am very proud of what the Government Digital Service has achieved in the past few years. That is why it is rated the foremost digital service in the world connected with a Government. I am pleased to welcome Kevin Cunnington as the new director general—it is the first time the office has had a director general. He has a fine pedigree in the private sector and will bring his expertise to the Government Digital Service.

T5. [906049] **Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con):** The Prime Minister set her Government on the right track with her very first words outside 10 Downing Street, with a determination to stand up against injustice and inequality. What progress has been made on the audit of racial disparities in public service outcomes?

Ben Gummer: I am very glad to hear my hon. Friend endorse the words, on the steps of Downing Street, of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. She will be glad to know that we have already had a substantial meeting to discuss the remit of the racial disparity audit. It will uncover uncomfortable truths, but unless we do that we will not be able to face up to the burning injustices that remain in our country.

T6. [906050] **Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab):** Does the Minister agree with the Lord's Speaker that membership of the House of Lords should be less than that of the Commons?

Chris Skidmore: The other place has an important role, as a revising chamber, in scrutinising and improving draft legislation. The Government are clear that an unelected chamber should not seek to block the will of the Commons. The Conservative manifesto is clear that reform of the House of Lords is needed and we have seen significant reforms, including the retirement of peers. Over 150 peers have left the Lords since 2010 and the Chamber is 400 Members smaller than in 1998. The operating costs of the Lords have also fallen by 14% since 2010.

T7. [906051] **Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con):** The Government recognise how vital small and medium-sized enterprises are to our nation's fortunes. They are increasingly looking to see how they can open up

Government contracts to them, last month launching a new webinar resource. What more can the Minister and I do, with the Government, to seal the deal for local businesses in Eastbourne and Willingdon?

Ben Gummer: My hon. Friend is entirely right: small and medium-sized enterprises power this nation. I hope that in the negotiations we are soon to begin we will unleash them even further into the global markets that Britain will now be able to exploit. She is also right to say that we should be giving more central Government contracts to small and medium-sized enterprises. We beat our target in the previous Parliament. We have an ambitious target of a third of all projects to go to SMEs in this Parliament. I hope to work with her to make sure we achieve that target, too.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked— Engagements

Q1. [906104] **Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 7 September.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): I know the whole House will join me in congratulating the British Olympic team on a truly magnificent performance in Rio: the record medal haul, second in the table ahead of China and so many memorable moments. We can say they did themselves and their country proud. I know the whole House will wish to give our very best wishes to our Paralympic athletes and wish them the best of success. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”]

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

Thangam Debbonaire: May I add my warm wishes to those of the Prime Minister to all Paralympians, in particular Bristolians? I know they will do us proud.

I am sure the whole House will be delighted that this country hosts a disproportionate number of the world’s finest universities. However, some of them are saying that they are already being shut out of important collaborations with other fine universities in the European Union, in anticipation of Brexit. They are very important for scientific, medical, engineering and other research, as well as for our economic prosperity. In view of this, will the Prime Minister please tell us what her strategy is?

The Prime Minister: May I first of all say to the hon. Lady how very good it is to see her in her place in this House? Of course we agree on the importance of our universities and the work they do and the research collaboration they have with a number of other countries, both within the EU and elsewhere. That is why, earlier this summer, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made an announcement giving certain guarantees to universities in relation to funding decisions that are being taken by the European Union. We are standing behind our universities because we recognise the value they bring to the country.

Q2. [906105] **Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I very much welcome the statement from the Chancellor on support payments for farmers up to 2020 to give confidence to farming and the countryside. British farmers produce some of the best welfare-friendly and environmentally friendly food in the world. We need to make sure that both farming and the food processing industry are protected in any trade deals we make. I seek that reassurance from my right hon. Friend.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The announcements by the Chancellor, to which I referred in answer to the first question, provided guarantees to the farming industry about the support available to it up to 2020. We need to recognise the significant role that the food and farming industry plays in the United Kingdom, and we will of course look to working with the sector—my right hon. Friend the Environment Secretary will be doing this—to see how to develop those industries with a view to the trade deals that will play their part as we look to the future.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): May I join the Prime Minister in congratulating the entirety of the Olympic team on their fantastic achievements at the Olympics in Rio and wish the Paralympic team all the very best? Did our Olympic success set off the visit to China in a good way, or was there a bit of tension there, when bragging rights were allowed?

The average house price in Britain is now £215,000—over eight times the average wage. The average price of a first-time buyer’s home has risen by 12% in the past year. Is not the dream of home ownership for many people just that—a dream?

The Prime Minister: In response to the right hon. Gentleman’s first point, President Xi actually congratulated me on the United Kingdom’s success in the Olympic games.

The right hon. Gentleman mentions housing, which he has raised on a number of occasions both with my predecessor and with me before we broke for the summer recess. Let me simply say this. Of course it is important for us to look at helping people to get their first step on to the housing ladder and ensuring that people are able to have the home that they want. That is why I am pleased that house building has been up under a Conservative Government by comparison with a Labour Government. We are not complacent, however, which is why we will do more to see more houses built under this Conservative Government and continue to provide support for people to ensure that they have the financial support that helps them to own their own homes.

Jeremy Corbyn: Actually, house building under this Government is 45,000 fewer a year than it was under the last Labour Government, and many people are desperate to get their own place. Let me refer the Prime Minister to a note I received from a lady called Jenny whose partner and herself work in a supermarket earning £7.37 an hour each. They are trying to get a mortgage and have been told that they can borrow £73,000—not much hope for them, then. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) promised a one-for-one replacement for every council house sold

under right to buy. Sadly, the reality is that there is only one for every five that are sold. Will the Prime Minister give a commitment and tell us when the one-for-one replacement will be a reality?

The Prime Minister: Let me first say to Jenny that I fully understand and appreciate the concerns individuals have about wanting to be able to set up and have their own home. I fully recognise the difficulties some people face in doing that. I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman that he is wrong about the figures on council houses. We have delivered on the one-for-one replacement under right to buy.

I noticed that the right hon. Gentleman had asked all his Twitter followers what questions he should ask me this week, so I thought I would look to see what sort of responses he had received. I have to say that the first one was quite good. In fact, he might want to ensure that he stays sitting down for this. Lewis writes, “Does she know that in a recent poll on who would make a better Prime Minister, ‘Don’t Know’ scored higher than Jeremy Corbyn?” What we do know is that, whoever wins the Labour party leadership, we are not going to let them anywhere near power again.

Jeremy Corbyn: The number of first-time buyers has halved in the past 20 years, and their average age has increased a great deal. There is a housing crisis in Britain. Ten million people now live in the private rented sector, and many are forced to claim housing benefit to cover the costs of rents. Devastating figures released over the summer show that £9.3 billion of public money is paid through housing benefit directly into the pockets of private landlords. Does the Prime Minister think that that £9.3 billion going into the private rental market is really money well spent?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman starts off talking about the importance of people being able to be in their own homes, and then challenges one of the measures that actually help people to get into their own homes, through housing benefit support in the private rented sector. It may be that he just has an ideological objection to the private rented sector, but I say to him that this Government are looking across the board to ensure that more houses are being built. We are seeking to ensure that there is a diversity of opportunity for people who want to be in their own homes.

Everything that the right hon. Gentleman says tells us all that we need to know about modern Labour: the train has left the station, the seats are all empty, and the leader is on the floor. Even on rolling stock, Labour is a laughing stock.

Jeremy Corbyn: The Prime Minister’s predecessor, when discussing this issue, said:

“The simple point is this...every penny you spend on housing subsidy is money you cannot spend on building houses.”—[*Official Report*, 10 February 2016; Vol. 605, c. 1569.]

“If landlords rent out houses in a very bad state, such as heavy damp, wet walls, no working toilet...they need to be getting a fine. The government has to regulate”.

That is what Joyce wrote to me. The Citizens Advice Bureau says that one sixth of housing benefit goes to

private sector landlords who are letting unsafe homes. Does the Prime Minister really think that that is a satisfactory state of affairs?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that housing benefit is such a bad thing, why is it that, when we changed the rules on housing benefit, the Labour party opposed those changes? He talks about bad landlords. We are making changes. We have changed the rules on selective licensing. We think that giving councils free rein to impose burdensome bureaucracy on landlords would cause problems in the market that would actually lead to higher costs for both tenants and landlords. We are introducing new regulations in relation to houses in multiple occupation. We are looking at all those issues. I recognise, as will every Member in the House, the problems that people sometimes experience when they are living in accommodation that is not up to the standard of the accommodation in which we would all wish people to live. That is why we are changing the rules and ensuring that the regulations are there.

Jeremy Corbyn: That is extremely interesting, because only a year ago the Prime Minister voted against a Labour amendment to the Housing Bill that said, quite simply, that all homes for rent in the private sector should be fit for human habitation. Just over a year ago, the Treasury estimated that it was losing half a billion pounds a year in tax unpaid by private sector landlords. So there we have it: £9.5 billion in housing benefit, half a billion pounds not being collected and a very large number of homes that are not really fit for human habitation. Does that not require Government intervention on the side of the tenant and those in housing need?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asks for the Government to intervene. The Government have, through the Housing and Planning Act 2016, introduced further tough measures such as civil penalties, banning orders for serious offences and the extension of rent repayment orders. We have provided money so that local authorities can conduct more inspections of people’s homes, and we have seen more properties being inspected. Thousands of landlords now face further action. Far from not taking action in this area, the Government have done so.

But I say this to the right hon. Gentleman: he may have a model of society where he does not want to see private landlords, and where he wants to see the Government owning everything, deliberating on everything and doing everything for everybody. That is not what we want: we want opportunities for people; we want to help them to take those opportunities. That is a big difference between him and me.

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course we all recognise that there is a mixed housing economy, but we want to make sure that those living in the private rented sector are properly treated and not having to pay excessive levels of rent.

Women’s Aid has said that two thirds of women refuges are going to close because of the benefit cap when it comes into force and that 87% of women and children in those refuges will suffer as a result, and that most of those refuges require an income level that comes mainly from housing benefit—90% of their income comes from it. Does the Prime Minister recognise that

the women in those refuges are very vulnerable and that closure of those refuges would be devastating for them—very dangerous for the most vulnerable people in our society? Will she take action to make sure that the cap does not apply to Women's Aid refuges in any part of Britain?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman raises the very important issue of domestic violence. We should across this House be doing all we can to stop these terrible crimes that are taking place and obviously to provide support to the victims and survivors. That is why we are working on exempting refuges from the cap in relation to what he speaks about, but I would also remind him of the very good record we have on domestic violence. It was a Conservative Government who introduced the new offence of coercive control that put into practice the domestic violence protection orders, who introduced Clare's law, and who are putting £80 million into support for domestic violence victims in the period up to 2020. We are listening and responding to these problems, and we all take this very seriously indeed.

I say to the right hon. Gentleman as well that it is 50 days, I think, since he and I last met across this Dispatch Box—

Jeremy Corbyn: Nice to see you.

The Prime Minister: Well, it is very good to see him sitting in his place. Let us just look at the contrast in what has been done over this summer. The Conservative Government have been working tirelessly to support everyone in this country: £250 million of loans to small businesses, the introduction of the racial disparity audit looking at public services and how they treat people, and of course setting the groundwork for new trade deals around the world. What a contrast with the Labour party, divided among themselves and incapable of uniting our country. What we do know is that there is only one party that is going to provide a country, a Government, an economy, a society that works for everyone, and that is the Conservative party.

Q4. [906107] **Lucy Frazer** (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con): Last week the Children's Society published a report which showed that 10% of children feel their lives have little meaning or purpose. I know that the Prime Minister understands the importance of tackling mental health because she raised it in her Downing Street speech. What further action does she propose to increase mental health support in our schools?

The Prime Minister: My hon. and learned Friend raises an important point, and there has, I think, been a collective concern about the way in which mental health is dealt with. That is why we have put a record £1.4 billion into transforming the dedicated mental health support that is available to young people across the country. That includes £150 million for services to support children and young people with eating disorders. There are various other things, too: we are publishing a blueprint for school counselling services, because my hon. and learned Friend is right that the role that schools play is very important, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary will be looking very closely at the "Good Childhood Report" to see what more we can do.

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): I join the Prime Minister and the leader of the Labour party in praising all Olympians. This is the first day of the Paralympics, and I wish all Paralympians from all parts of these islands well. They are an inspiration to us all.

There is real concern and worry about the prospects for Brexit, especially in Scotland, where the majority of people voted to remain within the European Union. The UK Government have had all summer to come up with a plan and a strategy, but so far we have just had waffle. I want to ask the Prime Minister a simple but important question. Does she want the UK to remain fully within the European single market?

The Prime Minister: What I want for the UK is that we put into practice the vote that was taken by the people of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, that we get the right deal for trade in goods and services with the European Union in the new relationship that we will be building with it, and that we introduce control over the movement of people from the European Union into the United Kingdom. I say to the right hon. Gentleman that we can approach the vote that took place on 23 June in two ways. We could try to row back on it, have a second referendum and say that we did not really believe it, but actually we are respecting the views of the British people. More than that, we will be seizing the opportunities that leaving the European Union now gives us to forge a new role for the United Kingdom in the world.

Angus Robertson: We on these Benches respect the views of the people of Scotland, who voted to remain in the European Union. The European single market—
[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must be heard, and he will be heard.

Angus Robertson: Thank you Mr Speaker. The European single market is the biggest market in the world and it really matters to our businesses and to our economy. I asked the Prime Minister a very simple question, to which there is either an in or an out answer. Let me ask it again. Does she want the United Kingdom to remain fully part of the European single market? Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman does not seem to quite understand what the vote on 23 June was about. The United Kingdom will leave the European Union and we will build a new relationship with the European Union. That new relationship will include control over the movement of people from the EU into the UK, and it will include the right deal for trade in goods and services. That is how to approach it. I also say to him that, in looking at the negotiations, it would not be right for me or this Government to give a running commentary on them—
[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Just as I said that the right hon. Gentleman must be heard, so must the Prime Minister's answer be heard, and it will be.

The Prime Minister: And it would not be right to prejudge those negotiations. We will be ensuring that we seize the opportunities for growth and prosperity across the whole of the United Kingdom, including growth

and prosperity in Scotland. As we saw from the figures released this summer, what really gives growth and prosperity in Scotland is being a member of the United Kingdom.

Q5. [906108] **James Heapey** (Wells) (Con): Last week, hundreds of local residents and businesses attended my faster broadband fair, and many of those with the very slowest speeds claimed a £500 voucher from Connecting Devon and Somerset to fund an alternative broadband connection capable of delivering at least 10 megabits per second. Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating Somerset County Council on this excellent scheme and confirm that the Government remain committed to delivering a universal service obligation of at least 10 megabits per second by 2020?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance and also to join him in paying tribute to his council and the work that it is doing, and indeed to all those involved in that innovative scheme. High-speed broadband is an important part of 21st-century infrastructure, and we will be doing everything we can to ensure that it is available for people, because that will enable us to develop jobs and to grow prosperity in this country.

Q3. [906106] **Richard Arkless** (Dumfries and Galloway) (SNP): Penman Engineering, which was established in my constituency in 1859, was forced into administration this week by one debtor, which is the recipient of huge public sector contracts. I cannot name that debtor. This is an impossible position: Penman has to continue to trade with the debtor as well as pursuing the debt. Will the Prime Minister please put me in touch with the Business Secretary so that we can discuss any potential export support that could be given? How can we ensure that companies that receive enormous amounts of public money pay their bills on time and do not hold our supply chains to ransom?

The Prime Minister: Of course, our thoughts are with all the families affected by what has happened to Penman Engineering. The administrator has a role in ensuring that any sale of the business protects the maximum number of jobs, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has made it clear that that is his priority. I hope that the Scottish Government will offer their support to this long-standing business. As I said, our thoughts are with all those who have been affected, and the administrator will obviously be looking to ensure that the best possible options are found for the company.

Q7. [906110] **Mr Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): In adding my congratulations to the many that the new Prime Minister has received on her appointment, may I comment that following the EU referendum and under her leadership I feel more confident about the future of this country than ever in my lifetime? Will she beware of those who are trying to make leaving the European Union ever more complicated and protracted? To that end—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Progress is very slow and there is far too much noise. The hon. Gentleman will be heard. It is as simple as that.

Mr Jenkin: To that end, will the Prime Minister confirm that there is no basis in law to require the Government to seek the permission of Parliament before invoking article 50?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He is absolutely right and the Government's position is clear. This is a prerogative power and one that can be exercised by the Government. As he alluded to in his question, no one should be in any doubt that those who are trying to prolong the process by their legal references in relation to Parliament are not those who want to see us successfully leave the European Union; they are those who want to try to stop us leaving.

Q6. [906109] **Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The Prime Minister seems less keen than her predecessor on the northern powerhouse, but she also says that post-Brexit Britain is open for business, so where would be better than the great city of Manchester to host the World Expo in 2025? Where better than the home of the world's first programmable computer, where the atom was split and where graphene was invented to showcase the best of Britain to the world and the best of the world to Britain? Will she back our bid?

The Prime Minister: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's lobbying for Manchester and will of course seriously consider what he says. May I also say how pleased I am that Manchester will host the parade for our Olympic athletes?

Q8. [906111] **Mr James Gray** (North Wiltshire) (Con): In this post-Brexit world, does the Prime Minister agree that NATO is a more important than ever cornerstone of the nation's defences, particularly article 5, which lays down that an attack on one member is an attack on all? Does the Prime Minister agree that any politician who will not sign up to that commitment or, even worse, tells NATO to

“give up, go home and go away”

is recklessly risking the defence of the realm?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree with all my hon. Friend's points. We must never forget the importance of NATO. It is the cornerstone of our defence and security, and that strength is based on the fact that all NATO partners have committed to article 5 and to operating on the basis of article 5. Anybody who rejects that is rejecting that security and that defence. They would be undermining not only our national security, but the national security of our allies. What we know from the Labour party is that far from delivering stronger defence, it would cut defence spending, undermine NATO and scrap the nuclear deterrent.

Q11. [906114] **Ms Margaret Ritchie** (South Down) (SDLP): Prime Minister, I have just had a debate in Westminster Hall on the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's report into the Loughinisland massacre, in which six men were shot dead by the Ulster Volunteer Force in a period of direct rule in my constituency. I received a letter from her predecessor in which he acknowledged this unspeakable evil and assured me

that the Government accept the police ombudsman's report and that any allegations of police misconduct will be taken seriously. Will the Prime Minister detail what action she will take to ensure that prosecutions are pursued, that an apology is forthcoming from the Government and that compensation is provided for the lives lost?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is right: what happened at Loughinisland was a terrible evil. I am sure everybody across the House will want to join me in expressing our sympathies to all those affected by the appalling atrocity. As she has said, and as my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) said, the Government accept the police ombudsman's report and the Chief Constable's response. It is important that where there are allegations of police misconduct, those are taken seriously and are properly looked into; if there has been wrongdoing, it must be pursued. Obviously, this is now a matter for the Police Service of Northern Ireland, although I would remind the hon. Lady that the Chief Constable has made it very clear that he is determined to ensure that where there has been wrongdoing, people will be brought to justice.

Q9. [906112] **Richard Fuller** (Bedford) (Con): A long-running review of hospital services in Bedford and Milton Keynes was an abject failure that lost all credibility with local people, for example, by publishing recommendations for significant changes to services and then refusing to answer any questions. Will the Prime Minister assure me that the sustainability and transformation plans for Bedfordshire and elsewhere, to be released by NHS England, will be subject to proper local accountability and full local decision authority?

The Prime Minister: It is absolutely the point of these plans that they are locally driven. They will be considered locally and should be taking into account the concerns and interests locally, not just those of the clinical commissioning groups, but those of the local authorities and of the public. These plans must be driven from the locality, so I give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Q12. [906115] **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): Nearly 2 million people signed up to vote in the European Union referendum earlier this year. It is surely right that constituencies are based on the actual electorate who want to vote, so is the Prime Minister not concerned that the boundary review is going ahead next week without including those 2 million voters?

The Prime Minister: Parties from across this House supported the proposal that the Boundary Commission would follow this timetable and would bring forward these proposals, and that by 2018 those Boundary Commission proposals would be put in place. All parties supported that, and I continue to support it.

Q10. [906113] **Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): Does the Prime Minister share my anger that on the weekend of 23 July up to 250,000 people on the roads to Dover were stuck in gridlock in the sweltering heat for up to 17 hours, without food, water or even being able to go to the loo? Will she support my campaign to make sure that we get better infrastructure to the channel ports,

starting with the lorry park and car park on the M20, dualling the A2 and getting some proper motorways to Dover?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has been a passionate advocate for support for his local area, given some of the pressures Dover finds itself under as a cross-channel port. This is an important issue and we are committed to providing support. The money for the lorry park was, of course, announced last November, the site was announced in July and I believe that consultation is now taking place on the potential design for that site. On the possible dualling of the A2, he is right to say that we want to support local infrastructure to be able to handle the growth in traffic, particularly given that there are expansion plans for the port. I assure him that Dover will be considered as part of the planning for the next road investment strategy.

Q14. [906117] **Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): As many children return to school this week, I am sure the Prime Minister will join me in wishing them all the best for the school year ahead. Will she also provide reassurance to my constituents and to children across London that the objectives of the changes to the schools funding formula will be achieved by levelling up, not by levelling down, and that funding for schools in London will not be cut by up to 20%?

The Prime Minister: I join the hon. Lady in wishing all those going to school, many for the first time, well in their education. We will be aiming to ensure that every child has the education that is right for them and the opportunities that are right for them. It is right that we look at the national funding formula, but that will be done carefully to see what the impact will be across all parts of the country.

Q13. [906116] **Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): Our world-leading universities are one of our country's great assets, so when I next meet the vice-chancellor of York University to discuss Brexit and higher education, what assurances can I pass to him from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that our universities will continue to receive the vital funding they need to thrive beyond 2020?

The Prime Minister: Again, my hon. Friend raises an important point about the relevance and significance of our universities. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to give confidence and reassurance to universities in the summer about the funding arrangements that will continue while we are still a member of the European Union. While we are a member of the EU, we will maintain our full rights and obligations of membership, and expect others to deal with us on that same basis. Of course, looking ahead, we have a higher education Bill going through this House, which is about how we can ensure that we have the university places available in this country to provide the education that we want to provide. We have a great record on higher education in this country. We want to build on that and develop it for the future.

Q15. [906118] **Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I wish to put to the Prime Minister a request that I know she will think is reasonable. St Helier hospital, which is a high-performing local hospital that delivers

excellent care, was built in the 1930s and is in need of very substantial investment. Will she agree to earmark the first two weeks of the £350 million that will be available each week post-Brexit to spend on the reconstruction of my hospital?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's question tempts me to go down a number of routes in answering him. What I will say is that I recognise the importance of his local hospital trust, and I am pleased to say that, over the past six years, we have seen more doctors and more nurses in that trust able to provide more services and more facilities. Indeed, since 2010, the capital spend in the trust has been £72.7 million. We will be looking to ensure that we provide the health service that is right for everyone in this country.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): At the moment, there are 80 vulnerable elderly patients in Kettering general hospital awaiting delayed transfer to social care. The national guidelines say that there should be 25. In the next few weeks, the number is likely to rise to 200—the highest in the country—with a similar number at Northampton general hospital because of proposals by Northamptonshire County Council to extend social care assessments from three days to four weeks. To prevent this crisis, will the Prime Minister authorise a joint meeting of local government and Health Ministers, county MPs, the local NHS and the county council to bang heads together to prevent this crisis from happening?

The Prime Minister: I will ensure that the Health Department is aware of the requests that my hon. Friend has put forward. I think that everybody in this House is well aware of the challenge that we face in relation to the interaction of social care with hospitals. We have already looked at this issue. We have put money into the better care fund, and we have been considering the better working together of health services and social services under local authorities, but it is one of the challenges that we face. There are some areas where this interaction has been done very well, and it is right that we look at those and try to spread that good practice. I will make sure that the Health Department is aware of his concern.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Nine months after signing the Paris climate agreement, the Government still have not ratified the treaty. According to the Committee on Climate Change, they lack half the policies they need to meet their climate targets. With the delayed carbon reduction plan and the very real risk of missing our renewable energy targets, will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to reassure people that the Government remain committed to climate action? Will they follow the example of the 26 states that have already ratified the treaty, including the US and China? Will they give us a firm date for ratification before the follow-up negotiations in November?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to assure the hon. Lady that we will be ratifying the Paris agreement. Indeed, it was my right hon. Friend the current Home

Secretary who, as Energy Secretary, played a very key role in ensuring that the Paris agreement was achieved. We have been identified as the second best country in the world for tackling climate change, and I had hoped that the hon. Lady would want to congratulate us on that.

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): Today is World Duchenne Awareness Day, which is designed to draw attention to a terrible muscle wasting disease that affects a small number of young men. On this day, will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming the recent announcement that the drug Translarna will now be available to these young boys in NHS England, and will she congratulate my constituent Archie Hill, Muscular Dystrophy UK, and all those colleagues in this House and some former Ministers who have worked so hard to make this life-changing drug available in this country?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to join my right hon. Friend in congratulating all those who were involved in making sure that that innovative drug is available, and I thank her for raising awareness of this very important issue. I know that, as Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) met Archie, the young man with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and was inspired by him. I am sure that all Members across the House will welcome the fact that this innovative drug is now available on the NHS. We are committed to ensuring that patients with rare conditions get access to the latest medicines and we are taking some bold steps to speed up that process.

Jim Dowd (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister join me and, I am sure, the whole House in sending our deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to the family and friends of Rozanne Cooper and her 10-year-old nephew, Makayah McDermott, who were mown down by a stolen car in Penge last week? May we also send best wishes to the three young girls who were involved, all family members? While other inquiries, including those by the police and the Independent Police Complaints Commission, are being undertaken and the matter is before the courts, I shall say no more about the specific case. However, is the Prime Minister aware of the widespread public concern that the law on causing death by dangerous driving is wholly inadequate? Will she undertake a review of both its suitability and its applicability as the courts implement it?

The Prime Minister: First, I join the hon. Gentleman in expressing our sympathies to all those who were involved in that terrible accident—the terrible tragedy that took place when, as he said, a stolen car mowed down two people and affected others as well. I am aware of the concern that there is about the law on dangerous driving. The daughter of constituents of mine was killed as a result of dangerous driving, and they have raised concerns with me specifically about their case. This is a matter which, I believe, the Ministry of Justice is looking at.

G20 Summit

12.42 pm

The Prime Minister: With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the G20 summit in China.

Before I turn to the G20, however, I would like to say something about the process of Brexit. On 23 June the British people were asked to vote on whether we should stay in the EU or leave. The majority decided to leave. Our task now is to deliver the will of the British people and negotiate the best possible deal for our country. I know many people are keen to see rapid progress and to understand what post-Brexit Britain will look like. We are getting on with that vital work, but we must also think through the issues in a sober and considered way.

As I have said, this is about getting the kind of deal that is ambitious and bold for Britain. It is not about the Norway model, the Swiss model or any other country's model—it is about developing our own British model. So we will not take decisions until we are ready, we will not reveal our hand prematurely, and we will not provide a running commentary on every twist and turn of the negotiation. I say that because that is not the best way to conduct a strong and mature negotiation that will deliver the best deal for the people of this country. As the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union told the House on Monday, what we will do is maximise and seize the opportunities that Brexit presents. That is the approach I took to the G20 summit.

This was the first time that the world's leading economies have come together since the UK's decision to leave the EU, and it demonstrated the leading role that we continue to play in the world as a bold, ambitious and outward-looking nation. Building on our strength as a great trading nation, we were clear that we had to resist a retreat to protectionism, and we had conversations about how we could explore new bilateral trading arrangements with key partners around the world. We initiated important discussions on responding to rising anti-globalisation sentiment and ensuring that the world's economies work for everyone, and we continued to play our part in working with our allies to confront the global challenges of terrorism and migration. Let me take each in turn.

Trading with partners all around the globe has been the foundation of our prosperity in the past, and it will underpin our prosperity in the future. So under my leadership, as we leave the EU, Britain will seek to become the global leader in free trade. At this summit we secured widespread agreement across the G20 to resist a retreat to protectionism, including a specific agreement to extend the roll-back of protectionist measures until at least the end of 2018.

The G20 also committed to ratify by the end of this year the World Trade Organisation agreement to reduce the costs and burdens of moving goods across borders, and it agreed to do more to encourage firms of all sizes, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and female-led firms, to take full advantage of global supply chains. Britain also continued to press for an ambitious EU trade agenda, including implementing the EU-Canada deal and forging agreements with Japan and America, and we will continue to make these arguments for as long as we are members of the EU.

But as we leave the EU, we will also forge our own new trade deals, and I am pleased to say that just as the UK is keen to seize the opportunities that leaving the EU presents, so too are many of our international partners, who recognise the attractiveness of doing business with the UK. The leaders from India, Mexico, South Korea and Singapore said that they would welcome talks on removing the barriers to trade between our countries. The Australian Trade Minister visited the UK yesterday to take part in exploratory discussions on the shape of a UK-Australia trade deal. And in our bilateral at the end of the summit, President Xi also made it clear that China would welcome discussions on a bilateral trade arrangement with the UK.

As we do more to advance free trade around the world, so we must also do more to ensure that working people really benefit from the opportunities it creates. Across the world today, many feel these opportunities do not seem to come to them. They feel a lack of control over their lives. They have a job but no job security; they have a home but worry about paying the mortgage. They are just about managing, but life is hard, and it is not enough for Governments to take a hands-off approach. So at this summit I argued that we need to deliver an economy that works for everyone, with bold action at home and co-operation abroad. That is why, in Britain, we are developing a proper industrial strategy to improve productivity in every part of the country, so more people can share in our national prosperity through higher real wages and greater opportunities for young people.

To restore greater fairness, we will be consulting on new measures to tackle corporate irresponsibility. These will include cracking down on excessive corporate pay, poor corporate governance, short-termism and aggressive tax avoidance, and giving employees and customers representation on company boards. At the G20, this mission of ensuring the economy works for everyone was echoed by other leaders, and this is an agenda that Britain will continue to lead in the months and years ahead.

Together, we agreed to continue efforts to fight corruption—building on the London summit—and do more to stop aggressive tax avoidance, including stopping companies avoiding tax by shifting profits from one jurisdiction to another. We also agreed to work together to address the causes of excess global production in heavy industries, including in the steel market, and we will establish a new forum to discuss issues such as subsidies that contribute to market distortions. All these steps are important if we are to retain support for free trade and the open economies which are the bedrock of global growth.

Turning to global security, Britain remains at the heart of the fight against Daesh, and at this summit we discussed the need for robust plans to manage the threat of foreign fighters dispersing from Syria, Iraq and Libya. We called for the proper enforcement of the UN sanctions regime to limit the financing of all terrorist organisations and for more action to improve standards in aviation security, including through a UN Security Council resolution which the UK has been pursuing and which we hope will be adopted later this month. We also agreed the need to confront the ideology that underpins this terrorism. That means addressing both violent and non-violent extremism and working across borders to tackle radicalisation online.

Turning to the migration crisis, Britain will continue to meet our promises to the poorest in the world, including through humanitarian efforts to support refugees, and we will make further commitments at President Obama's summit in New York later this month. But at the G20 I also argued that we cannot shy away from dealing with illegal migration, and I will be returning to this at the UN General Assembly. We need to improve the way we distinguish between refugees and economic migrants. This will enable our economies to benefit from controlled economic migration. In doing so, we will be able to get more help to refugees who need it, and retain popular support for doing so. This does not just protect our own people. By reducing the scope for the mass population movements we are seeing today, and at the same time investing to address the underlying drivers of mass migration at source, we can achieve better outcomes for the migrants themselves. As part of this new approach, we also need a much more concerted effort to address modern slavery. This sickening trade, often using the same criminal networks that facilitate illegal migration, is an affront to our humanity, and I want Britain to be leading a global effort to stamp it out.

When the British people voted to leave the European Union, they did not vote to leave Europe, to turn inwards, or to walk away from the G20 or any of our international partners around the world. That has never been the British way. We have always understood that our success as a sovereign nation is inextricably bound up in our trade and our co-operation with others. By building on existing partnerships, forging new relationships and shaping an ambitious global role, we will make a success of Brexit—for Britain and for all our partners—and we will continue to strengthen the prosperity and security of all our citizens for generations to come. I commend this statement to the House.

12.51 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement on the G20 statement and for giving me an advance copy of it.

I first went to China in 1998 to attend a United Nations conference on human rights—the same year in which the European convention on human rights was incorporated into UK law in our Human Rights Act. That legislation has protected the liberties of our people and held successive British Governments to account. That is why Labour Members share the concerns of so many at the Prime Minister's Government's plans to repeal the Human Rights Act.

On the issues of Brexit and the G20, the Prime Minister said that she was not going to reveal her hand on this subject. Nobody would blame her, because she has not revealed her hand, or indeed any of the Government's many hands, on this particular thing; they are unclear about what they are trying to do. The G20 met in the wake of the vote to leave the European Union. We have to be clear: we accept the decision taken by the majority of our people. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the outcome has left this country divided, with increased levels of hate crimes, huge uncertainty about what comes next for our country, and an extraordinary lack of planning and preparation on how to navigate the post-referendum situation in relation to Europe.

That uncertainty and division have been made worse by Government Ministers' political posturing and often very contradictory messages, which do not seem to add up to a considered position. Yesterday the Brexit Secretary said that staying in the single market was "improbable"; the Prime Minister's spokesperson said that was not the case. It is one or the other; it cannot be both. So can the Prime Minister tell the House what the Government's policy actually is?

The negotiations for Britain's withdrawal from the EU must focus on expanding trade, jobs and investment, and on defending social, employment and environmental protections. Many colleagues raised during Prime Minister's Question Time the uncertainty facing universities, for example. The question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) is a very important one. They need certainty about their relationship with European universities immediately—it cannot wait. Parliament and the public cannot be sidelined from this, the greatest constitutional change this country has embarked on for 20 years.

Corporate globalisation is a key issue that has to be addressed, and I am pleased that the G20 did address it—or apparently so. The G20 was formed in response to the global financial crisis of 2008: a devastating event that was triggered by reckless deregulation of the financial sector. It is a model of running the global economy that, as the Prime Minister acknowledges, has produced huge increases in inequality and failed in its own terms. I raised this issue with President Obama during his visit earlier this year. It is clear that rising levels of inequality in all our economies fuel insecurities and pit people and communities against each another.

It has been 40 years since the UK has had to engage in bilateral trade negotiations. The free trade dogma that the Prime Minister spoke of has often been pursued at the expense of the world's most fragile economies, and has been realised with destructive consequences for our environment. We need a UK trade agenda that protects people and the environment. I urge the Prime Minister to stand with me against the use of Britain's aid and trade policies to further the agenda of deregulation and privatisation in developing countries. We need a trade policy that values human rights and human dignity.

In particular, could the Prime Minister inform the House about her talks with the Chinese president in two crucial areas, the first of which I raised with him in my meeting last autumn? The UK steel industry continues to face deeply challenging times. A key reason for this is the scale of cheap, subsidised Chinese steel that is flooding European markets. What assurances did President Xi give that this practice will stop, and stop now, because of the damage it is doing to the steel industry in this country, and indeed in others? On the question of Hinkley, during the summer the Prime Minister announced that she was postponing the decision on the new nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point. Could she take this opportunity to explain to the House why she decided to postpone the decision, and also set out which aspects of the contract she is apparently re-examining?

The Prime Minister was involved in discussions at the G20 about global challenges to security. As the complex, brutal conflicts continue across the middle east, I agree that we need a concerted global response to

[Jeremy Corbyn]

these challenges. The human cost of the refugee crisis, including the thousands drowning in the sea each year, must be our No. 1 concern and our No. 1 humanitarian response. That is why I remain concerned that at the heart of this Government's security strategy is apparently increased arms exports to the very part of the world that most immediately threatens our security. The British Government continue to sell arms to Saudi Arabia that are being used to commit crimes against humanity in Yemen, as has been clearly detailed by the UN and other independent agencies. Will the Prime Minister commit today to halting the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia that have been used to prosecute this war in Yemen, with the humanitarian devastation that has resulted from that?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman raised a number of issues. First, he referred to the question of hate crimes that have taken place in the United Kingdom. We have a proud history in the UK of welcoming people into this country, and there is no place in our society for hate crime. The Government have already published a new action plan to take action against hate crime. We are concerned about the levels of hate crime that we have seen. My right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary met Polish Ministers earlier this week to discuss the particular concern about some terrible attacks that have taken place on Polish people here in the UK. We are very clear, and the police are very clear, that they will act robustly in relation to hate crime. Anybody who has been a victim of this or who has allegations of hate crime taking place should take those allegations to the police.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about what we will be doing in our negotiations with the European Union. I covered this in my statement, but just to reiterate: what we will be doing as we negotiate our leaving the European Union is negotiating a new relationship with the European Union. That will include control on the movement of people from the EU into the UK—I do not think he referred to that—but it will also be about getting the right deal for trade in goods and services that we want to see. It will be a new relationship. As I indicated in my statement, and indeed in Prime Minister's questions, I will not be giving a running commentary, and the Government will not be giving a running commentary, on our negotiations. There is a very good reason for that. We want to get the best deal. We want to get the right deal for the United Kingdom, and if we were to give a constant running commentary and give away our negotiating hand, then that is not what we would achieve.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the issue of steel. I raised the issue of over-production in the plenary session. That was important, because it was not just being raised with the Chinese Government but with all the leaders around the table. Crucially, the G20 has recognised the significance of this and recognised the steps that some Governments are taking, which are leading to some of the problems that we see. That is why the new forum has been introduced, which will be looking at these issues. The Chinese will be sitting on that forum, and they will be part of those discussions.

On Hinkley, I have said it before and I will say it again: the way I work is that I do not just take a decision without looking at the analysis. I am looking at the details and looking at the analysis, and a decision will be taken later this month.

On Saudi Arabia, I met the deputy crown prince at the G20, and I raised with him the concerns about the reports of what has happened in Yemen. I insisted that these should be properly investigated. The Leader of the Opposition referred to our relations with Saudi Arabia, and I think he implied that what happened in Saudi Arabia was a threat to the safety of people here in the UK. Actually, what matters is the strength of our relationship with Saudi Arabia. When it comes to counter-terrorism and dealing with terrorism, it is that relationship that has helped to keep people on the streets of Britain safe.

Finally, I hold the very clear view, as does the Conservative party, that if we are to see prosperity and growth in the economies around the world, the way to get there is through free trade. Free trade has underpinned the prosperity of this country. I will take no lessons from the right hon. Gentleman on action to help developing countries and those who are in poverty elsewhere in the world, because this Government have a fine record of humanitarian support, educating girls and others around the world and helping to give people access to the medical care, water and resources that they need. It is free trade that underpins our growth, and we will be the global leader in free trade. Free trade can also be the best anti-poverty policy for those countries. I will unashamedly go out there and give the message that we want a free trade country, and I am only sorry that the Labour party is turning its back on something that has led to the prosperity of the United Kingdom.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her emphatic support for free trade? In the European Union, according to the Office for National Statistics, we run a deficit with the other 27 member states of £62 billion a year. However, we run a surplus of more than £30 billion on the same goods and services with the rest of the world, and that surplus went up about £10 billion last year alone. Will my right hon. Friend therefore continue her crusade for free trade to develop our world opportunities through Brexit and to make sure that the European Commission and the European Union no longer continue to run our trade policy? We will do it ourselves, and we will do it really well.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. We have an opportunity, and I want to ensure that we are ambitious in seizing that opportunity to develop trade deals around the world. We will be developing the new relationship that I have referred to with the European Union, part of which will obviously be about how we trade with the EU in relation to goods and services, but we have the opportunity to develop trading relationships around the rest of the world. Of course, we cannot formally have those deals in place and operating until we leave the European Union, but we can do the preparation to make sure that they are there when we need them.

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): May I begin by thanking the Prime Minister for an advance copy of her statement? In one area, I agree with her. The G20 summit was very much cast with the Brexit vote and her

Brexit brainstorming from the previous week. I read one report about it, which said that what Brexit appeared to mean at the G20 was the Prime Minister getting shunted to the back of the row of the leaders' group photo, being briefed against by the Americans and the Japanese and being left to big up the fact that Mexico, Australia and Singapore have expressed a vague interest in doing trade deals. [*Interruption.*] The Conservatives do not like it, but that is how other people view the United Kingdom internationally at present.

G20 leaders are as keen as we all are to learn what on earth the UK Government's plans are for leaving the European Union. I asked the Prime Minister twice during Prime Minister's questions a really simple question. Since then, she has said that she will

"not be giving a running commentary"—

it seems more like she is giving no commentary whatsoever—and that she is not going to comment on "every twist and turn". Being a full member of the European single market is not a twist or a turn. It is absolutely fundamental to business across the United Kingdom. Does she seriously expect to be able to hold out for years in not confirming whether she wants the UK to remain a full member of the single market? Please can she tell us now: does she want the UK to remain fully within the single market—yes or no? It is not that difficult.

On trade, we know that the United States and pretty much every other country want a trade deal with the European Union ahead of the United Kingdom, and that they want a trade deal with the UK only after the UK leaves the European Union. Can the Prime Minister tell us how many trade negotiators the UK Government have hired since the referendum?

On immigration, we learned that the promise of a points-based immigration system is being ditched. At the same time, the UK Government apparently plan to trail-blaze a policy first mooted by Donald Trump and build a wall. Is the Prime Minister not totally ashamed? Surely she can come up with something better than that.

May I ask the Prime Minister two specific funding questions? Voters were promised that if they voted to leave the European Union, the national health service would receive an extra £350 million a week. Will the Prime Minister confirm that that promise, like the immigration promise made by the leave campaign, is being broken? An important question that really matters to a lot of people in coastal communities in Scotland is about the funding of more than €100 million that they were due to receive from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund between now and 2023. There has been no commitment whatsoever from the UK Government to honour that funding round. Will she give it now?

It has been very problematic in recent weeks to have to deal with a situation in which the Prime Minister's party has suggested that EU citizens should not participate fully in Scottish public life. We in the Scottish National party totally repudiate that narrow-minded, racist and xenophobic position.

The Prime Minister *indicated dissent.*

Angus Robertson: The Prime Minister is shaking her head, but she should be aware of this. Will she take the opportunity to dissociate her party from this, apologise

for it and confirm that we value the contribution of European Union citizens living in this country, and that we are grateful for it? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: As the right hon. Gentleman has taken twice as much time as he was allocated—punctuated by some interruptions, it is true—I trust that his last sentence will be a pithy one.

Angus Robertson: The Prime Minister has not yet had time to make an oral statement to the House on the important matter of the estates review of the Ministry of Defence. Will she confirm the commitment that the Government have given to communities that there will be consultation with them before final decisions and announcements are made?

Mr Speaker: That is an extremely important matter, but it is not obvious to me how it appertains to the G20.

The Prime Minister: I will try to limit my response to the key issues in my statement that the right hon. Gentleman picked up. First, on the issue of immigration, he says that a points-based system has been rejected. What the people of the United Kingdom voted for on 23 June, as part of the vote to leave the European Union, was to have control over people who move from the European Union into the United Kingdom. A points-based system does not give us that control. A points-based system means that anybody who meets a certain set of criteria is automatically allowed to enter the country. It does not give the Government the opportunity to control and make the decisions about who can enter the country. It is that issue of control that we will be looking for as we decide the relationship that we will have with the European Union in future.

The right hon. Gentleman said a lot about trade deals with other countries, about the EU, about opportunities and so forth. What I saw at the G20, in my discussions with a number of other world leaders, was a great willingness to seize the opportunities that come from the UK leaving the European Union and to do exactly the sort of trade deals that my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) has just referred to. I think we should, as a United Kingdom, be willing to seize those opportunities. We should be ambitious in the deals that we wish to do around the world. As I have said, we should be the global leader in free trade. We should be taking those opportunities and ensuring that, as we leave the European Union, we are able to have the relationships that will ensure growth and prosperity for the whole of the United Kingdom, including growth and prosperity for Scotland.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): At the G20, with the Saudi deputy crown prince, the Prime Minister met the Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel al-Jubeir, who is now in London. Is she as delighted as I am that he made it clear to parliamentarians this morning that we can now add the Gulf Co-operation Council to the list of those parts of the world seeking an early free trade deal with the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I echo my hon. Friend's comments. I am pleased that that has been reiterated. In fact, I discussed the issue with the deputy crown prince, and I am pleased that the GCC is in that position, too.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement and for early sight of it. Now that Australia has today joined America at the G20 last week in slapping down her Government—telling us that we are in fact at the back of the queue for a trade deal—the plain fact is that this Government are not concealing their hand because they have not got a hand or, it would appear, a clue. Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to reassure business and confirm that we will remain a member of the European single market? Does she agree with me that we trusted the British people with the question of our departure, so we should trust them with the question of our destination and put whatever deal she negotiates to the British people in a referendum?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman refers to the remarks that have been made by the Australian Trade Minister. What the Australian Trade Minister has done is, very simply, to set out the legal position. I mentioned it in response to an earlier point. The legal position is that we are not able finally to sign or put into practice trade deals with other countries while we remain a member of the European Union. That is just the situation. It does not mean we cannot prepare for that. It does not mean we cannot negotiate about and discuss that.

I am also very clear that as long as we are full members of the European Union—until the point at which we leave—we will be advocates for free trade. We will be advocates for the trade deals that the European Union is negotiating with other countries. I have given that commitment to Prime Minister Trudeau in relation to the EU-Canada trade deal. I have given that commitment to President Obama in relation to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the negotiation on it. We will play our full part, but at the same time, we will be looking to have the discussions that will enable us, when we leave the European Union, to have the trade deals that will give us the growth and prosperity we want.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on the way in which she, quite rightly, puts forward the huge benefits of free trade. I know that she will be aware and share the concerns of, notably, the financial and automotive sectors about any consequences of our abandoning our membership of the single market, which of course ensures that we can trade free of customs duties and with all the benefits that the single market confers. Although she is right to say that we do not want a running commentary on what now faces us, may I urge her to consider the fact that we do need some principles? What assurances can she give us about customs duties and tariffs, and about our membership of the single market?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely recognise the important role that our automotive industry plays in the United Kingdom. I was very pleased to visit Jaguar Land Rover in Solihull a few days ago to see the huge success that has been made of that company, with the extra employment it has brought and, as I say, the growth that it continues to make.

On the issue of the sort of language used about membership of the single market, access to the single market and so forth, I would say this to my right hon.

Friend. As I said earlier—I repeat it again—we want the right deal for trade in goods and services for the United Kingdom. This is about saying, when we are outside the European Union, what the right relationship will be with the European Union on trade. That is why it is important for us not simply to think of this as trying to replicate something here or something there, but actually to say, “What is the deal that we want for the future?” That is the work the Department for Exiting the European Union is doing at the moment, looking at and, in particular, talking to different sectors—the automotive industry will be one of those sectors—to ask what they are looking for and what they want to see, so that we can forge the deal and then go out there, be ambitious and get it.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Three months ago, the International Syria Support Group agreed, as a last resort, to back airdrops to deliver much needed humanitarian supplies to besieged areas of Syria, including Aleppo. However, since then, the only things that have arrived from the sky have been Russian missiles and Syrian barrel bombs, including, as was alleged yesterday, those with chlorine, a banned chemical weapon. Will the Prime Minister tell the House, based on her discussions at the G20 about the situation in Syria, whether that commitment still holds, and if so, when she expects humanitarian relief finally to get through by whatever means to the people who have suffered for so long?

The Prime Minister: I think I can give the right hon. Gentleman the reassurance that there is still that commitment. The situation on the ground has, as he said, made it incredibly difficult for the delivery of that commitment. The issue of humanitarian aid getting into Aleppo was one that I raised directly with President Putin in my discussions with him.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to concern about the sort of weaponry that is being used, potentially, by the Syrian regime. We have been very clear, as he will know, about our opposition to what is happening in relation to that. We are very concerned about the reports that have come forward. Obviously, it is important that those reports be properly looked at. In the longer term, we remain committed to a political transition in Syria, and that will be a political transition to a Syria without President Assad.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I am very pleased to hear the Prime Minister’s full support for free trade as underpinning our prosperity in Britain and across the world. I had thought, until I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, that that was widely shared on both sides of the House. Given that it is not, and given the worrying noises we are hearing from both candidates in the US presidential election—they both sound not terribly enthusiastic about free trade—will she make it a policy of her Government to campaign for free trade in the United Kingdom and to argue for its merits on the global stage?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend expresses his surprise—I think there was surprise on this side of the House—when the Leader of the Opposition showed his hand in saying that he was not in favour of free trade. Indeed, I suspect many right hon. and hon. Members on the Labour Benches were surprised to hear

that that was the policy of the Labour party. We will be advocates—strong advocates—of free trade, as my right hon. Friend suggested, and we will ensure that we send out that message. As he says, free trade underpins our prosperity.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Like the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), we all understand that this is an early stage of the negotiations, but it would be helpful to know more about what the Prime Minister values in the negotiations and about her aims. She talked a lot about free trade, but she is still resisting saying what she actually thinks about the ultimate expression of free trade in Europe, which is the single market. Please will she tell us and clear up the confusion from yesterday? Does she value membership of the single market? Does she think it should be an aim or an objective of the negotiations, and that we should be trying to stay in it if we can?

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the right hon. Lady that I have answered this question on a number of occasions already today. She will find that if people ask me a question, I will give an answer, and if they ask me the same question, they will get the same answer. I think that that is perfectly reasonable and perfectly normal.

Our aim is to get the right deal for trade in goods and services with the EU, but this will be a new relationship. We will be looking to develop a new model of the relationship between the UK and the European Union. As I said earlier, we will not be setting out every bit of our negotiating hand in advance of entering those negotiations, because that would be the best way to come out with the worst deal.

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, not least what she said on the international concern about some of those on the edges of the market economy: it must be made to work for everyone. On global security, will she firmly back and support the attempts being made today in London by the Syrian coalition to bring forward its own proposals to settle the matter? Will she urge the respective powers that have interests—competing interests—in Syria to accept that the longer they go on fighting over the bodies of the people of Syria, the longer the risk to global security will continue, and that this opportunity being presented in London should certainly be taken?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree with my right hon. Friend. Today is an important point, with the Syrian opposition coming together and the meeting taking place here. I also agree that the best thing for global security is to see an end to the conflict taking place in Syria. I continue to believe that that conflict and the actions of the Syrian regime, under President Assad, are what we have seen encouraging people to join terrorist organisations and go out there to fight, and then perhaps to return to other countries and conduct terrorist attacks. We must ensure that we are playing our part—as I believe the UK is today in hosting the Syrian opposition for these talks—in ensuring that we bring an end to the conflict.

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement. I commend her for the common-sense realism of her approach to negotiating

our exit from the European Union. Is it not very clear that a lot of criticism and commentary now coming from those who advocated for the remain side—a perfectly legitimate point of view—demonstrates a lack of respect for the decision that the British people as a whole have now made? It is time to get on with making the best of that in the way that she proposes. I offer the support of Democratic Unionist Members and of the First Minister of Northern Ireland to the Prime Minister as she tries to achieve the best possible deal for all of the United Kingdom and for Northern Ireland in particular.

On terrorism, I ask the Prime Minister simply this: will she ensure that more action is taken to put in place greater deterrents for those who go around preaching hatred and the radicalisation of young people in the United Kingdom? More needs to be done to send out a strong message by ensuring that strong sentences are passed to act as a deterrent.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his support for the Government's approach. As he says, that is the sensible way to go forward in the negotiations. I want to ensure that the interests of Northern Ireland are fully taken into account in our work, and that was the message I gave when I visited Northern Ireland shortly after I became Prime Minister. In fact, the message I have given to all the devolved Administrations is that we want that full engagement so that we can ensure that the interests of the whole United Kingdom are taken into account.

On terrorism, it is important that we deal with those who preach hatred. We saw the sentences that were given yesterday to Anjem Choudary and another individual. The whole question of the radicalisation of young people in particular, but also generally, whether online or in other ways, is important and needs to be addressed. As the right hon. Gentleman said, we want sentences that give the clear message that that is not acceptable activity for people to be involved in, but we also need to do the sort of work that is happening through, for example, the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit and within Europe, as well as what we are doing to promote mainstream voices against preachers of hate.

Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): After her discussions with other world leaders at the G20, will my right hon. Friend ensure that small and medium-sized businesses are at the heart of future trade negotiations, including the many successful local businesses that will be attending my jobs fair in Louth on Friday?

The Prime Minister: I commend my hon. Friend for holding her jobs fair. I am sure that many opportunities will be offered by local businesses and that many people will be able to take up those opportunities and benefit from the jobs fair.

Small and medium-sized enterprises will play an important role. Earlier in the summer I had a meeting at No. 10 Downing Street with a number of small and medium-sized businesses and representatives of SMEs. What struck me was their optimism about the opportunities now available to the United Kingdom and their willingness to play their part in taking up those opportunities and encouraging the prosperity we want for everyone in our country.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister accept that, like all developed economies with ageing populations, Britain needs to import labour to thrive? Would it therefore not be an act of extreme self-harm for us to give up our full and unfettered access to the single market out of a dogmatic and arbitrary desire to reduce immigration?

The Prime Minister: It is not an arbitrary and dogmatic desire. We recognise the impact that uncontrolled immigration can have on people, particularly those at the lower end of the income scale. The right hon. Gentleman needs to consider carefully the message that the British people gave in the vote on 23 June. I think that vote told us that they want to see the Government able to take control of the movement of people from the European Union into the United Kingdom, and that is what we will do.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): People coming to my constituency and driving along the A45 will see the Rushden Lakes retail development going up with huge steel constructions—the Leader of the Opposition will be pleased to know that 100% British steel is being used there. Does coming out of the EU not give us an opportunity, if necessary, to deal with Chinese dumping of steel? Will the Prime Minister find time next year to come and see Rushden Lakes, as it has some very good shoe shops?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend may just have sealed the deal. I commend and welcome the fact that the Rushden Lakes development is using 100% UK steel—that is very good. We need to look at the issue of overcapacity and over-production, not simply as an individual country, or indeed as the EU, but globally. That was why it was so important that that was on the agenda for the G20 and that the new forum has been set up, with Chinese representation on it.

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab): I believe in enterprise and wealth creation, but I also believe in fair taxes. The International Monetary Fund and the OECD have both said that if the amount of tax that is owed to developing countries was actually paid, that would greatly dwarf the amount of support they get through international aid. Given the Prime Minister's statements on tax avoidance, and as we now have public country-by-country reporting enshrined in law, how will she make this issue a priority for the G20?

The Prime Minister: In my interventions at the G20 I was able to refer to the important issue of tax avoidance and the work that needs to be undertaken. The G20 has been playing a leading role in addressing the issue and galvanising action on it. A number of initiatives have taken place, including on the whole question of those who, as I have said, try to use different jurisdictions to resist the payment of tax due. Action is being taken and I was able to refer to the need to push that particular initiative forward. There are other initiatives, too, such as providing support to developing countries for collecting tax within their countries—that tax is needed and should be collected. Initiatives such as the Addis tax initiative are also important. We have played a leading role in the G20 on this, and the G20 is now playing an important global role.

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking the opportunity at the G20 summit to raise the issue of modern slavery. Will she outline what further steps can be taken to engage with countries around the world to eradicate this evil practice?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the hugely important issue of modern slavery, which is a heinous crime that we need to do more about. I have been encouraging people in other countries to look at the initiative we have taken through legislation—our Modern Slavery Act 2015 is the first of its kind. There is more we can do through law enforcement and other Government agencies working together to ensure that we stamp out the organised crime groups that are behind this terrible crime. In doing that, however, we must never forget that modern slavery takes place here in the UK and that UK individuals are taken into slavery as well. We must not simply think of this as a global issue. We need to act globally, but we need to act locally as well.

Alex Salmond (Gordon) (SNP): Why did the Prime Minister authorise a very public dressing down of the Brexit Secretary merely for telling the House that membership of the single market and free movement of people tend to go together? Is it not possible that the Brexit Secretary, who has believed in this stuff for years, has thought more deeply about it than the Prime Minister, who has been a Brexiteer for a matter of weeks? Can we revert to the traditional practice whereby Ministers are disciplined for misleading the House, as opposed to for the odd occasion when they are caught telling the truth?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I do not recognise the picture the right hon. Gentleman sets out. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union very clearly set out that this is not a zero-sum game. As I have said in response to other questions, the Government are absolutely clear that we will go out there and get the right deal for the United Kingdom and that we are negotiating a new relationship with the EU.

Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con): Is it not vital during this Brexit period that we maintain confidence? Is it not the case that with the opportunity to forge new global trade deals, with record low interest rates, and with the opportunity to free ourselves from burdensome regulation, now is a golden time to invest in the United Kingdom? Will the Prime Minister use forums such as the G20 to continue to make that case?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to do so—I was doing so in Hangzhou at the G20 summit—but we must also welcome the vote of confidence that has been given in the United Kingdom since the vote to leave the EU. The single biggest vote of confidence came from the Japanese company SoftBank, with the £24 billion investment in ARM, but we have also seen investment from companies such as GlaxoSmithKline. This is a time to be confident about the British economy—the fundamentals of the British economy are strong—and we want to encourage that investment in the UK, which is exactly what the Government and I will be doing.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): In July, on the “ConservativeHome” website, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union wrote:

“I would expect the new Prime Minister on September 9th to immediately trigger a large round of global trade deals with all our most favoured trade partners.”

Will the Prime Minister confirm that she will be able to trigger those deals in two days’ time on Friday, as predicted by her Secretary of State, and which countries will be involved?

The Prime Minister: I was involved in discussions with countries on free trade deals that we can develop at the weekend at the G20 summit; I listed some of those countries in my statement, but there are others. I am pleased about the opportunities we now have and at the willingness of other countries to sit down around the table and talk to us about trade deals.

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that for trade to be truly free and to work for everyone, it needs to be free of corruption? Will she update the House on discussions at the summit on tackling corruption and taking forward the actions agreed at the London summit earlier this year? Perhaps she can explain how some of the countries at the summit are a little less keen on taking action and responding to that.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is important that we deal with corruption if we are to have free trade deals and people trading freely around the world but, in addition, corruption sadly gets in the way of the ability of some countries to develop their economies, and of people in them taking the benefits that economic development can bring. The G20 collectively was clear that it wanted to continue that anti-corruption work. I made specific reference to the international anti-corruption co-ordination centre, which we are setting up here in London—a number of countries are joining us in that. That is one part of the action that we need to take, but I can assure my hon. Friend that the G20 was very clear that we needed to continue to press on the outcomes of the London anti-corruption summit.

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab): Many people are not getting a share of globalisation, especially in this country. What specific measures did the Prime Minister and other leaders agree at the G20 to deal with that problem and to ensure that the benefits of globalisation are given out more equally?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right. As I said in my statement, there was a collective agreement echoing the comments that I made for the United Kingdom that we need to ensure that the benefits of globalisation and economic development are truly shared among people. We need to take a number of steps in order to ensure that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills) indicated, in some countries, that means dealing with corruption, but there are a number of other areas. I referred earlier to the work we will be doing on corporate irresponsibility, which was picked up and echoed by a number of leaders around the G20 table. Our commitment remains absolutely strong.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): I very much welcome the Government’s announcement this week that they plan to ban plastic microbeads in many cosmetic products, including face scrubs and toothpastes. As well as the moral stance that the Government take in forums such as the G20 on anti-slavery and free markets, my request is that we continue to be world leaders in taking forward environmental policies so that we can protect our marine wildlife and the rest of the planet.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments about our decision on microbeads. They have an impact on marine life and it is clearly right that we ban them in certain products. We are seen to be leading on issues such as climate change, and we can lead on the wider area of environmental concerns.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Public services are exempt from all EU-negotiated trade deals to which the UK is party. Will the Prime Minister commit today to a public services exemption clause in all post-Brexit UK trade deals, which her International Trade Secretary failed to do in answer to written question from me?

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my previous references to our approach. We are not setting out at this stage the details of any particular negotiation in which we will take part on trade deals. We will go out there and get the right deals for the United Kingdom.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister’s positive statement. The UK, the north-west, Cheshire, Manchester and Liverpool can rightly be proud of our clear strengths in science, with world-leading projects such as the square kilometre array at Jodrell Bank and, more widely, with life sciences. Will she confirm that those sectors will continue to be central to what the Government do with the northern powerhouse and their new industrial strategy, and central to the new trade deals, which are so vital to the future of our economy?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for that question, which enables me to recall that I did not respond to a point made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) when he talked about the northern powerhouse. The Government remain absolutely committed to the northern powerhouse. The developments in new industries and new scientific projects such as those to which my hon. Friend refers have been and remain an important part of that. I assure him that, as we look towards those new trade deals, we will also look at the developments that can take place and what innovative decisions we can take. We want to ensure that we are not only looking at trade in traditional goods and services, as it were, but asking what more we can do and what we can develop for the future.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for clarifying that her Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union was wrong to rule out membership of the European single market, that her Foreign Secretary was wrong to campaign for a points-based immigration system and that her International Trade Secretary was wrong to say that we are leaving the customs union, but is it not the case that, if we want

[Emma Reynolds]

to strike trade deals with non-EU countries—I am someone who appreciates the value of free trade deals—we will have to leave the customs union, which will bring disadvantages for UK businesses and foreign direct investment?

The Prime Minister: I will not repeat what I said earlier about our stance on the negotiations but, given what the Labour leader said in the Chamber today, I encourage the hon. Lady to take him to one side and point out to him the benefits of free trade.

Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con): I am delighted to hear the Prime Minister's obvious commitment to free trade, but in many respects free trade is on the retreat in the world today. Global trade and investment are on the decline, we have seen a lack of support for it in the United States Congress and from presidential candidates, and, even here, misinformation and scaremongering from some quarters in recent years has led to an erosion of faith in the benefits of free trade among our constituents. Does the Prime Minister agree that, given the centrality of free trade and of signing agreements to the future of our economy, now is the time to put aside that scaremongering, particularly from some parts of the left of British politics, and to believe in free trade and its ability to work for everyone?

The Prime Minister: It was significant that the G20 was very clear that we wanted to take action on protectionism and we did not want a retreat to it. My hon. Friend makes an important and valid point that was discussed at the G20 about the need for all who support free trade to go out there, make the case for it and show the benefits that it can bring. As I said earlier—this has been universally echoed on the Government Benches—free trade underpins our economic growth and prosperity.

Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): Given, as we understand it, that comments made from the Dispatch Box by the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union on Monday are to be regarded as personal opinion as opposed to Government policy, and that the remarks made by the Secretary of State for International Trade on the customs union need to be changed and if it is the case that the Prime Minister is to continually amend statements and comments made by her newly appointed Ministers, why did she make the appointments in the first place?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady refers to matters that have been referred to in previous questions. I answered those previous questions and I suggest she takes the answer I gave to them.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): The Prime Minister has already referred to the very substantial recent investment by the Japanese firm SoftBank. Will she give the House a little more on the reassurances she is able to give to overseas companies to enable them to continue to invest in the UK, as a centre of excellence in manufacturing?

The Prime Minister: I am very pleased to say that we encourage companies to invest in the United Kingdom. There are some real opportunities here in the UK. We are a centre of excellence in certain areas of manufacturing.

I referred earlier to the visit I made to Jaguar Land Rover. To see the investment coming into the United Kingdom to reinvigorate that company, to create jobs and growth, is a very good example of what can be done. I want to see that happening across a wide range of industries and across the whole country.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): May I follow the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) on imported labour and people who come to work here? Some 10% of doctors in the NHS are EU nationals and their position is now very uncertain. We know that since 23 June doctors who are EU nationals have been put off applying to work here. Since then, of course, we have had the vicious attacks and the increase in hate crime to which the Prime Minister referred. We need more doctors in the NHS. We have many unfilled training places. What is she going to say to reassure EU nationals working in the NHS, and to the people who should be looking at coming to work here, that we value them?

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to say to the hon. Lady that under this Government we have more doctors working in the NHS. The number of doctors in the NHS has increased since we came into government. On the position of EU citizens, I fully expect to be able to guarantee the status of EU citizens. While we are members of the EU their status does not change. I fully expect, intend and want to be able to guarantee the status of those EU citizens. The circumstances in which that would not be possible would be if the status of British citizens living in other EU member states was not guaranteed.

Mr Stewart Jackson (Peterborough) (Con): During my right hon. Friend's bilateral talks with President Putin, did she gently but firmly disabuse him of the notion, put around recently by among others the Leader of the Opposition, that this country is less committed than hitherto to its NATO treaty obligations, in particular article 5, and that on the contrary we remain wholly committed to the autonomy and sovereignty of our partners, particularly the Baltic states and Poland?

The Prime Minister: The Government and I are absolutely clear about our commitment to NATO and to article 5. As I indicated earlier, that is a central underpinning of NATO and of the joint security we provide for each other as members of NATO. I think many people will have been shocked and deeply concerned by the Leader of the Opposition's statement, when he suggested that we would not be signing up to article 5. It is an underpinning of NATO that ensures not only our national security but the national security of our allies.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Were there any discussions with the Chinese about the acquisition of the Global Switch data company by the Chinese DailyTech group? If Hinkley Point poses some security questions, would this acquisition not also have some security issues?

The Prime Minister: I answered earlier, in response to the Leader of the Opposition, on how I am addressing the question of Hinkley Point. We have seen Chinese investment coming into the United Kingdom and we

will continue to see Chinese investment coming into the United Kingdom. We have a global strategic partnership with the Chinese and that will continue.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): Fortuitously, London is the global leader in international shipping. International shipping law is at the heart of international trade. As a former shipping lawyer, I am proud to know a great many London-based international shipping organisations. May I invite the Prime Minister to ensure that her Government make contact with those organisations based here in London to ensure we get the best international shipping deals with international trade?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend refers to a number of organisations being based here. The International Maritime Organisation, a very important shipping organisation, is based here in London. I assure my hon. Friend that the Department for Exiting the European Union is looking across sectors of activity to ensure that the views of those sectors will be taken into account as we develop our proposals for the relationship with the EU.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): On behalf of steelworkers in my constituency, may I reiterate how disappointing it was to learn that the Prime Minister did not raise with the Chinese President specifically the overproduction of Chinese steel? May we have a commitment from the Prime Minister here today that her Government will do absolutely everything now and in the future proactively to raise these issues? We need the Prime Minister to do that to protect our steel industry.

The Prime Minister: I did raise the issue. I chose to raise it in the plenary session so it was clearly raised not just before the Chinese President but before the other leaders. Crucially, what has come out of the G20 is an agreement to set up a new forum, which will be looking at actions that lead to overcapacity and overproduction. The Chinese will be a member of that forum.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): May I first congratulate the Prime Minister on focusing more on policy discussions at the G20 than where she was positioned in the photo-op, upsetting to the Scottish National party though that may be? Will the Prime Minister confirm that, while tackling international tax avoidance through the G20 is vital, there is also a great deal we can do, and indeed are doing ourselves?

The Prime Minister: Absolutely. My hon. Friend is right. I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) for the steps he took as Prime Minister to encourage not only action in relation to tax evasion and avoidance here in the UK but globally. It is an important issue that we need to address. My hon. Friend is absolutely right: we should always look to see what we can be doing here in the UK.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): With Saudi Arabia patently failing to carry out an independent investigation into potential breaches of international humanitarian law, will the Prime Minister

exercise global leadership and call for that independent investigation to be held so we can find out what is going on in Yemen?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated earlier, I raised with the deputy crown prince of Saudi Arabia the importance of ensuring that any allegations are properly investigated. I reiterate the point I made earlier that we have a relationship with Saudi Arabia across a number of issues. The relationship we have with it in dealing with terrorism is important, because it helps to keep the streets of Britain safe.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): My constituents and I are enormously encouraged by the international interest shown in signing free trade deals with the UK. Did the G20 discussions confirm my suspicion that interest in doing exactly that is only going to grow? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the particular responsibility of every Member of this House to shout from the rooftops for jobs and investment in this country? My constituents' jobs are, frankly, not a matter of dogma.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has spoken very well on this issue. I confirm that what was very welcome was the way in which a number of countries were coming up to me throughout the summit to say that they wanted to be sitting down and talking to the UK about trade deals. As he says, this is not a matter of dogma; it is a matter of jobs and people's security. It is a matter of the prosperity of this country.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): In the Prime Minister's remarks on refugees and migration, she referred to humanitarian efforts but not to human rights. In those words and in her other words today, was she alluding to such things as the Khartoum process, where it is envisaged that refugees in and through the horn of Africa will be concentrated into camps in Sudan, a country whose Government have been bombing their own people and a country whose security forces have been implicated already in nefarious trafficking? Given all that she has said, where is the UK in relation to the Khartoum process? Without it being a matter of commentary on the Brexit exercise, will the UK continue to chair that process on behalf of the EU, pending Brexit?

The Prime Minister: On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the chairmanship of the Khartoum process will move away from the UK; I think, from memory, that it will go to Ethiopia. It will not stay with the EU; it will be done on a rotation basis. The UK is part of and has been chairing that process.

We have consistently said as a Government—and I did so as Home Secretary—that it is important for us that, if we are going to deal with the significant movements of people that we have seen, including the significant movements of economic migrants across the world, particularly into Europe, we need to work with countries upstream. We need to deal across the board, ensuring not only that people have better opportunities in their home country so that they do not feel the need to come to Europe to grasp opportunities, but that we work with transit companies to stop the terrible trade that often takes place in organised crime groups encouraging the illegal migration and smuggling of people and human trafficking. We will continue to work across all of those.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): As we begin the process of leaving the EU, and given my right hon. Friend's experience of the G20, particularly in her conversations with the other world leaders, what is her view of Britain maintaining a strong voice on the world stage after we have left the EU, and of our ability to lead discussions on the issues that matter to us?

The Prime Minister: What I saw in my discussions at the G20 was that our leaving the EU will not have a negative impact on us as a spokesman on the world stage. Indeed, I am very clear that I want the UK to be a global leader in free trade. There are many issues already where the UK has been at the forefront of discussions, including on climate change and tax avoidance and evasion. It is important that we continue to play that role. We are the fifth largest economy. We will be out there as a bold, confident, outward-looking nation, continuing to play a key global role.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Not least in the light of the horrific scenes in Syria over the whole summer, did the Prime Minister have any discussions with others at the summit about how we might better protect civilian areas, particularly hospitals and other infrastructure that has been targeted, perhaps even through using our assets and intelligence, as well as humanitarian airdrops, if necessary? Has she given any further consideration to what we can do?

The Prime Minister: We are all concerned about some of the activities that we have seen taking place in Syria. That is why, as I indicated earlier, we need to put all our efforts into trying to ensure that we can bring an end to this conflict, because of the horrific impact it has had on millions of Syrian people, including some who have left Syria, some who are still in Syria and some who are living in appalling conditions and are under threat of action being taken against them by various forces. We need to redouble our efforts and we need to look—we have been very clear about this—at how we can increase the ability for humanitarian aid to get through to those who need it. Sadly, it is proving to be very difficult actually to put that into practice, but our desire to continue to try to find ways of doing that is still there.

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): Did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have the chance to discuss the issues of Ukraine and Crimea with the Russian representatives? At the recent Rose-Roth seminar in Ukraine in June, which I attended as part of my NATO duties, much evidence was presented that ethnic cleansing of the Crimean Tatar people is happening on the biggest scale possible, with some horrendous human rights abuses. If the Prime Minister has not had the opportunity to raise the issue, may I ask her to encourage my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to look very closely at it so that she can be prepared at the next G20 to raise this terrible situation, which is happening right now?

The Prime Minister: The Government's position on what has happened in Crimea has not changed and I was able to refer to our position on Ukraine in a number of the discussions that I had, but we will continue to return to the subject.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): Was the Prime Minister lobbied at the G20 by the Chinese and US Governments about ratifying the Paris climate treaty as quickly as possible?

The Prime Minister: The Chinese and US Governments did, of course, indicate their intention and their ratification of the Paris agreement shortly before the G20 summit started, and I was clear with everybody that it is our intention to ratify it.

Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): I am encouraged that the Prime Minister has indicated the willingness of countries to instigate trade deals with the UK, but is she confident that we have the correct number of officials, negotiators and people with the correct experience to be able to deliver those crucial trade deals?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, over the years, because of the position of the UK within the EU, we have not developed negotiators on trade ourselves, but we are developing that within the Department for International Trade. I thought it was important to set up a separate Department that could bring in that expertise. We are looking at how we can ensure that. The Department has been building up, but we will look to increase the expertise within it.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): Child refugees face psychological trauma and loss. They are being systematically exploited and abused. What discussions took place to ensure their safety, progress reunification and meet our commitment under the Dubs amendment?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is right to refer to the psychological impact that being a refugee can have on children. That is why, as part of the support that we give as a country, through our Department for International Development support of humanitarian aid for refugees, we provide support of that sort to children. On those refugees who are being resettled here under our Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement scheme, one of the issues that we look at is the support and counselling that individuals might require. On the Dubs amendment, discussions have been taking place with local authorities. That is, of course, a matter for the United Kingdom; it was not a matter for discussion at the G20.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): I very much welcome the Prime Minister's statement. Paragraph 44 of the communiqué looks at the strategy to tackle forced displacement of people and protecting refugees. On this day last year, I asked the then Prime Minister about the creation of safe havens for the protection of civilians fleeing Syria, and I was told that that was the "right sort of thinking". Were there any discussions with other countries at the G20 about the creation of safe havens, either now or in future conflicts?

The Prime Minister: I understand my hon. Friend's point and the concept he sets out. It is, of course, very difficult to look at some of these issues in practice in terms of what is happening on the ground. He is right, however, that the communiqué refers to mass movements of people and that we need to think very carefully about

the support that we can provide for refugees. That is why this country is proud of being the second-biggest bilateral donor of humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): Thousands of jobs in north Staffordshire are dependent on international trade. Given the Prime Minister's reluctance to outline her priorities for future negotiations, will she inform us who she is consulting domestically in our industrial centres to ensure that their views are represented in the negotiations?

The Prime Minister: As I have indicated, the Department for Exiting the European Union is looking across and consulting different sectors of the economy on their requirements. I am very interested to hear that the hon. Lady is an advocate for free trade. I suggest that she imparts that to her party leader, who has patently set out this afternoon that his policy for his party is not to believe in free trade.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): This is the first opportunity I have had warmly to welcome my right hon. Friend to her place, so may I do so? I entirely concur with her comments on a free economy and a manufacturing base in this country that will provide jobs and wealth for all. Will she take into account the effect of green taxes and other restrictions on large manufacturers, to ensure that we can compete properly, on a level playing field, around the world?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome. I assure him that what he asks will, indeed, be taken into account. One of the benefits of bringing energy and climate change policy into the new Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is that energy policy can be seen alongside the requirements of business and our industrial strategy as it develops.

Tristram Hunt (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab): First things first: I believe in free trade. Indeed, Josiah Wedgwood, an early constituent of mine, negotiated one of the first free trade pacts with France in the 1770s, but now many of my constituents are employed at the nearby Toyota plant in Derby and they were very concerned by the Japanese Government's comments about investment in the UK if we did not have access to the single market. What conversations did the Prime Minister have with the Japanese about their concerns? May I ask her to take control of the Brexit negotiations and make sure that jobs and prosperity in north Staffordshire are not put at risk?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must be the oldest and most long-serving Member in the history of the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Let me reassure the hon. Gentleman that negotiations will look to ensure, as I have said in a number of answers, that we secure growth in jobs and prosperity in the United Kingdom. That applies to the relationship we will have with the European Union post-Brexit and to the trade deals that we will be able to strike around the rest of the world. That is where we are focusing our efforts, and we will continue to do so.

Richard Fuller (Bedford) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for signalling to the G20 that free trade will be the core of British strategy as we leave the European Union, and for indicating that substantial progress can be made on country-by-country trade agreements right now. May I add two things to her list? First, can we establish a distinctively British position in the multilateral trade in services agreement? Secondly, will the Prime Minister have a conversation with the Secretary of State for International Development about how to use this opportunity to enhance the trade facilitation agreement, as agreed at the World Trade Organisation in 2013?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a good point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development will certainly be looking at the sort of issues he has raised. I can assure him that, in looking at these trade deals, we will consider every aspect to ensure that what we get is the right deal for the UK. I think that the sort of trade deals we are talking about will be the right deals not only for the UK, but for the countries that we deal with as well.

Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP): Given the Prime Minister's refusal a number of times to answer direct questions from my right hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Angus Robertson), among others, on whether or not we would remain members of the single market, when will this House be presented with any kind of detail—beyond the soundbites—of what Brexit actually means?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is not going to get any different answer from me to the one that I have given on numerous occasions throughout this afternoon. I will simply say this: if we are going to negotiate the right deal for the United Kingdom on trade in goods and services, it would be quite wrong for this Government to give away all our negotiating position in advance of starting those negotiations.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): As the Prime Minister knows, about 140,000 workers in the UK are employed by Japanese firms. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt) has mentioned Toyota, but Nissan, Honda and Hitachi all have large manufacturing bases that are vital to local economies and the supply chain. The Prime Minister knows that the huge uncertainty about our future relationship with the EU and the single market is creating difficulties. I want to provide her with another opportunity to say how, in her discussions with the Japanese and others, she tried to mitigate those risks to inward investment and jobs.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who reminds me that I did not fully answer the question from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt) who referred to the issue of Japanese firms. I was able to sit down and discuss these matters with Prime Minister Abe, and the outcome was a positive desire to take forward further discussions on how we can ensure that we are getting the best possible trading relationship with Japan, and that we can continue to see Japanese investment in the UK. I am pleased to say that the single biggest vote of confidence on investment in the United Kingdom since we had the vote to leave

[*The Prime Minister*]

the European Union came, of course, from a Japanese company—from SoftBank with its £24 billion takeover of ARM.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Let me first commend the Prime Minister and her Ministers for the hard and excellent work that has been done to prepare and secure trade deals across the world. An example of a trade deal signed with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has just secured us the export of beef to the United States of America for the first time in some 20 years—despite President Obama telling us that we would go to the back of the queue. Does the Prime Minister agree that, for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, if the price is right and if the product is of the highest quality, the world is truly our oyster?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. We can trade many products from various parts of the United Kingdom very well with other parts of the world. They are quality products, and it is the quality of the product that will lead to people wishing to take them.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Further to her answer to the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams), the Prime Minister will have seen the reports that we have seen that there is a lack of people in the UK with the necessary experience to negotiate trade deals. Is that a matter of concern to her? Are we being forced to employ people from overseas to do that job because they have those necessary skills?

The Prime Minister: As I said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams), I think it was important to focus the Government's efforts on trade deals through the creation of a new Department—the Department for International Trade. That Department is building up its expertise and will continue to do so.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): I do not know whether there was any discussion at the G20 of America's greatest cultural export, "Star Trek", which celebrates its 50th anniversary tomorrow and is commemorated in early-day motion 393, but if any of us want to live long and prosper, we must tackle climate change. Given the commitments of the US and the Chinese at the summit, does the Prime Minister regret abolishing the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change? When will the UK ratify the Paris agreement?

The Prime Minister: I think I can honestly say that in all the discussions that I had in the G20 and all the plenary sessions that I sat and listened through, "Star Trek" was never mentioned.

Yes, we will be ratifying the Paris agreement. People seem to think that the commitment of the Government to tackling climate change can only be represented by whether or not there is a separate Department devoted to it. That is not the case. The important point is that we have taken energy and climate change and put them alongside business and industrial strategy, and I think

that by doing so we will get a better, more strategic approach on these issues. But I repeat the point that I made to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) at Prime Minister's questions earlier by saying that if the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) is interested in climate change, I would hope that he would congratulate the Government on what we have done in relation to climate change, because we have been at the forefront of encouraging others to take action on emissions.

Tom Blenkinsop (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab): We know the Prime Minister raised the issue of steel at the plenary session, but did she also raise it at the bilateral session? Did she have any discussions with the Chinese delegation about market economy status? What powers will the new forum have? I have to say that when states such as China are communist, when the state owns its own steel industry and when it deliberately uses measures to distort the market and undermine the steel industries of other nations, it is a bit rich to hear lessons from the Tory party about free trade. When are we going to get immediate trade defence measures from this Government? For the last four to five years, we have seen an explosion of dumping into the British market by the Chinese state—with zero action from this Government.

The Prime Minister: It is absolutely not true that this Government have taken no action. The whole question of global overcapacity is significant in the steel industry, and it is an issue for other industries as well. That is why it is important that this forum, on which the Chinese will be represented, has been set up. Let us look at the various ways in which we have been supporting the steel sector. The industry had certain asks of us. We secured state aid to compensate for energy costs, and flexibility over EU emissions regulations. We made sure that social and economic factors can be taken into account when the Government procure steel. We successfully pressed for the introduction of anti-dumping duties to protect UK steel producers from unfair trade practices. This Government have taken and will continue to take many steps, because we recognise the importance of the steel industry to the UK.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): When the Prime Minister was in China, did she have any discussions with the leaders of France and Germany as to which city is likely to replace the City of London as Europe's financial capital when the City's current trading relationship with Europe is severed? If she did not, when she does, will she please ask them to consider Edinburgh, which is currently the UK's second largest financial centre and is the capital city of a country with a Government who are very clear that they intend to remain in the single market?

The Prime Minister: The hon. and learned Lady raises the issue of Scotland and whether it will be part of the European Union's single market post-Brexit. The decision that was taken on 23 June was a decision of the people of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. The best thing for growth and prosperity for Scotland is to remain part of the United Kingdom, and I intend to make sure that when the UK has left the

European Union, we will be able to seize opportunities that will be to the benefit of people across the whole United Kingdom, including Scotland.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The Prime Minister is rightly using summits like the G20 to press Britain's case in a globalised economy. May I press her a bit further on the issue of Manchester's bid for Expo 2025, which I raised at Prime Minister's Question Time? Part of the Ashton Moss site is in my constituency.

As the Prime Minister knows, the United Kingdom has not hosted Expo since Dublin in 1907; before that, there was the Great Exhibition in London. The issue is therefore important in terms of national pride. It should also be noted that Expo 2015 in Milan brought 22 million visitors to that city, and a £7 billion investment. Will the Prime Minister meet the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Tameside Council, myself and other Members, so that she can fully appreciate the benefits of Britain's putting in a bid for the Expo?

The Prime Minister: I would just say to the hon. Gentleman, 10 on 10—in fact, I think probably 20 on 10—for effort in promoting Manchester as a potential host of Expo. I will listen very carefully about the proposal that he has made.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): I do support free trade, but may I ask the Prime Minister whether her vision of free trade is a vision of Britain as an offshore tax haven with lower health standards, lower environmental standards and lower labour rights? Or will she ensure that any bilateral trading agreement with America and Canada does not contain new powers for transnational companies to sue our Government in response to laws that we pass here to protect our environment, our health and our workers through the

investor-state dispute settlement clauses in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman has misrepresented TTIP, which has, of course, happened before. All I say to him is that we will be going out there to get the right deals in trade for the United Kingdom with other countries around the globe. We have a real opportunity to be a global leader in free trade, and that is what we will be.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): I am sure that, on Monday, members of the European Union delegation to the G20 were delighted that the Secretary of State for leaving the European Union stipulated on the Floor of the House that free trade, or free movement of people at least, with one of its member states will exist when the remainder of the United Kingdom leaves the European Union—that is the common travel area with Ireland. Given that the free movement of people through Ireland and Britain is built on equal rights, will the Prime Minister advise the House that there will be no change at all to the Republic of Ireland Act 1948, as amended in 1949, which gives Irish citizens more or less non-foreign status within the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: Discussions were taking place with the Irish Government, prior to the decision for us to leave the European Union, to consider how we could enhance and improve the current arrangements for the common travel area. Of course, those discussions now continue in the future against the background of the different circumstances.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the Prime Minister and to all colleagues.

Points of Order

2.13 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The BBC is reporting that “Newsnight” believes that the House of Commons Committees on Arms Export Controls are going to recommend that the Government no longer sell arms to Saudi Arabia. I make no bones with that; I rather agree with “Newsnight”, but the point is that it says it is doing this on the basis of having seen a draft report from the Committees. The House has always taken the leaking of draft reports from Committees to the media extremely seriously. I hope, Mr Speaker, that you will have an opportunity to speak to the Committees to establish whether that is the case, and if so, what remedial action the House can take.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. What he says about the seriousness with which leaks of copies, or draft copies, of Select Committee reports are taken is absolutely true. He is quite right about that: it is a very serious matter. I do not know whether there has been such a leak or whether there is merely speculation, but I am happy to make inquiries into the matter, and knowing the dogged and tenacious character of the hon. Gentleman, I have a feeling that if I do not get back to him, he will probably return to it. We will leave it there for now, and I am most grateful for him for the public service that he has done in mentioning it.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Earlier today, during Cabinet Office questions, it seemed to be suggested by some hon. Members that the Boundary Commission was a gerrymandering organisation, there to act at the behest of the Government. My understanding, sir—and I would welcome your confirmation or, indeed, correction, if I am not correct—is that the commission is entirely independent, that it will come up with its own proposals, and that we, as Members of Parliament, and our constituents will then be able to respond to them through a formal consultation process. Can you confirm, Mr Speaker, that the commission does not act, or come up with proposals, at the behest of the Government?

Mr Speaker: I am very happy to confirm that the Boundary Commission operates, and has always been expected to operate, on the basis that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

BILL PRESENTED

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Secretary Sajid Javid, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Greg Clark, Secretary Chris Grayling, Secretary Andrea Leadsom and Ben Gummer, presented a Bill to make provision about planning and compulsory purchase; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 61) with explanatory notes (Bill 61-EN).

Workers' Rights (Maintenance of EU Standards)

Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)

2.15 pm

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a bill to make provision about the safeguarding of workers' rights derived from European Union legislation after the withdrawal of the UK from the EU; and for connected purposes.

I am delighted to have secured this timely opportunity to highlight some of my concerns about the future of workers' rights in Britain post-Brexit.

This Bill was brought about by necessity. Despite the warnings from the TUC and others about the potential for workers' rights to be significantly undermined if we left Europe, the Government have, to date, failed to explain just how they will ensure that that does not happen. I now call on them to take proactive steps to protect employment rights that are not contained in primary legislation and that therefore risk falling away post-Brexit. It is no use adopting a wait-and-see attitude; people in this country deserve to know that their rights at work will not suffer detriment.

Research conducted by the Library has highlighted several areas of legislation that derive either partly or wholly from European directives. They include rights for agency workers, the European Works Council, information and consultation of employees, health and safety, TUPE, the working time directive and the protection of young people at work. Those are the broad areas that could disappear if the Government opted to repeal the European Communities Act 1972, in which case there would be no legislative framework relating to, for example, collective consultations on restructures, redundancies, shift pattern changes or pay. Those are not small, inconsequential or obscure areas of employment law; they are up front and centre for many working people today who, in an increasingly unstable labour market, rely more than ever on the certainty of protections that can be afforded to them under that legislation.

For more than 40 years, the EU has devised laws designed to protect working people from exploitation and discrimination. Trade unions have operated together at a European level to secure agreements across all nations to better protect workers. The rules have ensured that, regardless of any Government's ideology, hard-fought-for minimum standards have been protected. They have kept those rights a non-negotiable distance away from the potential deregulatory whims of Ministers who may take the view that such rights are no more than cumbersome red tape. After all, we know that the Secretary of State for International Trade—the very Minister who is responsible for negotiating our trade agreements as we exit the European Union—is on record as having said that it is “too difficult” to fire staff. Members of Parliament must not allow the downgrading of workers' rights to be an unfortunate side-effect of the Government's negotiations.

In July, on the steps of Downing Street, the Prime Minister referred to those who have a job but do not always have job security. For millions of agency workers in the care sector, retail, security or factory work, the agency workers legislation ensures that they have access

to the same wages and holiday entitlements as permanent workers and have equal access to facilities, vacancies and amenities. That is progressive legislation, which recognises the changing needs of an increasingly so-called flexible workforce, and we should not hesitate to secure our own domestic laws to support those workers.

In recent days, we have been reassured by the Government that Brexit will not undermine workers' rights. Indeed, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union wrote in his July article for the "ConservativeHome" website that, in his view, it is

"not employment regulation that stultifies economic growth".

If that is the case, there should be no barriers to the Government positively reviewing which elements of UK employment law will be without any foundations after leaving Europe unless appropriate alternatives are implemented, and then implementing them. Given that the UK has one of the most lightly regulated workforces in the OECD, it is right the Government should seek to uphold these minimum standards.

Further, much UK employment law originating from the EU has become a basic expectation of reasonable employers. The protection afforded to workers is woven into the fabric of the employment relationship—for example, no discrimination against part-time or fixed-term workers and the right to rest breaks, paid holiday and leave for working parents. All those things are now standard; we should not be going backwards.

If we take a closer look at TUPE—the transfer of undertakings, protection of employees—it is clear the intention is to benefit workers. It means that if someone's employer contracts out their job role to another organisation, or there is a company takeover, they can expect certain minimum guarantees in relation to these changes. They can expect that there will be a period of consultation. They can expect that there will be reasonable sharing of information. They can expect that any proposed changes to structures, salaries or redundancies will be discussed within the consultation. If they are transferred to the new employer, their salary, holiday and sick leave will all be protected, as will their pension, unless another agreement has been made during the negotiations.

Importantly, rights to representation and recognition of trade unions also transfer, providing certainty and reassurance to affected employees. After transfer, employees continue to be protected unless the receiving employer can provide evidence of operational, technical or economic purposes that make it impossible for them to continue with certain terms and conditions. Even then, they must undertake sufficient consultation before they can make those changes. This is only possible because of the European legislation that provided the TUPE framework.

We should accept a reality here. TUPE and other EU-derived legislation is not perfect. As we have seen with other legislation such as maternity and paternity leave, our Parliament—us, here—can make the choice to go further and offer more than the minimum requirements of legislation. But in this instance, it has not, choosing the least burdensome interpretation of the legislation.

Having taken numerous groups of employees through TUPE transfers as a Unison officer, I recognise the weaknesses within the law, but that is all the more reason to be concerned about what would happen if TUPE were not there to act as a check and balance.

Before TUPE, employers were able to make the staff of a transferring unit redundant regardless of whether their job would exist within the new undertaking. Very often, those same staff would have to go through a recruitment process to secure their previous jobs, but often on lower wages, with worse pensions, fewer holidays and increased responsibilities. These were workers such as school meals assistants and refuse collectors who were not even given the chance to participate in any consultation. We surely would not want to place that kind of disruption and uncertainty on workers again by rolling back to the bad old days, but roll back we might. Without there being any recourse to previous European Court of Justice rulings, we may find ourselves sleepwalking into a situation where recent positive outcomes for workers, such as carers who do sleep-in shifts receiving a full wage for their time, are no longer adhered to as employers seek to cut their costs.

We should not allow the potential for European case law to simply be discarded, as it risks dumping swathes of precedent in favour of re-litigation of settled principles. For example, relatively recent ECJ case law around the calculation of normal remuneration for holiday pay under the working time regulations must factor in non-guaranteed overtime, which is not explicitly stated in the wording of the regulations. If future decisions were no longer bound by that case law, workers would pay the price.

Given the changes in employment-related legislation over the past six years—including reduced consultation periods for redundancy, the extension of qualifying periods of employment for unfair dismissal claims, the introduction of fees for employment tribunals and the attempted undermining of trades unions through the Trade Union Act 2016—there is little to give the British public faith that the Government's warm words will translate into action.

And what of current proposals in Europe that would bring further protections to UK workers? A right to a written statement of terms and conditions, improved work-life balance and improved rights for posted workers: will workers in Britain ever feel the benefits of such changes?

I have been asked why I have not asked for more in this Bill—extended its reach, filled the gaps in the current system and sought to extend workers' rights further—but this is not about grandiose positioning. It is based in the reality of the situation we face today. It is right that, first and foremost, stability is provided and the Government do everything in their power to protect what we already have.

Despite being on the other side of the debate, I accept that the British public voted for Brexit, but they did not vote for more insecure contracts, less safe workplaces or anything less than they currently have by way of protection in their jobs.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Melanie Onn, Louise Haigh, Chris Elmore, Ruth Smeeth, Wes Streeting, Jess Phillips, Chris Stephens, Christian Matheson, Jo Stevens, Justin Madders, Carolyn Harris and Matthew Pennycook present the Bill.

Melanie Onn accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the first time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 November, and to be presented (Bill 62).

Opposition Day

[7TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Paris Agreement on Climate Change

2.27 pm

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House notes that the USA and China have both ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change; regrets that the Government has not accepted the Opposition's offer of support for immediate commencement of domestic procedures to ratify the Paris Agreement; further notes that if the UK lags behind its G20 partners in ratifying the Paris Agreement it risks losing diplomatic influence on this crucial future security issue; recognises, in light of the EU referendum vote, the need to maintain a strong international standing and the risk of rising investment costs in UK energy infrastructure; and calls on the Government to publish by the end of next week a Command Paper on domestic ratification and to set out in a statement to this House the timetable to complete the ratification process by the end of 2016.

I am delighted to rise to move this motion.

“My country has an unwavering commitment to pursue the path of sustainable development”: those were the words of President Xi last week when he and President Obama jointly—communist China and capitalist America—announced their ratification of the Paris climate treaty. In a quite extraordinary event, we saw the world's two superpowers, who are also the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, locked in an embrace to try to save our species from itself—from so altering our atmosphere that we make it almost impossible for many of our fellow human beings to survive, and destroy countless other species and ecosystems in the process. A few days before they did so, I wrote to our Prime Minister urging her to begin the process of ratification of the treaty by the UK. I understand her office passed my letter to the Secretary of State. I also tabled today's motion to discuss ratification and press for the UK to follow China and America's lead and get on and ratify the Paris agreement. So now with the US and China making it highly likely that the agreement will formally come into force by the end of this year, I decided that if China and America can put aside their differences and ratify, surely we in Parliament could do the same and become founder parties to the agreement.

I wrote to the Secretary of State and offered to amend the motion to make it the formal vote required by the House of Commons to ratify the treaty. The process of ratification is not unduly complex. It requires the tabling of a Command Paper by the Government and then affirmative resolution by both Houses. The Government have not tabled that Command Paper. In fact, my offer has still not received any formal response. The Scottish National party agreed. The Green party agreed. Plaid Cymru agreed. When I eventually could find a Liberal Democrat to speak to, he agreed as well. Here we had Her Majesty's official Opposition, the Labour party, offering to forgo one of its precious Opposition day debates to do something on a cross-party basis and for the wider good—to create parliamentary time for something the Government had said they wanted to do but could not find the time for—yet that offer was rejected.

Sometimes, I think that people must look at us in this Parliament and say to themselves, “Can they not, just for once, put aside their petty party differences and

agree to do something together? Are they really not bigger than this?” The Government had even said earlier this year that they would do this. In March, David Cameron agreed the EU Council conclusions, which underlined

“the need for the European Union and its Member States to be able to ratify the Paris Agreement as soon as possible and on time so as to be Parties as of its entry into force.”

James Heapey (Wells) (Con): The shadow Secretary of State knows that I am a great supporter of the Paris climate change treaty, and I hope that we will ratify it as soon as possible, but I cannot help but feel that he is manufacturing a disagreement here. I think that there is consensus on both sides of the House that we should ratify it. All member states of the EU must ratify it in their time, so in my view, his sense of urgency is also manufactured.

Barry Gardiner: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I trust him, and I know that he cares deeply about this issue; I think he knows that I do, too. The olive branch that I extended to the Secretary of State was a genuine one. This is something that I had been told the Government wanted to do; indeed, they stated publicly on many occasions earlier this year that that was the case. However, I had been told that they had been unable to find the time to do it yet, so I decided that this would be an opportunity for them to make time. This is therefore a matter of deep regret to me. I am sure that the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box in due course and explain to us precisely why it was impossible to take this opportunity to table the Command Paper yesterday or the day before and to use this parliamentary time to enable us in the House of Commons to vote to ratify the treaty.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): I am pleased that my hon. Friend has secured this time to debate these matters. The United States of America, China and France have already completed ratification, and other G20 countries such as Brazil and Germany have pledged to do so by the end of the year. All we are asking this Government to do is to set out precisely what the timescale is going to be for the United Kingdom to ratify this important piece of work, but we are not getting any answers from them.

Barry Gardiner: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but I really hope that we can make some progress this afternoon. The right hon. and hon. Members in the Government Front Bench team know that I have respect for them and that I do not seek to be partisan on this matter, but I will attack them if they do not keep to their commitments and I will continue to do so.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I have great respect for the hon. Gentleman, and this has been very much a cross-party debate on climate change, but the heart of the commitment on climate change is the Climate Change Act 2008, which was voted on in this House and is now part of British law. We have committed in the Act to achieve an 80% reduction in our emissions by 2050. I echo the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heapey) that the hon. Gentleman is creating an argument where there is none. The Government have not said that they will not ratify the treaty, and I fully believe that we will do so. We must

think about this very sensibly, and I hope that we will continue to lead the way, just as we have done all along the line.

Barry Gardiner: I am delighted that the hon. Lady has referred to the Climate Change Act 2008 and to the fact that the commitments made under the Act are legally binding on us. Later in my speech, I shall examine exactly what the legislation stated and try to show precisely where the Government have deviated from it over the past couple of years. This is why we have been on a pathway of divergence rather than convergence in this House for the past two years. The bipartisan—indeed, cross-party—approach that used to obtain in the House on these matters has been severely tested by what has been seen as the Government’s backsliding on those legally binding commitments. I shall adumbrate that a little later.

Until this morning, it was not clear to me why the olive branch I had extended to the Government had been quite so haughtily ignored. Then I found out what the Minister had said to the Aldersgate Group and what the Secretary of State had quietly revealed to journalists at his departmental cocktail reception for the ladies and gentlemen of the press yesterday evening—*[Interruption.]* They laugh. They said candidly that they would not be publishing the carbon plan by the end of the year. Carbon plan? What is that?

This is not the kind of thing that any normal member of the public would think sounds terribly important. If I were to explain that it is really important because it is supposed to set out precisely how the Government are going to meet their carbon budget, that same hypothetical member of the public might look blank, because people do not talk in these terms. They do not talk in terms of carbon plans and carbon budgets; they talk in terms of effects, not budgets. They know that climate change is causing disruption across the world, with more flooding in some places and more drought in others, with stronger hurricanes and typhoons and with the loss of crops and arable land. They know that that is related to the emissions polluting our air and our children’s lungs, and these things are important to them.

That is precisely why we politicians agreed, back in 2008—under a Labour Government but very much on a cross-party basis—to limit the ways in which we were causing those problems. We agreed to reduce and limit those emissions that were changing the world with such devastating effect. That is why we created the Committee on Climate Change to set legally binding carbon budgets that would precisely limit the damage that we were doing, but we tasked it to ensure that we always adopted the most cost-efficient pathway, so that we could move towards the long-term target of at least an 80% reduction in admissions by 2050 at the lowest possible cost to the public, to industry and to business.

That is why this carbon plan is so important. How dare the Secretary of State let slip to a few journalists at a cocktail party that of course he will not be publishing the carbon plan by the end of this year? How dare the Minister reveal to the Aldersgate Group that he “may” find space in the timetable to publish it in 2017? May? May? I ask the Minister to read the primary legislation, which states that after the publication of a carbon budget, the Government must publish a plan to put it into effect

“as soon as is reasonably practicable”

thereafter. The fourth carbon budget was published in 2011. Five and a half years later, we still have no carbon plan. My grasp of the English language is not so weak that I would think that five and a half years, during which we have had a change of Government and a new Prime Minister, constitutes “as soon as is reasonably practicable”. And now the Minister says that he “may” get around to doing this in 2017.

Earlier this year, the Government promised that the reason for the delay was simply that they now wanted to include their measures for achieving the fifth carbon budget in the plan, which they set almost three weeks later than the legislation required. This is another area in which the Government have lost the people’s confidence. The primary legislation is very clear. It states that a carbon budget must be deposited on 30 June 12 years before it comes into effect. The Government published it before then, but they did not set it in legislation, as was required by law, until 19 July—almost three weeks late.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is making the point that publishing the carbon plan would be very good and a useful next step. He spoke earlier about the pertinence of climate change to ordinary people on the street. The reality is that 222,000 homes in Wales are in danger of flooding. The current cost of remedying that danger would be about £200 million, and that cost is certain to grow. This demonstrates the need for urgency.

Barry Gardiner: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. When we talk about such matters in terms of carbon plans and carbon budgets, it can seem as though we are talking about a world separate from that understood by the people who listen to us. They understand when their homes are being flooded. They know that such things are the effects of climate change. What they need to know is that we are following what was the best legislative model in the world when it was set out in 2008 with cross-party agreement under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband). We achieved that here and it has become a model across the world, but we must follow it and the tragedy is that this Government have been backsliding.

The reason Ministers could not accept the cross-party olive branch that I extended was that, the night before, they knew that they were about to admit to the world that they still had not a single clue about how they were going to meet the promises and targets that they had already made to keep the UK safe from climate change. They knew that they were not even going to commit to a new deadline by when they might put such a plan together and that to come to this Chamber today—all smiles—in a cross-party endeavour to ratify the Paris agreement would have exposed them to the accusation of being arrogant hypocrites. They have avoided that charge, but they have opened themselves up to an infinite number more: incompetence, dithering, anti-business, anti-investment. They are a party divided between those who circle on the Back Benches saying that all these budgets and plans are just costly “green crap” and that we should get on with a future industrial strategy based on fossil fuels and the few sane heads, some of whom are in the Chamber today—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. There is some unrest about the hon. Gentleman's language, but I think that in using a word that I would not advise him to use, nor would I use myself, he was in fact perhaps quoting.

Barry Gardiner: My excuse is that I believe I was quoting the former Prime Minister, who used such language about his previous embrace of the huskies.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We will leave the point as to whether it was a quote or a misquote, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will temper his language.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not the least bit offended by the hon. Gentleman's language, but if he is allowed to describe green policies in that fashion, I want to clarify whether I will be allowed to do the same.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his making his point of order, because the reason for my intervention was to ensure that the rest of the debate will see temperate language that we would all be happy to quote in future.

Barry Gardiner: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This is interesting because the hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies) is one of those who believes that in meeting their climate change commitments the Government are wrongheaded and that man-made climate change is somewhat overblown as a hypothesis. He is, in effect, a climate change denier—[*Interruption.*]

David T. C. Davies: Up until that point, the hon. Gentleman was quite right and I was nodding. I have never ever denied that the climate changes. In fact, on every single occasion that I have spoken on this subject, I have made the point straightaway that of course the climate changes, but that it has been changing for a lot longer than 250 years. The real deniers are people like the hon. Gentleman who seem to deny that the climate changed prior to the industrial revolution.

Barry Gardiner: I was of course referring to the hon. Gentleman being a denier of anthropogenic climate change, and he knows that.

However, there are sane heads who understand that when the world's largest superpowers ratify a climate change treaty that commits the world to a net carbon future by the second half of this century, it is time to do what President Obama said last week and "put your money where your mouth is."

Last year, global investment in low-carbon technology was \$286 billion. The problem is that investment in developing countries outpaced that in richer nations. We are locked in a low-carbon race and we are losing. The reason I want us to get on and ratify is not because Paris is some sort of totemic environmental symbol, but because political leadership sends a strong signal to attract investment. Countries with a clear policy framework are the ones that attract investment. Countries with a stable policy framework attract investment. The UK has had neither over the past few years.

On solar, the Government plan this month to hike the tax on businesses with rooftop solar installations through a six to eight times increase in business rates. In 2015, they cut all solar subsidy for commercial installations of

over 5 MW and reduced the subsidy for the rest by 65%. The Government's own figures show that that has resulted in a 93% fall in UK solar deployment and the loss of more than 12,000 jobs in the industry.

On wind power, the Government decided to end all subsidy for onshore wind farms despite them being the cheapest source of renewable power. For offshore wind, they took away all investment certainty by announcing that they would extend the levy control framework only to 2021.

On biomass, I wrote to the Secretary of State only a few days ago to ask why regulatory changes to the tariff structure of combined heat and power biomass plants were rushed through this summer, using secondary legislation to amend the renewable heat incentive without proper consultation. No impact assessment was made of the risk to business, and trade associations estimate that £140 million of investment is now at risk.

On carbon capture and storage technology, the Government broke their manifesto promise, cancelling £4 billion of promised finance—the latest £1 billion was cancelled last year just six months before it was due to be awarded, sinking the White Rose and Peterhead projects.

On energy efficiency, the Government ditched the zero-carbon homes policy and finally scrapped their green deal policy despite having no idea about how to replace it with other household efficiency measures.

On transport, the Government reduced the vehicle excise duty incentives for low-emissions vehicles. Is it any wonder that in just four years we have sunk from fourth to 13th in the Ernst and Young index of the best places for investment in low-carbon industries?

Just to make the investment picture complete, they took the quite monstrous decision to sell off the green investment bank. A bank that was precisely set up because there was a market failure that the private sector simply could not address. By abolishing the GIB, they are now prepared to starve low-carbon industries in the UK of the investment that they need at a critical phase of development.

However, not all parts of the energy nexus are being hit by this Government. In 2013, they announced that fracking companies would pay half the tax paid by conventional oil and gas producers. The then Chancellor called the tax regime the

"most generous for shale in the world".

CCS, commercial solar, business rates on rooftop solar, onshore wind, offshore wind, biomass, the levy control framework, the green deal—is there any part of our energy sector that I have not mentioned? Oh yes, nuclear. Hinkley—oh dear. Dithering, delay, incompetence and an overpriced contract have led to a contract for difference that will now cost the bill payer, not the Government, not the £6.1 billion originally calculated by the Government but the £30 billion as determined by the National Audit Office.

The Hinkley project has already been delayed for eight years, and the Prime Minister has now thrown in into chaos. Two and half years ago, the Government should have reviewed the project on grounds of cost. To do so after the EDF board had taken a final knife-edge investment decision is to show a level of contempt for investors in our energy infrastructure and a lack of understanding of how company boards actually take

decisions, sending out the most damaging message and turning investors away from the UK as a market of preference for low-carbon investment.

Rebecca Pow: The hon. Gentleman is making a powerful point, but I suggest that it is all about the way one uses statistics. In this country, 16% of our energy comes from renewables, and this year 25% of our electricity is from renewable sources. He laughs, but in 2014, 30% of all of Europe's renewable energy investment took place here. Does he not agree that that is an excellent track record, and that one of the best ways we can indicate we are combating climate change is by phasing out fossil fuel power stations, which is exactly what this Government are doing?

Barry Gardiner: The hon. Lady is right to say that we have had an enviable track record on the amount of our renewables and way in which they have been built up. But of course the statistics she referred to were created by the policies that previously allowed the subsidy into the renewable industry. The points that I have just been making show clearly how the Government, in the past 18 months to two years, have withdrawn those subsidies. As I said, the effect on the solar industry was a 93% cut in the projects that are now going ahead—in the panels and the capacity now being installed.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): The hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) mentioned energy investment in this country, but she failed to mention that energy companies in this country often buy in energy from Europe—in fact, they have invested £2 billion to £3 billion in Europe. That does not say much for the Government's energy policy, does it?

Barry Gardiner: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I had not referred to it in my speech, so I am glad he has drawn the House's attention to it, because interconnection with Europe is vital for our energy security. It would be a very positive move if the Minister were to talk about the future of energy infrastructure and of energy interconnection with the continent. As I understand it, there is no reason why coming out of the European Union should mean we are not part of the single energy market—that can stand separately. I would very much like confirmation from the Minister that the Government intend to make sure that that is safeguarded, because it is an important way of managing our energy supply.

Instead of using our time today to take a bold step forward, seeking Commons approval for the UK to join the founder parties of the historic Paris climate deal, we have had to hold the Government to account for just how far the UK's leadership on climate change has fallen on their watch. Leapfrogged by the world's biggest polluters, we have gone from the world-leading Climate Change Act to where we now sit: with a 47% gap in meeting our target, which we simply do not know how to fill—we have not yet even given a date for the publication of the plan as to when we will fill it. I will rephrase that, because we do know how to fill it. It is by properly insulating millions of homes in the UK to increase energy-efficiency and, where that is not viable—with older, single-skin properties—by ensuring that they have access to low-carbon renewable community sources of

energy, so that we are not burning fossil fuels to see the heat escape through draughty walls and windows. It is by transforming our transport system with electric vehicles whose battery capacity can double up as storage facility and fill that space that intermittent renewable technologies require.

Later today, the leader of the Labour party will set out his ambitious vision for our environmental and energy policy, creating 300,000 jobs in low-carbon industries and using a new national investment bank to invest in public and community-owned renewable energy projects. The Paris agreement demands that we move to a net zero-carbon future in the second half of this century. That requires courage and imagination. It requires a coherent low-carbon investment plan. Today should have been a day when all parties came together to piece together that future in optimism and hope. By turning their back on that opportunity, the Government must explain when they will ratify the Paris agreement and when they will publish the carbon plan to show the British public how they will deliver on that promise.

2.55 pm

The Minister for Climate Change and Industry (Mr Nick Hurd): As you well know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Opposition days are traditionally set up for division. When I saw today's motion, I hoped that today was going to be different, but 28 minutes later I was really disappointed by the tone the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) set for this debate. That is because, as I hope he knows, I have a deep respect for him personally, and it is widely acknowledged that he has a deep and serious knowledge of this issue and agenda, and, to date, has had a serious commitment to it. His speech, however, was very disappointing. As I said, Opposition days are set up for division. Sometimes the divisions are real and sometimes they are exaggerated, but rarely have I been asked to open a debate where the division has been so entirely manufactured, stretched and distorted, in a way that is really unhelpful and matters. That is at the heart of my disappointment.

Today, we had, and I hope still have, an opportunity to have a substantive and timely debate on an issue of enormous importance. We can take stock, at a pivotal time, of where we are in, what is now, at last, a global effort to manage the risk of dangerous, expensive and possibly extreme climate instability. Arguably—and I have argued this—this is the most complex and important long-term issue that our generation of politicians have to grapple with. It is an issue on which there has been impressive and very important cross-party support over successive Governments, not least when the groundbreaking and enormously influential Climate Change Act, on whose Bill Committee I remain proud to have served, was passed by a majority of 463. Without that cross-party support, British Governments would not have been able to show the leadership we have shown, under different political colours, which has, in turn, enabled us to have the global influence that is at the heart of the hon. Gentleman's motion.

The motion encourages the Government to get on and do what we have already said we will do, which has been confirmed again by the Prime Minister today: ratify the Paris treaty as soon as possible. I therefore urge the hon. Gentleman, who is widely respected for his knowledge and commitment to this agenda, to resist

[Mr Nick Hurd]

what I think I heard, which is an urge to play party games, particularly against a backdrop of a Labour leadership election. That is extremely unhelpful and out of character for him.

Out of respect for the hon. Gentleman, I do, however, want to address his motion and, in doing so, seek to reassure the House and many outside, whom he rightly says are deeply concerned about this issue, that this new Department, led by a highly respected former shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark), who is sitting alongside me on the Front Bench this afternoon, and the new Government remain very committed to Britain playing a full part in the global effort to improve our climate security. There is no backsliding here; we are genuinely committed to this. Why? It is not only because we see climate change as one of the biggest long-term risks to our future security and prosperity—a risk that has to be actively managed—but because we believe that long-term, cost-effective climate action is an opportunity to promote growth, good jobs and improvements to our health, not least through the right to enjoy cleaner air in our cities.

We are committed to ratifying the pivotal Paris agreement, and we see it, as I said last night, as a start. We are committed to the UK Climate Change Act 2008. Arguably, there is no more important proof of that in the short term than the very early unflinching decision to put into law the fifth carbon budget. I pay tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman), who, just hours after he was lured from the charms of chairing the thoroughly agreeable Select Committee to enter Government, was on his feet facing the Opposition Front-Bench team putting the fifth carbon budget into law. Anyone who knows anything about this subject will understand that that is an extremely important and challenging commitment on behalf of the British people. Therefore, there is no more important proof than that the new Department was prepared to make such a commitment at such an early stage in its life.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the importance of green jobs. I represent Ashfield, a former coalfield community, where the pits are now closed and the replacement jobs are not as secure or as well paid. What are the Government doing to get those green jobs to areas such as mine?

Mr Hurd: The hon. Lady addresses a very important and substantive issue, which lies at the heart of this Government's commitment to forge and commit and put on the tin of this new Department the need for an industrial strategy. As the Prime Minister said, that strategy needs to work for everyone, to create a broader sense of opportunity across the country and to take a very hard look at industries, sectors and places and think about future competitiveness and resilience. It needs to ask such questions as: "Where are the opportunities going to come from?" and "How do we broaden the opportunity for other people?". I am talking about fundamental, deep-seated questions, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering.

Fundamental to that incredibly important work is this debate today and the debate about the future of our low carbon economy.

I was just trying to make the point about the importance of the fifth carbon budget, which commits us to reducing our emissions in 2030 by 57% relative to 1990 levels. That is a very major commitment. I will return to our commitment to take effective climate action in the UK, but, out of respect to the hon. Member for Brent North, I will address the issue of Paris ratification, before moving on to address how we intend to maintain our international influence.

We signed the Paris agreement in April and we said that we would ratify it as soon as possible, and we will. For the information of the House—the hon. Gentleman knows this—there are two steps to ratification. First, countries complete their domestic processes to approve the treaty and then they deposit an instrument of ratification with the UN. We signed the agreement as part of the European Union. As many Members know, we negotiated the treaty together and—this point was ignored in the hon. Gentleman's speech—the convention is that we will ratify it together. That is our understanding. Until we leave the EU, the UK will remain a full member with all the obligations that that entails.

Colleagues will understand that with such a complex process in which so many different countries are going through their domestic processes of approval—we are lucky because ours is relatively straightforward and there is an understanding that we will ratify simultaneously—it has always been understood that the EU was never expected to be at the vanguard of ratification. Indeed, that was confirmed to me by the most senior people involved in the negotiating process and, in part, explains why others have chosen to go first. Of course we welcome that, as we want early ratification of this hugely important treaty.

Barry Gardiner *rose*—

Mr Hurd: I will just finish my point and then, of course, I will take the hon. Gentleman's intervention. For the same reason, it is very difficult for us to set the timeline for ratification that the hon. Gentleman seeks. It depends on the timing of the other processes. However, I wish to reassure him and the House that we will start our own process as soon as possible. Although I cannot confirm the exact timetable today because the processes are not complete, we will make a decision and we will communicate it at the appropriate point. The main issue is not whether that decision comes next week, as he seeks, or soon after, but that we fulfil our commitment to ratify as soon as possible. With that I am very happy to take the hon. Gentlemen's intervention and thank him for his patience.

Barry Gardiner: I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene. He has just said that it was never the intention that the EU would ratify the treaty as one of the founder members, but in March this year, the EU Council underlined

"the need for the European Union and its Member States to be able to ratify the Paris Agreement as soon as possible and on time so as to be Parties as of its entry into force."

The conclusion of the March Council, therefore, was that we would be founder members and that we would

enter the agreement. However, because it is now clear that that final ratification with the Secretary-General will be in December of this year, it is vital that EU member states now take early action. We should be taking even earlier action to push other member states to fulfil what the European Council statement said.

Mr Hurd: Let me be absolutely clear: this Government welcome the shift in dynamic in terms of the ratification process. It is fantastically good news. As the hon. Gentleman has rightly pointed out, the important change—it has been the most important change since I was immersed in this matter in my first Parliament—is the shift in the attitude of the two biggest economies—the United States and China. This is the big game changer. Frankly, that is much, much more important than the exact timing of when we lay a command order in this place. No one is in any doubt about the commitment of the UK to this process. We have demonstrated that commitment under the leadership of successive Secretaries of State—I am delighted to see the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) in his place today—over many Governments.

Rebecca Pow: I am heartened by the positivity from the Minister on this subject. The fact that the United States has come forward first with the ratification is largely because Britain was leading the way on this matter. Many of these countries, China in particular, are among the biggest offenders on climate change, so to see them taking part is great. I urge the Minister to continue to lead the way, and I am heartened by his assurance that we will ratify this treaty and that we will be playing our part.

Mr Hurd: I thank my hon. Friend for that constructive and positive intervention. I am delighted that we are doing our bit to shift the tone of this debate, which is much needed. I will go on to address her point about how we intend to maintain our leadership and this international influence.

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab): The Minister is quite right to point to the two-stage process of ratification, and the question of how the UK will go about that process in conjunction with the EU. The fact is that that process is undertaken in the UK by laying an order to achieve the objectives of an EU treaty, by having it debated by both Houses and by it coming out the other end. That process has already been completed by France, and yet the UK is nowhere near even thinking about it. Is that the Minister's understanding, or is such a process imminent in this House?

Mr Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has a long and distinguished record. We served together on environmental Committees a very long time ago. I thank him for his interest. He is right on one point. Yes, France has completed its domestic processes. He is entirely wrong on his second point, which was that the Government have not even begun to think about the process. We have, and we will be in a position to make our announcement on this at an appropriate point. I am sorry that it is not today, but we have made it clear, as the Prime Minister set out explicitly today, that we do intend to ratify as soon as possible.

On the important question of international influence, the challenge is not just how we meet our own commitments in the fairest and most cost-effective way, but how we maximise our influence to make sure that others play their full part. Those two aspects are linked, because it is easier for us to keep our people, businesses and private sector with us on this journey if they feel that other countries are fully engaged, and if they see that the global opportunity offered by the low-carbon economy, which I will come to, is real, substantial and growing, and that we must maximise our involvement in it.

I want to address the question of an international instrument, which the hon. Gentleman is rightly and understandably probing and which underlies the motion. UK diplomacy is widely recognised as having played an important role in shaping and securing the Paris agreement. The framework for the commitments to which countries have signed up has clearly been influenced by the structure that we have set up in the UK. That is enormously welcome. Our influence was built not on symbolism, but on substance.

We were the first to put our own house in order, putting world-leading targets into law and implementing the policies to meet them. We then established what is still the most extensive network of climate attachés in our embassies overseas. We gave other countries practical help in areas such as carbon pricing, energy planning, power sector reform, low-carbon urban development, green finance and climate legislation. Climate change researchers are now, apparently, working with the Chinese on the structure of their own emissions trading scheme. In many of these areas, UK expertise is world leading, and sharing it has strengthened our bilateral relationships and opened up commercial opportunities. I pay tribute to Sir David King for the work that he has done over many years with commitment and passion, which he maintains today.

We have also played a leading role in international climate finance. Ahead of Paris, we committed to providing at least £5.8 billion—that is serious money—of international climate finance over the next five years to support poorer countries in raising their level of ambition to reduce emissions and strengthening their resilience to growing climate insecurity. In the Department for International Development, I had responsibility for the climate finance brief. On regular trips to Africa, I saw the exposure, vulnerability and cost attached to lack of resilience to climate change, which made even clearer to me the importance of international climate finance. I am very proud of the lead that we have taken, and of the fact that we have been asked by the global community to take the lead in Marrakesh on setting out the road map for further progress.

We arrived in Paris well respected, with a strong set of relationships. On top of that, the UK negotiating team in the UN is recognised as one of the strongest in the world. It was rightly praised after Paris for playing a key role in bringing diverse countries into the agreement. Before I close on the past, it is appropriate to put on record my personal appreciation, and I am sure that of many colleagues, of the leadership role played by the then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, who is now Home Secretary.

I can reassure the House that all these elements of our influence remain strong. Our bilateral co-operation on climate and energy with key international partners

[Mr Hurd]

remains as wide ranging and ambitious as ever. As I said, our climate finance over the next five years will be 50% greater than it was over the past five years. Our investment in clean energy research and development will double over the next five years, and we are a leading member of a group of 20 countries that have all made such a commitment. The Governor of the Bank of England is leading the way globally on green finance and the important issue of climate risk disclosure. The Bank of England co-chairs the G20's working group on green finance with the People's Bank of China. Our negotiating teams across Government remain active and influential, not only on the US process that will meet again soon in Marrakesh, but in critical negotiations on emissions from civil aviation and the maritime sector, and hydrofluorocarbons.

I agree that ratifying the Paris agreement early is important symbolically. That is why we will ratify as soon as we can, but it is not credible to suggest that our international influence hangs on this one symbol when it is so firmly rooted in substance. We in this Government are proud of the leadership that the UK has shown and we have no intention of surrendering it.

Our influence overseas will always rest on our action at home. Few countries can lay greater claim to leadership in decarbonisation than the UK. Through the Climate Change Act, we were the first country to set a legally binding 2050 target to reduce our emissions by at least 80% compared with 1990. That target is in line with the Paris agreement's goal of keeping the temperature rise to well below 2° C. We have not just set targets; we have acted. At home, just as abroad, we focus not on symbolism, but on substance. We reduced UK emissions by 36% in 2014 compared with 1990. Between 2010 and 2015 alone, we reduced emissions by 17%, which was the biggest reduction in a single Parliament.

On this journey, we have proved something that was in doubt when we started debating the issue in 2005 and 2006: whether cutting emissions comes at the expense of economic growth. We have proved in the UK that it does not. UK emissions have steadily decreased since 1990 while GDP has increased. By 2014, emissions had fallen by 36%, while GDP has increased by 61% since 1990. We have proved that green growth is a reality.

We have invested in clean energy, with 99% of our solar power being installed since 2010. Renewables now provide a greater share of our electricity generation than coal. I am confident that that impressive progress will continue. During this Parliament, our investment in clean energy generation is set to double, and we are on track for 35% of our electricity to come from renewables by 2020.

I will respond to the provocation from the hon. Member for Brent North. As we develop our emissions reduction plan, which is one of the Department's top priorities, we will set a course towards deeper emission reductions in both heating and transport. The hon. Gentleman asked me about the emission reductions plan and, I think, manufactured a suggestion of gossip from the Secretary of State. The hon. Gentleman totally distorts what I said last night. He needs to check his sources.

The emissions reduction plan matters enormously. Any suggestion from the hon. Gentleman that this Government are not taking it seriously, are sliding away

from it or do not understand its importance is misleading and misrepresents our position. It is important for the reasons that he states: to underpin the credibility of our progress towards challenging decarbonisation targets, and because, as he stated, if it is done well, it will send signals to market for investment and for the mobilisation of private capital and the private sector that is fundamental for success. It is essential that we get our carbon reduction plan right.

Barry Gardiner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hurd: I am about to finish. The hon. Gentleman had plenty of time to speak. He knows that I am very laid back, but he stirred me with the approach that he took. The conversations that we are having about the emissions reduction plan—the carbon plan—are driven by the conviction that we must get this right. The hon. Gentleman knows the subject well and he knows the challenge that faces us. We have to take people with us, including a set of new Ministers with critical briefs, who need some time to get on top of the issues at stake because they are so important. We need to engage with the private sector and non-governmental organisations. This has to be a shared challenge. We have to make sure that the process is properly connected with the extremely important substantive and long-term work and thinking being done about the industrial strategy, because Paris, as he rightly said, changes so much—not least because the two largest economies in the world are saying, “We are now set out on a path towards decarbonisation of our power systems and our transport systems.” If we turn that into an estimate of the investment required, it runs into trillions of dollars.

We need to get this right, and all I was saying is that that is the priority. If we can meet all those criteria—if we can do all those things—by the end of 2016, great, but the overriding priority is to get this right, and that is what drives us. I hope that that is supported by Members on both sides of the House who can see that this commitment is important for our UK national interest, as it is for our identity as a responsible global citizen.

I am going to conclude. Our primary task is to manage a risk, but all this investment and innovation, as I have suggested, is creating one of the most important economic opportunities the UK has seen—arguably since the industrial revolution. The global low-carbon market is estimated to be worth more than \$5 trillion, and it is now forecast to expand rapidly in the wake of the Paris agreement. Over the next 15 years, it is estimated that around \$90 trillion will be invested in the world's energy systems, land use and urban infrastructure, and an increasing proportion of that needs to be low-carbon if our globally agreed climate goals are to be met. The UK's leadership and experience will put UK industry in a prime position to benefit.

The UK low-carbon sector is worth over £46 billion across more than 90,000 businesses. It employs more than 240,000 people and indirectly supports many more. There is great potential for it to continue to create high-value jobs in construction, manufacturing and services. That is why—here there is a genuine point of difference with the Opposition—the creation of the new Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is such an exciting opportunity. As we contemplate the importance and the consequences of Paris, and as we

go through substantive processes in the industrial strategy, we think deeply about the future of our places, industries and sectors, and about what we can do to make them more competitive and more resilient, to broaden opportunity in this country and to make the economy work for everyone. It must be right to look at how our energy decarbonisation and industrial challenges can be brought together and thought through much more effectively than in the past. I regret that the Opposition continue to shadow the Government as they would like them to be, rather than as they actually are.

Rebecca Pow: I thank the Minister for so generously giving way to me again. Are not the Government showing that they really have thought deeply about the situation by linking business with energy and with this new low-carbon era in tackling climate change? This shows a whole new move in the direction of this Government. Does not the Minister agree that this is absolutely the way to go if we are really serious about climate change and linking it with business?

Mr Hurd: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. More importantly, the feedback we are getting from the business community on this is extremely positive, because they want the Government to join things up, and to think intelligently and for the long term. However, I have to finish my speech because Back Benchers must get in.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I am very grateful to the Minister for finishing. Can he tell us when we will see the emissions reduction plan for the fourth and fifth carbon budgets?

Mr Hurd: I know the hon. Gentleman has been busy talking to his colleagues, so he might have missed the bit of my speech in which I said we were reviewing where we are with that plan. It is massively important, and this has to be done well. We would like to do it in 2016. We are reviewing the whole process now, but if that changes and we feel that there is a case for doing this later, we will make an announcement and a decision at an appropriate point, which is not today.

Mr MacNeil: When we are ready.

Mr Hurd: When we are ready is the answer to that.

The UK always has been and, as the Prime Minister has made very clear, always will be an outward-looking country. Brexit does not change that, and nor does it change our commitment to tackling major international challenges such as climate change. We have an unrivalled set of relationships around the world, and our leadership on climate change is recognised in all the key international groupings. We will continue to use the authority that comes from our domestic track record to shape the international agenda.

Few issues that affect our national and global security, economic prosperity and poverty reduction ambitions are as important as climate change. We can rightfully—across all parties and on both sides of the House—be proud of the role we have played. This Government embrace the challenge of keeping the country on track to meet our long-term domestic commitments fairly and in the most cost-effective way possible. We will do

everything that we can to maintain our influence, to make sure that other people play their part and to ensure that, on this long-term journey, we maximise the benefits to British businesses, British consumers and the British taxpayer. I leave the House in no doubt about the Government's commitment to play a full part in the global effort to improve our climate security. I suggest in all sincerity to the hon. Member for Brent North that he does not press his motion to a Division.

3.26 pm

Callum McCaig (Aberdeen South) (SNP): That was a long conclusion. I have been sat like a taut spring for the last 10 minutes, since the Minister said he was getting ready to conclude—I will clearly take some time to get used to the new ministerial team. However, I welcome the chance to debate this issue as, I think, the House's longest-serving Front-Bench climate change spokesperson—the irony is not lost on me.

We are here in our quarterly debate on climate change, and it would seem that we regularly discuss these matters. That is important—it is just a shame that it is, largely speaking, the same faces that we see every time. I think there is a wider body of folk in all parties who could do with hearing some of this, and it is, to a degree, regrettable that we see the same faces and largely hear the same arguments. We can push things on somewhat, and I think the shadow Secretary of State is attempting to do that today. I welcome the fact that we are having the debate.

I listened carefully to what the Minister was suggesting, and I am still slightly at a loss as to why we cannot press on with this issue. He said that the Government see the ratification process as a start and that they will start as soon as possible, but, as we say in north-east Scotland, it might be time to nip on a wee bit, because this is genuinely important. The symbolism the Minister talked about is key. The UK has been a leader on this issue, but with ratification by the US, China, France and others, we risk passing the baton to others. That would be regrettable for the UK's global voice on this issue, but it is also regrettable in terms of the lack of opportunity and in terms of losing our impetus and our technological lead—the industrial lead we potentially have in deploying the technologies that will make the Paris agreement possible.

A year ago—this is something to be celebrated—we were sat discussing the possibilities of the pre-conference of the parties. I do not think anyone thought that the deal that we have would be quite as strong as it is. There is a lot to be done, but a global deal—a global consensus—to keep global warming well below 2°, with an ambition to keep it to 1.5°, is to be welcomed. They are incredibly challenging targets that have been set, and delay in ratification will not help. We need to get on with this. The terms of the debate are shifting. This is not just a subject for NGOs and those who care; it is becoming mainstream in political debate. The world's biggest asset manager, BlackRock, in a warning to investors, said that we can no longer ignore climate change, and that

“climate risk factors have been under-appreciated and underpriced because they are perceived to be distant”.

We are already 1° warmer than the long-term trends, and the past three years have been the hottest on record. If that is not a wake-up call to what we need to do, then what is? If we are to keep things below 1.5°, we had

[Callum McCaig]

better get started quickly. We need to deploy the full range of our technological know-how, here and abroad, or we will miss the one chance that we get to make sure that we do not see catastrophic climate change.

The impacts of climate change here in the UK have been set out by the Committee on Climate Change in its risk assessment: increased flooding, and, conversely, drought; food shortages; and potential damage to critical infrastructure. This is a big country and a rich country. We can probably weather a lot of that—no pun intended—but others are not so fortunate. We need to be planning ahead. We need to get the mitigation and the adaptation in place early—otherwise it will be more expensive—but we also need to help others.

The most precious thing that came out of the COP21 agreement is the international consensus, but there is a suggestion that it is already beginning to fray. President Duterte of the Philippines is not someone I would regularly seek to quote, but he said something that is symbolic of the attitude change that we risk causing if we are not serious about getting on with this. He said of the ratification and the INDC—intended nationally determined contribution—for the Philippines:

“You are trying to stymie us... That’s stupid. I will not honour that.”

He did change his tune a bit a little later in addressing the Philippine Parliament, when he said:

“Addressing climate change shall be a top priority but upon a fair and equitable equation. It should not stymie our industrialisation.”

That is a fair point. The greatest irony of climate change is that the countries that have contributed least to it are those that stand to lose the most. Above all, the poorest members of those communities, who have contributed even less, will be the first to see their livelihoods and way of life destroyed by it. We have to address the problem of climate change, but we have to do so with justice at its heart.

The £100 billion of climate change finance that was part of the Paris agreement is absolutely fundamental. That money can be used for adaptation and new technologies. However, it has to be new money, and it has to be built on an international consensus that recognises that the rich parts of this world have contributed more than their fair share to creating the problem—to causing the mess—and that we are certain that we are going to pay more of the price in cleaning up that mess.

We cannot have a system where global development is stymied because countries cannot industrialise in line with the model that we agreed. We need to have new models of industrialisation. We need to skip the dirty phase and move on to the clean phases. These countries need to see the investment in solar and wind, and the new technologies that will come. They will need support. Some of that support will come through aid, no doubt, but it also comes in the form of opportunities. We have the technologies and the businesses to do this. We can help. This can be a mutually beneficial partnership with the poorer countries of this planet to help them develop. That is a moral responsibility on us, but it is also an economic opportunity. If someone does not feel particularly compelled to act based on the moral imperative, then trying to make some money out of it, at least, would be

a way to go forward. The two things can go hand in hand, but they need the correct support both at home and abroad.

The Minister said that it is really important that, to use his term, there is industrial strategy on the “tin” of Government. That is welcome, but we have to reflect the converse—we cannot have it both ways—and off the tin has come climate change. It has come out of the lexicon of Government. That, to a degree, is regrettable. It may have been an oversight or it may have been deliberate. I do not know about the motivations for it, nor do I particularly care. However, it can easily be rectified by putting addressing climate change right at the very heart not just of this Government Department but of Government as a whole. With all due respect to the Minister, he is not going to solve this problem alone; it will take cross-Government, cross-sectoral engagement with the devolved Administrations and with the business community. That is fundamental to everything we will have to do as a country if we are going to get this right. So let us put it at the heart of what we do, and, as the Minister said, let us make a start.

Let us start with a big, symbolic gesture and ratify the Paris agreement as soon as possible. We can talk about the fact that we have led the world in the Climate Change Act 2008, and I can talk about the fact that Scotland has led the UK in that by exceeding our 2020 targets. We are already seeing a reduction on the 1990 baselines of 45.8%, against a target of 42%. The First Minister has committed to extending that target, because it has already been reached.

That is the sort of high ambition that we need, and we need it across all sectors. We are getting on fairly well with electricity, but we are doing more poorly in terms of heat and transport—the next big challenges. Tackling them will require money, support, innovation and skills, so there has to be the ambition to deliver on that right across the remit of Government.

The shadow Secretary of State talked about the damage that has been caused to investor confidence, and he listed a whole host of things. I gently suggest that just because there is not 100% agreement on this, does not mean that we should risk losing cross-party consensus. If ever there was an issue on which we could benefit from political parties seeking to outbid each other, it is climate change. We should welcome the fact that the Labour party is trying to outdo the Conservative party and trying to outdo us. We should all be trying to outdo each other, because that ambition and desire to see things happen will make them happen.

I have commended, in the past, a number of things that the Government have done. The former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change played a great role in leading the high-ambition coalition at the negotiations in Paris, and that is welcome. In a few months’ time, the conference of parties will meet again in Marrakesh. If we are to have these discussions, I would rather that the UK went to the table and was able to demonstrate the progress that has been made in one year. I want the UK to be able to say, “We have ratified our commitment. We are pushing ahead. We have taken x, y and z steps,” and I will come on to what those steps should be. If we turn up without having delivered on our promise, and without having been through the ratification process, it will undermine our position. That would be distinctly regrettable, because our voice,

the soft power and the pressure that have been applied in this area are among the high points of British diplomacy over many years—potentially in my lifetime. That is too precious to put to waste.

In terms of the x, y and z of deliverability, I do not think that the Government's renewable energy policies, U-turns and so on—in fairness, I am talking about the previous Government—have been welcome. There are unresolved issues and questions about investor confidence brought on by the Brexit vote.

Mr MacNeil: One of the first reports that the Select Committee on Energy and Climate Change undertook was on investor confidence. If there is a plea that I can make to the new team, it is not to lurch and suddenly make announcements, as happened just over a year ago, last July.

Mr Hurd *indicated assent.*

Mr MacNeil: I am seeing some nodding, so I feel reassured that that will not happen. I am grateful for that.

Callum McCaig: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I commend his Committee's report. We had a welcome debate about it before the recess, and it teased out an awful lot of the issues. I do not think that that jumping around and that policy change were helpful.

We need to set clear guidelines. We need to set out how the decarbonisation process will look. There needs to be a degree of flexibility to allow for new technologies to emerge, but there must not be a cliff edge. We do not need to march people up to the top of the hill and off a cliff face, as has happened with solar and onshore wind and may happen in future with other technologies. That upsets investor confidence in a way that we cannot afford. It will make doing what we need to do more expensive, as the banks factor additional risk into their financing agreements. We all lose from the ad hoc nature of policy in that regard.

Mr MacNeil: We are talking about climate change, and we have had some positive reaction from the ministerial team, but I hope there will be some revision of locational charging so that for wind resources—they are particularly strong in constituencies in the Scottish islands—it will cost less to bring energy to the market. In continental Europe it costs less to bring it to the south of England. There is a penalty to produce energy in the UK that is not faced by our European competitors.

Callum McCaig: I again agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. To take things forward we need a proper decarbonisation plan. For electricity in particular—he touched on island connections, which we need—a tremendous resource is waiting to be unlocked. Likewise, there is a tremendous potential resource in wave and tidal energy, of which Swansea bay is another example. These big programmes may be costly in the first instance, but we missed the boat with onshore wind in terms of owning and developing the technology, which is where the real money is. With offshore wind, we are part of the way towards making sure we have some of that, although the main basis of the technology is outwith these islands.

With tidal energy in particular, we have the chance to be the world leader. In the past fortnight, fantastic announcements on tidal energy programmes have been made in the north of Scotland by Nova and Atlantis. Such announcements need to be the first of a kind, not one of a kind, but that requires continued access to the market. If I were to make plea above all else to the new ministerial team it would be for them to support and commit to 100 MW of tidal energy, at a CfD of £305. That will be fundamental to delivering the future of tidal energy.

Tidal energy has huge benefits. It is clearly far more predictable than other forms of renewables. It ticks an awful lot of boxes. It may be costly in its initial phases, but it is a new technology. Let us look to the future and not see it as a cost. If I have one criticism of the previous Department of Energy and Climate Change it is that everything was seen as a cost; nothing was seen as an investment. This is a form of investment. If we get the technology right and become the world leader in tidal energy—and potentially in the wave energy to come—such a deployment will provide us with a reliable renewable source of energy, and it will also open up a market. There is a lot of sea and there are a lot of tides in the world. There is astronomical potential for the deployment of tidal technology, so let us not kill it before it has got off the ground. Let us have a pathway and allow it to develop. Let us allow it to bring down its cost, and then allow it to go global.

To conclude, we can have consensus on this subject. We will probably not get it today, but that does not mean it should not be the aim for the future. We can do this, but we need to make a start. Paris is such a start—I agree with the Minister on that—so let us get on and do it. Let us get it ratified, and then get it delivered.

3.42 pm

James Heappey (Wells) (Con): Like the Minister, I was surprised to see the topic for today's debate given the fact that, as far as I can tell, there is consensus in the House on tackling climate change and ratifying the Paris agreement. I attend many meetings on these subjects, and I know just how heartfelt the concern is for this cause among Opposition and Government Members. To present a picture of disunity is rather unhelpful when there is real consensus of opinion in this place that we must all tackle this real challenge together.

The Climate Change Act 2008 achieved consensus. In Paris, our then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change led the negotiations with great style and was applauded for doing so by Members on both sides of the House. The fifth carbon budget was recommended. There had been concern that it would not be adopted, but it was—in full. We can therefore say that the intention of the Government and of this House is that we should continue to decarbonise at best speed.

It will not, however, be as straightforward in the UK, as a member of the EU, to ratify the treaty as it was for the US, China and countries elsewhere to do so. I have no doubt that Her Majesty's Government remain as committed to it as ever, and that they will come up with a timeline that works legislatively and within the reality of the context of what the rest of the EU is doing. We should not seek to create any concern when none really exists. The Government's green credentials are absolutely sound—£52 billion has been invested in renewable energy

[James Heapey]

since 2010, and the deployment of renewables has accelerated under this Government—but we have to balance the energy trilemma. Price, security and decarbonisation are sometimes at odds with one another, so a bit of sense is required in how we proceed. The Government are clear that we will meet our decarbonisation targets, but we will do so without compromising on the other two elements.

I very much agree with the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Callum McCaig), who quite rightly said that the same people speak in these debates every time. That is a real shame. These issues range far more widely than the interests of those who are interested simply in energy policy and the environment. I am going to have a go at suggesting a line of argument that might attract a wider audience: whatever someone's view on anthropogenic climate change, there is no reason not to support many of the opportunities that come from our drive to decarbonise.

I will give just three examples, about heat. I visited a district heating system out in east London recently. On the visit, I went into a one-bedroom flat to meet a chap who was on benefits and right on the poverty line, suffering from fuel poverty. Once the district heating system had been installed, he put £30 on to his new meter in his flat. He had done so in October; when I went to see him at the beginning of March, there was still £13 left on the meter. He had heated his flat for an entire winter for seventeen quid. That is just extraordinary. It is socially just to adopt such policies; it does not just help tackle climate change.

A hospital in London has installed a combined heat and power station to cut down its energy bills by synergising heat and electricity. It realised that the surplus of heat was an opportunity to sell heat to a district heating system outside. It is doing so at a low cost—again, that is socially just—and the proceeds from the heating network have allowed it to build a new cancer centre. Again, that is extraordinary.

I know of a hotel chain that is installing CHPs. It is making huge savings on its energy costs while still absolutely meeting its customers' needs for roasting hot water at whatever time of day. It is achieving that while saving money and decarbonising.

We must continue the drive towards greater energy efficiency—too much of our heat and electricity is being wasted—and some pretty nifty technologies are available to achieve that. I bring up the point about heat and the need for greater efficiency together to make the point that the marginal financial gains experienced by businesses and homeowners will encourage people to take on these technologies, but we all know that the cumulative effect of their uptake will be a huge reduction in our production of carbon and therefore a huge increase in our ability to meet our targets.

I hope to speak in tomorrow's Backbench Business debate on the fourth industrial revolution; I will speak at more length than on the incredible synergies I see being achieved when our physical energy infrastructure collides with the really exciting technological innovations that are coming through so rapidly. By seizing those opportunities we are not just seeking to accelerate our decarbonisation; we are developing a world-beating industrial strategy, with green growth and the pursuit of a zero marginal cost of energy right at its heart.

Arresting climate change and splashing out on subsidy are not synonymous. As far as I can see, the renewables sector in this country is succeeding. Offshore wind deployments around Europe are bringing down prices very rapidly. Despite the reduction in subsidy, the solar industry continues to achieve a good rate of deployment. Hydroelectric is coming. Industry is working hard to achieve tidal. A fantastic company in my constituency has employed some of the brightest oceanographers and hydrologists from around the world to look at what we can do with wave power. There are many more technologies beside. Now that we have recalibrated the planning process to empower communities to resist if it is not their will to have it on their doorstep, even onshore wind production is claiming to be able to operate subsidy free.

Sound climate change policy is not about the levels of subsidy. Subsidy can become a crutch if we are not careful. The Government have used subsidy as a lever to grow the renewables industries to the point at which they can go it alone. The direction of travel is clear. This Government are absolutely serious about decarbonisation and meeting our climate change targets.

There is one area where the Government's policy is not quite so clear. As a Somerset MP, I daren't not talk about the new nuclear programme. I understand my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's wish to scrutinise the Hinkley deal in more detail, but, as far as I can see, new nuclear is the only low-carbon generation technology that is ready to guarantee now that it will meet our baseload needs in the middle of the next decade. We cannot wish away the reality that our existing nuclear fleet will decommission in the next decade or so.

I seek to champion decentralised energy, a digitised smart energy system and the incredible economic and industrial opportunities that come with it, but renewables plus storage is not ready to commit to being our baseload in the timelines we need. Gas might seem cheap now, but gas prices can change. The debate about the Hinkley price compared with the current wholesale energy price is, in my view, a non-starter. We cannot build anything at the current wholesale price of energy. We must judge Hinkley and the wider new nuclear programme not only on the current strike price or the current wholesale price of energy; we must consider the costs of insufficient capacity in a decade's time.

We must keep prices as low as possible and decarbonise as quickly possible, and we absolutely must keep the lights on—full stop. I am sure that this will be the last set of large power stations we will ever build. I am absolutely sold on all the incredible stuff that is happening to make renewables work, including storage and demand-side management. I believe that our future is not in big power stations, but we have to take a decision now for what will power the United Kingdom in a decade's time. As exciting as those technologies are, none is ready to look us in the eye and say, "In 10 years' time, we will keep your lights on." The new nuclear programme is. I hope the Government agree and put Hinkley forward at the first possible opportunity.

3.51 pm

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Wells (James Heapey), who spoke eloquently, particularly about the

role that renewable heat can play. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) for securing this important debate. He brings huge knowledge and depth to his role and I wish him well in it. I should also take this opportunity to congratulate the new the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Mention was made earlier of the fact that he was my shadow when I was Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. I always respected his ability and commitment on climate change. I was deeply disappointed by the abolition of the Department of Energy and Climate Change but the one saving grace was his appointment and that of his extremely able Minister for Climate Change and Industry. I have spoken to the latter since the election about climate change. I do not want to damn his career too much, but I can say that he is a class act, as we will hear when he speaks.

Having got the niceties out of the way, I should add that, when I was thinking about my speech for this debate, I recalled a number of things the Secretary of State said when he was my shadow. Among other things, he called for more generous feed-in tariffs than the ones I proposed; for more generous commitments on carbon capture and storage; and for more generous resources for the renewable heat incentive. I look forward to his making good on all the aspirations he had in opposition now that he has the chance in his new role.

In the main, I want to talk about the impact of Brexit on climate change, but I should mention in passing that I could not help hearing in the Minister's remarks the wheels of government grinding on the issue of domestic ratification. As his speech wore on, we got more of a sense that it would come more quickly than slowly. I encourage him in that, because my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North is right about the signal it would send.

The central issue for UK climate policy is Brexit. That is the unavoidable context for discussions about climate change. I have been nice about the Minister of State. I am not going take it back, don't worry—maybe he'd like me to. He talked about British diplomacy. There is a big elephant in the room for British diplomacy on climate change: Brexit. We have to address it. I understand that the Prime Minister says she does not want a running commentary—fair enough—but there is a difference between a running commentary and a Trappist vow. There cannot be a Trappist vow. We have to engage with the many, many hard questions raised by Brexit for UK climate policy. Saying "Brexit means Brexit" does not really solve the problem.

The case I want to make is this: first, our membership of the EU has helped us to be a persuader for global action on climate change. Secondly, the ability to persuade is needed more than ever after the Paris agreement. We all know the issue in the Paris agreement: an aspiration to keep global warming below 1.5° with pledges that add up to about 3°. Thirdly, Britain's ability to be that persuader for greater ambition is gravely endangered by Brexit. We cannot shy away from that. The real issue I want to focus on is this: the kind of Brexit we opt for—whether it is hard Brexit, which leaves Britain on its own, or whether we forge a new close relationship with the European Union—will be absolutely crucial to the issue of UK influence and the world's ability to tackle the problem of climate change. That is why, having paid them nice compliments, I want to say to the

Secretary of State and the Minister of State that they have a big responsibility in this process—I am sure they are aware of it—to ensure we have the right outcome in these negotiations on climate and energy.

The starting point for addressing this question is to understand that, in this area and in many others, the debate about our co-operation with the EU has not somehow ended with the referendum. It is only just beginning. I was on the remain side, but we all know the reality: the British people did not vote for a particular model of Brexit. They voted to leave the European Union, but the model we decide now has to be a matter of detailed debate and negotiation. As the House knows, in the international negotiations on climate change we currently negotiate as part of the European Union. As part of the EU, we are on a par with players such as China and the United States. The EU is responsible for about 10% of global emissions and Britain is responsible for about 1%. In the EU, we have been a successful advocate of strong European ambition on climate change. We have been—mention was made of this earlier in the debate—at the forefront of landmark international agreements, punching above our weight as a country. To be fair, we have seen that under Governments of both parties: at Kyoto in 1997, with the role played by John, now Lord, Prescott; and just last December, to give her rightful credit, with the role played by the last Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, now the Home Secretary, in the negotiations around the Paris agreement.

We in this House should be proud of what Britain has been able to achieve, but we should be under no illusions. The influence and role that Britain has played in the past two decades on climate change, which has been hard won, is now gravely at risk. The danger, in this area and in many others, is that we are outside the room when the big decisions are made, or are in the room as bit-part players. A recent paper from Chatham House, the respected international think-tank based in London, said that the danger of Brexit is that we would "move alongside other second-tier powers such as Australia, Canada and South Korea".

All those countries have played varying roles on the issue of climate change, some of them important and honourable, but we have had greater influence. I want to preserve that influence.

There is another danger. We have been persuaders for ambition in the European Union and the real danger is that our absence from the EU waters down and dilutes the commitment of the EU. The danger is that our absence tips the centre of gravity away from the high-ambition countries to those countries that have more anxiety about the issue. That is why the implications of Brexit are not just self-serving ones about Britain's influence in the world and on climate change; they are also about the world's ability to make the right things happen in the fight against global warming.

The risk that I have described about Britain's influence comes with other associated dangers, including for the role of British science and research, which I am sure the Secretary of State and the Minister are concerned about and which draws huge benefit from EU resources, and of the European Investment Bank, which in the past few years has either loaned or given the UK a quarter of the money for energy and climate change

[Edward Miliband]

projects. There is also a massive issue relating to the repeal of environmental legislation from the European Union.

I now come to the question of the mandate of the referendum result. Personally, I do not believe that when the British people voted to leave the European Union, they did so to diminish our influence or to weaken laws on air pollution or other environmental legislation that comes from the EU. That is why, as I said at the outset, there is a huge responsibility on us to shape new arrangements that can protect British influence and, indeed, our national interest.

Some people say that the best we can hope for in the negotiations is a Norway-style arrangement in the European economic area or the European free trade agreement. I like Norway—I spent part of my holiday there this summer—but I do not think that that should be our aspiration. It is a country of about 5 million people and we are a country of 65 million people. Our international role has traditionally been different from theirs, and I think that Norwegians would say that, too. On the issue of the climate, Norway negotiates on its own, not as part of the European Union. Crucially, if we went for a Norway-style arrangement, it would leave us without a voice on key aspects of environmental legislation. We would be affected by them, but we would be rule-takers, not rule-makers. That is the Norwegian problem: it accepts directives on air pollution and so on, but it does not have a say in the formation of that legislation.

What is to be done, given the referendum result? Surprisingly, I agree with some in the leave campaign who say that, after the referendum, we have to carve out a role for Britain that reflects our size, position and global reach, and that does not necessarily emulate the role played by other countries.

I want to draw the House's attention to a recent pamphlet produced by an august group including Paul Tucker, who is the former deputy governor of the Bank of England, the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag, and a senior adviser to the French Government. They propose a continental partnership between Britain and the European Union. What does that mean in practice? Essentially, it is an argument for the closest possible co-operation on a host of issues of foreign and defence policy and, crucially, climate and energy.

What should that new arrangement mean? In my view it should mean that we continue to negotiate with the EU in international discussions, thereby protecting British influence. There is no earthly reason why, following the vote on the European Union, we should not continue to be part of the European bloc on those issues. We can write our own script for the future on those questions. We should also continue to be part of the emissions trading scheme; after all, Britain played a role in coming up with it, so there is no reason why we should leave it. I also believe that we should continue to be part of crucial environmental legislation, such as car emission standards and waste management. The reality is that we will probably have to accept that legislation anyway, if we want to gain access to the single market, so it is far better to find an arrangement that gives us a say on the rules.

I want to be clear: we would not continue to be members of the European Union—our status would change—but we would be crucial partners, and in my view that is completely consistent with the referendum. We should do that because it is in our national interest. Whether Members think we have gone too far on climate change or not far enough, nobody in this House, on whichever side they sit, has an interest in diminishing our influence. I think it is just objectively the case that we are in real danger of diminishing our influence as a country on this vital issue for the future of our people.

That provides some thoughts about where we need to go and where we need to take our new relationship, but there is a hard truth here for Government Ministers. For this to happen, it requires those in government who are sensible and who care about these issues to stand up to those who want hard Brexit. Let us not be under any illusions: hard Brexit is about detaching ourselves from the EU on all these issues. It is about some form of free trade arrangement, although goodness knows what, when what is at the front of the Government's mind gets more confusing by the day. Leaving that to one side, it is not about having these kind of relationships.

I view the three Ministers who are in their places on the Front Bench as people who all care about these issues, so I urge them not to leave their climate convictions at the door when it comes to the Whitehall battles around Brexit. As I said at the outset, I do not doubt their commitment, but they have got to prove it in the proposals that the Government eventually produce.

Finally, I believe in the principle of co-operation with our closest neighbours in Europe, and I believe that we are strengthened, not diminished, as a country when we do that. Climate change is just one example of where that is the case. That was true before the referendum, and it is true after the referendum as well. I think that both the Secretary of State and the Minister of State know that, too. The stakes could not be higher on this issue and on what unfolds in the coming months and years. We will hold them to account, because Members of all parties care about not just tackling climate change, but making sure that we can continue to punch above our weight as we do so and get the right outcome for humankind. A lot rests on those Ministers' shoulders; if they make the right decision, we will support them on it.

4.6 pm

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): I begin by welcoming the new Ministers and indeed the new Department. I am very pleased at the fact that industrial strategy is going to be a huge part of what is going on. I think it is impossible to separate industrial strategy from climate change and energy.

With the greatest respect to Ministers, experienced though they are, I suggest that when their teams of advisers and experts tell them that the temperature is rising directly as a result of carbon dioxide, they should merely deploy the scepticism and intelligence that I know they have and ask a few pertinent questions. They should at least try to get some rational answers before embarking on decisions that will have a huge impact on industry, particularly energy-using industries such as the steel industry, which is an important one for me.

I do not intend to speak for too long today, but every time I speak on this issue, I deliberately and repeatedly make the point that I accept climate change. I have never tried to deny climate change; in fact, I have never met a scientist who does. The climate has always changed, and the ice age is testament to that. Those changes have gone on over the course of millions of years, and over the last 2 million years, we have seen ice ages usually lasting about 100,000 or so years, followed by interglacials, which are usually about 10,000 to 12,000 years. We are possibly coming towards the end of an interglacial at the moment, so we might want to turn our thoughts to what will happen when the earth inevitably starts to get cooler, as it will.

Of course I do not deny that the climate will continue to change; no sensible scientist has ever done so. The point I always make is that the climate change we have seen over the past 250 years is not particularly exceptional. Although it is of course true that carbon dioxide is a global warming gas—there is no doubt about that either—and that if we have begun to emit more carbon dioxide, it follows logically that it must have had some effect on the climate, that does not mean that it is responsible for the relatively small increase in temperature seen over the past 250 years.

I believe that the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Callum McCaig) said that the temperature had increased by about 1°, and in common with many other commentators, he has linked that directly to increases in carbon dioxide emissions. In fact, the temperature increase that is generally agreed on—it is, of course, open to question—is 0.8°, but even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recognises that a significant amount of that is not due to man-made carbon dioxide emissions. The first question that I would put if I were ever to become a Minister in the Department—which I accept is probably an unlikely proposition—is, “What percentage of that 0.8° has come about as a result of man-made carbon dioxide emissions, and what percentage is due to the natural forcings that we know are there?”

I have mentioned the ice ages and the interglacials, but over the last 2,000 years there has been a well-documented series of climate changes that have had nothing to do with carbon dioxide emissions. We know, for example, that 2,000 years ago, when the Romans ruled Britain, there was what was called a Roman optimum, a warmer period. That was followed by the dark ages, when things were cooler. There was then a medieval warming period during the Renaissance, which was followed by what was commonly referred to, and scientifically recognised, as a “little ice age”. That came to an end in about 1800, which, coincidentally, is when we started to industrialise.

Another important question that I would love to put to experts—in fact, I have put it to experts on many occasions, but have never received a rational answer—is, “How much of that 0.8° increase in temperature is due to the fact that the temperature was warming anyway because we were coming out of a particularly cool period, when the Thames”—just outside the House—“used regularly to freeze over so solidly that ice fairs could be held on it?” Some of that warming is clearly natural.

If people are still not convinced, we can look at the correlation, or rather the lack thereof, between carbon dioxide emissions and the temperature increases that have taken place since industrialisation. If it is the

case—as some of the more alarmist commentators would have it—that this 0.8° increase has occurred directly as a result of carbon dioxide emissions, it would logically follow that one could correlate a line between carbon dioxide emissions that have taken place since, say, 1800 and temperature increases, but obviously, if we look at the graph, we find that there is no such correlation. We see that over the last 250 years there have been periods, once again, of warming and cooling, regardless of carbon dioxide emissions. In the first part of the 20th century, for example, there was a significant warming. From 1940 until about 1970, or probably a bit later, there was a significant cooling, which led to people beginning to suggest—

Dr Whitehead indicated dissent.

David T. C. Davies: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but that is a fact. There was a cooling from the 1940s onwards. That is why, when I was growing up in the 1970s, people were worried that the next ice age was coming.

From the mid-1970s until about 1998 there was a significant amount of warming, but from 1998 until now there has been no statistically recognisable warming. People keep referring to the third hottest year on record, or whatever it is, but the reality is that when we look at the actual temperature increases, we see that they are absolutely minute. They are almost impossible to detect. Scientists who are asked about it will also have to admit that the margin for error within those increases is much greater than the increases themselves. Given the level of increase that we are seeing, it is perfectly possible to explain it away, because we are not comparing like with like. We are using slightly different temperature gauges, the areas in which we are using them have moved, some of the areas that they are in have changed over the years, and they can be subject to something called the urban heat island effect or to other natural factors. So there has not really been an increase since 1998.

Members may shake their heads, but I have raised this with the Met Office, and also with Professor Jim Skea. Scientists refer to it as the Pause, and they have come up with numerous explanations for it. I have heard about volcanoes, for instance, and the heat going into the ocean. At a meeting in this building, Professor Skea suggested that a pause over 16 or 17 years was statistically insignificant, which prompts an obvious question: if 17 years of temperatures not rising are insignificant, why are 30 or 35 years of temperatures increasing slightly so significant that we have to make radical changes to our economy and our industry to try and tackle that?

Barry Gardiner: Of course I have not dismissed the possibility that the hon. Gentleman might be right and that all the meteorological experts in the world are simply mistaken, but does he accept that if his thesis that there is natural as well as anthropogenic warming is correct, we are in a much worse position than we had thought, and therefore anything we can do to minimise the anthropogenic causes becomes all the more important, rather than less so?

David T. C. Davies: I do not of course dismiss the possibility that the experts may be right. I have never said they are wrong; I have merely suggested that they

[David T. C. Davies]

ought to be able to answer some fairly basic questions if they expect us as policymakers to go ahead with policies that are going to be profoundly unpopular with the public and which, in many cases, the NGOs that support those policies will not support the consequences of—I will come back to that. The point the hon. Gentleman is making is that if some of this warming is natural, the amount of warming that is not natural is that much greater in terms of the percentage of CO₂ that has caused it. [Interruption.] Well, there is another issue that I am tempted to go into, but I have been asked by the Whips to keep it short and I will respect that, and that is whether or not this is a logarithmic increase. In other words—[Interruption.] Yes, I am getting looks from all around. In simple terms, if X amount of CO₂ has caused Y amount of warming, would 2X of CO₂ cause twice as much warming? People seem to have made the assumption that it would, but of course, in nature things often do not work that way.

Let me return to the Paris agreement. It talks about limiting temperature increases to about 2° of what they were in pre-industrial times. With due respect to the Minister, which pre-industrial times is that? I do not mean to look angry, but which times is he talking about? Presumably 1800 is about the base figure, but pre-industry goes on for about 4 billion years longer than that. We could quite easily go back a few years further and say 2° above temperatures in the medieval warm period, when they were around the same level as they are now. They were around the same temperature as they are now in the Roman optimum, too. I am probably going to mess this point up, but a Greek philosopher—I think he was called Thracius—was writing about date trees in Greece and how they could be made to grow but could not produce fruit, therefore intimating, through that, that temperatures were about the same then as now in Greece because date trees behave in the same way as they did 2,000 years ago. The point I am making is if we took as a pre-industrial basepoint the year 10 AD we could probably carry on merrily putting CO₂ into the atmosphere for quite a while yet before we hit 2° degrees above that period.

James Heapey: My hon. Friend is an oracle on these things. I do not share his analysis, but if he is right does he not still agree with me that a low-carbon future with its clean air and low cost is surely something to be embraced and sought anyway?

David T. C. Davies: My hon. Friend is making the assumption that carbon dioxide is some sort of pollutant. It is not. Sulphur dioxide is a pollutant, and we have done wonderful things in getting rid of that. Carbon dioxide is actually the elixir of life, and a small increase in carbon dioxide has a very beneficial effect on the ability of farmers to grow crops. So I do not accept the premise of my hon. Friend's question, which is that CO₂ is a naturally bad thing.

I would of course accept that we should concentrate on making sure our air quality and environment are good. I have been a surfer for 20 years—or I was until I had children, anyway—and I strongly believe in the environment. I was a member of the environmental group Surfers Against Sewage for years. I am not some

kind of lunatic who wants to tear the environment apart and build everywhere, but I do have concerns about policies that are going to be enormously costly and have an impact on businesses, including some in my area.

I suggest that Ministers should ask themselves whether they actually believe what the NGOs that call on them to adopt certain policies are saying. A good point was made earlier about nuclear power. I believe it is absolutely safe. It is very interesting that whenever anyone proposes a nuclear power station somewhere, some of the biggest supporters are the people who live in that area. In Anglesey, or Ynys Môn, the Wylfa site is being supported by Members of Parliament right across the political spectrum, including those of Plaid Cymru, who normally try and paint themselves, literally and figuratively, as the most green party of them all. When it comes to nuclear jobs, Plaid Cymru is very enthusiastic about nuclear power and I commend it for that. It is right to be so. Let us contrast that with what happens when people want to put up wind farms. I know of Liberal Democrat politicians in Wales who will bang the drum for wind farms at every opportunity until someone suggests that one should be constructed in their own constituency, at which point they come up with all sorts of reasons why that should not happen.

One of my concerns is that green groups—and perhaps the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner)—say that global warming is the greatest threat to mankind but then oppose proposals for a nuclear power station, which could resolve some of our energy problems without creating any extra carbon dioxide. The same attitude has been shown repeatedly by green groups towards the Severn tidal barrage. I do not know whether that project would stack up economically, but from an environmental point of view it has the capacity to produce about 5% of the UK's electricity without creating carbon dioxide emissions.

Philip Boswell (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP): One word: Sellafield.

David T. C. Davies: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt take the opportunity to discuss that with his close colleagues in the Welsh national party, Plaid Cymru, who are incredibly enthusiastic about the prospect of a nuclear power station in a constituency that it represents in the Welsh Assembly. No doubt that will be an interesting discussion.

My concern is not so much that we are adopting renewable energy schemes, because I understand the arguments about the need for energy security and diversity, but if we go too far, we are going to end up adopting energy generation systems that will cost a lot more money. I have had a lot of emails recently from environmental groups complaining about Hinkley, saying, "Mr Davies, it costs too much. Solar power and wind power would be much cheaper than Hinkley." I am tempted to suggest that the Secretary of State should have a look at those emails and, on this basis, perhaps cut the renewables subsidies further and bring them down below the £92.50 per MWh that we are promising for Hinkley, given that we are paying up to £150 for some offshore wind farms.

I also get frustrated when I receive emails from Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and all these other environmental groups complaining about fuel poverty, because fuel

poverty will get worse if we continue to have to pay more for our electricity because we are adopting schemes that require strike prices. Similarly, I cannot understand why Opposition Members and non-governmental organisations will not support fracking, when it is quite clear that if we get rid of our coal-fired power stations and instead use gas that is produced in this country, we can create jobs and cut carbon dioxide emissions. That is surely something that they should support.

I do not want to be a thorn in the side of Ministers. I understand many of the concerns that people are expressing, and I hope that Ministers will put the pertinent questions to the experts. I also hope that they will remember at all times that it is rising tempers about increased energy prices that have caused companies such as Tata to consider closing down in Wales. That is the big cause for concern, rather than rising temperatures, which mankind has coped with quite happily for thousands of years.

4.23 pm

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab): The hon. Member for Wells (James Heappey) described the hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies) as an “oracle”. I cannot resist observing that the oracle at Delphi was a priestess known as the Pythia who raved incoherently under the influence of the noxious gases coming up from beneath the earth’s surface and whose comments were then translated by the priest for the delectation of the general public. I shall simply let that observation fall to the floor, for what it is worth.

Today’s debate is about not just the ratification of the Paris accords, but the consequences of their ratification for the UK, and the ability of the UK to ratify them in good faith and good order on the basis of what it recognises as the commitments it will undertake as a result of being a party to the accords. In that context, it is important not only to clarify one or two points about the ratification process, which we have already done to some extent today, but to review the process and how it relates to issues such as the existence or otherwise of a low-carbon programme that actually sets out what we are committed to. I would have thought that it would have been a particularly good idea—or should be particularly good idea—to make the low-carbon programme available at the same time as the consideration of the ratification process so that we could have the full raft of information in front of us, but I will return to that point in a moment.

It is clear that the ratification process has two stages, as we have discussed, and that the UK’s particular responsibility now is to put an order—the EU treaty converted into an order—in front of the House and to get our bit done, which, as I mentioned in an earlier intervention, France has managed to do. That is important not only to get the business done for our country, but to ensure that the EU ratification is made as speedily as possible by getting the full process undertaken, especially by the heavy-hitters such as the UK, at the earliest possible time.

It is also important to clarify what we are undertaking in our joint ratification with the rest of the EU. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) underlined earlier, we need to clarify our ratification position as the Brexit process is undertaken. As far as we are concerned, the INDCs that were put on

the table in Paris form part of the European bloc for the international negotiations. We have a joint INDC with all other EU member states, and the commitments that come from that relate to ambitions not for 2050, but for 2030, given the 40% reduction in emissions between 1990 and 2030 that was jointly agreed among all participating EU states.

The INDCs will then be the subject of progress reports. The INDCs together represent a reduction in temperature of substantially less than the 2°/1.5°C ambition, coming in at 2.6° or 2.7° in the overall INDCs. Therefore, the conference of the parties progress reports on how the INDCs are going will not only consider whether countries have carried out their INDCs, but form part of a process of strengthening them over time to get further commitments and to move them down towards a reasonable target or ambition for global temperature stability.

In those circumstances, by my reading, we will be in the first review period just at the point when we will be undertaking Brexit, so the INDCs that we had negotiated jointly with the EU may no longer be seen as tenable for the UK. The question we may have to start to face in those international negotiations is: do we, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North said, seek to nail ourselves down in the EU discussions on the INDCs, or do we decide at some stage that we are somehow going to develop our own INDC, which will be recalibrated from whatever it is we think we have allowed ourselves to be put in line for within the EU? If we do that, does that recalibration indicate a lessening or an intensification of our commitment? Better still, is there simply an agreement that, whatever else Brexit may say, we are committed to that joint INDC on the basis of whatever is shared out by the EU as the process goes forward? I would value a thought from the Minister about what the intention on the INDCs might be, because that is important for clarifying our long-term commitment over the next period in reality.

Notwithstanding that, the ratification process will take place on the basis that we are committed to being part of the European basket of a 40% reduction by 2030 as our offer from Paris and beyond that. The question of the missing low-carbon programme therefore starts to loom large because, as a result of Paris, we need to know whether the UK is really able to deliver on that 40% reduction, be it separately or as part of that EU programme. The whole issue of ratification must have that as one of the questions within it—are we able to do what we said we would be doing at the time of the agreement?

At the time, it was welcome news that the Government went ahead and agreed to the fifth carbon budget, and that they did so without any suggestions that there might be caveats attached, unlike what happened with the fourth carbon budget. That sent a clear signal about what our overall ambitions should be. A question then arises about the fourth and fifth carbon budgets moving forward, and whether we can fit what we have agreed regarding the INDCs into the process of agreeing those carbon budgets and their consequences. That is where we start to have a problem. I am increasingly concerned about whether we have the policy instruments in place and the wherewithal to reach a position where we can say, hand on heart, “Yes, we are in this seriously.” Indeed, that concerns not only me but, more importantly, the Committee on Climate Change. Its recent progress

[Dr Alan Whitehead]

report to Parliament on carbon budgets made the important point that although, as the Minister mentioned, our progress on tackling overall emissions has historically been looking pretty good over the recent period, with emissions falling by an average of 4.5% a year since 2012, that has been almost entirely due to progress in the power sector, not progress in the rest of the economy.

The Committee on Climate Change says that, in the rest of the economy, emissions have fallen by less than 1% a year on a temperature-adjusted basis. It specifically says that that is because of a slow uptake of low-carbon technologies and the behaviour of the building sector—low rates of insulation improvement and low take-up of low-carbon heat—as well as because improved vehicle efficiency has been offset by increased demand for travel. It also says that there is minimal evidence of progress in the industrial and agricultural sectors. The Committee is beginning to sound alarm bells about the extent to which we will be able to make the progress that is needed if we are to carry out those INDCs properly.

The Committee on Climate Change points out that, even as far as the energy sector is concerned, some areas have seen progress. It says that funding for offshore wind has been extended to 2026, which I very much welcome as an important step towards attaching the next stage of the levy control framework to offshore wind. However, the Committee says that there are backward steps in other areas, and Members will not be surprised to hear what they are: the cancellation of the commercialised programme for carbon capture and storage; the reduction in funding for energy efficiency; and the cancellation of the zero-carbon homes standard.

The Committee on Climate Change also says that other priorities have not moved forward. There have been no further auctions for the cheapest low-carbon generation, no action plan for low-carbon heat or energy efficiency, and no vehicle efficiency standards beyond 2020. It also says that progress on improving the energy efficiency of buildings has stalled since 2012. Annual rates of cavity wall and loft insulation in 2013 to 2015 were down 60% and 90% respectively from annual rates between 2008 and 2012. I cite these points from the Committee given its status as an expert body.

The carbon budget and carbon programmes have substantial ramifications for endeavours, aspirations and targets way beyond the size of what appears to be the policy put in place at a particular moment. I have a lot of sympathy with the Minister in his task of putting the new low-carbon programme together over the next period. He inherits a number of issues that have percolated down to short-term policy decisions, which have substantial ramifications on climate change targets over the longer period. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North, I would like to big up the Minister's new post. It is a good idea to have a Minister for climate change who is completely onside as far as climate change is concerned. Not only is he onside, but he has a long record of being onside. His commitment to this cause is absolutely unquestionable.

Edward Miliband: We have finished him off now.

Dr Whitehead: Indeed, yes. That is now two stabs to the heart of the Minister's career.

In his responsibilities and those of his Secretary of State, the Minister has a problem arising from the flurry of policies over the past year on the long-term considerations relating to climate change effects. If his new Department lets those policy changes lie, or runs further with them, the problem will be exacerbated, and his problem of writing a low carbon programme will be magnified.

The new Department benefits from particularly good appointments in the form of Ministers who completely understand and are at ease with the question of what we need to do, where we need to do it, how we need to do it and what the effects will be. We need to identify where those effects may continue to be felt outside the new Department. We can point the finger at what happened with some of those changes under the previous Department of Energy and Climate Change, and we can point the finger in the direction of the Treasury. During the latter stages of the previous Government and in the first period of the present Government, we had the Treasury's energy and climate change policy and the Department's energy and climate change policy, and the two rarely coincided. Let us guess who came out on top in terms of policy direction.

My first plea, coupled with kindly advice to the Minister, is to get on top of the Treasury straight away. If Treasury domination of energy and climate change policy is allowed to continue, regardless of the long-term climate consequences, the writing of a new carbon policy will end in tears. To illustrate that, we can look at the previous carbon plan, which came out in December 2011. That plan not only contained some bright ideas, but set out where we were, where we wanted to be in 2050 and how the transition would be undertaken in each of a series of sectors, and that was analysed thoroughly for those sectors.

In the context of the 40% emissions cut that we are now looking at in the European INDCs, the assumptions underlying a low carbon plan are important. How effectively do they cover where we are now, where we are going to be in 2050, how we make that transition and how that transition works in 2030, which is the period that we are now considering? The carbon plan 2011 is clear about carbon saving, the green deal and ECO. It envisages that all practical cavity walls and lofts will be insulated by 2020 and up to 1.5 million solid walls will be insulated. We know that that has gone. There is no longer even a remote chance of such an achievement, particularly with respect to solid walls and probably also with respect to other forms of insulation, because the green deal has gone and ECO has morphed into a pretty restricted version of the original ECO. Yet, the Committee on Climate Change, in its preamble to the fourth carbon budget, suggested, as an assumption in that carbon budget, that by the early 2020s over 2 million treatments of solid-wall properties would have to be undertaken as a central contribution to carbon reduction. So that has gone.

The 2011 programme says carbon capture and storage will

“make a significant contribution by 2030”.

In the scenarios modelled, it is estimated that CCS will contribute as much as 10 GW. Well, that has gone. The Treasury managed to bundle CCS into a cupboard very neatly just a little while ago. Personally, I thought that was one of the biggest enviro-crimes committed by the

Treasury, in terms of its policies of cutting off the fundamental route to decarbonisation of remaining baseload power over the period and apparently not worrying about the consequences.

The 2011 carbon plan says:

“From 2030 onwards, a major role for gas as a baseload source of electricity is only realistic with large numbers of gas CCS plants.”

We have committed ourselves to close down coal by 2025, although we have yet to see the consultation on that, but that is to be undertaken, it is stated in the relevant consultation, only if the progress on building new gas plants is sufficient to allow that to happen—that is, the commitment is to phase out coal, but to replace it with a new dash for gas. Yet, the carbon plan and, indeed, the Committee on Climate Change indicate very clearly that gas itself can be maintained as a baseload only if it has a substantial amount of CCS attached to it. We are apparently going ahead with the dash for gas over the next period without any thought that in the reasonable future CCS may come in as far as gas itself is concerned. That has a substantial impact on our ability to meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets over the next period.

The low carbon plan says:

“Looking to the future, between 21% and 45% of heat supply to our buildings will need to be low carbon by 2030”,

but the then Secretary of State warned last year that we are failing badly on our 2020 heat targets and there is no chance at present of getting to our 2030 target, so that contribution has also gone.

Finally, let me just pick out some of a larger number changes from the 2011 report. The report said

“all new homes from 2016”

will “be zero carbon”, which would make a considerable contribution to the fourth and fifth carbon budgets. Well, of course, those homes will not be zero carbon, because the zero-carbon homes plan has also been pulled.

Barry Gardiner: My hon. Friend always speaks with such authority on these matters. In relation to CCS, is he as concerned as I am that the cross-Yorkshire and Humber pipeline has just had its planning deadline extended by the Secretary of State? It looks as if, yet again, these projects are being put into cold storage.

Dr Whitehead: There is perhaps an irony in the words “put into storage”, because the whole purpose of the exercise in the first place is storage. However, my hon. Friend is absolutely right that the whole question of what will happen with not only CCS pilot projects but the infrastructure and the prospects for CCS as a whole appears to have been put into the long grass, and that is a profound problem as far as our future climate change commitments are concerned.

It is going to be hard to write a convincing new low carbon programme in the light of just some of these things unless the Department gets to work very rapidly and unpicks the damage to the long-term low carbon prospects that have been underlined by the savage changes of the past year. I know that the new Minister is committed personally to making sure that the consequences are right, so that is perhaps an early task on his desk. Let us turn this round so that we can put into the low

carbon programme positive consequences for the future rather than the negative consequences that there are at the moment.

These two issues go very closely together. We have to get on, very soon, with doing our bit on ratification. I am encouraged to hear from the Minister that if the documentation is not imminent, perhaps it is pretty imminent.

Mr Hurd *indicated assent.*

Dr Whitehead: The Minister is sort of nodding his head, so that is good. At the earliest opportunity, we need to have a good look at the new low carbon programme to see whether what we are committing ourselves to do can really be carried out, and, if it cannot, what we must do next to make sure that we can meet those commitments. That is part and parcel of the documentation, and the sooner it can come forward, the better. I hope that by putting the two issues together, we can get a real grip on what we have committed ourselves to and how well we can do it for the future.

4.51 pm

Seema Kennedy (South Ribble) (Con): I shall keep my remarks brief because other right hon. and hon. Members have spoken very eloquently, with great expertise, and at length.

My constituents are only too aware of the effects of climate change. South Ribble lies on the plain where the River Ribble—the historic boundary between north and south—meets the Irish sea. Last Christmas, in the village of Croston—which you, Mr Deputy Speaker, used to represent so well—many of my constituents’ homes and businesses were flooded. This brings home the absolutely paramount challenge to our generation of how we deal with climate change. As a country, we need to tackle climate change while growing our economy and providing for energy security. My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey), who is no longer in his place, described this as a trilemma. It is a great challenge to us, but it is one that I believe my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, and the whole UK Government, are meeting.

Let us look at the progress that has been made. The Climate Change Act 2008, which was steered through by the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband), who is also no longer in his place, and received great cross-party support in this House, obliges the UK to achieve an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. Since 2010, when the coalition came to power, investment in renewables has increased by 42%, and support for renewable energy will increase to £10 billion during this Parliament. Emissions have already been cut by over 30% since 1990. This is to be applauded; it is great progress. Offshore wind generation is up by two thirds, and the UK has enough solar power to power almost 2 million homes. Nuclear power, which supports so many jobs in Lancashire, is also benefiting from Government support. All this has happened while the economy is growing. In 2014, there was a 2.8% growth in the economy and yet an 8.4% reduction in emissions. This is absolutely crucial, because it is particularly important to our energy-intensive industries that they have energy they can pay for. We do not want to see these jobs go to other countries.

[Seema Kennedy]

I do not think there can be any doubt of this Government's commitment to reducing carbon emissions, as was set out greatly as a priority. The Paris climate change conference was a pivotal moment in binding the world's superpowers to a path towards decarbonisation. The UK pushed to ensure the excellent outcomes that were achieved last year by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Amber Rudd). Rather than decrying the fact that the UK has not ratified the Paris agreement in haste but is taking a careful approach to ratification, the Opposition should be applauding the cross-party progress that has been made.

I am still quite a newcomer to this place, so I learn a lot from you, Mr Deputy Speaker. In my 16 months here, I have spoken in several Opposition debates that have been marked by the paucity of argument from Opposition Members, but this one really wins the prize for being an utterly confected motion, and it goes to the heart of the Opposition's disarray. I conclude by echoing the remarks of the Minister in asking the shadow Minister not to press the motion to a Division where there is none, and instead to work in a cross-party manner to meet the fundamental challenge of our age.

4.55 pm

Philip Boswell (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP): We in the SNP find ourselves in full agreement with the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner), who was both comprehensive and passionate; he and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen South (Callum McCaig), who is no longer in his place, are quite right to be so, given the critical nature of this issue.

Confidence in the UK Government's commitment to tackling climate change is on the wane. They have rolled back almost every green policy, and in the previous Prime Minister's strong language on the subject lies the truth of it. The rolling back of policies that supported energy investment and domestic energy efficiency is more than disappointing; it is irresponsible.

The Minister spoke of how business was very much behind him. I can forgive him for that misapprehension, because he is new to the job—I sincerely wish him all the very best in his new role—but for quite some time, investment in the UK, particularly in energy, has been undermined by the almost continuous moving of the legislative goalposts by the Government. Backtracking on issues such as privatisation of the Green Investment Bank, the withdrawal of the renewables obligation element for onshore wind and the cut to solar subsidies have been well covered in the House, particularly by the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead), who provided us with a comprehensive list; it does, indeed, go on.

The aforementioned reversals and the withdrawal by the UK Government of the £1 billion carbon capture and storage competition with no prior warning has left a hugely damaging legacy for investment incentive and consumer confidence in the UK. On the plus side, I am delighted to say that the carbon capture and storage advisory group will report its findings this coming Monday 12 September, as requested by the former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. The CCS report is a cross-party, pragmatic solution that

includes industry, academia and parliamentary input from both Houses, and I urge the Government to implement its good-value recommendations, which are fully supported by the Conservative hon. Member for Waveney (Peter Aldous).

The recent Brexit vote should not become a flippant reference. This is the UK leaving the European Union—the biggest single market in the world. It is a frightening prospect, hence why many Brexiteers have simply run away. They are like the proverbial dog that has finally caught the bus that it was chasing and now has no idea what to do with it; in fact, they cannot even define Brexit. This grave uncertainty has plunged the UK's energy sector into yet further uncertainty. As such, the SNP calls on the UK Government to halt their damaging programme of austerity and inject the economy with the investment necessary to stimulate growth and create a healthy environment for investors and consumers alike.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The behaviour of the UK Government stands in contrast with the ambitious programme for government set out by the Scottish Government yesterday, which will inject resources into the economy to help it to withstand the trials of Brexit. The Scottish Government are also leading the way in tackling climate change, with one of the most ambitious climate change Acts anywhere in the world to tackle carbon emissions. Does my hon. Friend share my concern that all the UK Government's actions that he is outlining are undermining our ability to meet those targets?

Philip Boswell: I will come on later to some of the points that my hon. Friend has raised, but he has encapsulated them perfectly.

I ask the Minister: will his Government reverse austerity and make the necessary investment? As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen South and, more recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady), have illustrated perfectly, Scotland is a world leader in tackling climate change, with ambitious statutory targets and strong progress to date. We must work together to tackle the issue, and it is most encouraging that all contributors to this debate agree on that. We will support the Minister in any way we can to find a collegiate solution to our requirements in this country.

Scotland has made a leading contribution to the EU-wide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Considering that Scotland is the biggest EU oil producer, the second biggest EU gas producer and has about 25% of the EU's renewables potential, we would of course be extremely well placed to do so were the decision only ours to make.

I agree with the hon. Member for Brent North in criticising this Government's approach to energy in the UK—their almost complete reliance on the rash dash for gas, fracking and nuclear. While I must applaud the current Prime Minister for pausing to reconsider Hinkley Point C, I condemn her party for the poor decision in the first place.

The Minister touched on the domestic and European processes for ratification, but how difficult is the process? The hon. Member for Southampton, Test, also touched on the process, but what is it? To put it simply, there are two separate processes for the ratification of the agreement:

one for the European Union, and one for the UK Government. For the UK, an EU treaty requiring ratification is presented to Parliament as a Command Paper and approved in secondary legislation. A draft Order in Council is laid before Parliament, which may be debated and approved in both Houses under the affirmative procedure. This process seems straightforward enough, so let us get on with it.

5.1 pm

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) on securing this important and most timely debate.

Last September, I met Councillor Miguel Magalang from the Philippines to hear his first-hand experience of the impact of climate change in his country. He was visiting the UK to raise awareness of the impact of the increasingly extreme weather conditions that the Philippines are experiencing. The Philippines are made up of thousands of small islands. He told me that it looks like a tropical paradise, with sandy beaches lapped by turquoise blue waters. However, this beautiful place is suffering from the impact of climate change through increasingly frequent typhoons. His country—his home—is under threat, and people have to live in readiness to follow evacuation procedures. This means uncertainty and instability for everyone, and it has a knock-on effect on the economy, the education of children and the provision of healthcare. In the typhoons of 2012 and 2013, over 8,000 people lost their lives. The message from Councillor Magalang was simple: climate change is here now, not in the future, and we should play our part in tackling it. The UK has responsibilities to other parts of the world, such as the Philippines, as a major emitter. Like other industrialised countries, we clearly bear a strong responsibility for climate change, and we should therefore provide a strong lead in taking action to tackle it.

Patrick Grady: I wholeheartedly agree with the points the hon. Lady is making. I have experience of living in Malawi, where people are also being affected first and hardest by climate change, having done the very least in terms of emissions to cause climate change. Does she agree that the concept of climate justice, which has been articulated by Pope Francis and others, is very important to this debate? The Scottish Government have a very innovative climate justice fund, and it would be interesting to see the new Department working closely with DFID to try to imitate it.

Margaret Greenwood: Absolutely. Climate justice is very important to this debate.

Last year, I attended the COP21 legislators summit in Paris, which was organised by GLOBE and the French National Assembly. I attended it alongside colleagues from across the House who are also on the Environmental Audit Committee. I particularly thank the hon. Member for Beverley and Holderness (Graham Stuart) for his work within the GLOBE organisation.

The summit was attended by over 200 parliamentarians from around the world, from whom we heard, at first hand, accounts of climate change. We heard about how more frequent weather events are threatening the lives of these people, and about the threats to diversity in places such as South Africa and Brazil. We heard from

people in India about the impact of the retreat of the Himalayan glaciers on water supplies, and about the threat of increasing sea levels. We also heard from politicians from Nigeria, who described how in the north of that country the desert is moving in and about how Lake Chad, which once seemed to be like an ocean, now appears as a puddle. That has been accompanied by internal migration, delivering an awful lot of upheaval for those people.

We know that climate change is the biggest global challenge that we face. Its impact is clear around the world in increased storms, flooding, droughts and movement of peoples because of lack of resources. We also know that the poorest people on the planet are the most badly affected; as one of the richest nations on earth, we have a real duty to do something about that. The message at the summit could not have been clearer. We must reach our targets on emissions to reduce climate change and must protect fragile ecosystems. Action is needed at local, national and international level.

I was proud to hear British politicians being praised for the lead that our country has taken in tackling climate change. In particular, respect was shown for my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) and for Lord Prescott, who was hailed in Paris as the “father of the two degrees” for the part he played in focusing the world’s attention on the significance of the 2° target. Back in the UK, the Home Secretary is to be congratulated on the contribution she made in Paris last year to help bring about the final agreement. It is clear that Britain has the expertise to play an important role in tackling the greatest global challenge the world faces. It is therefore important that we continue to show leadership.

I welcome the Government’s commitment to ending the unabated use of coal in energy generation altogether by 2025 and to restrict its use from 2023. I urge them also to commit to banning the burning of coal underground, an issue I have raised on a number of occasions. I ask them to look very closely at that; it would be particularly welcome in my constituency of Wirral West. I am pleased that the Minister is committed to the ratification of the Paris agreement on climate change. But we must be clear that this Government’s record on taking action to cut carbon emissions in the UK is poor, and the policy direction of the past year is particularly worrying.

Last year, the Government cut feed-in tariffs for solar by 65%. Further attacks on that important industry are imminent through a proposed rise in business rates for businesses and other organisations, including state schools, that have installed solar panels on their roofs. The Government announced plans to privatise the Green Investment Bank, despite its real success in investing in more risky renewable projects. They also ended support for new onshore wind through the renewables obligation a year earlier than expected. In the face of huge public opposition to fracking, they are pressing ahead with encouraging that carbon-hungry technology. All those measures are undermining my confidence that the Government are serious about tackling climate change; I am sure they are undermining the confidence of a lot of other people.

We face the greatest challenge to the future of the planet. The agreement reached in Paris last year was greeted with celebrations right around the world, and

[Margaret Greenwood]

rightly so. The Paris climate deal offers the very best chance for ourselves, our children and our future children for a more secure future. Hillary Clinton has said that if she is elected US President in November her Administration will mobilise a global effort, on a scale not seen since the second world war, to tackle climate change. China and the United States have already ratified the treaty. France has completed the domestic legislative process.

Britain must step up to the plate and lay an Order in Council so that Parliament can approve the treaty and send a clear signal to other European states that we still intend to provide a strong international lead on tackling climate change. In addition, the Government must revisit their damaging policies, so we can foster vital green industries, provide confidence to investors and be at the forefront of the green energy revolution that must surely come. There should be absolutely no delay. I urge the Government to take action.

5.8 pm

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Under the last Labour Government, we in the UK took the initiative and developed the Climate Change Act 2008, a world first. We really should continue to take the lead on the world stage. I was therefore disappointed to hear the Minister say today that he cannot give us a timetable for ratifying the Paris agreement on climate change. I urge his Department to bring one forward as soon as possible.

People often wonder what the point is of us in the UK doing anything if the big players do not. But now China and the US are taking the initiative, which is particularly welcome because of the size of their economies and populations. I really would like to see the UK up there among the world leaders on climate change, keeping our position of influence on this extremely important issue.

Tackling climate change is an immensely important task, but one that it is very easy to put off, or accord only a low priority to, particularly when voters have more pressing concerns in their everyday lives. We ignore climate change at our peril, as we have seen from the numerous flooding incidents in our country in the past few years. As other hon. Members have mentioned, the problems are very much worse in some of the poorest parts of the world. Temperature increases and periods of drought are driving people from their homes and becoming a major cause of migration. At the other end of the scale, we have the problem of flooding, as was well explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood).

It is not for me to tell the Prime Minister how to organise her Departments, and there is certainly a logic to including energy with industrial strategy, but I am concerned that the abolition of DECC will make the issue of climate change less visible. It is extremely important that proper resourcing and importance should be dedicated to tackling climate change. More than that, tackling climate change should be a part of thinking and policy development in all Departments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead) pointed out, the Treasury is a key Department to get onside. I would have preferred to have a dedicated Energy Minister in the Commons rather than in the

Lords because other Ministers will stand in for her at questions and debates in the Commons, which is not satisfactory.

The Government's record to date on green issues, and on the incentivising behaviour that will help to reduce our emissions, has been inconsistent and disappointing. First, back in 2011, the accelerated reduction in feed-in tariffs for solar energy was announced before the industry had been properly consulted. We had a repeat earlier this year with the changes in valuation office assessments, which will make it less viable for businesses, including schools, as an hon. Friend pointed out, to benefit from having solar panels on their roofs and to contribute to a reduction in emissions. We also had the abolition of the Green Investment Bank, which had provided valuable finance to incipient industries that cannot always get funding from elsewhere, and the abandoning of plans for the carbon-capture demonstration plants, despite their being a manifesto commitment.

On wind power, energy companies have effectively withdrawn from new projects in England because of the hostile environment the Government have created. We at least have a more positive attitude to wind power in Wales, but subsidies are a UK Government matter. Eventually, wind projects in Wales will be affected by those reductions.

The Swansea tidal lagoon is continuously postponed and kicked into the long grass—back in February, a review into tidal lagoons was announced. I urge the Government to look carefully at the tremendous potential that the project offers. Rather than looking at the cost of the Swansea tidal lagoon, they should look at the potential of lagoons elsewhere and the export potential. The Swansea proposals require no money up front from the Government—the taxpayer pays only when the electricity is delivered. The bosses of the project are very committed to sourcing as many of the components as possible locally in the UK. If we could be a world first and lead the way, it would open up opportunities to our manufacturing industry, not only in providing the Swansea lagoon, but in providing other lagoons here and abroad.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): How many homes might the Swansea barrage light or heat, because it is a great idea?

Nia Griffith: The figure that has been given is 800,000 homes—that is just one project and it could be repeated elsewhere. That number of homes heated is the size of a substantial town, so it is very worth while.

Bob Stewart: When you used the word “export”, did you mean exporting electricity or exporting the idea and the technology?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he is speaking through the Chair—when he says “you”, he is addressing the Chair.

Bob Stewart: Forgive me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Nia Griffith: I was referring to exporting the idea. In the past—with wind turbines, for example—we have lost the initiative in manufacturing and find ourselves

importing. We do not want to do that. We want to be world leaders—we want to make the components, export them and build potential markets for our industries for the future.

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): Is my hon. Friend aware that the success of the Swansea project by the same developer would unlock the world's largest tidal project in Workington in west Cumbria?

Nia Griffith: That sounds like a very exciting project indeed. The whole point is not to think about the cost of an initial project, but the huge impact of rolling it out: reducing emissions, finding good markets for our components industries and ensuring we are up there as a world-first. There would be huge kudos for the Government if they did that.

Philip Boswell: I had the good fortune to speak in the Swansea tidal lagoon debate. I am sure the hon. Lady agrees that the ultimate aim is for a chain of tidal lagoons that could power all of Wales and meet up to 8% of the UK's energy needs. Does she agree that that would be an investment well worth making?

Nia Griffith: Absolutely—indeed it would.

Sadly, the Government's record has not been very good to date. The green deal was a complete fiasco. It proved to be a very unattractive deal, as the figures show, with only 2.7% of those who had had the assessment done actually taking out the investment in energy-efficiency measures. Indeed, many of us have had constituents who have experienced real difficulties with the scheme. It is no wonder that the National Audit Office was scathing in its assessment, pointing out what poor value for money the scheme was. In spite of warnings from the Labour Benches about the scheme's faults, the Government did not do anything to improve it.

The sudden ending of the scheme in itself produced problems. One constituent of mine, who was in receipt of pension credit, paid for an up-front survey. She then found she had difficulty getting a copy of that survey. After I chased it up, we got the copy but found that it was too late and the scheme was no longer up and running. She lost her money on that survey. That is an appalling situation in which to leave a pensioner in receipt of pension credit.

There is an awful lot more to do on very simple matters, such as recycling. We should be trying to ensure as many products as possible are either completely recyclable, such as steel, or biodegradable. For example, will the Government consider banning polystyrene takeaway trays, as some local authorities are already seeking to do, and asking catering businesses to use alternative, biodegradable ones?

I very much welcome the inclusion in the Department's title the words "industrial strategy". I very much hope the Government are really serious about developing consistent long-term policies for both manufacturing and energy. Business leaders are crying out for clarity and consistency. The Government are continually moving the goalposts, which completely reduces business confidence. We saw that in the massive job losses in the solar industry when the feed-in tariff regime was changed at short notice. To get businesses to invest in energy projects

and measures to help us reduce our emissions and tackle climate change, we need long-term certainty from the Government.

As we no longer intend to remain in the EU, companies need to know exactly what the Government are going to offer them. Sadly, Ford in Bridgend has slashed its investment plans from £181 million down to £100 million, and instead of creating 700 jobs it will be creating only 500 jobs. That is really, really worrying. The Government urgently need to provide the certainty and reassurance that the UK will be a good place to invest in and that we have the right sort of policies that both favour industrial development and reduce emissions. We need to ensure we are seen as a place in which to invest. More than anything else, I urge the Government to get on with the carbon plan. It is very important that the carbon plan is a major part of their strategy, that the "industrial strategy" part of the title of the Department becomes a reality, and that we give the certainty that investors need for the future of our country.

5.19 pm

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): When I was on my way to the Chamber, one of the Whips told me that the debate had been rather serene and soporific. I do not think that that is the case, and, having listened to the debate so far, I am excited by the prospect of a heated agreement among all parties.

I support the Labour motion, for a number of reasons. Climate change requires all political parties to take it seriously and, if possible, to agree, which would be in everybody's best interests. We need to bind a commitment to mitigating climate change in the hearts and minds of the people our country, and we must do so in perpetuity if we are to succeed in that mission. We need to commit the country, businesses and others to the mission at hand; it is no good to commit only Parliament or this or the next Government if we want to succeed. Tackling climate change has to become part of our national mission, and it should also become a central part of our national identity.

But words are cheap. Acts of Parliament can be meaningless—God knows that we have seen enough of such Acts—and the same can be said of treaties, arrangements, commitments and manifesto promises. That is why I am both hugely optimistic and a little sceptical about the Paris agreement. On paper, the agreement is absolutely huge, but, obviously, climate change does not happen on paper, and it will not be beaten, resolved or mitigated on paper, either. I am delighted that the US and China have signed the deal, but we have been here before. I am genuinely pleased that the tradition of US Presidents committing in their final weeks in office to international efforts that might not overjoy the American electorate remains alive and well, but—I know this view may not be widely shared—let's face it: we have been here before.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) mentioned Kyoto. If Kyoto had worked, we would not have needed the Paris convention, so it has always been the case throughout my life that the prose required for climate change progress does not always reflect the poetry of climate change politics.

[Mr Jamie Reed]

I will be candid: when I saw Heads of State hugging each other in front of the cameras in Paris, like a scene from a NASA mission control room at the end of a space disaster movie, I was pretty contemptuous. I put that to the former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, whose achievements and work I commend in the same way that Members on both sides of the House have done today. She was not very happy with my comments, but I stand by them, because the truth is that, so far, this is a diplomatic and political achievement, and nothing else. There is no doubt that that is important—the Minister was right to say in his response to the opening speech that China and the US signing this agreement is a game-changer—but let us acknowledge the physical realities.

Politicians alone cannot solve climate change. That is the task of scientists, engineers, inventors and investors. The role of politicians is to enable those people to do that by establishing market frameworks and by ensuring access to capital and stable, predictable policy frameworks. They also need a fair, improved and quicker planning process, which successive Governments have tried to achieve over at least a decade, and the centre of Government needs to develop a completely different relationship with local government and its local communities. Those are profoundly important issues, because without them investor confidence cannot be ensured and the progress that we all seek cannot be delivered.

The truth is that, despite some progress, this country is a long way from achieving that. Whitehall and Westminster do not work anywhere near well enough. That is not a partisan comment or a criticism of the current Government. Nobody could argue that, right now, our institutions are up to the task before them. I would go further and suggest that the machinery of government is actually stymying the efforts of those committed to combating climate change.

We will not achieve a low-carbon economy without industrial activism: an industrial strategy that, as many others have said, sees energy, economic and environmental policy as one and the same thing—a holy triumvirate, if you like—and I sincerely hope that the new Department has been designed to pursue that approach, which I have outlined and campaigned for over nearly 12 years in this House.

I am pleased that the Government have abandoned the market fundamentalism of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead). Under his stewardship, the Treasury effectively killed the industrial strategy of the last Labour Government, who sought to pursue so many of the same aims articulated today by Members on both sides of the House.

Members have also mentioned nuclear power, which, along with every other source of electricity generation, should be central to our national industrial strategy. Right now, we have no such policy, only talk. We urgently need one, particularly post-Brexit. Let me be clear, however, that I do welcome talk of such a policy. The industrial strategy should have at its heart a commitment to combat climate change. Such a policy could transform our country for the better. It would secure our energy supplies and enable us to meet our climate change obligations and to transform our

manufacturing and research and development sectors, including our universities. Crucially, such a policy could and should rebalance our economy, so I stand totally committed to assisting the Government in this regard, and I urge them to look no further than at the community that I represent. West Cumbria and my constituency of Copeland could and should be the engine-room of this national effort.

At Moorside, where three AP1000 Toshiba-Westinghouse reactors are shortly due to begin construction, my constituency will soon provide 7% of our electricity needs—clean, CO₂-free electricity generation, providing thousands of well-paid jobs. I am a long-standing advocate of a tidal lagoon project nearby in Workington, which could be the largest in the world, providing another 7% of our electricity needs, along with thousands of jobs and helping to regenerate an area of traditional market failure.

It is my hope that the Government will prioritise both the schemes I have mentioned as a matter of urgency. We do not need the Paris agreement to get on with these projects. I say to the Government, “Let my community help you; let us be the engine-room of this national effort and let us get on with it without any further delay.” We should do everything we can to ensure that these projects are developed as quickly as possible. In particular, I trust that the Secretary of State and his Ministers will join me in highlighting the critical importance of Japanese investment in that regard, and the need to work on our crucial relationship with Japan.

Climate change wears no party colours. Although these are hollow words now, we really are “all in it together” and it is past time that we got into the business of implementing an industrial strategy with the climate change agenda at its heart. The lesson for all of us is that talk is cheap.

5.26 pm

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): I apologise for not attending the first part of this debate. I was chairing the Environmental Audit Committee where we were hearing from Ministers from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Minister from the Department for Exiting the EU.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) on bringing this debate forward. It has been some time since we debated climate change. Like other speakers, I believe that this issue is one of the three great challenges of our age. The first is the challenge of the ageing society and how we can all live better now that we are living longer. How can society adapt to that new longevity? The second challenge stems from technology hollowing out traditional jobs and traditional workforces. How can the Government collect taxes on the new economy when the intellectual capital exists in places such as California, but the products are consumed in our own country? The final great challenge of our age is climate change.

There is the challenge of adaptation to protect our island from the different weather patterns we will see in the future. How can we mitigate the risks and play our part in the world in standing by our poorer neighbours? As previous speakers have said, they have done nothing to cause this catastrophe, but having risen out of poverty, they now risk seeing hundreds of millions of their own

people being dragged back into it through climate change. It will either cut off their food supplies and their traditional ways of life or, in the worst-case scenarios, see island states disappear under water altogether.

In 2015, 190 countries adopted the new climate agreement in the first ever universal and legally binding global deal. We cannot overstate how much of an achievement that was and what a great part the UK Government played in achieving it. The Home Secretary, then Climate Change Secretary, really took the lead on that, and it is a great shame that the Government have now abolished the Department for Energy and Climate Change. The lessons from other countries show that when climate change is put into a pot alongside other industrial and energy policies, climate change is often the loser as economic interests take over. We do not value what we cannot see. This is one of the big “abstract thinking” problems of trying to deal with climate change. We are talking about worst-case scenarios in 20, 30 or 40 years’ time, but scientists would argue that we have just seen 14 consecutive months as the hottest on record and are now 1.1° above our pre-industrial revolution peak.

John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP): Does the hon. Lady agree that if the Government want an example of certainty of policy, which has been mentioned by previous speakers, they should look at the state of California, where what I think is a 20-year all-party agreement on renewable energy has led to investment by various companies? Does she agree that Westminster Governments have probably been practising long-termism and short-termism for far too long, and they cannot allow this to go on until 2020, 2030 or 2040, or for an indefinite period?

Mary Creagh: I strongly agree that what investors and businesses want is certainty. Members of the Conservative party may want to see outcomes, but one way of achieving those outcomes is to set a strict framework and then stick, within that framework, to the interim targets that we wish to meet. The hon. Gentleman has played an important part in the Environmental Audit Committee, sharing with us not only the Scottish experience, but his wider global experience.

As we know, 23 countries have now ratified the agreement, and over the past week the United States and China have come together. Given that they represent 40% of the world’s carbon emissions, this is a really significant moment. It seems to me that they are firing the starting gun for the next big industrial revolution. Britain led the way in the first industrial revolution, with the spinning jenny, electricity and other forms of energy, and the steam engine. The second industrial revolution, in the 1990s, introduced technological change which has revolutionised the way we think and do business. This will be the third great industrial revolution of our time. Whichever country first gets to market with individual transport solutions that are non-emitting—solar-powered cars and battery storage—will have a massive competitive advantage in the global race.

We have heard about the Climate Change Act 2008. That was Labour’s achievement, but it was a cross-party achievement in that only five Members voted against it. It committed the United Kingdom to reducing its emissions by 80% of the 1990s level by 2050. It has been copied, replicated and imitated across the world because it gives

investors certainty, which is crucial, particularly at a time when, following the referendum result, there is a great deal of uncertainty in our economy. The Act sets out long-term goals, but it also gives Governments flexibility to decide how they want to meet those goals. Our Government also introduced feed-in tariffs and the renewables obligation, which brought about an energy revolution in this country. In 2005, none of our energy was being produced from renewable sources, whereas at certain points last year, 25% of our electricity was coming from such sources.

I want to say something about the work of the Environmental Audit Committee. I have here a copy of an excellent report that we published about 10 days ago, entitled “Sustainability in the Department for Transport”. It did not receive quite as much press coverage, or *Daily Mail* pick-up, as the microbeads report, which is a great shame. I am sure that no Member who is present, or anyone sitting in the Galleries, uses microbeads. I must say that we are all looking very polished and relaxed after our summer break.

What the Committee found was concerning. We found that the UK is failing to reduce its carbon emissions in the transport sector, that air quality targets that were supposed to be met in 2010 will not be met until 2020 at the earliest—and the only reason there is a plan for developing them is the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union, and the threat of action against us by the European Commission and the European Court of Justice—and that although a year has passed since we discovered, on 18 September, that Volkswagen had fitted cheat devices to a range of cars, the Government have yet to decide what action, if any, to take against the company. As far as I am aware, not a single Volkswagen has been recalled in this country for any sort of fix or refit. That is completely unacceptable to Volkswagen customers who, for instance, may wish to change their cars and are unable to obtain a fair valuation.

Domestic transport is the single largest emitting sector of the economy, accounting for 22% of UK emissions. Those emissions need to fall by 31% over the next 10 years. We found that the UK is on course to miss that target by 50%. So demand for transport is growing and, despite marginal falls in average car and van CO₂ intensity, this is driving up emissions. Therefore, we are not going to be on the most cost-effective pathway to those 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets. That is deeply worrying, because if we are not on the most cost-effective pathway, it means we are idling along in the slow lane, hoping that something will turn up to suddenly help us meet those carbon budgets later on down the road, literally and figuratively.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Does the hon. Lady agree that the Scottish Government proposition to make sure that all towns, communities and cities are free of fossil fuel vehicles by 2050 is the right approach? Does she agree that the UK should be looking to follow the example of Norway and the Netherlands, which are looking at banning all new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2025?

Mary Creagh: What I would say about a 2050 target is that it is long enough away for none of us to be accountable for it, because most of us will be dead by then. [*Interruption.*] Well, some of us; I probably will

[Mary Creagh]

be—no, I will be enjoying a long and fruitful old age, as I intend to live until I am 100. I want to see interim targets, so if there is a 2050 target I would be interested to see what are the 2020, 2025 and 2030 targets, because faraway targets can always be our children's problems.

The issue in the report about our transport sector is that we are not doing enough now, and I want to develop my theme because transport emissions increased in both 2014 and 2015. Some 94% of those transport emissions are from road transport, and we were concerned that less than 1% of new cars are electric. There is a good reason for that: they are very expensive—£30,000 or £32,000, perhaps. The Committee on Climate Change says that we need 9% of all new cars to be ultra-low emissions vehicles by 2020 if we are to meet those targets at the lowest cost to the public. We should match what the Committee was saying with the Department's forecasts; the Department was saying, "Well, actually 3% to 7% of vehicles will be ultra-low emissions by 2020, but our average central point is 5%." So the Department's central forecast is 5%, but the Committee on Climate Change says it should be 9%.

That is worrying, because the next target—the 2030 target—is that 60% of all new vehicles should be low-emissions. If we are only at 5% by 2020, I cannot see a way of getting to 60% of low-emissions vehicles without some spectacular change in the way we buy cars in this country, and we did not hear any brilliant bright ideas from the Department for Transport. We heard of the money that was committed, but we did not hear a strategy for getting that mass take-up. That means we are playing catch-up and we are not going to follow the lowest cost route to decarbonise the economy.

Bob Stewart: I am no expert, but is there any way of measuring progress towards the targets for 2020, 2030 and so on, perhaps by year?

Mary Creagh: Yes; it is done in the single departmental plans and the annual reports, and the Committee on Climate Change looks at these targets every year and says whether we are going to meet our various carbon budgets. There is a range of reporting mechanisms, and I see it as the job of the Committee to point out where we think things are going wrong.

We could see a whole range of policies that would help drive low-emission vehicle uptake, and local authorities had a range of innovative ideas, particularly in the area of fleet procurement. The Government are probably the largest buyer of vehicles in the country, and if the NHS were to move to all electric vehicles, they would get them at much less than £30,000 per car. They could then guarantee buy-back and there would then be a second-hand market that gets people used to buying these vehicles. We could see workplaces investing in charging points—one of the perceived problems with electric vehicles is their range—and the introduction of a national grant scheme, or scrappage scheme, for electric and low-emission taxis.

We also want the Treasury to think about changes to the taxation of vehicles, including company cars, to make electric vehicles more attractive. This is really important for the UK's industrial strategy. I was born and brought up in Coventry, and I watched the car manufacturing industry virtually disappear around me

in the 1980s. The remaining manufacturers, including Nissan, Honda, LTI—which I am delighted to say makes electric taxis in Coventry—and Toyota, need a reason to choose their UK car factories based in Sunderland, Swindon, Coventry and Derby to manufacture the next generation of low-emission vehicles. We have heard from the Japanese ambassador about some of the anxieties following the vote to leave the European Union, but we are obviously keen to see Nissan manufacture the next generation of its electric car, the Leaf, in Sunderland from 2018. That decision is under consideration at the moment. Investors want stability, certainty and policies that will signal the Government's intention to incentivise the uptake of these vehicles. All those factors are vital.

James Heappey: The Energy and Climate Change Committee has similarly been looking at the uptake of electric vehicles. What assessment has the Environmental Audit Committee made of the preparedness of our energy system, particularly for clusters of electric vehicles? For example, are we going to be able to provide the level of charge required if, say, two dozen or more electric cars on the same road all need to be charged at the same time?

Mary Creagh: We did not look at all the life cycle issues, but I have a feeling that that might be coming out in the hon. Gentleman's report. If so, that would be great—a good bit of boxing and coxing from both Committees. He makes a good point: we still have coal-fired power stations, and it would make no sense to have emitting power stations fuelling electric vehicles. We need to look at the whole life cycle of the power supply. There are big issues with battery storage and battery life, and it would be a great prize for our industry if we could find a way to capture renewable energy and store it when we have more than we need.

I have talked about air pollution and air quality zones, and the fact that the targets will not be met until 2020. The report contains a detailed analysis of that. The Volkswagen emissions scandal revealed that 1 million diesel cars in the UK contained cheat device software, and we found a worrying inertia among Ministers when it came to deciding whether to take legal action or any other action. We want Ministers to ask the Vehicle Certification Agency to carry out tests to find out whether those Volkswagen group cars in the UK would have failed emissions tests without those cheat devices. It is important for people to know that. We would also encourage the Serious Fraud Office and the Competition and Markets Authority to make their decisions about whether to take legal action against Volkswagen. In the United States, Volkswagen owners have already started to receive compensation; some have received as much as \$10,000.

The Committee has also produced a report recently on the Government's approach to flooding. Flooding is the greatest risk that climate change places on our country, and the risk is threefold. There is a risk from surface water following heavy rainfall, whether in summer or winter. The July 2007 flooding, which flooded more than 1,000 homes in Wakefield, was the largest civil emergency that this country had seen since world war two. There is a risk from river flooding, which is what we saw in the Christmas and Boxing day floods in York and all across the country, including Scotland and Wales.

There is also a risk from a tidal surge from the North sea. We were in a position, I think in 2014, in which a combination of high winter tides and heavy rainfall resulted in red flood warnings and evacuations from Newcastle all the way down to Margate. The entire east coast of England was at risk from a tidal surge.

The ways of mitigating these risks are complex. We need to get in place the civil resilience systems so that we are able to respond when floods occur. So far, we have been fortunate that most of them have happened at different times, but if we were to experience all those different kinds of flood problems at the same time, there could be issues relating to our ability to respond adequately.

Barry Gardiner: My hon. Friend is making such an important point about flooding. Does she recall that had the high tide and the surges been realigned by one hour, more than 10,000 homes in the Humber area would have been underwater?

Mary Creagh: It was an anxious time. I remember following events on the Met Office website and thinking, “This is not looking good. I would not want to be the Minister in charge.” We cannot keep relying on luck. We must be fully prepared. I am disappointed that the Government’s flood review and the analysis of the resilience of national infrastructure to deal with flooding emergencies has been postponed. We understand that it was a Cabinet Office responsibility, and I have written to the DEFRA Secretary and the Minister for the Cabinet Office to find out where that responsibility now lives because there has been some confusion.

During the recent flooding, we found that if the transport network goes down because a bridge has been taken out or a road has been flooded, the police, the fire service and ambulances are unable to respond. People are unable to make phone calls because digital infrastructure or phone lines go down, and power supplies can also go down. People end up literally and metaphorically in the dark about the flood situation sometimes only 10 miles up the road. We heard that from the people of the Calder valley who came to Leeds to talk to the hon. Member for Falkirk (John Mc Nally), who is not in his place, and me, and we had an interesting conversation.

Turning to the Environmental Audit Committee’s work on looking at the Treasury, all such decisions are ultimately signed off or not by the Treasury. The National Audit Office told the Committee that there is a growing gap between our stated ambitions on climate change and the policies and spending that the Government are bringing forward to get us there. According to the Government’s own calculations, we are on track to miss our fourth carbon budget between 2023 and 2027 by 10%, yet we saw no action in the previous spending review to take us nearer to closing that gap.

In fact, the spending review contained a number of negative decisions that impacted on our ability to tackle climate change. The last-minute cancellation of support for carbon capture and storage, for which industry had been preparing for seven years, has delayed the roll out of this crucial technology for a decade or more, meaning that the eventual bill for cutting our carbon emissions could be up to £30 billion more. Other last-minute changes, including ending all funding for the green deal, cancelling the zero band of vehicle excise duty on

low-emission cars, abolishing the zero carbon standard for new homes, cutting the funding available for greener heating systems available under the renewable heat incentive, and closing the renewables obligation to onshore wind a year earlier than previously promised, have all damaged business and investor confidence.

We need to start valuing our natural capital, such as our bogs, peatlands and rivers—our wild and special places. There is twice as much carbon in our bogs than in the UK’s atmosphere. If we practice farming techniques that drain that land, degrading peat soil and releasing that carbon, we are contributing to the problem, not taking away from it. We need to consider the role of soils—that was another excellent report by the Committee that did not get much *Daily Mail* attention—and what peatland and bog restoration can do for capturing carbon. That work is vital and contributes to the richness of our ecosystems and wildlife. We will continue to scrutinise the Treasury’s record and work with the National Audit Office and evaluate every future autumn statement for its environmental impact.

In conclusion, the US and China have worked together to ratify the agreement. They are getting a head start in the next great innovation race: the decarbonisation of advanced economies. We are fortunate that we have the Climate Change Act 2008 and the framework that forms the basis for this new industrial revolution in sustainable technology. I hope that all Members will continue to work together and do diligent work in our Select Committees and interest groups to ensure that the Government ratify and honour the spirit of the Paris agreement.

5.49 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): I am particularly grateful to have caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, having missed the start of the debate. I apologise to the Front-Bench speakers for that, but I was detained in the Procedure Committee, where we were taking evidence on the effectiveness or otherwise of our EVEL—English votes for English laws—procedures. I look forward to that issue returning to the Floor of the House in due course.

I was particularly inspired to try to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, by the comments of the hon. Member for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood) about the impact of climate change on people in developing countries. As she said, and as I said in my intervention on her, the poorest and most vulnerable people around the whole world, who are often those whose historical carbon emissions have done the least to cause climate change, are feeling the impact of climate change first and hardest. That is why, in this debate and in the negotiations that took place in Paris, the concept of climate justice is so important. As I said in my intervention, the Scottish Government have really embraced that concept, as can be seen in a range of policy interventions. The former First Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond), spoke about this concept at the central party school of the Communist party of China in Beijing, no less, which shows the Scottish Government’s ambition in this area.

Along with this Parliament, the Scottish Government have set some of the most ambitious carbon reduction targets anywhere in the world. Earlier this year, we were able to announce that the commitment to reduce carbon

[Patrick Grady]

emissions by 42% on 1990 levels by 2020 had already been met this year. Of course, 42 is the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything, according to “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”, but I am sure that it was just a coincidence that that was the target.

The other innovative approach the Scottish Government have taken is through their climate justice fund. I have had the privilege of seeing that in action at first hand in Malawi, a country with which I have become very familiar over the years. I have seen the impact of climate change in that country, as rain patterns change significantly from what people were used to. Periods of drought are followed by periods of intense rain, which makes the cultivation of crops incredibly difficult. Of course, most people in that part of the world rely on their crops as they are subsistence farmers. The changing weather patterns that result from climate change are having a huge impact on the day-to-day lives of the population of that country and the wider region. The region is, of course, facing a drought at the moment.

The climate justice fund has been able to help people to adapt to the impacts of climate change, often by using innovative methods that are energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly in their own right. For example, I visited a community in Dedza where people were able to irrigate their crops thanks to a reservoir built at the top of a hill. Without the need for any kind of electricity or pumping—just through the force of gravity—that irrigation allows people to grow crops and cultivate their food, whereas previously that would not have been possible because of drought or the erratic rain patterns. Likewise, in Chikwawa, in the south of the country, a solar pump is harnessing the extreme power of the sun that is felt in that area and turning that into green energy which, again, has allowed crops to be irrigated and food to be grown.

Drew Hendry: My hon. Friend mentioned innovation, particularly in a country such as Malawi. Does he agree that there is an opportunity for hydrogen technology and storage to be deployed to meet some of these ambitious targets? Many of us here hope to be around in 2050 and the Scottish Government have targets for emissions up to then. We have not heard a lot about hydrogen today, but it could also be used in vehicles, as we are doing in Aberdeen, where hydrogen buses and council vehicles are running now.

Patrick Grady: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. That is an example of the kind of innovation we see in small countries such as Norway, which was mentioned earlier, Malawi and Scotland. What is particularly important about the Scottish Government’s climate justice fund is that it is additional to the international development fund that they make available for mainstream international development programmes. It is encouraging that the Minister for Climate Change and Industry was formerly a Minister in the Department for International Development. I hope that will mean that there will be joined-up conversations across the Government as we take forward these important concepts.

The other matter on which I wish to reflect briefly, which I mentioned in an intervention, is the message from Pope Francis about climate justice and tackling

climate change, and our own personal responsibilities to take action in our daily lives to reduce our footprint on the planet. Much of this has already been discussed in terms of where our energy comes from in the first place and clean electricity generation, but we have a responsibility to drive demand reduction through the more efficient use of electricity and by purchasing more efficient electrical appliances. We do not need to live in the stone age, but we should make much more efficient use of the energy that is generated, hopefully in a clean manner. The idea of climate justice is due to the fact that people who have contributed the least to climate change and can least afford to deal with it are experiencing the greatest impact.

Philip Boswell: Prime Minister Modi of India has said that his country, which has only recently been industrialised, should not be presented with a full share of the bill for carbon emissions. He said that that would be like being presented with a full bill for a meal having had only a dessert. Does my hon. Friend agree that justice should take that into consideration?

Patrick Grady: Yes, absolutely. We must take responsibility for our history. We live in such an industrialised country because of the extent of industrialisation that took place. Buildings in this very part of the world—even the building in which we are standing—had to be cleaned of the soot that had been generated, and those carbon emissions are having an impact today through the climate change that we are experiencing, so we absolutely have a responsibility to lead on these issues. Even in our own country, it is the people who can least afford it who are being hit the hardest. Pensioners living in fuel poverty during colder winters are finding their incomes squeezed as they try to heat their homes. Indeed, people who cannot afford air conditioning in the excessive heat of the summer, as we have seen in France, are feeling the impact. This concept works both at home and overseas. We have heard about all kinds of interventions. In my home town of Glasgow, we are introducing food waste recycling, with all of us having grey bins. It will be interesting to see how the uptake of that scheme goes; I encourage everyone to make the best of it.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) was absolutely right to say that this is one of the greatest challenges of our time. That is why there is not just a political, economic and social impetus behind tackling climate change, but a moral impetus, which is why the Government have a moral responsibility to show leadership on this issue and to ratify the Paris agreement as soon as they possibly can. This is much like the position on the Istanbul convention, which my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) is having to address by bringing forward a private Member’s Bill because the Government are dragging their heels so much. Again, this is another example of the Government ceding the moral high ground in global political leadership to other countries, which is quite disappointing.

I said to the Prime Minister earlier that we should mark the 50th anniversary of “Star Trek”. The fourth movie in the series has the crew going back in time to save the whales as a bit of a metaphor for the damage that our generation is causing to the planet. It is fair to say that, if we want to live long and to prosper, we really must tackle climate change.

5.58 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I did not realise that I was at a “Star Trek” convention, but we learn something new every day in this place.

This has been an incredibly important debate. There have been a number of excellent speeches from all parts of the House by Members who really know this subject inside out and upside down. The debate was opened with a formidable tutorial by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner), who mentioned the Government’s woeful record.

Drew Hendry: On the subject of the Government’s woeful record, does the hon. Gentleman agree that a missed opportunity was not supporting the alternative air fuel scheme, proposed by British Airways, which would have transformed 575,000 tonnes of London’s waste into fuel and allowed BA to operate its flights twice over for a year from London City airport? Does he agree that that was a missed opportunity by the UK Government and that they should revisit it?

Bill Esterson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his exceedingly early intervention in my speech. Of course, there are many examples of the kind that he gives.

We heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) about the worrying loss of UK influence on tackling climate change, like so much else that results from the Brexit vote. He also mentioned his grave concerns about the damage being done to the international community’s ability to tackle climate change, given our leading role up till now and the likely dramatic reduction in our influence outside the European Union.

We heard contributions from my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead), who reinforced the importance of the UK’s role and the implications of Brexit. He questioned whether Government policy meant that we were on track to meet our obligations. That theme was picked up by other hon. Members later in the debate, including my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh). We heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood), for Copeland (Mr Reed) and for Llanelli (Nia Griffith), among other contributions.

Earlier, the Minister spoke about what he called the Government’s fantastic record, but he rather ignored the fact that investor confidence has plummeted, subsidies have been cut and jobs, not least in the solar industry, have been lost. He blamed the European Union for our not having ratified the Paris agreement, while acknowledging that other European countries had done so. The Government and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have been happy enough recently to act against the rest of the EU. The UK recently blocked action by the rest of the EU to protect our steel industry. The Government are happy enough to take unilateral action when it suits them, but we had enough false claims about the EU during the referendum campaign, thank you.

James Heapey: It is my understanding that no EU member country can fully ratify the treaty until all have done so and the EU ratifies it as well, so some European

countries may have taken the early legislative steps to put themselves on the way to that, but I do not believe that any of them will have ratified it yet.

Bill Esterson: Last time I checked, France was still a full member of the EU, with no intention of leaving.

We had the announcement last night, and we have heard the loose interpretation of legal obligations today in the Chamber when it comes to the preparation and delivery of the fourth and fifth carbon plans. That announcement, the approach and what we heard today confirmed the need for today’s debate, and it is why we are right to press the motion.

It is astonishing how quickly the Government have trashed our hard-won reputation for leading the world in responding to the challenges of climate change. Our role as key EU negotiators at Kyoto, our world-leading Climate Change Act 2008 and our progressive reputation at the Paris climate conference all risk being left in tatters if we are seen to be dragged to the table at the last minute as a result of being outside the EU. Whereas China, the US and France, among many others, have all ratified the Paris agreement, despite what the Prime Minister said earlier today, we are being left lagging behind.

At least the Government have moved on from the position under the previous Business Secretary, who refused to let the words “industrial strategy” pass his lips. The new Business Secretary will have to develop a strategy. That is especially true in respect of green energy. The argument for energy, particularly green energy, to be at the heart of our industrial strategy was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland, and the Minister made similar remarks in his speech.

Last year, we were going to lead the way in Paris with a £1 billion carbon capture and storage competition. The United Nations framework convention on climate change identified CCS as one of the interventions that could help countries worldwide meet emissions reduction targets, yet just a week before the Paris climate conference the Government scrapped their plan, despite the international praise it had received. After the Paris agreement had been signed, the Government abolished DECC, precisely when the Department’s expertise would most sorely be needed. They cut subsidies for green household energy initiatives by 65%, and then they increased subsidies for fossil fuel production at the same time as cutting investment in green technologies. While the cost of green energy has been falling, the Government have instead focused on fracking.

There are signs, with the arrangements for devolution, that we are starting to see the sort of long-term, ambitious vision at a local level that is sadly lacking at the national level. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham) is Labour’s candidate for metro mayor for the Liverpool city region. After many false dawns, we finally have a chance for the Mersey barrage to be a reality, developing the high-tech industries that can drive forward the economy and deliver the quality jobs his constituents and mine so badly need, while potentially delivering energy self-sufficiency to the city region. The devolved Administration in Wales are committed to green technology, with eye-catching proposals for tidal lagoons—something mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli. Meanwhile, Sadiq Khan has committed to make London a city run entirely on clean

[Bill Esterson]

energy by 2050, joining the leaders of 50 Labour-run councils in making a 100% clean-energy pledge. Sadiq and his Labour colleagues recognise the damage being done by harmful emissions to the health of the people they represent.

Labour in local government and in the devolved Administrations wants to deliver on the green agenda, but it cannot do these things alone, and they should not have to be done in a piecemeal way. Why is the green agenda not a national priority, on which Government, local authorities and Assembly Administrations can all work together to deliver as full partners? Where is the underwriting by the Government of the development of our green industries? Where is the Government-backed green energy company to challenge the market and to address complacency from the energy cartel, which is simply not set up to put the needs of residential or business customers first? That is what follows from the short-term nature of the stock market-listed companies that make up the cartel and from their need to put shareholder returns above all else. Where is the development of a national energy strategy to address the very real security concerns about supply? If the Government are committed to the green agenda, why, oh why, did they privatise the Green Investment Bank?

The Government are missing the fact that inconsistency and uncertainty are the enemy of investment. Last year, for the first time, the UK fell out of Ernst & Young's top 10 most attractive countries for renewables investment. We used to top the table, thanks to clear long-term planning that gave investors confidence, but we fell to fourth in 2013 and 11th in 2015, and now we are 13th. The Government's inconsistency is also undermining confidence in green tech start-ups. Why has confidence gone among investors? Because the Government have put short-term budget cuts before strategic investment, and because they make and revoke green policy piecemeal and in a vacuum.

There is an overwhelming economic case for the UK to build infrastructure and cutting-edge technologies, not just to meet our Paris agreement commitments. We are well placed to serve the market that exists given that 180 countries signed the Paris agreement. There are nearly 100,000 low-carbon and renewable energy businesses in the UK. UK Government figures value the green economy as a whole at £122 billion a year—double the size of the automotive industry, twice the size of the chemicals industry and five times the gross value added of aerospace.

Green energy is a major trade opportunity. We have signed deals for low-carbon trade of £6.7 billion with China and £3.2 billion with India. The global green energy market is growing at over 4% a year and is expected to reach £5 trillion this year. Trade in green energy has the potential to transform our export prospects just at the moment we most need it, following the Brexit vote.

Then there is the long-term cost of failing to invest. The decision to cut the pioneering CCS project might have saved the Exchequer £1 billion this year, but it is forecast to push the bill for meeting climate change agreements up by more than £30 billion, according to the National Audit Office—a very clear example of false economy. So where is the strategy: where is the coherence? Where is the Government's fabled long-term

plan? Whether we are looking for an environmental, economic or business rationale, the plan simply is not there. No wonder the 100,000 members of the public who signed the petition on ratifying the agreement on environmental grounds were joined by investors worth £13 trillion arguing the business and economic case for early and enthusiastic ratification of Paris.

The complete lack of strategy in green and renewable industries is threatening to rob the UK of a golden opportunity at the very time when it is most needed. The opportunities exist in renewables. They include the potential for us to be self-sufficient, the delivering of energy security, lower prices, a chance to develop world-leading status in a high-tech sector, and a massive export opportunity at a time of great economic need—and all the while we deliver on our obligations to the international community and to the environment.

We have a new Business Secretary: the chance for a fresh start. If he wants to—I hope that he is serious about an industrial strategy and about our global and domestic responsibilities—he has the chance to develop and deliver a strategy that puts the green sector at the heart of what his Government do. He has the chance to support our renewables industry, so that it can be the world leader it wants to be and can be. I hope that he takes the chance he has been given.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel): I call Jesse Norman.

6.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Jesse Norman): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is my first time at this Dispatch Box. I have often wondered what the view would be like, and I must tell you that it is really not bad. [Laughter.] And I do not just mean the Scottish National party. I was lured, without difficulty but with great regret, from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee because of the challenges involved and the extraordinary fascination of the issues. I discovered on my first day the challenging, testing and strenuous nature of the Department: the Canadian swim technique of being welcomed to the Department, briefed, and then invited to manage two statutory instruments within four hours—on carbon budgets, I might add. I could not have been more pleased to do that, given the importance of the issue.

We have heard many passionate speeches about climate change from Members on both sides of the House. We have gone from the Oracle of Delphi, to the Philippines, to Swansea, to Malawi. We have gone from “Star Trek” to logarithms, and from bogs to lagoons. It has been a fascinating debate. There has been great expertise, some humour and some real wisdom displayed across the House. However, one very odd thing is that this has been an Opposition debate with remarkably little true opposition. We heard very eloquent words from the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband), who was very kind about the new ministerial team. We have had the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead) welcoming the fifth carbon budget. We have had the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) and for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood) praising the Home Secretary. Their tone has been absolutely admirable—constructive, bipartisan, intelligent and right—

and it has been echoed by other colleagues across the House, particularly the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Callum McCaig).

What a contrast with the manufactured indignation of Opposition Front Benchers. You may know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that John Gielgud's Hamlet was famous for its choked ferocity. He had the capacity to bring a tear to any eye, such was the intensity of his engagement. The Opposition spokesman managed to bring a tear to the eye of those in the House but, alas, it was a tear of laughter. He reminded me more than anything, in his histrionics, of Dame Edith Evans in the role of Lady Bracknell; but instead of declaiming about a handbag, he gave us a lot of nonsense about the Government's record.

Barry Gardiner: Can the Minister adumbrate one single point that I made in my opening remarks—one single point where I criticised the Government for backsliding—on which I was wrong?

Jesse Norman: There are many that one could pick on, but my point was a matter of tone.

Barry Gardiner: So I was not wrong; I just said it in a nasty way.

Jesse Norman: I am enjoying the sedentary contributions from the Opposition spokesman, but he has had his moment. Let us focus on the two themes that came through, loud and clear, across all the speeches and interventions today. The first is that the issue of climate change is now in the absolute mainstream of our political debate. Whatever people's specific views, climate change is recognised across all parties, in all the nations and regions of this country, as a central issue of public concern. The second point follows from that, and it is that we cannot and we must not view this country's commitments in relation to climate change in a narrowly partisan or party political way. The Paris agreement has been welcomed by Members from across the House, as has the concerted action taken this week by China and the USA.

As the Prime Minister underlined only a few hours ago, this country has long exercised global leadership in this area. It has balanced great ambition with a sober recognition of the costs involved—costs that can hit not merely industry but often, directly and indirectly, the poorest people in our society. There is so much more to do, but what the UK has done is cause for celebration, not regret.

We can all agree that climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world, and that has been brought home to us again today by the excellent examples highlighted in the contributions of the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady), my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Seema Kennedy) and the hon. Members for Wirral West, for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) and for Wakefield, as well as by my brilliant colleague the Minister of State. We agree that climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world. We agree that the UK has played, and will continue to play, a unique and important role in global action to tackle the changing climate. We agree that that action is an opportunity for growth, for new jobs and for improvements to health, to cities and to our daily lives.

That consensus is the prerequisite. It is the essential long-term basis for concerted action in this area by all Governments, at any time. It will be especially helpful to us as we look forward to the COP22 meeting in Marrakesh in November, which will help to set many of the rules relating to the Paris agreement and so will mark a shift from aspiration to implementation. That consensus, and the need to maintain it, is fundamentally why I still hope that the hon. Member for Brent North will not press this needlessly divisive motion to a vote.

The Government have made it very clear that they welcome the push by the US, by China and by other countries towards the early ratification of the Paris agreement. We remain firmly committed to that agreement and to ratifying it as soon as possible. The convention, however, is that all European Union member states ratify the agreement together, collectively. We hope that that will happen, as has been said, as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, it is not true, as was stated by the hon. Member for Sefton Central (Bill Esterson), that France has ratified the agreement. The Commons Library briefing of 6 September says:

“As set out on the UK French Embassy website it will not do so until all Member states and the EU are ready to do so, and will focus”—

in the meantime, on—

“encouraging other Member States to make progress”.

France was reported in the press as having ratified the agreement, but it has not in fact done so.

I appreciate that we have heard some perfectly proper concerns about the Paris agreement coming into force before the EU has ratified it. However, there is widespread international understanding that in the event that the agreement enters into force early, countries that have not yet completed their domestic processes to allow ratification to take place—very important processes of consensual ratification—should not and will not be prejudiced. Not to do so would mean that as many as 140 countries, including some of the very poorest and most climate-afflicted nations in the world, would be denied a full seat at the table. COP22 in Marrakesh in November will, I hope, take a formal decision to that effect.

Turning to recent history, few countries have been more active in decarbonisation than this one. We were the first country to set, through the Climate Change Act, a legally binding 2050 target to drop our emissions by at least 80% on 1990 levels. Far from not having a strategy, we have just signed off our fifth carbon budget, which sets the terms for the overall picture. The UK has made great progress in reducing its emissions, which had fallen by 36% by 2014 on 1990 levels. During the past five years, between 2010 and 2015, our domestic greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 17%, which is the biggest reduction in a single Parliament. We already have domestic obligations that keep the UK well below the 2° rise in temperature goal mandated by the Paris agreement.

Dr Whitehead: The Minister mentions the signing off of the fifth carbon budget and my pleasure about that, but perhaps he missed the point I made earlier, which is that the Government are nowhere near in any possible way meeting the terms of the fifth carbon budget, as a result of the policies they have recently put in place. That is presumably of some concern to him.

Jesse Norman: It has always been understood that, as has been stated, the Government would announce measures during this Parliament that will address the concerns—the perfectly proper concerns—the hon. Gentleman raises. I do not demur from the point that the framework exists, with the independent check of the Committee on Climate Change, whose suggestions the Government have, broadly speaking, in every case accepted. I do not think there can be much doubt about the structure and credibility of the long-term framework that the Government are following.

Through the Climate Change Act and the carbon budgets, Britain has an advanced model for the requirements set out in the Paris agreement, with a national plan to curb emissions and the aim to improve the plan every five years, setting progressively tighter targets. That model has been widely admired abroad, and it has proven extremely helpful and influential to other countries facing the same challenges, including Denmark, Finland and France. With the confirmation of our fifth carbon budget in July, we are in a strong position to continue on this steady path of improvement. That is the goal of this new Department. Its creation shows that climate change has become an absolutely mainstream part of our political life.

Mary Creagh: I do not know whether the Minister has seen the conclusions of the Environmental Audit Committee report, but the transport sector is set to miss one of the Committee on Climate Change's interim decarbonisation targets by over 50%. Will he comment on some of the specific challenges facing the transport sector and on the fact that we are set to miss our fourth carbon budget for 2027, which is in nine years' time?

Jesse Norman: I think we all recognise that, on present projections, the UK will have more to do to reduce domestic emissions. As has been said, that is going to require an emissions reduction plan. It is too early to give specifics about what will be included in that plan, but I can say that it will aim to set out the Government's proposals across key sectors of the UK economy over the medium to long term and will be specifically structured to meet such needs.

I turn briefly to the issue raised by the right hon. Member for Doncaster North, namely our relationship with the EU in the context of Brexit. His words were wise, well chosen and constructive. Although we will ratify the agreement as part of the EU, leaving the EU does not mean that the UK will step back from this agenda. Indeed, let us all be quite clear that the UK will not step back from international leadership as such, and remains as committed as ever to tackling climate change. We will continue to be an outward-looking country. We have an unrivalled set of relationships around the world and membership of key international groupings through which to make the case for action and to build bridges between different views and interests, as he said.

Even after Brexit, we expect to work closely with the EU and with individual EU member states with whom we will have a continuing shared interest in pressing the case for action on climate change. We will continue to use the authority from our track record to support domestic and international climate action and shape the wider international agenda.

As I have made clear, our history of domestic climate action puts us in a very good position to build on what was agreed in Paris. The COP22 conference in Marrakesh marks an important further stage in the implementation of that global agreement. The negotiations are very complex and will take time, and we should not necessarily expect headline-grabbing outcomes. But it is important to focus on the positive side, from an innovation standpoint; some very important contributions, including that of the hon. Member for Glasgow North, stressed the importance of innovation.

Ambitious action on climate change should also lead to real opportunities for this country. As a result of the UK's historical leadership we can build our progress towards a low-carbon economy both domestically and abroad. Low-carbon sectors are already an important and growing part of our economy. In 2014, more than 95,000 businesses were directly engaged in low-carbon and renewable energy activity, generating £46.2 billion in turnover and resulting in 238,500 full-time equivalent jobs. I particularly enjoyed and benefited from the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey) in that context, with his call for common sense and his emphasis on social justice and the importance of taking advantage of the economic opportunities.

Capital markets, too, play an increasingly important role in the transition to the low-carbon economy, and green finance is a major priority for the largest emerging markets. The green bond market, which funds projects with positive environmental or climate benefits, has grown from just \$3 billion in 2012 to \$42 billion globally last year. With London, the world's most international financial centre, and with significant expertise and strong professional and legal services, this country is very well positioned to help finance the transition globally to a low-carbon economy.

I conclude by congratulating and thanking every Member who has contributed to the debate. It has been a very absorbing debate indeed. The number and quality of the speeches testify to the importance of the issues involved. The UK remains firmly committed to the Paris agreement and to its ratification as soon as possible. This country has not and will not step back from international leadership in combating climate change. We also remain committed to ambitious domestic action. The fifth carbon budget was set in line with the recommendation of our independent advisers, the Committee on Climate Change, as I have stressed. It is equivalent to a 57% reduction on 1990 levels.

We know that there will be complex challenges to decarbonising in the years ahead. That is to be expected. But our aim is to meet those challenges in a way that is fair and affordable, and maximises the economic benefit to the UK. That requires a whole-economy approach to delivering our climate change goals, one that effectively balances the priorities of economic growth and carbon reduction. Through the creation of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy we will do just that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House notes that the USA and China have both ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change; regrets that the Government has not accepted the Opposition's offer of support for immediate commencement of domestic procedures to ratify the Paris Agreement; further notes that if the UK lags behind its

G20 partners in ratifying the Paris Agreement it risks losing diplomatic influence on this crucial future security issue; recognises, in light of the EU referendum vote, the need to maintain a strong international standing and the risk of rising investment costs in UK energy infrastructure; and calls on the Government to publish by the end of next week a Command Paper on domestic ratification and to set out in a statement to this House the timetable to complete the ratification process by the end of 2016.

Garden Bridge

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Mark Spencer.*)

6.30 pm

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): It is nice to get started a bit early, which means I do not have to rush through my speech to fit it into the time. I hope other hon. Members wish to contribute.

I want to use this opportunity to lay out the issues around the garden bridge project, which is unfortunately now known by most Londoners as the vanity project. A Transport Minister will respond to the debate tonight, but it is certainly not a transport project. Lord Ahmed should be the answering Minister, but he is in the House of Lords. I welcome the Minister who is here and hope he understands his brief in the wider context.

I pay tribute to all those to all those who have worked so hard to shine a light on the failings of the garden bridge project: Thames Central Open Spaces; the Waterloo Community Development Group; and a cross-party group of members of the Greater London Authority who did their best to get to the truth, especially Liberal Democrat Caroline Pidgeon, Labour member Tom Copley and Conservative Andrew Boff. They are from different parties but are united on the issue. I also pay tribute to the local councillors for Bishop's ward, which is just across the river from the House, particularly Councillors Mosley and Craig, who have been brave enough to stand up to their own Labour council to represent strongly the views of their local area.

A great deal of the information I will use tonight had to be dragged out of public bodies by freedom of information requests. I pay tribute to the work of journalists such as Will Hurst from the *Architects' Journal*, Peter Walker from *The Guardian*, Theo Usherwood from LBC and Hannah Barnes from "Newsnight", who have done so much to ensure that the information, which should have been public in the first place, is transparent.

Many of us in London have been incredibly disappointed in London's *Evening Standard*. From the beginning, it has ignored any criticism or alternative view of the project and has been the official mouthpiece of the Garden Bridge Trust, which is perhaps not surprising, because at one time its proprietor was shown as a governor of the trust, although that is no longer the case. It is sad that a paper once known for its fearless reporting has on this issue acted as the cheerleader without recognition of the widespread opposition from Londoners.

Oliver Colvile (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): I thank the hon. Lady, who is a very good friend, for giving way. When the *Evening Standard* gave its support, did it consider making room for hedgehogs on the garden bridge?

Kate Hoey: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's work on supporting hedgehogs. Perhaps he shares my view that, if there were fewer badgers, we might have more hedgehogs, but that was not a consideration in any discussion to do with the garden bridge.

I am not a nimby and I am not afraid to support unpopular causes—I support some popular ones too, as we saw recently. For example, I supported the London

[Kate Hoey]

Eye from the beginning when many Members of the House thought it was wrong—they opposed the London Eye because they did not want to be overlooked when they were out on the Terrace. The London Eye was delivered without a penny of public money. It was painstakingly argued for by the two brilliant architects David Marks and Julia Barfield, who are my constituents. They spoke and discussed it with every group to win their confidence. We are going back some years now, but most importantly at that time, the London Eye was the catalyst for regeneration on that part of the South Bank. A specific trust was set up so that a percentage of the profit goes directly to keep the area policed and cleaned. The Garden Bridge Trust has behaved so differently. Its consultation, if it existed at all, can only be described as lacklustre. It treated local views with disdain, acting always as if anyone who objected was some kind of stupid. I was very disappointed when another constituent of mine, Joanna Lumley, who I have huge admiration for, at various times almost disparaged people who had genuine objections.

Now, I have to admit that when I first heard about a garden bridge across the Thames I, probably like most people, thought “Oh, that sounds really nice.” When described, the proposed garden bridge leaves the impression of being an enchanting mythical passage between Temple and the South Bank, an escape from noise and pollution, a tranquil hiding place. Who would not have thought that that was a nice idea? When we look at the reality, however, we see that it is very different. It will land in my constituency on a beautiful site overlooking the Thames that has 29 mature trees and wonderful views of St Paul’s. The site is an asset of community value dearly loved by locals and visitors. This public open space will be lost to a huge concrete visitor entrance-retail centre building manned by security guards. This area was won through a long and hard-fought battle by the local community through the 1970s and 1980s to secure green open space beside the river for the benefit of local residents, local workers and visitors.

Once I had really looked into the garden bridge proposals, I realised that even if the concept seemed nice, it was in the wrong place. There were other parts of the river where a transport crossing was far more needed. More crucially, there is the cost. This is not simply a local issue or even a London issue. It carries national significance in respect of the use of public funds and the delivery of a major infrastructure project in a specific location to the value of £185 million. In my view the arguments are very, very weak in respect of its need, supporting business case and, especially, location. Other areas of London have a significant need for investment of this sort, as do so many other important regions of our country.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): On the regions, at the same time in 2014 that the Department for Transport was providing £30 million of public money to back the bridge, despite the £185 million scheme not having the required £100 million of private sector funding, Hull had £100 million of private sector funding to electrify the rail line to Hull. The Hull scheme was submitted to the Department for Transport and has sat in the Department for over two years, even though it had to provide only £2.4 million of public

money. Does that not show that the regions are losing out again when it comes to transport investment by this Government?

Kate Hoey: I have great sympathy with my hon. Friend. Many other hon. Members across the country will look at this money and wonder why they have not been able to get something like this for something that is really needed in their area.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): My hon. Friend is a doughty campaigner for her constituency in London, but does she agree that no other city or region of the UK would qualify for the level of Government attention and initial expenditure the bridge has received?

Kate Hoey: I absolutely agree. I stick up for London. I believe that London, being a great capital city that is loved by the people who live here while being very open to tourism, does sometimes need special arrangements, for example policing. This, however, is something very different. Perhaps the problem for my two hon. Friends is that they do not have Joanna Lumley living in their area.

Let us look at the cost. When the garden bridge was first announced, it was claimed it would not require a penny of public money. Very soon after, the former Chancellor announced £30 million of support and Transport for London also came up with £30 million. So, £60 million of taxpayers’ money has been committed to a project that came out of thin air. It had never been discussed with anyone before it was announced, unless in private discussions between Joanna Lumley, the former Chancellor and others.

From the beginning, those supporting the Garden Bridge Trust behaved as if they knew they had support in high places—and of course they had. The report in February by Project Compass, the not-for-profit procurement intelligence service, goes into great detail on how the procurement process was handled. The tender originally asked for broad options for a pedestrian bridge between Temple and the South Bank, and it made no mention of a garden/living bridge element. As a result, only the Heatherwick Studio bid responded with not just a garden bridge proposal, but a design drawing and actual location plan of the garden bridge. That had not been called for in the tender spec, yet Heatherwick Studio received the highest mark for its understanding of the brief.

A single person in City Hall—Richard de Cani, the then managing director for planning for Transport for London—assessed the technical and commercial evaluation of the three bids. Usually, subjective judgments in public tender documents have a team of assessors to ensure impartiality, but this is the same Richard de Cani who we now know used to work for Arup—the same Arup that in another flawed tendering process, as outlined by Project Compass, won the contract for the Temple bridge part of the garden bridge and has been given more than £8 million.

It gets worse. Where has Mr De Cani gone back to work? Arup, of course. Arup seems to like ex-City Hall staff, because it has recently appointed as its new global transport leader Isabel Dedring, the former City Hall deputy head of transport. She was personally involved with nearly all the meetings prior to the tendering process with Thomas Heatherwick. So, both of the

officers directly involved with the entire process have now left City Hall and gone to be employed by the garden bridge engineer and lead consultant, Arup. That could be a coincidence, but I think that most fair-minded people would think that it is very strange. Even Greater London Authority's internal audit head, Clive Walker, admitted that the procurement had been neither open nor objective.

There is a question mark over the procedure, and yet the National Audit Office could do nothing about it. It responded to me by saying that it was not in its remit to look into TfL behaviour, and that that was the responsibility of the GLA oversight committee, supported by locally appointed auditors. Ernst & Young is the GLA's locally appointed auditor and it was also appointed by the Mayor to run the investigation into TfL, but—believe it or not—Ernst & Young is listed as having donated £500,000 to the bridge, and an Ernst & Young partner also sits on the board of the Garden Bridge Trust. The GLA oversight committee looked into that, and its chair described it as a “dodgy design procurement process” and suggested that TfL reimburse the two other applicants, WilkinsonEyre and Marks Barfield.

I think that the NAO should be able to investigate public money used by TfL. I am glad that it has agreed to look into the £30 million given by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer via the Department of Transport and how it has exercised control over the money.

The model under which the GBT operates sets a dangerous precedent—this is why this should be of interest to all Members—that allows public bodies to effectively offshore major infrastructure projects by leveraging charitable vehicles, under the oversight of the Charity Commission, to avoid the transparency and scrutiny preserved for governmental bodies via the NAO. The House will be interested to know that since July 2015, £26,720,292 has been paid to the GBT, with absolutely no accountability for how it has been spent and no visibility of its accounts.

The current Mayor stated when he came to office that £37.7 million has already been spent by the trust, but:

“Nothing has been achieved to date”.

More recently, he stated on LBC that the figure was now £42 million, yet he himself had stated that he did not want a penny more of public money. It would be interesting to know why another £5 million to £6 million has been spent since he came to office.

Recently, Lord Davies, the chair of the Garden Bridge Trust, stated on “Newsnight” that a significant amount of spend had been on two contractors, namely Arup and Bouygues, which is a French company and there are slight variations in how it is pronounced. No visibility has ever been provided over those contractual arrangements, or legal clarity provided as to whether there are clauses to return public money in the event that the project is cancelled.

I believe that contracts should not have been entered into until the land arrangements on both sides of the river had been secured because it exposes taxpayers' funds to risk. The land deal still has to be negotiated and Coin Street Community Builders, who hold the long lease from Lambeth, are not happy with the terms of agreement even now. A judicial review has been filed. The money for that was raised by small donations across London. Quite suddenly, just a few weeks ago,

the GBT changed its dates for filing its accounts, originally due on 31 July, to 31 December. Again, this lack of transparency is very worrying.

This project is at risk not just of never happening, but of being a colossal white elephant. It is nicely depicted in a cartoon in this week's *Private Eye*, with a big white elephant over the Thames. We now know—it has been admitted by Lord Davies on “Newsnight”—that it is going to cost £10 million more, up to £185 million, and will be further delayed by a year even if the GBT gets what it wants. It now has to raise between £52 million and £56 million just to build the bridge, up from the original estimate of £32 million. Additional money is needed to support the running costs at £3 million per year, while the insurance is £15 million, but only £9 million has been offered as surety by the Department for Transport.

I understand—the Minister will want to go into it—why the Secretary of State agreed to continue the underwriting, but I welcome the fact that the Department did not say that it was going to increase it in any way. There was a danger of allowing it to continue, with increased amounts each month. In fact, that did not happen, which is to be welcomed. I still think that this is a ridiculous waste of public money.

The GBT's own press release from June 2016, just a few months ago, admits to spending £22.7 million of public money solely on pre-construction activities—progressing the design, obtaining licences, permits and planning approvals, which are still not final, including stakeholder and community consultations—but no further information was provided. A number of leading construction experts have said that they cannot understand how that could have amounted to anything more than about £1 million.

I genuinely cannot understand how the Government, whether it be the Treasury or the Department for Transport, can feel comfortable with the truly remarkable amount of money already spent by the GBT. I find it hard to explain to my constituents, many of whom would be the kind of people the new Prime Minister addressed from the steps of Downing street on her first day in office, precisely how £40 million pounds of public money has already been spent on a bridge that is going to be closed regularly for private functions, that will not allow cycling and that will be subject to all sorts of rules about what can and cannot be done on it. As I said, the bridge is in completely the wrong place.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I thank the hon. Lady for what she has said. Having come here to listen to her, I am increasingly against this garden bridge project. Is it true that the beautiful view of St Paul's created by Canaletto will be destroyed by this project?

Kate Hoey: I thank the hon. Gentleman, and I am glad to hear that he has come to this debate with an open mind. Yes, as I am going to mention later, that is indeed one of the most dreadful things that will happen. It might not seem that important, but once it is no longer there, we will realise it and miss it. The wonderful views of St Paul's from Waterloo bridge will be ruined. That will happen without a doubt if the garden bridge is built.

I also find it difficult to understand why this new Government are giving money and underwriting a project for a charity whose donors and backers too often remain

[Kate Hoey]

unidentified. The public do not discriminate as regards which pot of money the funds come from; to them, it is all public money. There is, however, a list of donors and a breakdown of the funding up to August 2016, and what is remarkable is how many of those donors are anonymous—anonymous this and anonymous that. Why do they want to be anonymous? Some people might decide that they want to be. Strangely, however, £12.6 million is described as being “confidential until launch announcement”. Is that real money or is it a pledge from someone? It is all smoke and mirrors. I shall say more about donors in a few moments. Because of that, and because of the way the trust’s accounts have been dealt with, I welcome the Charity Commission’s investigation, which it has confirmed to me in writing.

Let me say a quick word about the business plan, which has been examined admirably and in great detail in a report entitled “Operational Viability of the Garden Bridge” by Dan Anderson, who is a director of Fourth Street. Some Members will know of Fourth Street, which has done great work for the National Trust and other public bodies. The report draws attention to all the flaws in the business plan, and I commend it to anyone who wants to understand more. In paragraph 4.2, Mr Anderson makes this crucial point:

“It is worryingly worth noting that the Garden Bridge Trust has a perverse incentive to spend money as quickly and not as efficiently or cost-effectively as possible. That is, the Trust has a powerful incentive to ensure that it reaches a ‘point of no return’ (in financial terms) as quickly as it can so that planning, land acquisition and/or legal challenges do not ultimately thwart the project.”

I think that that must be a very large part of the explanation of how such an extraordinary sum could have been spent before construction has even started.

Others, too—apart from the Government, Transport for London and City Hall—need to examine their behaviour in respect of this project. A cosy little cartel has been operating, with everyone blaming everyone else. The almost zealous support that has been given to the Garden Bridge Trust by Lambeth council is disturbing. The chief executive has attended meetings with the Mayor’s head of staff, David Bellamy, and the trust. The council’s leadership has never allowed a proper, full debate in the council and a vote, and has ignored local councillors’ views. Council officers and members have proceeded for three years without any policy basis. Their transport plan does not even mention the garden bridge, and there has been no policy paper from Lambeth explaining why the council should support it.

Lambeth could stop this project tomorrow if it wished. Coin Street Community Builders, of which I am a huge supporter, should have said no to the change in its land lease from the beginning. It, too, could stop this tomorrow if it wished. The Mayor of London, coming new to the project, should have put a stop to it, or at least consulted local politicians. It is just not good enough for him to say, “So much money has been spent that we must carry on.” He could stop it tomorrow if he wished. Will the Minister tell us who will pay the £3 million running costs? Will he confirm that it will not be the taxpayer, and will he confirm categorically that there will be no more public funding for the bridge?

Lord Ahmed had stalled everyone who objected to the bridge. No one could manage to see anyone in power except representatives of the Garden Bridge Trust,

who seem to have been able to do so whenever they wished. Lord Ahmed has now written to Councillor Craig saying that he will meet local councillors, but I ask him to come and look at the site, and speak to the people who really know the area and the problems.

Having talked privately to many of those who are involved in all the different aspects of the project, I know that there is huge unease. I know that there is unease in the Department for Transport, I know that there is unease in Lambeth, and I know that there is unease in Coin Street. I know that most of those people—with the exception, probably, of the former Chancellor—would like the project to be stopped, but no one wants to be fingered as the person responsible for actually saying no.

I appeal to all the potential donors to think carefully about whether they want to be associated with the project. I believe that the reputation of many of them will be damaged by their support for this folly. As the critique of the business plan states, the garden bridge must be loved as much by the public as by its creators, or the business model will fail. Given how unpopular it is and how much has been exposed by freedom of information requests, I have to say that if I were a trustee of a body that was thinking of donating to the Garden Bridge Trust, I would be thinking again. It is ironic that this may be the only way in which we may now be saved from a complete waste of public money, even more of which will be wasted as time goes on, and a deeply flawed project which, as I said earlier, will ruin the most wonderful views of St Paul’s from Waterloo bridge, as well as making congestion on the South Bank—which is already at dangerous levels during some weekends—much worse.

Charitable trusts and private donors should now stop their support and look elsewhere for projects more in keeping with their objectives. That is what I would like to see happen.

This has been put forward as a wonderful new tourist attraction for London. It is a tourist attraction, but it has been dressed up as tourist infrastructure; it has been dressed up to get Government support when other brilliant tourist attractions in London have done this through private money. It is an inappropriate use of taxpayers’ money and, worse, it was promised from the beginning that it would not be.

We have to ask who has sold us down the river and how we can ensure that no more damage will be done and no more public money will be wasted. This Garden Bridge Trust project must be stopped by someone, and I would like to hear the Minister say he will do his utmost to make sure not a penny more will be spent and that we will find ways, when this project fails, as I believe it will, to get that public money back.

6.56 pm

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): In my very brief contribution, let me start by paying warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey). It says a lot about her and her priorities that when she is offered what is apparently a prestigious large-scale project in her constituency, she instead considers its effect on ordinary people in her community, and her mind is made up partly because of that. I also pay tribute to her for the forensic way she has tried to get

through the murk of the financing of this project. She has obviously made some progress, but some murk remains; there is still a lack of clarity.

My ears pricked up at the sound of the £30 million from the Government. The Transport Minister who is in his place will know that I have been campaigning for just £100,000 for a transport project on the M56 to put in police and Highways England safety cameras. Sadly, the Minister declined that expenditure. Yet at the same time we can find £30 million to pour into a black hole, which my hon. Friend tells us is a vanity project, with several big-name backers but no clear benefit to the community. Will the Minister tell the House in his response whether he thinks that £30 million spent on a vanity project garden bridge in London is better expenditure than £100,000 on motorway safety cameras in Cheshire? Is the garden bridge receiving this level of public money simply because it is in London rather than the north-west of England?

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): I am afraid my hon. Friend seems to be straying into the Brexit argument about figures written on the sides of buses, because I do not necessarily think this is an either/or. I am massively in favour of my hon. Friend getting all the money he needs for his part of the world, and he has made the case very strongly, but he must not think it is because of the garden bridge that he is not getting it. I ask him to let his spirits soar with the imagination of this marvellous project which will be immensely beneficial to London and the country. Tourists will flood in to see this beautiful creation. Have a little imagination. Chester is a beautiful city—I admire it and love to visit it. Come and visit London and see, hopefully, our marvellous garden bridge.

Christian Matheson: My spirits soar every time I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound). My point is simply that there seems to be a reason why £30 million of public money is being given to this project despite the immense lack of clarity that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall has exposed, despite no clear end to the project, and despite very little financial and accounting responsibility and oversight.

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): I completely take on board my hon. Friend's point. Does he agree that, by all means let us have vanity projects, but let us have them when we have done the bread-and-butter stuff? In my constituency, we have got £10 million for a major link to the port and railway, but meanwhile tens of millions of pounds are being spent on these vanity projects.

Christian Matheson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall's excellent exposé has revealed, we are not even sure how much this vanity project will cost. I simply ask the Minister for some clarity: does he believe that this £30 million is—

Oliver Colville *rose*—

Christian Matheson: I have spoken for much longer than I expected to, but I will always give way to my old friend from Plymouth.

Oliver Colville: I thank the hon. Gentleman, who is also a very good friend. We, too, need a significant amount of investment in the railways and roads in Devon and Cornwall—

7 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Mark Spencer.)

Oliver Colville: It is a great shame, too, that there will not even be a hedgehog superhighway.

Christian Matheson: Much as I support the campaign of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Oliver Colville), I am concerned that we are getting away from the main points that have been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall. I simply want to ask the Minister whether he believes that this would be £30 million of public money well spent, and whether that amount would ever have been spent anywhere other than in London.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel): Order. Before I call the next speaker, I must remind Members that this is quite a narrow debate on the garden bridge in London. Other projects might be very interesting, but the Member in charge is the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey), and Vauxhall is in London. It would be good if we could keep to that subject.

7.1 pm

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have listened carefully to what you have said. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on her speech and on the questions that she has asked. We all deserve to get answers to them. I appreciate that London is the capital city and that it rightly gets more money as a result, but I recently learned that the new Crossrail station at Canary Wharf was costing £500 million—and getting a roof garden; there is obviously a thing about gardens going on—which is more than double the cost of what my city of Hull needs for rail electrification and for all the road transport schemes that we have been arguing for for many years. It would therefore be helpful if the Minister told us what prospect there is of closing the gap, given the ratio of 6:1 in relation to funding for London compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. That seems quite out of kilter, especially if the Government really are committed to the northern powerhouse and to rebalancing the spend on infrastructure all around the country.

7.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Andrew Jones): I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on securing the debate on this important topic. I am sorry that I am not my noble Friend Lord Ahmad, whose responsibility this is in the Department for Transport, but I understand that a meeting has been arranged and that she will be seeing him shortly.

[Andrew Jones]

I recognise, as do the Secretary of State and all my ministerial colleagues in the Department, that the garden bridge is a subject that divides public opinion—it is dividing opinion tonight on Benches just a few feet away from each other. Its supporters argue passionately that it will be an iconic and beautiful addition to the London cityscape, while its opponents argue that it is an unnecessary eyesore and that no public money should ever have been put into it.

Let me start by explaining why the Government decided to support this iconic and novel project in the first place. The previous Mayor of London was approached some years ago with an idea for a completely new type of bridge: a footbridge that was also a park, and a place where people could cross the river as part of their journey or stop and enjoy the surroundings and wonderful views of London and the river. The Mayor and Ministers at the time considered that this could be an innovative and iconic project for our city, but they did not—they still do not—consider that the project should be wholly funded by the taxpayer. However, they agreed to help with some funding to kick-start the project and stimulate private sector funding. The then Chancellor of the Exchequer therefore announced in the 2013 autumn statement that the Government would provide £30 million towards the project as long as the Mayor contributed a similar amount, and as long as there was a satisfactory business case to show that the project would deliver value for money for the taxpayer.

The Garden Bridge Trust and Transport for London produced a business case in early 2014, which the Department for Transport analysed carefully in exactly the same way as it does for any transport project. The analysis showed that while it was a highly unusual project and one with a wide range of possible benefit-cost ratios, there was a reasonable chance that it would offer value for money for the taxpayer. We therefore agreed to release the £30 million of funding that had been pledged by the Chancellor, but importantly we attached several conditions to our funding, including a cap of around £8 million on the amount of Government money that could be spent on pre-construction activities, which was designed to limit taxpayer exposure in the event that the project did not proceed. A requirement was also included for TfL to draw up a detailed funding agreement with the trust governing how the money would be used.

Over time and in response to requests from the trust, the cap on the Government's exposure was increased in stages to £13.5 million as circumstances changed and as it became clear that more money was needed to get the project to the point at which construction could start. The trust then asked the Government earlier this year to underwrite the project's potential cancellation costs. Let me be clear that that was not a request for additional funding; instead, it was a request to be able to use some of the £30 million that we had already committed to pay the project's cancellation costs should that be necessary. Without such an underwriting guarantee, the trust said that the project could not continue. After careful consideration, the Department agreed in late May to provide a time-limited underwriting guarantee but, again, with various conditions attached, including a requirement for the trust to provide more

regular reports to the Department on the status of the project and the steps that it was taking to address the risks.

Over the summer of this year, as a result of further delays to the construction timetable, the trust asked whether the underwriting guarantee could be extended beyond the September deadline. The Department agreed last month that it could, but in such a way that the risks are more fairly shared between the Government and the bridge's private sector backers. To be precise, the Government will now underwrite £9 million of the cancellation costs, should they arise, with the private sector required to underwrite any such costs above that level. The Government therefore continue to support the project and wish it well, but we have made it clear to the trust that not only public money should be at risk should the project fail.

The challenge now for the trust is to focus its efforts on getting private sector backers to take on some of the risk. We have also reiterated that the Government have no intention of putting more than the £30 million originally pledged into the project—that is a cap.

Peter Dowd: Will the Minister tell us whether the first tranche of the cancellation costs will be picked up by the taxpayer or by the private sector?

Andrew Jones: My understanding is that it would be a joint undertaking, but I will check the detail of any financial arrangements and report back to the hon. Gentleman.

As I was saying, the bridge must be predominantly funded by the private sector. As things stand, at least two thirds of the funding will come from private donations.

I understand that there are many concerns about the project, some of which I will talk about. The hon. Member for Vauxhall has already articulated a number clearly and in detail. The Garden Bridge Trust was set up in 2014 to manage the construction of the bridge. This experienced group of trustees has complete control over development and fund raising. The Department for Transport and TfL speak to the trust regularly to discuss progress and concerns. A significant amount of work has already been achieved on this complex project, which involves many different interested parties, and a huge amount of progress has been made. The land must be secured, permission to use the river obtained, and all necessary land planning conditions secured. A large ship, HQS Wellington, will also need to be moved. Those are all complex tasks that will take some time to achieve. There is still much work to be done before construction can start, but most issues are expected to be resolved soon.

Bob Stewart: The Minister might not know something that I became aware of today. A considerable part of the constituency of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) on the South Bank—a tree-lined avenue—will have to be demolished. The question therefore is: are we going to lose a tree-lined avenue, and will that be the equivalent of what we are going to get on the garden bridge?

Andrew Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. The hon. Member for Vauxhall said that 29 trees would be removed, but the Garden Bridge Trust

would argue that they would be more than replaced by the increased number of trees that would be part of the planting.

I am aware that many concerns have been raised about the bridge, and who would be able to use it and when, so let me clarify some points. While the bridge will principally be a footbridge, it will be open to all, although cyclists will be asked to dismount when crossing it. That is consistent with other footpaths in this area, such as those along the South Bank, and is simply to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Kate Hoey: The Minister might be aware that the Ramblers, an organisation that is not known to oppose anything that will help people to be able to walk, has made it clear that it opposes this, because one condition of going on to the bridge will be that people will not be able to be led in a group, so it would not be able to take its groups across the bridge. Many different conditions have been put in place. This is not just going to be a garden or a bridge, and it certainly cannot be called a garden bridge.

Andrew Jones: I was aware of the Ramblers' objections, but the bridge is certainly planned to be open to all. It will include step-free access and there will be no charge to use it. I am aware of a media report that there will be bans on large groups, but I understand that that is not correct, although they will be encouraged to phone in advance to find out the best times for a large group to visit. There is no ban on large groups. The bridge will be closed at midnight, in line with local attractions and transport facilities. Again, that is consistent with other parks in London, although some of them close earlier, at dusk.

There will also be some days, or parts of days, when the bridge is closed. These days will be limited. The purpose will be to ensure that income can be generated to ensure that the maintenance of the bridge is self-funding. There will be a maximum of 12 of those days through the year. There are concerns about the use of the land on the South Bank, which have been clearly articulated in the House, and I certainly sympathise with residents' concerns about the loss of some of the trees in this area. However, the Garden Bridge Trust plans to plant more than 270 trees on the bridge, as well as thousands of bulbs and plants, to create a tranquil place, which I hope would be used by residents in the area.

I understand the concerns that the hon. Lady has clearly articulated about how the trust is being run, how public money is being spent and how much transparency there is around this project, but there have been several reports on and investigations into this project. The London Assembly has reviewed the procurement process, the National Audit Office has reviewed the project and is currently reviewing the Department's grant control measures, and the Charity Commission is looking at how the trust is run as a charity. We have never sought to make any secret of these investigations. I can go further by saying that the fact that they have taken place demonstrates the robust scrutiny that has been applied to this project to ensure it is being run properly and that we get the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Kate Hoey: None of this scrutiny would have taken place just because the NAO decided to do it. These things have happened because local people, local councillors,

myself and others who are campaigning were so concerned about what was happening that we asked the NAO and Greater London Authority members to investigate. The investigations are still going on, so this has not been completed. The fact that this is being investigated is not any sign that there are not huge problems, and I think that all sorts of things will emerge when the process is finished.

Andrew Jones: I recognise that there are many questions to answer, but the idea that this project has not had scrutiny at local council, London Assembly or national body level is not quite fair. The procurement process itself has certainly been reviewed, and no significant faults found with it. The hon. Lady mentioned that the trust has not published its accounts, but the trust has made lots of information about its expenditure public on its website. The trust has a funding agreement with TfL, which is available online, and it will be publishing its annual report and statement of accounts later this year.

Stephen Pound: I am extremely grateful to the Minister for giving way. I must say that Earth has nothing to show more fair than the view from some of London's bridges. Does he not agree that, over the years, London's bridges have had houses, markets and shops on them? People have traded on them. They have been not just thoroughfares or tarmac arches in the sky, but glorious and marvellous examples of how to live, work and sell in the space above the river. Can the Government not be a little bit more proactive and positive and say that this is going back to one of the great glories of our city when there were occupied bridges and floral arches from one bank to the other—what a marvellous vision? I urge the Minister to articulate his views more strongly.

Andrew Jones: I would always struggle to match the oratorical flourishes and style achieved by the hon. Gentleman. I certainly agree that, when we see magnificent bridges around the world including in London, they are inspiring sights. I recognise entirely his wise words about the views from London bridges. As one looks up and down the river, the views are positively marvellous. Whether they are the best views in the world is a little open to question. I suggest that some of those could indeed be in the Harrogate area.

We all have our individual favourite views. We have had interventions and speeches across the House this evening with people championing particular transport investments in their areas. Everybody here has projects that they wish to see progress locally, but I hope that no one doubts the Government's commitment to investment in transport. It is very hard to play off one scheme against another for comparison purposes, as we would be comparing different modes of transport in different regions. The bottom line is that Members are always right to speak up for their areas. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Oliver Colvile), who is no longer in his place, they are also always right to speak up for hedgehogs.

Diana Johnson: The scheme to which I referred in Hull—electrifying the train line—involved private sector money. It was not going to cost the Treasury or the Department for Transport; the money was there from the private sector, yet the plan has been sitting in the Department for two years waiting for a decision.

Andrew Jones: I understood the hon. Lady's point. All I can say is that some projects are very complex as they have a mixture of public and private finance, and in some cases, it takes a very long time to get projects out of the development phase and into construction. That is a comment not on the individual project that we are talking about here, but on projects overall.

In conclusion, although I recognise and understand the concerns raised by the hon. Lady and other Members in the House today, the garden bridge is a unique and exciting project. The hon. Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound) has asked whether I could be much more euphoric in my language. Well, it is certainly an opportunity to showcase the ambition, creativity and talent that exist in this country. We see it in so many examples, and transport is one area in which we lead the world.

Kate Hoey: The Minister has said very little about some of the important criticisms that I made of the procurement process and the fact that scrutiny from City Hall was done by a company that was involved with the garden bridge. Can he tell us, in the secrecy of this Chamber, that he has no concerns about some aspects of the project? If, as we hope, the bridge project fails, will he lose any sleep?

Andrew Jones: I see this as a project that could well enhance this magnificent capital city. It has to be done correctly. I have not been involved in the process up to now. As the hon. Lady knows, the Minister who was responsible is my noble Friend Lord Ahmad. Would I lose sleep over it? Well, if it is done correctly, it could be an opportunity to enhance what is already a wonderful part of our wonderful capital.

I see many examples around our country where people are a little cautious, perhaps a little sceptical, about projects, but sometimes when those projects come to fruition or start being built, people row in behind them and realise just what they can be. This could well be one of those cases. I hope we will have a project to show that London is a thriving, creative, bustling, ambitious city with all the talent in the world. It will show that London is open for business, and the Government wish it every success.

Question put and agreed to.

7.20 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 7 September 2016

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

Psychosis: Early Intervention

9.30 am

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): I beg to move,

That this House has considered access and waiting time standards for early intervention in psychosis.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. May I welcome the Minister to her new role? I spent a great two and a half years in the Department of Health; it was the most invigorating time in my life. I wish her every success.

The debate is on something that I care a lot about: a new standard of access for people who suffer a first episode of psychosis, a cruel and punishing condition that can have a massive impact on people's lives—incidentally, at enormous cost to statutory services. When I came into my role as Minister, I recognised that there was a complete inequality of access, standards and rights between those who suffer from mental ill health and those who suffer from physical health problems. That inequality of access has existed for many years. In the last decade, the Labour Government introduced comprehensive access standards in the NHS for physical health problems, and they were right to do so—the cancer standards that have transformed cancer care in this country are a leading example of those—but they left out mental health.

It is not just that individuals sometimes end up having to wait interminably for treatment in some parts of the country; that complete imbalance of rights between mental health and physical health drives where the money goes. There is enormous political interest in meeting those demanding access standards. The national media look at the four-hour A&E standard. Certainly in my time in the Department of Health, all the great and the good of the NHS gathered around the Secretary of State's table every Monday morning to look at spreadsheets showing the performance of every hospital in the country against those access standards. That extraordinary almost micro-management from the centre on access standards in physical health sets the tone for the whole system and makes it clear that meeting them is critical. So what do clinical commissioning groups around the country do? They trim a little bit off funding for mental health, which is still funded primarily through block contracts, to feed the beast of those exacting access standards in physical health.

I was determined from the start to address that injustice—that is what it is; it is a discrimination at the heart of our NHS—and introduce access standards in mental health. We went through a long deliberation before coming up with two specific standards, which were set out in a Government document published in October 2014, that we wanted to introduce as the start of a process that would lead ultimately to comprehensive access standards in mental health so that everyone with a mental health problem had the same right to get treatment in our NHS as anyone else.

The first standard that we identified was a six-week standard for access to psychological therapies. That is part of the improving access to psychological therapies programme, a well-regarded, world-leading programme that does not do everything but has been a significant development. The other was a two-week standard to start treatment when someone suffers a first episode of psychosis. Those people are typically teenagers or perhaps in their 20s—that is the most common age—but such an episode could happen at any time in one's life.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing this very important debate. He has hit somewhat on the point that I was going to raise about early intervention. At what stage does he believe that we should deal with this condition? He talks about 18 or 20-year-olds, but should we go right back to primary or secondary school and deal with it in younger children?

Norman Lamb: We should always be guided by clinical judgment. That is critical. The standard that was introduced was for people between the ages of 14 and 65, which gives a clue about the appropriate level. This condition could emerge during teenage years, but we know that 50% of adult mental health problems start by the age of 14, so getting in and addressing problems early is critical.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for securing this important debate. Does he agree that although not everyone will suffer mental health problems in childhood, it is important that mental wellbeing is focused on in schools—both primary and secondary—to ensure that good mental health is promoted?

Norman Lamb: I thank the hon. Lady for that intervention, because I totally agree. When I was Minister, we set up a taskforce to look at how we could modernise children's mental health services. It published a report last March called "Future in mind," the whole focus of which is on shifting fundamentally towards prevention: establishing wellbeing, particularly in schools, and intervening much earlier to stop deterioration ever happening. That approach is much more effective. It can help teenagers through difficult years as they grow up, but it also stops the enormous cost to the system later of neglecting those problems.

Psychosis costs the NHS £11.8 billion a year. That is a vast cost. Only 8% of people who suffer from psychosis are in work, so the cost of the illness to society is enormous. The evidence of the effectiveness of early intervention in psychosis is overwhelming. It is clear that if we intervene quickly, we can have an impact on that condition, stop it in its tracks and give sufferers the chance of a good life, which the rest of us take for granted. If we neglect the condition, those people will almost inevitably suffer lives on benefits and with difficult relationships, at—this is critical—enormous cost to the state. Analysis shows that if we invested £1 in services for early intervention in psychosis, the return on that investment over a 10-year period would be £15. We might ask, "What is the reason not to do that?" It is overwhelming common sense. It is both morally right and the economically sensible thing to do.

Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con): I pay tribute from the Government Benches to the immense work that the right hon. Gentleman did in government, and to my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), who is no longer in his former position as Minister. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is not acceptable to talk about parity of esteem unless that is matched by parity of provision and parity of funding so that those who suffer from mental ill health have the same provision as those who suffer from physical ill health? Parity of esteem means nothing to our constituents unless we actually deliver it.

Norman Lamb: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind comments. I totally agree. There is an awful danger of a damaging gap emerging between the rhetoric and the reality. The coalition Government legislated for parity of esteem, so it is in the legislation that people should be treated equally, but unless the reality of people's experience is that they are treated equally, the rhetoric is absolutely meaningless waffle and they lose trust in the Government. That is why I feel so passionately that we must do concrete things to make parity of esteem a reality for people, and that is an example of how we can make a difference to people's lives.

The standard was announced in October 2014, to be implemented by April 2016—it had to be met by this year. Why is it so important? If we fail on that, we fail so many people whom we have the chance to help and surely it would be scandalous if the NHS neglected a standard accepted by Parliament and introduced by Government that we know makes a massive difference to people's lives. It gives people the chance of a better life and surely the NHS is fundamentally about giving people the chance to have happy, good lives.

What has happened in that period? We undertook a comprehensive Freedom of Information Act survey—now that I am out of government, I have to rely on such surveys to find out what is going on—and the answers from clinical commissioning groups and mental health trusts are deeply troubling. On the key findings, first the overall conclusion is that the implementation of the standard is just fundamentally flawed. It has failed to deliver what we committed to. If the Minister, on advice from her officials, is tempted to refer to the nationally published data that suggest that the standard is being met, I would discourage her from doing so because the data are a fiction—we have established that through our work.

The first detailed finding is that there is a complete lack of robust commissioning in many parts of the country. The whole purpose of the commissioner-provider split, which of course is fairly controversial in the NHS, is that the commissioners hold the money and are there to design services for their community to meet the needs of that community, yet a third of CCGs could not identify how much funding had been allocated to early intervention in psychosis. That in itself is scandalous. They just say that there is a block contract and that it is up to the mental health trust—a total abdication of responsibility. Later, I will ask what the Government are doing about that, because that is not acceptable and completely contradicts the national guidance that was published.

Incidentally, I should say that one of the excuses used around the country for slowness of implementation is that the final guidance was published in April this year—when the standard was supposed to have been met. That does not demonstrate particularly helpful leadership from the centre. Having said that, the draft guidance had been in place for the best part of a year, so clinical commissioning groups around the country knew the direction of travel and could absolutely have been getting on with the job of preparing for meeting the standard.

When we did the survey back in May and June, well into the financial year, another 18 clinical commissioning groups—that is 11%—were still in negotiation for funding for early intervention in psychosis for a standard that was supposed to have been met in April. The question I will keep repeating is: why is that is not being treated with the same seriousness as the cancer standards? Why do we treat that as less important than someone suffering from cancer? I absolutely support and endorse the cancer standards, because it is critical that people with cancer get access to treatment quickly, but why should not someone with psychosis? It is scandalous. No one stands up for them. The Government have to lead on that. More than one in three clinical commissioning groups could not provide an estimate of the number of people in their area in need of early intervention services, in spite of the national guidance that says that commissioning should be underpinned by estimates of the local incidence to ensure that services are designed to serve the needs in a particular locality fully. If CCGs have no idea because no work has been done to establish the need in that area, how on earth can they commission a service to meet that need?

Next, according to NHS England, the estimated annual cost of providing the full package of treatment is about £8,250 per patient per year. Only 60 CCGs in our study were able to estimate their investment at all and only 11 estimated that they will meet the NHS England guideline on the level of investment. The average investment per patient from those who were able to say was £5,199, but of course an average hides the fact that many are way below that level. To draw an analogy, that is like saying to a cancer patient, "Well, you can have the chemotherapy but we can't afford the radiotherapy, so you'll have to put up with what we can offer." Of course, we would never allow that to happen—the *Daily Mail* and many others would be up in arms, and they should be about this issue as well because the situation is exactly the same.

On age, which the hon. Member for Upper Bann (David Simpson) raised earlier, as I said in response to his intervention, the access standard is to provide the service to people between the ages of 14 and 65, in line, I should say, with guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which has done the work and provided the evidence-based guidance. Almost a quarter of trusts—23%—commission services only up to the age of 35, including my own county of Norfolk. How on earth can trusts justify anyone over the age of 35 not getting access to a service that we have deemed it appropriate to provide to people across the country? They are just ignoring the national guidelines. Again, that seems to me to be completely unacceptable. That totally conflicts with the clinical commissioning groups' responsibility. Out of the 39 CCGs which commission

only up to 35, nine said they had plans to expand the service—they have plans, but why are they not doing it now?—and another 10 said that that was under review, but the rest had no plan to provide a service to people over 35. Outrageous, in my view.

Next is staffing and skill mix. We found a widespread failure to provide the full range of interventions required by NICE as part of the package of treatment, which is due to the shortage of staff with appropriate skills to deliver the service. Most trusts reported shortages of staff trained in cognitive behavioural therapy for psychosis and there were many other training shortfalls.

On data recording, NHS England introduced new information standards to support the monitoring of standards so that we could have some confidence that they were being met. Providers are expected to use electronic care record for patients to enable the collection of data and monitoring of performance against the standard. The guidance says that commissioners should assure themselves that local providers have made the necessary updates to the electronic care record system to ensure that clinicians are able to enter the data required to monitor performance against the standard, but we have heard that many trusts have not upgraded their systems and so are incapable of doing what is in the national guidance. We talked to someone who was at the heart of the implementation of the standard in one part of the country who mentioned widespread failure to do that. That means, as I said earlier, that the national data published by the information centre, which we are all supposed to rely on to tell us what is happening in the NHS, cannot be relied on. I put this point to the Minister: can the information centre investigate that further to ensure that the data it publishes tell a true story of what is going on?

There was also a scandalous variation between regions. I met the woman who has been responsible for implementation in the southern region. She was driving a programme of implementation and had a complete handle on the whole of her region. She had enormous variation of performance across her region, but there was someone in charge, doing it. She was an impressive woman. She told me that she was being made redundant; she was told that her job was done, even though palpably it is not. However, in other regions there has been no programme of implementation—no one in charge, to take responsibility for making things happen. The situation in the midlands and east in particular is in my view a disgusting, outrageous shambles, which should not be tolerated.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. On several occasions he has talked about this important matter in the context of the entire country; he is now discussing comparisons. Does he agree—I have raised this issue on a number of occasions, particularly on health matters—that we need to ensure that best practice is replicated not just in local commissioning groups in England, but across the United Kingdom? Ministers would then share information across the devolved settlements, to ensure that best practice was replicated and improved on for all our citizens.

Norman Lamb: I very much agree. We should all be learning from each other—and internationally, as well; but so often we fail to do that in the NHS. People on the

outside may think that the NHS is a Stalinist organisation where everyone does the same thing. Far from it—it is too often anarchic. In the context of the NHS England infrastructure that we are considering, there are regions of the country that just have not done their job as they should have, which is scandalous.

Johnny Mercer: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is not good enough simply to understand an experience—because it affects someone close to us—when it is part of day-to-day life for the most vulnerable people? In Plymouth we have someone who is intimately involved in the system, and whose daughter is involved in the system, and who really gets mental health. However, it is not good enough in this place just to understand something because it happens to someone close to us. The vulnerable often do not have a voice, and we have to work harder. As the right hon. Gentleman is saying, it is not good enough to push the statistics away.

Norman Lamb: I totally agree. Everyone across the country who suffers this damaging, tragic illness has a right, surely, in anything that amounts to a national health service, to get good evidence-based treatment on a timely basis; but, tragically, that is not happening. I appreciate and welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has now taken specific responsibility for mental health. However, if I may be bold enough to offer some advice from my experience as a Minister, I would say that if a new standard of the type in question is to be embedded into the day-to-day life of the NHS, to make it something that happens as a matter of course and that is considered in the Monday morning meeting in the Secretary of State's office exactly as the physical health standards are, there must be leadership from the top, including from Government. I appreciate that there are changes to Ministers' roles under the Health and Social Care Act 2012; but they can demonstrate leadership. They can monitor, push, cajole and encourage, and set the moral tone about what is necessary for the approach we are discussing to become standard practice. That level of focus is needed from the Secretary of State downwards.

Will the Government consider the dossier of evidence and data that we have collated, and report back to us on their findings? Will they commit to addressing properly the defects and flaws in the implementation of the programme, as I think is necessary? One thing is clear: the Paul Farmer taskforce report published as part of the five-year forward view process sets out an ambition for mental health—for how we achieve equality for people who suffer mental ill health; however, if the lessons from the flawed implementation are not learned, every other part of Paul Farmer's programme will fail to deliver the results that are so desperately needed. How will clinical commissioning groups be held to account for failure to implement the programme properly? What is the sanction for those who decided to ignore it—which is unacceptable to their communities? What is the Minister's response to the findings I have talked about, and how does she respond to the clear evidence that people with mental ill health are not being treated with the same seriousness, or as if they have the same importance, as those suffering physical health problems?

It is time for mental health to come out of the shadows. We have started a national debate about mental health. The issue is much more out in the open than it

[Norman Lamb]

used to be. However, as the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) said, there is a great danger of a damaging gap, which undermines confidence and trust in Government, between rhetoric and the reality that people experience in their lives. It seems to me that there is an absolute moral responsibility on the Government to ensure that the standard is delivered.

9.55 am

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I thank the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) for securing this extremely important debate. I declare an interest, having worked as a clinical psychologist for 20 years in the NHS, and as a continuing member of the British Psychological Society, our professional body.

I shall start by giving a little context. I am heartened by some of the progress that has been made and by initiatives on mental health taken by Governments in the UK and Scotland over the years. When I started out, it was quite commonplace for patients to wait up to or more than a year for treatment. There appeared not to be any urgency about dealing with the waiting list and waiting times. That has improved very much, and we have waiting list standards. The HEAT targets—health improvement, efficiency and governance, access and treatment targets—focus service providers, policy makers and resources. So things are improving, but we clearly still have much work to do. I concur that we need to work in a conjoined way across the UK and share best practice models in doing so.

The service when I started in practice clearly was not good enough. Patients had been waiting far too long by the time they came into treatment. Often they had been admitted to hospital in an acute situation—perhaps they were suicidal—or had had multiple episodes of psychosis, and we were not providing the best possible standard of care. Psychosis is a distressing illness, which tends to be long-term, although people can recover at an early stage if we pick up their symptoms and provide the appropriate care timeously.

In psychosis, people experience symptoms of paranoia and, often, delusional belief systems that take them outwith reality. They may experience visual and auditory hallucinations. It is distressing for the person and also very much affects their family and those around them, and we must take it very seriously. Although it affects quite a small proportion of the population, it has huge ramifications for family relationships.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): The hon. Lady is building on an impressive speech by the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb). Does she accept that while it is right to pay attention to how quickly people get treatment after diagnosis, the biggest barrier to early intervention and treatment is securing diagnosis? I have personal experience, as my wife struggled for two years to get a diagnosis. Once she got it treatment was put in place, but it was far too long to wait. Until we crack that nut and, rather than dismissing people's symptoms and struggles, deal with them practically, sympathetically and professionally, early intervention is only a myth to be discussed. We need the diagnosis first.

Dr Cameron: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention about his personal and family experience. What he says is totally true; the issue is about shortening the gap between presentation and emergence of symptoms, and diagnosis. That is also true of other mental health problems and developmental disorders. Autistic spectrum disorders are the ones that stand out to me, particularly because parents often struggle for years to obtain a diagnosis, and therefore their children do not receive appropriate intervention early enough. They struggle with understanding their child and family relationships can deteriorate as a result, so I very much concur with the hon. Gentleman's point.

That is why the mental health taskforce setting a standard for England is such a positive development. It is intended to achieve parity of esteem, but again, we cannot just have that in words—we must have the action to follow. The initiative and standard also establish that this is a national priority, which is important, because it has not been in the past. Mental health services have often been seen as an adjunct, which is not good enough, because we know that, for instance, one in four people experience depression in their lives, while many more experience other types of mental health problems, such as anxiety.

Although only a small proportion of the population will experience psychosis, mental health problems and difficulties are widespread. Most of us will at some point experience someone in our life having mental health difficulties, so it is important that we have the standard in place and that care is within two weeks from referral. It is also really important that the data are recorded, because services have to be standardised. That is the other issue to consider, because some trusts can often implement things more quickly than others. We need to ensure there is not a postcode lottery across services and that people can access good mental health provision wherever they may be in the country. I would welcome that.

Psychosis requires multi-professional services, so a specialist team is required. Providing such a team is often labour-intensive and costly, but we should focus on the cost-effectiveness over the long term. As the right hon. Member for North Norfolk said, if we do not intervene early, the cost to society, the health service and people's lives far outweighs the cost of the NHS provision that we must make. Standards focus policy makers on resources and ultimately improve care. The Scottish Government are currently undertaking a consultation on their mental health strategy, and early intervention and prevention will be key pillars in that. We now have a Mental Health Minister, Maureen Watt, who will be focusing on the delivery of the strategy, which will be informed by carers, service users, professionals, research and best practice.

One project I am aware of is the Esteem project in Glasgow, run by my colleague Suzy Clark, which covers Argyle and Clyde and is an early intervention service for psychosis. I understand that there is no waiting list and patients are usually seen within five days of referral, which is a huge change from the days when I started out. If patients are admitted to hospital they are assessed at the service within 24 hours, so people can feel supported straight away. It is very much a holistic service, looking at psychiatry with a medical model but also looking at psychological interventions and family support.

In the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, cognitive behavioural training for psychosis is important. It helps people who are suffering from the positive symptoms of psychosis to begin to reappraise those symptoms, so that they can once again make a connection with reality and begin to be rehabilitated back into day-to-day life. Behavioural family therapy is also extremely important. As I have mentioned, psychosis affects not just the person who suffers but their whole family and social circle.

People can suddenly find themselves in a caring role, and research indicates that spending 10 hours and above per week as a carer can be a challenge to someone's wellbeing. Once again, we can see the ramifications of avoiding putting best practice in place and not giving early intervention the priority it deserves. Depression is common in carers. They describe a need for information, practical help and emotional support, often from other people in a similar situation. Crucially, the outcome for and individual who suffers psychosis also partially depends on their relationship with their carer and family. That is why services and treatment have to look at the individual in a holistic manner and make sure that the available interventions encompass the family.

The Esteem project provides CBT for psychosis and behavioural family therapy. It also helps individuals to look at early warning signs and identify their symptoms at an early stage when they start to become unwell, so that they can contact appropriate providers if they have a subsequent episode. Outcomes from the first episode study by Professor Gumley at Glasgow University show massively significant and favourable outcomes following early intervention and service involvement. I must mention that Tony Morrison is also leading on the issue at Manchester University, so we can see that areas of expertise are developing right across the UK, which is heartening. We need to focus on early intervention; it is key. It leads to better prognosis, has better outcomes and reduces the risk of further relapse. It helps a person reintegrate into society, assists their carers and family and is cost-effective.

I welcome the Minister to her role, and I urge that the direction that is given is the best practice that has been recommended. We need that for service delivery, patient care, clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness. We must ensure there is parity of esteem for mental health.

10.7 am

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): As ever, it is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Sir Roger. I also welcome the Minister to her place.

Psychosis is incredibly frightening for friends and family to witness, and I speak from personal experience. It means people in effect having lost control of what is going on inside their head but not realising it, and it is difficult to get through to them. It is also an incredibly frightening experience for the people who suffer such episodes—perhaps not at the time, when they are in the grip of psychosis, but it becomes apparent from talking to them afterwards. One person, a veteran of the first Gulf war who has suffered from psychosis for the best part of 20 years, said, “You never know again whether what you are experiencing, feeling and thinking is true, because other people are telling you your experiences were not true.” It is an incredibly distressing place to be.

Early intervention is crucial. Mothers in particular have come to my constituency surgery, desperate to keep their young adult sons out of the criminal justice system, yet that is often the only alternative. These are big lads who can be quite frightening when they are in the grip of psychosis. The last thing a mother wants is to see her son locked up in police cells for the night, but all too often that has been the only alternative. If the lads are not seen as a direct danger to themselves or to others they cannot be sectioned; the mothers do not want them to be sectioned but they desperately want to get them help.

I pay tribute to the police and crime commissioner in my local area, Sue Mountstevens. She is an independent candidate who has just been elected for the second time, and she has made it an absolute priority to try to get people with mental health problems out of the criminal justice system and to make sure there are beds available so they can get the help they need.

We know that psychosis is particularly prevalent among young men of black Caribbean or African origin. Indeed, the three mothers who have come to me about this issue are all of black Caribbean or African descent. It seems to be an established fact that these young men are more vulnerable, but I do not think we have ever got to the root of why that is the case, and I would like to see more research into that.

I agree with what has been said about parity of esteem; I think all parties now recognise that. Mental health has been the poor relation of physical health, but young people's mental health has too often been the poor relation of adult mental health. Young people struggle.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that overall people of black Caribbean heritage are over-represented in the mental health system? These young men tend to present late. They tend to be less likely to get talking therapy and tend to have poorer outcomes.

Kerry McCarthy: I very much agree, and I would love to see more research into the reasons for that. We know that early intervention is crucial and that if there is intervention after the first episode of psychosis, it can be deflected further down the line. It may be that young men's reluctance or the lack of access to those services means that they go on to develop full-blown psychosis, which then blights their adult lives. There could be all sorts of reason. I have heard my hon. Friend speak about this before. I know she thinks it is a really important issue, and I agree with her.

Young people are even more marginalised. I have the Riverside unit for young people in my constituency at Blackberry Hill hospital. It is part residential, part day placements. I visited it recently. If the spaces are full, a number of young people get sent a considerable distance from home and away from their friends and families for treatment, which is not ideal. If we are trying to deal with young people in very vulnerable circumstances, displacing them from their families and support networks is obviously wrong.

Dr Dominique Thompson, who is in charge of the GP services at the University of Bristol, has given me figures in the past about the proportion of the casework of GPs at universities that is now on mental health-based

[Kerry McCarthy]

issues, and it has grown exponentially. That is everything ranging from anxiety, stress and depression right through to severe psychosis. I make a plea that the health services at universities are not the same as ordinary neighbourhood GPs; they need particular support. They deal with young people who are away from home and away from their support networks. We know that GPs are under pressure—particularly in terms of recruitment, which is a debate for another day—and it is important they have the resources to deal with that.

I want to mention briefly one source of help that is available to GPs. I met a group of researchers yesterday who are part of the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and are based at Blackberry Hill hospital in my constituency. They do something called BEST—best evidence summaries of topics—in mental health, which is a web-based service. Basically, these experts look through all the information available and distil it down to easy paragraphs for clinicians, so that rather than having to wade through all the material on the internet, clinicians are given some guidance as to what they are likely to be looking at and the likely best treatments. The funding for that service is under threat. A cross-party group of MPs from the Avon and Wiltshire area met those researchers yesterday. We think that the service should at the very least be piloted, with a view to rolling it out nationally, because it is a really valuable resource. We are going to write to the Minister about that, but I wanted to flag it up today.

Finally, I was looking this morning at the NICE guidance on early intervention in psychosis access. It pays passing reference to substance abuse, saying:

“Around 40% of people with first episode psychosis misuse substances at some point in their lifetime.”

I would like to see more research done into cannabis-induced psychosis. It is clear to me—partly from anecdotal evidence, but there is research out there—that partly because of the stronger strains of cannabis that are now available, more people are presenting with cannabis-induced psychosis. There may be a connection between that and people going on to develop full-blown psychosis, or people may have a cannabis-induced psychotic episode and then recover. Speaking partly from personal observation, I think that in some cases drug use makes it more difficult to diagnose when people are suffering first-time psychotic episodes. I would like to see more research into that.

Dr Lisa Cameron: The hon. Lady is making an extremely valid point in terms of comorbidity. Comorbid substance abuse often precludes people from treatment, and they can be turned away from treatment centres. As she said, it is very common and should not mean that people cannot access treatment.

Kerry McCarthy: There is also the issue of whether people feel they are self-medicating by smoking. They may feel that it helps their symptoms, whereas it quite often exacerbates their symptoms.

Norman Lamb: I appreciate the constructive and really helpful speech that the hon. Lady is making. She is absolutely right that we need to understand this issue better. Does she agree that whatever the link may be, we

should not criminalise people for the use of cannabis in such circumstances? The idea of someone resorting to cannabis as a relief from pain and then being criminalised seems awful.

Kerry McCarthy: As I said earlier, I think that diverting mental health issues into the criminal justice system is completely the wrong approach. That includes people who have engaged in taking cannabis, which is an illegal activity. It serves no purpose at all to treat that as a criminal situation when people clearly need the intervention of the health services. The medicalisation of the problem is certainly something I endorse. On that note, I conclude my remarks.

10.16 am

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to be called to speak in this debate, Sir Roger. I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on initiating this debate. I commend him—I have done it in his absence but will now do it in his presence—for the experience and wisdom he brings to these debates, his passion for the subject matter and for letting us take advantage of his knowledge.

This issue is an essential one that needs to be addressed, and this debate is very timely. Just this week, on Monday past, I heard about a constituent who falls into this category. I was contacted by a residents' group, which expressed concern about a young man. The young man's parents have died and he is alone. It turns out that he is clearly not taking good care of himself. There is no electric in his home; I suspect that the bills were not paid, and that he was not even aware the bills were there to be paid. There were no benefit checks either. This is a young man who fell between two stools.

Unfortunately, no one was able to help this young man until they were made aware of his problems by the residents and those who lived close by. When the young man was approached, he made it clear that he wanted no help; that was his initial response. The residents' association worried from afar, and despite calls to the local police, nothing could be done until he was seen with what was perceived to be an offensive weapon. The Police Service of Northern Ireland then intervened, assessed him and realised there was something unusual about his behaviour. It decided he was not a threat initially to anyone other than perhaps himself, and referred him.

I got confirmation yesterday that a social worker has been initiated to come in and assist the young man. Hopefully this is now an example of a response taking place, but there was the delay that Members have mentioned. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) gave a very personal example of that. It is about diagnosis and the system that is in place trying to help. That is something we believe has, at long last, happened, but it happened because of the residents' group—the people who lived close by who had concerns and cared enough to raise them and assist when this man needed it. This is someone who obviously needed help for a long time and yet had fallen through the cracks. It is my belief that the onset of psychosis this young man is going through is not a new issue; it is historical, and yet nothing has been in place to help him in his situation.

Health is a devolved matter, and the Minister is not responsible for health issues in Northern Ireland, but I wanted to contribute to this debate to support what the right hon. Member for North Norfolk and others have said, and to comment about Northern Ireland.

The background information states that some 75% of mental illness in adult life begins before the age of 18 and that 17,000 people a year experience psychosis. It also indicates that many people aged under 16 also suffer psychosis—the right hon. Gentleman referred to that. There is clearly a massive issue to be addressed, and I know that the Minister will respond helpfully. I welcome her to her new position and look forward to her contribution.

The circumstances I have outlined underline the need for this debate. There must be a system in place to enable concerns to be raised and to provide a break for those with psychosis. There must be clear and dedicated guidelines for people to follow to get the necessary help. Without the observation of neighbours and the residents' group, the person I mentioned would not have received help. The circumstances could have been dire and terrible to contemplate.

On standard waiting times for intervention by psychosis services, I understand that from 1 April 2016 more than 50% of people experiencing a first episode of psychosis will be treated with a care package approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence within two weeks of referral. The previous Prime Minister—this is not a criticism, but an observation for the record—committed £1 billion to mental health; perhaps the Minister will say where that money is. Is it in the system, and has it been used for its intended purposes? If not, with respect to the Minister, we need to know why, and I look forward to her response.

The standard is targeted at people aged 14 to 65. It is two-pronged—both the following conditions must be met for the standard to be deemed to have been achieved: a maximum wait of two weeks from referral to diagnosis and the start of treatment, because it is so important to have early diagnosis and to respond immediately with the necessary help; and treatment delivered in accordance with NICE guidelines and quality standards for psychosis and schizophrenia. I am not sure whether my constituency is different from others, but I know from experience and my workload that I now have more people with mental health issues. Whether I notice them more now or they are coming to the door more, it is certainly a big issue.

Those are the guidelines, but what is happening in practice? Currently, the constituent I referred to has been placed under arrest by the Police Service of Northern Ireland for his safety and the safety of others while social workers and medical professionals determine a plan of action. That is what we need. In Northern Ireland between 2013 and 2014, there were 996 compulsory admissions to hospital under the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, of which 54.7% were of males. I will give some other statistics that give an idea of the gender and age of people involved. Some 45.3% were female, 2.4% were aged under 18, 47.1% were aged 18 to 44, 28.2% were aged 45 to 64, 7.1% were aged 65 to 74, and 15.2% were aged 75 or over.

This issue is massive not just for the NHS on the mainland but for us in Northern Ireland, and indeed for Scotland. The hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) referred to that, as will

the Scottish National party spokesman, the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin). We must resolve to make the situation more acceptable and ensure that there is adequate funding for earlier diagnosis and response so that people go into the appropriate care system, whether at home with the trauma team or in a dedicated facility.

Recurrent funding of £40 million has been allocated to support early intervention and the psychosis standard for England, in addition to the previous Prime Minister's commitment to provide £1 billion for mental health. NHS England's report on implementing the recommendation of the mental health taskforce estimates the cost of treating an additional 10% of people within two weeks at £70 million per annum when fully implemented, including the cost of developing the workforce. The figures do not add up. How does the Minister expect to reach the goal within the specified time without adequate funding? I know she is up to the task, and I am confident that she will give a good response. We need to see action on the ground.

I ask about that for selfish reasons. Those who know me know that I have no problem flying the flag for Northern Ireland in any debate in the House, especially one as relevant as this. In Northern Ireland, the devolved Assembly determined that the appropriate guidelines were that at least 80% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first out-patient appointment and that no patient should wait longer than 15 weeks. However, it is clear that those guidelines are not being reached. The matter must be addressed at home, but that can come about only if adequate funding is committed by the Northern Ireland Assembly, and by the Government here, to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

In an intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell) referred to a UK strategy. We have many debates on such issues in this Chamber, and the Minister will know that I always ask whether there have been talks with the regional devolved Governments—the Northern Ireland Assembly in my region, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly—to ensure that we have a UK strategy. The right hon. Member for North Norfolk, who moved the motion, referred in response to an intervention to the need to learn from one another's regions. Where there has been good practice, let us use it. If there has been good practice in Northern Ireland, we should use it here in England, and if Scotland has an appropriate strategy, let us use it in Wales and elsewhere. Let us exchange ideas and work towards ensuring that a UK strategy is in place and that funding is ring-fenced for that purpose. Access to mental health intervention should be not a matter of postcode, but a right. One in five adults in Northern Ireland will show signs of a mental illness. The figures also show that one in four people will experience mental health problems during their lifetime.

We had a conflict in Northern Ireland for some 30 years, and we have the highest level of mental health illness in the whole United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer), who serves on the Select Committee on Defence, served in Northern Ireland and is well aware of the issues facing those who served in the Army and the trauma they sometimes experience. In addition, families and other people in Northern Ireland have experienced at first hand the

[Jim Shannon]

threat of terrorism. For us in Northern Ireland, mental illness is a massive issue. I cannot underline that enough, and we must be aware of it.

Figures have shown that when matched against 17 other countries, Northern Ireland had the second highest rate of ill health and problems with mental illness in 2015. It was 25% higher than in England. I urge the Minister to take note of that and to work with the devolved Assemblies—the Northern Ireland Assembly and the others—to ensure that in five years, the statistics are different from those in 2015. Let us set a target and a goal for change. If we aim for that, we can achieve some of what we want to do.

A lot of hard work has been carried out to remove the stigma attached to those who need help with mental health problems. Sometimes I wonder whether we can use different terminology. “Mental health” seems to flag up for people that they should perhaps be careful. People may have emotional problems that are not as bad as they seem. Perhaps we could use other terminology.

We need a system in place to deal with the rising number of people with mental health problems, and that is not currently the case. We need a target for reducing that number. Major changes are needed, and that is the reason for today’s debate. I fully support the calls that are being made, and I look forward to hearing from the Minister about how my constituent—she is not responsible for him—and those like him across the entire UK will be able to get the help they need to function and live in society.

Again, I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk on bringing the matter to this Chamber, and I look forward to the shadow Minister’s response and particularly that of the Minister.

10.29 am

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP): I commend the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on securing this debate and on his long-standing commitment to this and related issues. He clearly cares very deeply about them. He is shining a light on some of the problems with the way in which the targets are being handled across NHS England.

The principle of early intervention and access to treatment for psychosis is fundamentally a moral one: at its heart it asks how readily we respond to some of the most vulnerable people in our midst. As others have asked, is there parity with people suffering physical ill health? We know that treating patients early improves outcomes significantly, not only in their mental health by reducing the rate of relapse and boosting recovery, but by reducing the knock-on impact of psychosis in other areas of a patient’s life. The hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) gave us an insight into the impact on the person themselves and their wider network of family and friends.

If someone is struggling to deal with an untreated episode of psychosis, there can be rapid deterioration in many of their life circumstances, particularly their financial circumstances. I would like to draw attention to the excellent work being done by the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute to look at how mental illness, which includes psychosis, can impact negatively on personal finances. It is investigating ways to support

people in those circumstances and is taking expert guidance from people who have been there. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) highlighted the case of an individual whose bills had not been paid—the chances are that he did not even know they had to be paid.

I want to give a simple example of something that the institute has come up with, with the support of the experts it is working alongside. Someone who may well suffer psychotic episodes in the future but is currently well lays out the key signs that they are experiencing such an episode. For example, they may say, “If I try to spend money between midnight and eight in the morning, that is a clear sign that I am suffering a psychotic episode. Don’t let me do it.” The banks are working with the institute and individuals to find ways for people to set parameters for their spending and be given support if that does not work out. As I said, the institute is taking guidance from people who suffer from mental health problems, but also from those who live and work with them, because they are the experts. I encourage anyone who has anything to say on the issue to join the expert panel; all they have to do is go to moneyandmentalhealth.org.

As many hon. Members have mentioned, particularly the right hon. Member for North Norfolk, £15 is saved in the long term for every £1 spent on early intervention. That is a powerful illustration of the importance and efficacy of that approach. It takes courage for Governments to commit to a course of action that might not produce results while they are in power or when they need votes but that will provide better outcomes for those who need them, so I am very pleased that the Scottish Government are now developing a 10-year strategy. I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) had to say about that.

As we have heard, many individuals have their first psychotic episode at an early age, but as many Members have said, we cannot exclude those over the age of 35 from the early intervention approach, which appears to have been happening in some parts of England. If roughly one quarter of men and one third of women experience their first incidence of psychosis after 35, CCGs are shifting the goalposts if they are applying the target only to the younger age group.

I hope that some of the progress that we have made on these issues in Scotland may be of benefit to the other nations of these islands, so I will mention a few of the key measures. However, I want to be clear that I am not claiming that all is perfect in the mental health world in Scotland, nor do I seek to set countries against each other. We are not competing. As many hon. Members have said, we should be sharing good practice. I want us to learn from the other countries in the UK and, as others have said, from international examples. However, I do think it is useful that, as my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow mentioned, the Scottish Government have appointed a Minister whose remit is dedicated wholly to mental health. That level of focus is vital and rightly reflects the impact of mental health issues right across society and across all Government directorates. As the right hon. Member for North Norfolk said—although perhaps not in exactly these words—we need a Government champion for mental health.

As I said, the Scottish Government are also developing a 10-year mental health strategy that focuses on early intervention and prevention. That longer-term vision is important for changing the way in which stakeholders across the public sector work and support mental health so that they are tackling issues head-on as early as possible. That is summed up by the principle of “Ask once, get help fast”, which is being put at the heart of the Scottish approach across this Scottish parliamentary term.

However, it is important for healthcare workers to understand that many people with mental health problems do not ask for help. Many of those they see on perhaps a six-monthly basis do not report what is happening to them, either because their mental health problem means that they do not want to be a bother or because they do not want to say what is happening to them. It is crucial that the holistic approach that my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow mentioned is taken so that families are involved and can give the person the support that is needed. Tackling mental health problems is not just the job of a psychiatrist and patient; it involves, or should involve, everyone the patient feels comfortable with.

On waiting time targets, the landscape in Scotland is slightly different in that, as we have heard, we have two key targets for mental health. One is that 90% of all those who are subject to a mental health referral should commence treatment within 18 weeks. I place on record my thanks to the mental health team at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, which is currently meeting that target.

I would like to highlight the impact of Brexit and the British Bill of Rights on mental health provision. I make no apologies for raising those two issues, as it is surely self-evident that the country's constitutional arrangements will have an impact across all policy areas. The Human Rights Act 1998 protects many vulnerable people who rely on health and social work support, and those safeguards must also be maintained for those suffering from psychosis.

I have a specific question for the Minister. The president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Simon Wessely, has stated that the UK's decision to leave the EU will hamper the development of new treatments for illnesses such as psychosis. He said:

“I don't believe there is a single scientist who does not think that being in the EU makes it easier to develop new treatments for mental disorder, and then to make them available.”

I would therefore be pleased if the Minister could tell us today how she will ensure that research and targeted funding for mental health from Europe is maintained or replaced.

I speak as someone who has close-up experience of significant mental health problems, including psychotic episodes. I will not say who the person is, not because I or they are at all ashamed or embarrassed but because there is still a lot of prejudice against people in that position. There is a lot of unnecessary fear. All of that only adds to the complications of trying to manage the condition. I mention this only because I hope the fact that someone close to me is currently in recovery from a traumatic psychotic episode, which I believe could have been prevented or at least been less traumatic had the person been able to access the services to which they were entitled, will add some weight to my words. Sometimes

we have to look beyond the paperwork, policies and targets, important as they are, and find out what is happening on the ground, because people do slip through the net, and the impact on them and their networks can be catastrophic.

I commend the right hon. Member for North Norfolk again, and I also commend everyone else who has spoken in the debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow and others for the very useful information that I have gleaned from them today. As someone with a close family member who is currently struggling and who initially did not get the help that they needed despite being entitled to it, I want to add my personal thanks to everyone in the room who continues to campaign for people such as my family member.

10.38 am

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on securing this very important debate. The House appreciates his engagement with this issue, given all his wisdom and experience as a former Health Minister, and his continuing work since the 2014 paper “Achieving Better Access to Mental Health Services by 2020”.

Every Member of Parliament, on both sides of the House, will have had the experience in their own advice sessions of people coming to see them who either are experiencing mental health problems or are a family member trying to get help for a child or partner with mental health problems. I think that every Member of Parliament will also have somebody struggling with mental health issues within their own family or among their wider acquaintanceship, but it remains the case that the stigma around mental health issues means there is more concealment, more shame and more delay in reaching out to the NHS for the treatment and support that people need. We know that mental health issues are on the rise. We know that there is a relationship between recession, unemployment and mental health issues and we can see it in our communities across the country.

I have to declare an interest because my mother was a mental health nurse until she retired. She worked in a mental hospital called Storthes Hall in West Yorkshire, and like a lot of mental health facilities it was a former workhouse. Despite the dedication of the nurses and doctors who worked there, this former workhouse on the edge of the Yorkshire moors exemplified, in a very physical way, the Cinderella nature of mental health services.

All parties in this House are committed to parity of esteem between mental health and physical health, but this important debate tests that reality. As we heard earlier, mental health is not just an issue for the individuals concerned; it can have a very sad and serious effect on their families. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) touched on the issue of black and minority ethnic men and psychosis. This subject is not often discussed in this House, so I will be forgiven for saying a little about it. It has been an issue for many decades that black and minority ethnic people are disproportionately represented in our mental health system at every level. If someone goes on to the wards

[Ms Diane Abbott]

of the Maudsley in south London or of mental health hospitals across London, they will see that a disproportionate number of the beds are filled by people of black and minority ethnic origin. In some cases, nearly all the beds are filled by people of black and minority ethnic origin.

This subject has been examined and studied since the book “Aliens and Alienists: Ethnic Minorities and Psychiatry”, which is by Dr Lipsedge, I think, and goes back to the ’80s. First, the issue is disproportionate representation, but then it is what sort of access to treatment people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds get. The first problem is their presenting late, and one of the reasons why black and minority ethnic people present late is that they are so frightened of the mental health system. I have dealt time after time with mothers who are struggling with sons with very serious psychosis whom they cannot manage and feel physically threatened by. When I say to them that they need to approach the national health service, they are often very resistant because they are so frightened. They believe that if they let their sons go into the mental health system, they will just be pumped full of—

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady. I understand that she wishes to address the Member who moved the motion, but she is off-microphone and it is making it difficult for the *Hansard* reporter. That is why, traditionally, Members address the Chair.

Ms Abbott: It is true of many communities, and in particular the black and minority ethnic community, as the statistics prove, that they are reluctant to take family members into the national health system. When they finally have to engage with the national health service, their symptoms are much worse and it is far harder to get positive outcomes. I tell the Minister that it is really important to look at this issue of black and minority ethnic people and the mental health system, because it is causing real misery and problems within the community. We are less likely to be offered talking therapies and more likely to be offered electroconvulsive therapy. Again, mental health facilities within the prison service, such as Rampton, have disproportionate levels of black and minority ethnic persons inside those institutions.

Norman Lamb: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. She is making an incredibly important point about the over-representation of black and minority ethnic people in the system. Does she agree that they are also more likely to be subject to coercion—to sectioning under the Mental Health Acts—and more likely to suffer restraint and physical force within mental health settings?

Ms Abbott: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that important point. It is absolutely true that, partly because they are presenting late and often have quite advanced psychotic symptoms, they are more likely to experience coercion and restraint. We know that some of those incidents of restraint have had very unhappy outcomes, and families continue to campaign against the misuse of restraint on mental health patients. All these decades after people first started to look at

issues relating to black and minority ethnic communities and the mental health service, we have made little progress. Is the Minister willing to meet me to discuss this issue, which I have looked at for many years? One of the basic problems is statistics. It took years to get the health service to keep statistics broken down by ethnicity within the mental health service, and I am not sure what is happening to those data.

As we have heard, it is vital that psychosis is treated early as that prevents complications, improves outcomes and is more cost-effective. We know that psychosis costs £11.8 billion a year and we also know that mental health problems are on the rise. It is very disturbing to find that the research shows that a quarter of CCGs seem to be ignoring the access waiting time standard for psychosis, and the National Audit Office reports that there are insufficient funds available for the strategy to achieve parity of esteem to have any reality. We know, because we have heard, that too many CCGs cannot even specify how much money is devoted to early intervention; that gives rise to the suspicion that not enough is devoted to it.

The right hon. Member for North Norfolk made the fundamental point that this issue is still not being treated with the same seriousness as cancer standards are. This goes back to the issue that many Members have raised of stigma, shame and an unwillingness of the families of psychosis sufferers to speak out in the way that the families of people who suffer from cancer are willing to go into the public space and to the media to speak out.

Johnny Mercer: I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Lady about that. This week, in Plymouth we have been running a campaign called “Talk Don’t Suffer”, in conjunction with *The Herald*. I pay tribute to the Plymouth *Herald* for what it has done. Getting people to come forward and printing their stories is such a powerful testimony for those who suffer with mental health, because they know that other people are suffering too and about the impact on families. To talk about it is very important to improving the situation.

Ms Abbott: I again congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk on securing this important debate. He spoke about discrimination and injustice, and that is what strikes people so strongly. There is the human misery of people suffering from psychosis, whether intermittent bouts or lifelong psychosis, and there is the misery and worry of their family members. We need to be a society in which the promise from all parts of the House for parity of esteem between mental and physical health becomes reality. We want to be a society in which people are not marginalised or almost warehoused just because they have mental health challenges, including psychosis, but have some promise of the support they need and of a better life. I look forward to the Minister’s response to questions asked by my Opposition colleagues. I assure her that I will return to this issue—not only black and minority ethnic mental health, but mental health in general.

10.49 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Nicola Blackwood): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for my first outing as a Minister, Sir Roger,

and I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on securing this important debate. He has rightly pointed out that many areas of our mental health services are not yet meeting the standards that patients and their families deserve and have a right to expect, and he is absolutely right to say that improving access and waiting times for early intervention in psychosis must be a top priority among those. I assure him that both I and the Government share his determination and sense of urgency in such matters.

I think we can agree that for far too long as a nation we tolerated poor mental health services in this country, and we all know the terrible price that some have had to pay for our collective failure to step in earlier. That time is now over and we are in the process of creating a mental health service that we can be proud of—one in which, no matter where someone lives, they will be able to access the services they need when they need them, and just as importantly, one that people feel safe and confident using.

But we have to be honest about this, or we will get discouraged and lose momentum: it is not going to happen overnight. Although there are already some areas of outstanding practice that we should be encouraged by, we are, in general, coming from a low base, and only a sustained effort over the next few years is going to bring about the change that we are all demanding.

For that reason, I would like personally to thank the right hon. Member for North Norfolk for his pivotal role in securing parity of esteem and for supporting the introduction of the first waiting time standards for mental health services. With the previous Prime Minister, the Health Secretary and my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), the right hon. Gentleman has set us on the road to better mental health services. Now we have to follow it through, no matter how bumpy the journey may become at times. I hope that he will meet me and give the benefit of his advice, because I suspect I am going to need it.

I would also like to thank everybody who has contributed to today's debate. Some have given moving accounts of personal experiences or those of family members or friends. Others have taken the opportunity to raise difficult constituency cases. I know that all here today are committed to keeping mental health at the top of our agenda as the Government shape their new programme.

That brings me on to the challenges of the early intervention pathway for psychosis, which is designed to deliver the improvements to psychosis care that are urgently needed, as the right hon. Gentleman so clearly laid out. He pointed out that psychosis is more common than people realise: it affects one in 2,000 people in England in any given year. We know that the early intervention in psychosis programme is crucial in ensuring that mental health services maximise their opportunity to intervene at the earliest possible moment to prevent patients from relapsing, so that they are less likely to be admitted to hospital and have less severe symptoms. As the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) so expertly described, such services are recognised as the best model for helping young people to recover from the first episode of psychosis. They have the potential not only to save the NHS tens

of millions of pounds but to reduce the serious impact of psychosis on those patients' lives and those of their families and carers.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) asked about funding. When waiting times for mental health were introduced for the first time, they were backed by £120 million of investment. In addition, we have invested £33 million in developing EIP services. Further funding for early intervention in psychosis was announced in NHS England's "Five Year Forward View for Mental Health" implementation plan earlier this year. That funding is designed to support delivery of the target to ensure that 60% of people who experience their first episode of psychosis receive treatment with a NICE concordant package of care within two weeks of referral by 2021.

Norman Lamb: I am encouraged by what the Minister is saying. I assume that the money she has talked about that will be allocated is part of the baseline that CCGs will receive and not a separate allocation. The question is how she ensures that CCGs actually spend the money as intended.

Nicola Blackwood: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, this work is in its early stages. He is right that services are working hard to develop this process. NHS England has set out in its implementation plan how the services will need to grow and improve to meet the new standards. In particular, it has noted that the current block contract arrangements can result in poor transparency on spend per patient, as he has seen with his freedom of information request.

NHS England has been looking at alternative funding models that will link an element of payment to achievement of quality and outcomes, including the EIP access and waiting time standard. When there are variations in spend, we will need to consider the reasons for that and ensure that necessary action is taken to address any impact on the quality of care available. I hope that reassures the right hon. Gentleman.

In addition, the Royal College of Psychiatrists College Centre for Quality Improvement has been commissioned to undertake continued assessment and quality improvement work. This will be through a quality improvement network, supported by an annual self-assessment that will be independently validated and scored. All early intervention in psychosis services are going to be expected to participate. The first results will be published in April 2017, but any earlier results will be published before that. It is intended to provide a transparent assessment of services across England. This will give us a clear picture of service provision and enable us to target areas where additional development will be required, so that we can ensure that the standard is met and that people receive the care they need.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned the important issue of age caps. The most likely age for a first episode of psychosis to occur is between 14 and 35, as has been pointed out.

Ms Abbott: Is the Minister saying that there is currently no way of making sure that CCGs spend the requisite proportion of their funding on mental health?

Nicola Blackwood: Currently, the block contracts make it less transparent than it should be and we are working to address that.

I had moved on to talk about the age cap. As I was saying, psychosis is most likely to occur between the ages of 14 and 35; consequently, services have traditionally been commissioned in this age range. However, a sizeable proportion of presentations take place after that, which is why NHS England guidance is clear that services should be available to people up to the age of 65. We are working with local commissioners to ensure that service provision is expanded to cover all age ranges. A regional assurance process is under way to assess providers' and commissioners' progress in making that happen. This is intended to deliver transparency across England on the plans currently in place, and, where it is not happening, to highlight where further development is required. Again, the Royal College of Psychiatrists CCQI's assessment work and the development of robust data, which I will come on to in a minute, will enable us to see areas that are not providing services for people up to 65 and to target development accordingly.

However, none of that will happen without the right people to deliver it. To improve access to NICE-recommended psychological therapies, we have to ensure that there are the staff numbers and the appropriate skills mix to deliver the full range of treatment to those who need it. The modelling undertaken by NHS England for additional investment to achieve the new standard incorporates the costs of the necessary workforce development. Health Education England has a targeted work programme under way to increase the number of EIP staff trained to deliver cognitive behavioural therapy for psychosis and family interventions, with £6 million invested in training this year.

Finally, as the shadow Secretary of State pointed out, to ensure consistently good performance against this standard and future waiting times standards, we need robust data. I am very happy to meet her to discuss that point. We know that the data need to improve and we are working hard to make that happen. The right hon. Member for North Norfolk is well aware that we are starting from a low base on data availability and quality in mental health, but we cannot let that stop our progress or our ambition.

We are implementing the EIP waiting time standard with a clear expectation that providers will meet that standard. We are working simultaneously with the NHS, NHS England and NHS Digital to ensure that the data become robust enough so that we can hold providers and commissioners to account for meeting that standard.

Data on mental health are behind that of physical health, and it will take time to get the data of the same quality. We know that from the improving access to psychological therapies data, which took some time to develop to a good quality. However, the IAPT pathway and standards are now an exemplar and represent a good model for development of other data sets. Encouragingly, data have started to flow via the mental health services data set from March this year, including experimental data on EIP. That is not robust, but there has been significant progress so far. We are currently working across Government to deliver a robust five-year mental health data plan to take us to 2020. The data plan, as recommended by the "Five Year Forward View for Mental Health", will address the need for substantially improved data and information about mental health services for adults and children.

I hope that this response will show that we are committed to ensuring that there is no gap between rhetoric and reality on the ground. The right hon. Gentleman was right to identify funding, age caps, staffing and skills shortages and data limitations as the key challenges that we are grappling with in the implementation of the EIP, but we have in place work streams to address all those factors. We also agree that we require a systemic review of implementation to challenge and support local areas to implement the EIP more effectively. That is why we have asked independent experts at the Royal College of Psychiatrists to do exactly that. As I have said, they will be reporting in April 2017, but they will report as they go along with any earlier information so that we can make progress as quickly as possible. In the meantime, I will certainly write to him with a response on the detail of his dossier, and I entirely agree with all those who have made the point that we need to share best practice between devolved nations on these issues.

Today's debate has been very important not just on the details of the EIP, but to test the Government's commitment to health equality. I am grateful to all colleagues who have raised concerns today. I hope that our commitment to reforming our mental health services is now beyond doubt, but I know, as I look around the Chamber today, that I have heard in speech after speech the determination to see change, and I take courage. Great reform requires long-term vision and non-partisan partnership. I have heard all three of those here today and that truly is a firm foundation for the task that we have ahead.

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).

Loughinisland Murders

11 am

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland's report on the murders at Heights Bar, Loughinisland.

I am pleased to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger, and I am pleased that the Minister and the shadow spokesperson on Northern Ireland are also here.

On 18 June 1994, an Ulster Volunteer Force murder gang burst into the Heights Bar in Loughinisland in South Down and, in a nakedly sectarian act, shot dead six Catholic men and seriously wounded five others as they watched a World cup football match. Those six men were Adrian Rogan, Malcolm Jenkinson, Barney Green, Daniel McCreanor, Patrick O'Hare and Eamon Byrne. Nobody has ever been held to account, charged or convicted for those murders and that single incident revolted the entire community I represent and in which I reside, some three miles from that pub in Loughinisland. The community was outraged at such a heinous crime.

Two of those killed were well-known family friends to me. Barney Green was aged 87, and one of his late brothers was married to my paternal aunt. His nephew, Dan McCreanor, was a cousin of my cousins. I pay tribute to the families, victims, survivors and their legal team.

In view of the fact that nobody has been held accountable, the families of the deceased and injured went to the Police Ombudsman with significant concerns. In summary, those were: that the police failed to conduct an effective investigation of the murders, including failing to keep bereaved families updated on the progress of the inquiry; that the police failed to discharge the state's duties as required by article 2 of the European convention on human rights; and that there was collusion between the then Royal Ulster Constabulary and those responsible for the murders.

On 9 June this year, the Police Ombudsman published the report. At that time, I said that, more than 20 years on and five years since the release of the totally discredited original Police Ombudsman's report, the damning disclosure in this report that security force collusion played a major role in the murder of those six innocent men has finally been made. Disgracefully, the protection of informants took precedence over the preservation of innocent lives and the devastation visited upon their families and the wider community.

On closer examination of the report, Dr Maguire clearly demonstrates that collusion was a significant feature in the deaths of the six men. I will illustrate that by directly quoting Dr Maguire's report, in which he writes:

"It is my view that the nature of the relationship between the police and informants undermined the investigative process in a number of ways... This was a 'hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil' approach to the use of informants, which potentially frustrated the police investigation into the attack and restricted investigation opportunities and lines of inquiry."

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene. This is an important debate about a controversial issue. I should put on the record that my late husband, who died eight

years ago with Alzheimer's, was, at one time, the Chief Constable of the RUC and was enormously proud of his role in an organisation that had been attacked and lost 302 members during the troubles.

The report is very controversial. Will the hon. Lady confirm for the record that the Police Ombudsman concluded that the UVF unit was responsible for the murder of the six innocent Catholic men? I extend my deepest sympathy to the families of those six innocent Catholics who were watching a football match. However, the ombudsman concluded that it was the UVF and that the RUC had no prior knowledge or warning that could have prevented that attack on the Heights Bar in Loughinisland. Will she kindly confirm that for the record?

Ms Ritchie: Indeed, the report says:

"Let there be no doubt, the persons responsible for the atrocity at Loughinisland were those who entered the bar on that Saturday evening and indiscriminately opened fire."

However, the Police Ombudsman goes on to mention the lack of rigour in the investigation and the fact that vital evidence was destroyed: namely, the car that had been accommodated at Saintfield police station, which is no longer there. I accept what the hon. Lady said and will ensure that the families—people I know very well indeed—are well aware of her deepest sympathies to them.

Danny Kinahan (South Antrim) (UUP): We are discussing the most heinous crime possible. There were many in Northern Ireland. We send our sympathies to the families. I note the ombudsman's quotation, which the hon. Lady read out, but will she confirm that there was no collusion over the act of violence that happened in the Heights Bar? The accusation of collusion is awaiting evidence. We believe that, if there is evidence, it should go to court and, quite rightly, be looked after, but we do not want to blacken the whole RUC and Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Ms Ritchie: It is worth noting what Dr Maguire says in his report. He uses the Smithwick report's definition of collusion, which includes "commission" and "omission". I firmly believe that if there had been an accelerated inquiry process following the deaths of the six men, we would have been in a better position than we were at that stage.

For some unknown reason, the police did not put in significant rigour, given the fact that there was a UVF unit operating in South Down and given that there were preceding events, including the murder of Jack Kieley in January 1988, the murder of Peter McCormack in the Thierafurth Inn on 19 November 1992, the attempted murder of his cousin, Peter McCarthy, some weeks before that in that bar, and the attempted murder of John Henry Smyth, who was originally from Downpatrick but was resident in Castlewellan and who, sadly, has since died from natural causes. The report is particularly instructive and provides the wider context about the importation of arms way back in 1987. According to forensic evidence, one of those arms was used in the murder of my six friends in Loughinisland.

Dr Maguire's report also states that

"Special Branch continued to engage in a relationship with sources they identified in intelligence reporting as likely to have been involved at some level in the Loughinisland atrocity."

[Ms Ritchie]

The report is particularly instructive, and it develops that concern at paragraph 5.67, wherein the Police Ombudsman describes that special branch

“established an intelligence asset that revealed that Persons A, M & K were leading UVF members in the area, with connections to the security forces. In addition, the intelligence identified a relationship between Persons A, M, K and Person I, who was a senior member of the UVF with links to East Belfast, but who reported directly to the UVF leadership on the Shankill Road, West Belfast.”

Paragraph 5.80 further states:

“My investigation has established that at least three individuals and their families, directly associated with the UVF unit active in South Down, were members of the UDR.”

That does not make very pleasant reading for me or my constituents but facts are facts, and these facts were established by an investigation that produced a report after much interrogation. The report goes on to inform us that in the year before the Loughinisland atrocity, persons A, M, K and I “were responsible for” the deaths I have already mentioned, including the murder of Martin Lavery in Belfast on 20 December 1992.

The indiscriminate brutal savagery of these murders stood out because of the nature of our community in Loughinisland. I live some three miles away, and I am talking about myself, my family, my neighbours and my constituents when I say that we are harmonious, integrated and peace loving—we always have been and still are. After the inquest on 28 January 1995, my party colleague and former councillor, Patsy Toman, who resided in Loughinisland and who arrived within 10 minutes of the shooting, received an anonymous letter on 14 February 1995. He gave the letter to the police after talking to me, and some of its details were quite explicit in relation to the names of those who may have been involved. Dr Maguire’s report tells us at paragraph 7.203 that the letter has been lost by the police and, notwithstanding its contents, no persons, certainly none of those named in it, have been charged before the criminal courts.

The Police Ombudsman further states:

“I am satisfied that on the basis of a sound intelligence case, Special Branch identified Persons A, M, K, I & B to the Loughinisland Murder Investigation Team as suspects on Sunday 19 June 1994.”

That was the day after the murders, yet Dr Maguire’s report tells us:

“On 24 August 1994 police received information that members of the gang, which police suspected had been responsible for the murders at Loughinisland, were informed on 21 August 1994 that they were liable to be arrested the next morning. Intelligence the following month stated that the source of this warning was a policeman. I have found no evidence that efforts were made by police to investigate this information.”

In view of the very serious issues raised by the report, I wrote to the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), on 10 June, and in a subsequent written response he stated:

“The Government accepts the Police Ombudsman’s report and the Chief Constable’s response and we take any allegations of police misconduct very seriously. Where there is evidence of wrongdoing it must be pursued—everyone is subject to the rule of law.”

On that basis, the then Prime Minister, the British Government and the current Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland accept the report’s finding that collusion was a significant factor. It follows that those who were to be arrested in August 1994—probably the same individuals mentioned in the anonymous

letter to my colleague, the then Councillor Toman, and specifically referred to by the designated letters in the Police Ombudsman’s investigation—should be brought in by the PSNI for questioning and reinvestigation. I am aware of those names, the authorities have the names and now, with the Police Ombudsman’s report, the PSNI has grounds under reasonable cause to bring these individuals in for questioning.

Last week I had a meeting with the Chief Constable, and I raised this directly with him. I will continue to pursue the matter on behalf of the families, the victims and the survivors because I believe that there must be truth and justice. If the past and the investigation mean anything, we need truth. In the same vein, the Police Ombudsman has a responsibility to follow through on his work that identified problems within the then police force and those officers responsible. If we are to have justice, truth and any form of accountability, resources must be made available to the PSNI and the Ombudsman’s office to act now on what is a relatively recent crime. Hopefully we will then have a better chance of prosecutions.

Lady Hermon: I express my deep appreciation to the hon. Lady for her tireless efforts on behalf of her constituents and their families. The manner and tone in which she speaks display the real commitment and compassion that she always shows to her constituents. Will she confirm that, despite the very controversial findings of the Police Ombudsman’s investigation into Loughinisland, the Police Ombudsman did not send any prosecution reports, or suggestions for prosecution, to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland? Was that a surprise in the light of the fact that he concluded that there was collusion?

Ms Ritchie: A section in the report states that the current Chief Constable has sent the specific names of junior and senior members of the then RUC about whom there are certain doubts—I put it like that—to the Police Ombudsman for investigation. As I understand it, they are currently being investigated. I want to put that on the record.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): My hon. Friend has compellingly set out how the report shows that there was serial dereliction on the part of a police service that was meant to be the guardian of people and the peace and the upholder of law and justice, but there was not only serial dereliction. In the many years since Loughinisland, when all these concerns have been voiced and raised, there has also been serial denial by too many politicians, including Ministers. Does she hope that the Minister today will strike a different tone from the previous Secretary of State in relation to these important matters?

Ms Ritchie: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. I agree that we want to move forward with this investigation, but we cannot begin to move forward to build a shared and inclusive society if issues from the past are not comprehensively addressed. How the Government respond to the report on the Loughinisland massacre is critical for legacy issues. The past has wider implications for public confidence and justice in Northern Ireland. The comments by the previous Secretary of State, to which he referred, insulted the people of Loughinisland, the families and the victims. I regret having to say that, but that is the position.

I look forward to a more helpful response today, but there must now be accelerated work on prosecutions, a British Government apology to the victims and survivors and their families, and provision of compensation for the victims, for those lost lives. That must be part of the urgent answer and solution to this tragedy in Loughinisland on Saturday 18 June 1994.

11.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Kris Hopkins): Thank you for your chairmanship and guidance, Sir Roger. I am extremely grateful to the hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) for bringing this important debate to the House.

What happened in Loughinisland in June 1994 was an act of unspeakable evil for which there is no possible justification. I am sure the whole House would want to pass our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to those affected by this appalling atrocity. I express my personal sympathies to the hon. Lady because of her personal link to this.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I agree wholeheartedly with the Minister's comments, especially about the way in which the hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) introduced the debate. However, does he accept that it would be reasonable for the House to see the definition of the word "collusion" being used by the Police Ombudsman in the report? That would give clarity on what it means, because the word "collusion" can be heavily baggaged.

Kris Hopkins: It is not for me to define "collusion" for the Ombudsman. There are many definitions, and we may choose a different one, but we accept fully the findings of the report—I shall comment further on that in a moment.

The Government accept the Police Ombudsman's report and the Chief Constable's response. We take any allegations of police misconduct very seriously; where there is evidence of wrongdoing, it must be pursued. Everyone is subject to the rule of law.

This is now a matter for the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Chief Constable apologised to the families after the Ombudsman's first report on this atrocity in 2011 and he apologised again on 9 June this year when the second report was released. He has given his reassurance both to the families and to the public that he fully co-operated with the Police Ombudsman's investigation and that he will co-operate fully with any disciplinary or criminal proceedings against former police officers. It is very clear from the Chief Constable's response that the Police Service of Northern Ireland remains firmly committed to apprehending those responsible for these murders and has appealed to the community for information. On behalf of the Government, I reiterate that commitment and that appeal.

We have judged our security forces against the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in the past, and we always will. As a Government, we have been more forthcoming than any of our predecessors in accepting where the state has failed to live up to the highest standards and in apologising when it is the right thing to do. Where it is warranted, we will continue to do so.

There have been calls for the UK Government to apologise for what happened on the fateful day of 18 June 1994. Of course the Government deeply regret that the terrorists who committed these vicious attacks have never been brought to justice, and we are sorry for any failings by the police in relation to this case. However, the Ombudsman's report makes it very clear that those responsible for this despicable attack were the Ulster Volunteer Force terrorist gang who planned it and carried it out, leaving utter devastation in the aftermath and for many years thereafter. The report also categorically states that the police had no prior knowledge of the attack that would have enabled them to prevent it.

The Government will never seek to defend the security forces by defending the indefensible.

Ms Ritchie: Will the Minister comment on the fact that the Police Ombudsman's report refers to a lack of resources invested in investigating the UVF unit operating in that area of South Down, which had resulted in prior murders of people who lived in the locality? There is a feeling that if more rigour had been applied to that investigation before Loughinisland, maybe Loughinisland would not have happened.

Kris Hopkins: As I have already said, the Government accept the findings of the report and so does the Chief Constable. What is important now is that we show compassion to the families and those who have lost, and that we pursue the individuals who carried out this atrocity. I am confident that the Chief Constable will continue to do that.

The majority of those who served in the security forces during the troubles did so with great bravery and exemplary professionalism. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude for what they did to uphold the rule of law and ensure that the future of Northern Ireland could only ever be determined by democracy and consent.

The report highlights the need to establish the legacy bodies set out in the Stormont House agreement. We all know that legacy issues in Northern Ireland have a continuing capacity to disrupt the political process and the economic stability of the people of Northern Ireland, and the current structures for dealing with these cases are not working as they should. We know for a fact, through many discussions with victims' groups, that the current structures do not work for victims and survivors of horrendous atrocities such as that in Loughinisland 22 years ago.

The Government remain committed to establishing the legacy bodies set out in the Stormont House agreement: the historical investigations unit, the independent commission on information retrieval, the implementation and reconciliation group and the oral history archive. It is our view that they offer the best way forward for us to achieve better outcomes for victims, survivors and the people who suffered as a result of the troubles. We share the widespread disappointment that the "Fresh Start" talks last year were unable to deliver the new structures, but today I reaffirm the Government's determination and commitment to do all we can to remedy that.

Mark Durkan: The Minister knows that one of the crux difficulties in dealing with legacy issues in the context of Stormont House was the insistence of the then Secretary of State on national security matters,

[Mark Durkan]

which of course involve putting a primary emphasis on the protection of informants and others. Surely the Ombudsman's report shows that it was a fatal flaw in the culture of policing and security control for so many years that primacy was given to protecting those people rather than protecting the innocent and prosecuting the guilty.

Kris Hopkins: I reiterate what I said before: we accept the full findings of the report.

We will continue to work with victims' groups, with the Northern Ireland parties and with the Irish Government to seek a way forward. The hon. Member for Foyle (Marl Durkan) talked about tone; I reassure him that wherever I can work with Members of Parliament for Northern Ireland to try to bridge some of the issues that they face as constituency MPs—and that many other MPs throughout the UK do not—my door is always open. I hope we can have a really positive relationship in the months and years to come.

Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair): Before I put the Question, I place on record, as a courtesy, the fact that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound), is present. The arcane rules relating to half-hour debates have precluded him from speaking, but it is important that it is recognised that he has been here and heard the remarks.

Question put and agreed to.

11.27 am

Sitting suspended.

HGV Fly-parking: Kent

[MR ANDREW TURNER *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered fly-parking by HGVs in Kent.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Turner. I welcome this opportunity to express my concerns to my right hon. Friend the Roads Minister. As he knows, fly-parking—the parking of lorries outside proper parking areas—is a long-term and growing problem in my constituency and across Kent. I thank my colleagues from Kent who are here today to show their support. I know that they share my concerns, as do other colleagues from Kent who are unable to attend this debate. Indeed, during this week, several colleagues from elsewhere in the country have mentioned to me that fly-parking is also a problem in their areas. I hope that through this debate I can push the issue up the Minister's agenda.

The nub of the problem is that there simply are not enough places for lorries to park in Kent, so they stop where they can. They fill the lay-bys on major roads and park on the hard shoulders of slip roads, on the verges of country lanes and in housing estates. The M20 is the main route to the channel, carrying thousands of lorries every day. In my constituency, junctions 7 and 8 are particular blackspots. Along the A2-M2 route to Dover, Brenley Corner and Gate services are also renowned for large gatherings of lorries.

Since December last year, Kent police have dealt with 2,534 illegally parked heavy goods vehicles. A study in 2011 found that there was a shortfall of about 600 lorry parking spaces in the south-east. Since then, freight volumes have increased substantially. For instance, in just one year, 2014-15, freight increased by 12%. It is now estimated that 11,000 lorries pass through Dover and Folkestone each day to cross the channel.

Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. As a neighbouring MP—my hon. Friend and I share the town of Maidstone—I have received several complaints from my constituents about lorries parked on the hard shoulder, particularly on the M20 and the A2. I agree wholeheartedly that we need much stricter parking controls. I would also like to see many more overnight parking facilities.

Helen Whately: I thank my hon. Friend for her support. We both experience problems with fly-parking around Maidstone.

A huge number of lorries pass along the M20 and through Kent every day. That number is increasing, and the growth trend is expected to continue. In fact, we should hope that it will, because lorry numbers and freight volumes increase as the economy grows. As that happens, the parking situation is likely to get only worse.

Fly-parking is not only a nuisance, it is dangerous, especially when lorries stick out of lay-bys into fast roads or occupy hard shoulders. Last year, tragically, a 74-year-old woman from Maidstone called Susan Mellor

died when her car crashed into a lorry parked on the hard shoulder at junction 7 of the M20 in my constituency. Kent police have shown me footage of officers walking along the hard shoulder to move lorries on. As they do so, cars are pounding past, clearly putting the lives of officers in some considerable danger. The process also takes up material police time. Aside from the dangers, there are the problems of noise from the lorries, particularly refrigerated lorries in residential areas; the significant litter associated with lorries parking up; and—I am afraid there is no nice way to put this—human fouling of verges and areas where lorries park. That is truly disgusting, but it happens because the average lay-by or roadside verge has no facilities for drivers to use.

Robert Flello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): My apologies for missing the start of the debate; I was delayed at a meeting. I am enjoying the hon. Lady's contribution, and I congratulate her on securing the debate.

The vehicle recovery operator who goes out to fix a vehicle in a lay-by that is awash with most unpleasant materials is the guy—typically it is a guy, although sometimes it is a lady—who has to lie in that to do the repairs. It is horrible. Does the hon. Lady have every sympathy with people, whether they are from one of the recognised motor clubs or from one of the many recovery businesses throughout the country, who have to lie in that to work on vehicles?

Helen Whately: I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing to life very effectively the unpleasantness of what is on the verges.

Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. Fly-parking is not just a problem in Kent. The Amazon fulfilment centre in Rugeley creates a lot of jobs, but we have the problem of a lot of lorries parking up overnight. My hon. Friend mentioned the litter, and there are a range of other associated problems. There are also the dangers of parking. Does she agree that we need to do more, in every way possible, to prevent lorries from cluttering up the backstreets of towns such as Rugeley?

Helen Whately: I completely agree with my hon. Friend that we need to do more. I will make some suggestions in a moment.

I want to look at this from the perspective of the lorry drivers as well. I am here to represent my Kent residents, but it is also important to understand that there is a challenge for lorry drivers. As my right hon. Friend the Minister will know, they are required by law to take breaks every four and a half hours, and they must record their driving hours on a tachograph. When the time comes for them to stop, they need to stop. Most drivers plan ahead for where they will stop, but all too often the stop they planned to use is full. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) tells me that the Stop24 lorry park in his constituency is often full. If that happens, drivers have to stop wherever they can.

The current situation has been intensified by the problems around Calais, which make drivers very reluctant to stop in that area. They are choosing to stop on our side of the channel, on their way over or on their way back, which is making the problem worse. The situation

in Calais may continue for some time. I hope that it will be resolved, but even when it is, we should not think that the problem will go away, because the underlying problem of a shortage of lorry parking spaces in the south-east will remain.

In preparation for the debate, I have spoken to Kent County Council, which is well aware of the problem and working hard to tackle it. Matthew Balfour, the cabinet member for transport, told me that the council is currently doing a survey of the number of HGVs parking overnight across the county, which will update the figures for how many additional spaces are needed. The council is also looking into where lorry parking might be made available. Councillor Balfour also told me that enforcing parking restrictions is a challenge, and the level of fines tends to be lower than the cost of collecting them. A clamping pilot in Ashford was successful, but it proved prohibitively expensive because the cost of carrying it out was much greater than the revenue it brought in.

I have some specific examples. The penalty for parking on the hard shoulder is only £30, which is less than the £50 fine for exceeding safe driving hours. Parking overnight at a truck stop often costs around £21, so from a driver's point of view, parking somewhere they should not might be a risk worth taking, even when there is room in a service area.

Robert Flello: The hon. Lady mentioned the cost of truck stops and all the other fines, but if a driver parks at a motorway service area—quite often, there are no truck stops—that can be considerably more expensive again.

Helen Whately: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. We need to combine available and affordable parking with penalties for drivers who park where they should not park.

The view from my local authority is that in order for it to properly enforce parking in sensible places, current legislation would require it to put up so much signage that there would be a veritable explosion in signage across the country, as well as extra yellow lines. That would be very high-cost and would have an unacceptable visual impact.

On the motorways, physical barriers can be effective, as has been shown at junction 8 of the M20 in my constituency, where permanent bollards have been put up, meaning that lorries are no longer parking on that slip road. However, rather than solving the problem, such barriers only shift it on elsewhere.

Issuing parking tickets is extremely time-consuming for the police. Where lorries are parked dangerously, the police's priority is to move them along rather than issuing drivers with a ticket, but again that just shifts the problem elsewhere.

Every organisation I have spoken to—Kent police, Kent County Council and the Road Haulage Association—is clear that the current system is not working and has not worked for at least 15 years. While Kent is disproportionately affected, other areas, such as Wales and Essex, are also affected, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling) said. This is a national problem and not just a Kent problem. Furthermore, it is a national problem because the M20 through Kent is the

[Helen Whately]

UK's main route for international road freight, an industry that is worth about £11.2 billion annually to the UK economy. The Government must surely recognise that this is a serious problem that requires a clampdown.

First and foremost, however, we need more overnight parking spaces in Kent. There are not enough commercial truck stops to meet demand, so there is market failure going on. Having said that, my right hon. Friend the Minister will know how much I welcome the Government's £250 million investment in the lorry parking area at Stanford West. It should save residents and businesses from the gridlock of Operation Stack, which closed the M20 in my constituency for 32 days last year. In addition, as has been proposed in the current consultation on the lorry park, it may also be used by lorries outside of Operation Stack, providing about 500 overnight parking places. That is absolutely crucial and would go a long way towards addressing the shortage of lorry parking spaces in Kent.

However, there is also a question of timing. I appreciate Highways England's "stack first" approach on the lorry park at Stanford West; Highways England is working to get it open for next summer. However, I have also been told—albeit informally—that it might be several years before the lorry park is ready for parking outside of Operation Stack, which strikes me as being too long to wait. I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to make sure that Kent and the country's lorry drivers do not have to wait so long for more parking spaces. Moreover, the Operation Stack lorry park alone will not solve the problem. If the shortfall in 2011 was 600 places, it is likely to be significantly greater now, and it will only grow further. Also, using just one location is not the answer, because lorry drivers use other routes, or they might need to stop earlier or later, so we need more lorry parking spaces all along the trunk roads through Kent.

Freight organisations have said that planning and funding are major barriers. One suggestion is that parking provision should be a requirement in any major industrial development. Major projects, such as the new lower Thames crossing, are on the way, and I would be grateful if my right hon. Friend the Minister could say what steps he might be able to take to ensure that as road capacity is increased with such major projects, lorry parking capacity is also increased to meet the demand.

In turn, however, that prompts the question of whose responsibility it will be to provide such extra parking. In preparing for this debate, it has been unclear to me quite whose responsibility it is to ensure that there is sufficient provision of lorry parking around trunk routes. I would be grateful if my right hon. Friend could say whether it is Highways England or another agency.

In considering what could be helpfully done to address this issue, we need to make it easier for local authorities, Highways England and the police to enforce parking control. Local authorities need to be able to restrict parking in inappropriate places without extensive and costly signing and lining. The police would like police officers and Highways England enforcement officers to be able to direct lorries to move on to a particular place, such as a lorry park, so that they can actually solve the problem when a lorry is parked illegally rather than just

shifting it along to another lay-by. At the moment, no sooner do they move a lorry on than it goes and stops somewhere else that it should not stop, and another lorry comes along and fills the place that it has just moved on from, which is a pretty frustrating process for them.

Once sufficient parking provision is in place, I would like the Department for Transport to consider increasing the fines for fly-parking, because it is clear that the current fines are not an effective deterrent. I am not saying that we should increase the fines while there is a shortage of legitimate parking places, but once there is sufficient parking capacity it would make sense to ensure that there is also a sufficient incentive for lorry drivers to use it, even though they are likely to have to pay some level of charge for it.

Local authorities have told me that they need greater powers to collect fines, particularly from foreign-registered lorry drivers, who constitute the majority of lorry drivers using the trunk routes, although I should make it clear that it is not thought to be exclusively foreign lorry drivers who are parking in the wrong places. Judging from the evidence I saw with the police, a mixture of foreign and British drivers do that. Nevertheless, one suggestion from a local authority is that foreign lorry drivers could be prevented from crossing the channel if they have an outstanding parking fine.

To make things really simple for lorry drivers, once there is sufficient parking capacity, could there not be some kind of complete ban on HGVs parking for prolonged periods other than at an authorised truck stop? Then it would be really clear that lorry drivers were not allowed to park up for their official rests unless they were in an authorised place.

While I was looking into all of this, it struck me that there is some level of confusion about who is responsible for what, and that there are various hand-offs between the different parts of the road network. What is a police matter, what is a matter for Highways England and what is a matter for local authorities? I wonder whether there is any way of simplifying that framework and having a single organisation that is responsible for the enforcement of lorry parking.

I have a final request to make of my right hon. Friend the Minister. Could he meet Kent County Council and other stakeholders to discuss the problem? That is particularly important now, because there is an opportunity to take a strategic overview of the entire road network across Kent, taking into account the projected increases in traffic and the impact that the new lower Thames crossing is likely to have on roads that are significantly downstream of it. I hope the Government will take that opportunity, because this issue is not just about Kent; it is about making sure that we have a road infrastructure for the whole country that is fit for the future.

2.46 pm

Robert Ffello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) on securing this debate. I do not intend to say more than a few words on this issue, which is one that I find very troubling indeed. I also draw the Chamber's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests regarding these matters.

I would like to highlight the fact that, as the hon. Lady said, across the country there is a shortage of something like 50,000 heavy goods vehicle drivers, so there is a real need for HGV drivers. One of the reasons—one of many reasons, agreed, but an important one—that there is such a shortage is, quite frankly: why would anyone want to be a haulier, for example a long-distance lorry driver, when it seems that the nation's view of hauliers is that they should be quite happy to park up in a dismal layby, using the nearest bush as their toilet facilities and washing in a cup? That seems to be what we as a nation believe our HGV drivers should expect, because there are just not the proper facilities for them.

There are motorway service areas across the country, which are mainly designed for car drivers in particular and, to some extent, van drivers; they are not really designed for drivers of larger vehicles. The facilities in those service areas, including the parking facilities, are expensive, as the hon. Lady allowed me to say in an intervention on her: the food and drink that they serve are expensive; and the fuel that they sell is very expensive. Quite frankly, the driver of an HGV would not want to stop at one of those service areas unless they were just nipping in to grab something to eat or to have a toilet break. Also, HGV drivers will probably realise that their managers back at base will be breathing down their neck, because the extra fuel it takes to slow down, pull into such a service area and then accelerate away again means that any break or stop by an HGV has a genuine cost.

As the hon. Lady also quite rightly pointed out, HGV drivers are bound by what their tachograph says about the hours they are working, when they should have rest breaks and those sorts of things. However, a driver is dependent on a road infrastructure, while travelling through Kent or through other areas, which means they might face a delay in getting to their destination as they come through the channel tunnel or use one of the ferries, or a delay on the road itself, as they get snarled up in traffic jams. There are a whole host of things that can go wrong for drivers. Despite their careful planning of their route, they might find themselves having to take a break somewhere they might not otherwise wish to stop.

Indeed, given the appalling situation in Calais at the moment, which the hon. Lady has already drawn our attention to, HGV drivers may well decide that they will stop many miles from Calais, to avoid running the risk of being attacked, as a lot of drivers have been, or having their vehicle broken into, or—to add insult to what is quite often real injury—getting to other side of the channel only to find that somebody did manage to stow away on their vehicle and consequently getting a penalty for having brought them into the country. We will have drivers stopping a long way from Calais, doing the run through and having to stop very quickly when they get to Kent. It will be the same in the other direction, with drivers stopping in Kent on their way through. There are a lot of reasons why a driver will stop, and it is not the drivers' choice. They do not want to stop in lay-bys and use the facilities or non-facilities there. They would like to use motorway service areas, but the cost is often prohibitive. The number of truck stops around the country is lamentable and poor. Where there are truck stops, they are often in places that historically were on main routes but that is now no longer the case because motorways or depots have moved.

It seems—from what I have picked up, this is what the industry believes—that the Government think this is just a commercial matter and the commercial side should just get on and build truck stops if there is such a demand for them. However, the developers that might be interested in building truck stops often say, “In all reality, it is often 10 years before the idea of truck stop produces a truck stop. We can't be bothered with it.”

My final point is on Operation Stack and the £250 million. I know there is pushback from some people in Kent who say that the lorry park is in the wrong place and that there will still be problems with congestion on the roads getting to and from the location. Time will tell on that one. I have a feeling that they are probably right to be concerned. I hope that what we take from this excellent debate, which the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent initiated, is that we need to start valuing our commercial drivers and give them the facilities they deserve. At a stroke, that would resolve all the problems and appalling situations that local residents have to put up with. They are not the only victims in this, however, and the Government have to do something to take this issue on board and not just leave it to the commercial sector to deal with.

2.52 pm

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) on securing this important debate and on all her work since being elected to this House in supporting the people of Kent who have suffered blight from congested roads, lorry parking and fly-parking.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) said that this issue should not just be left to the commercial sector. I agree, but I am pleased by the big step change we have seen in the past year, whereby the Government have recognised that lorry parking in Kent is a major strategic national issue. It affects the whole county and all the strategic national routes when there is a major cessation in services through the port of Dover and the channel tunnel to the continent and back. It causes severe congestion on a major national route.

There is an ongoing problem with fly-parking because of the sheer volume and number of lorries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent said, when lorries have reached the end of their permitted time as set out in their tachograph, they legally have to find somewhere to stop. If there are not proper facilities for them to stop, they will stop wherever they can. That is far too often in country lanes and lay-bys and on the roadside and verges, which makes a mess and creates misery for those who live with it day to day. The solution is the Government's decision, following strong representations by Members of Parliament from across the county, that there has to be a proper facility to provide overnight lorry parking on an ongoing basis and a permanent off-road solution to Operation Stack. I thank the Minister for the care and attention he has taken on the subject. I also thank the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones). He has discharged his ministerial duties with great care for and consideration of the problems of the people of Kent.

[Damian Collins]

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent rightly mentioned the problem at the Stop24 service station at junction 11 of the M20, where lorries seeking somewhere to park for the night are regularly turned away. The facility simply is not big enough. The figures given to me earlier this year by Shepway District Council showed that in October 2015, more than 1,200 lorries were turned away. In November, the figure was 1,600. In December, it was 1,700. It is a regular occurrence, and there simply are not enough spaces. To expand the services at Stop24 to allow for permanent overnight parking for 500 lorries is simply a case of meeting the need that is there.

I agree with what has been said: if we create the facilities, lorry drivers should be compelled to use them and not park up elsewhere in villages and on verges. The delivery of overnight parking facilities to prevent fly-parking is part of a much larger facility that will hold up to 4,000 lorries, meaning that it will be capable of taking the load of Operation Stack. The enforcement of phases 1 and 2 of Operation Stack requires the closure of the M20 between junctions 8 and 9 and junctions 10 and 11 to hold 4,000 lorries. Those lorries are simply queuing, waiting to make their journeys on through the channel tunnel and the port of Dover.

Last year, we lost more than 30 days with Operation Stack. The knock-on consequences for the county are considerable, because the coast bound lanes are closed. That puts amazing pressure on all the A roads. People simply cannot get around the county to do their ordinary business. A journey between Maidstone and Folkestone might take five hours by road when Operation Stack is at its peak. It is simply intolerable and cannot be allowed to continue. We know that volumes of freight traffic are likely to double over the next 10 years, meaning that the problem will get worse. Operation Stack is not just a question of migrant activity or strike action in Calais; it can be caused by any sort of disturbance that stops the flow, such as bad weather meaning that ships cannot cross the strait of Dover or a fire in the channel tunnel. All those things cause delays, and the more freight there is on the road, the more likely there will be delays and the more we will need alternative relief to Operation Stack.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South about the siting of the lorry park, which is required and absolutely essential. Substantial work was done by Highways England, Kent County Council and other stakeholders, including Kent police, to look for an alternative. Quite simply, if we do not want to shut the motorway, we have to put the lorries somewhere else. They need to be in a place where they can be quickly drawn on and off the motorway network and held securely, close to the channel tunnel and the port of Dover so that the queues can be got rid of and drawn down quickly once the congestion eases. One of the worst aspects of Operation Stack is that once it is fully enforced, it can take up to five days for things to clear, simply because of the volume of traffic and even if the disturbance that caused Stack has long since stopped. The lorry park has to be on a site close to the motorway.

The other important thing—so important in the design of the lorry park that the Government have proposed—is that it is totally integrated with the motorway network,

so that lorries can access the park and re-join the motorway without having to use other local roads and cause disturbance. The motorways and A roads should flow as they normally would, even when Operation Stack conditions are in place and lorries are using the lorry park.

An important part of the current consultation on the lorry park—I know the Minister is well aware of this and is speaking to my colleagues on Shepway District Council about it—is our concern that junction 11 of the M20 should be able to operate normally when Operation Stack is in place. Vehicles using the coast-bound carriageway should be able to exit the motorway at junction 11, even when the lorry park is in use and lorries are being drawn down from the lorry park to re-join the carriageway. Highways England has highlighted that there needs to be a proper traffic management system in place to enable that to take place safely. It is vital for my constituents that that is designed and in place by the time the lorry park becomes fully operational. That is a major concern for us, but I know that the Department has flagged up that it is working on a solution. No one thinks it is an insurmountable problem, so we want it to be addressed.

On the siting, the response to the initial consultation was absolutely clear. There were 1,300 individual responses, with a clear majority in favour of the creation of a lorry park, rather than continuing to use the motorways for Operation Stack. The respondents supported that solution, and it has my full support, too. It was also important to the people of Kent to recognise that the lorry park is a major piece of national infrastructure and so should be funded by the Exchequer and not by local authorities. We were therefore grateful that the former Chancellor committed the Government to spending £250 million to deal with the blight of Operation Stack.

I know that other colleagues from Kent wish to speak, but I want to underline the cost factor. Some have queried whether the lorry park is a good use of public money. The road haulage industry and others have estimated that the cost of Operation Stack to the UK economy is £250 million a day, so the cost to the British economy of one day of Stack is the cost of building the lorry park. It is a necessary facility that can be used to help manage fly-parking. It can relieve the county of the blight of Stack. I hope that the infrastructure gives us a better facility to manage other issues, including the regular build-up of traffic queuing to get into the port of Dover. Kent needed infrastructure to allow normal life to continue, and at last it will be delivered.

2.59 pm

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for securing this debate. I have had much correspondence on this issue with the Kent Association of Local Councils—I am sure my hon. Friend has as well—and it regularly fills up my email inbox. It is a struggle to know exactly how to solve it. The Stanford West development will be key to solving the problem of fly-parking, which is unfortunately blighting not just the immediate area around Dover and Folkestone, but the whole county. The attendance this afternoon of my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling) demonstrates that this is an issue that extends beyond Kent, across the country.

I want to put a few facts on the counter today. Some 88% of all HGV traffic passes through Kent going towards the Dover ferry port or Eurotunnel and 70% of that traffic passes down the M20 as the most logical high-speed route from the M25 and elsewhere to get there. We have 10,800 freight vehicles—5,400 each way—passing through Kent every 24 hours. As the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) noted very well, one of the reasons that Calais is not used is that, in the current environment, lorry drivers simply dare not park for long periods in Calais, as they may need protection from unwarranted and unwanted illegal migrants.

It is not just the primary routes that are suffering. Driving up here from my constituency on a regular basis, I have noticed areas particularly around Cobham. There is a particular on-off road around a petrol station, which is the main route back on to the dualled M2, and which is always chock-a-block with fly-parked lorries. The issue also affects minor roads. It is not uncommon to go anywhere in Kent and see lay-bys, meant for people to take a temporary stop or to dispose of rubbish from their cars, that have become overnight stops. Minor roads are also used. Traffic regulation orders have some value, but local authorities are often hamstrung by fairly limited powers and the difficulty of enforcing any penalty notices they issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent noted that the fines are so small that the cost of recovering them, using the SPARKS network and the powers under the Local Transport Act 2008, which allow local authorities to pursue foreign fines across borders, is often so prohibitive and aggravating that it is simpler to do nothing.

Amanda Milling: Picking up on the point about the nature of the areas where these lorries are parked, does my hon. Friend agree that it affects residents badly, such as those on Leathermill Lane and Love Lane in Rugeley, but it also affects businesses and other organisations in the locality, because they are parking on business parks as well?

Craig Mackinlay: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The problem is that, if a vehicle is properly insured and there is no traffic regulation order to prohibit the parking on, say, a housing estate, under the law the vehicle can park there. It comes down to the lack of facilities that we have. Because of tachograph requirements and driver hours, some drivers are forced to stop wherever they can. That enforces the argument for proper sites across the country to stop that happening.

The mess that is created down the last part of the Thanet Way has been mentioned. I know my right hon. Friend the Minister is familiar with that area. There are four or five lay-bys, which are used overnight. I have cause to stop there from time to time when driving with my dog, so that she can take an appropriate break. I pick up what comes out of my dog, but I sometimes wonder if there have been several inconsiderate dog owners. Sadly, that is not the case—it is human waste and filth, which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South ably described.

The way to solve the problem is a mixture of carrot and stick. Enforcement notices have a valid part to play. Figures from Kent police, which I think my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent already

raised, show that in the six-month period from December '15 to May '16, 1,354 lorries were moved on and 370 suffered a graduated fixed penalty notice. A penalty notice should be sufficient to prevent those drivers from fly-parking the next time, but, unfortunately, a degree of lunacy comes into play. The Minister might be interested in this point. I have been doing a lot of work in Sandwich to try to stop big lorries going into the town as a result of blindly using the free software on their phones that is designed for cars, not lorries. Thankfully, we now have a 7.5 tonnes traffic regulation order. When it came in, I asked the police what they were going to do to enforce it. There is new signage of course, but the big stick of fining can work when a fixed penalty notice is issued to a UK haulier, because we know where they are and they can be pursued easily through the British legal system. The problem is with foreign drivers, of which some 65% seem to be the ones responsible across Kent. There is just one handheld machine for taking a credit card across the whole of Kent police. I found that quite incredible. I could set up a shop tomorrow and get a credit card machine in, but Kent police only have one. I am taking that up with the police and crime commissioner.

Cost is the big issue. That £20, or whatever the cost is, is quite a lot of money to the driver or foreign driver and it is not surprising that they want to avoid that. Farthing Corner, one of the key stations on the M2, charges £20 per night—it is not surprising if drivers avoid that charge.

There is a big contrast here with our EU neighbours, who tend to do this better than we have. In France, they have the aires system of truck stops. In Hungary, a place that I am more familiar with—my wife is Hungarian—all main motorways have pull-in areas. They are not full service stations, rather they are off-the-motorway pull-in areas with toilet facilities, called *pihenőhely*—I will leave a note for *Hansard*. My first time in Hungary I thought it was a place; there seemed to be rather a lot of places with the same name—they are all over the place.

Drivers' hours are at the heart of this and until we provide proper facilities we are hamstrung on what we can do. Carrot and stick needs to come into play. The provision of areas, at reasonable cost if necessary, is the carrot. I do not know if there will be a cost associated with Stanford West for usual use; I would imagine there probably will be.

Damian Collins: The Stanford West site will have lorry parking charges for overnight parking but would be free for use for other means.

Craig Mackinlay: That may not solve the problem of overnight fly-parking, because people will want to park for free somewhere else. That is perhaps something we need to pursue.

Once facilities are available, we need the stick: a higher fine. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent raised that point. That stick should also be linked with Kent police getting more than one credit card machine—that might be useful. Also, local authorities should take the step to enforce. The cost to local authorities of cleaning up the human waste and rubbish in the lay-bys has not yet been quantified, but it must be substantial. It does little for the general quality of our road network.

[Craig Mackinlay]

Again, I thank my hon. Friend for securing this debate. This issue needs to be solved, because, no matter which part of the county we are in, Kent is very much at the frontline of the problem.

3.9 pm

Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab): I thank the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for securing this debate. From what colleagues have said, it seems that the problem of fly-parking does not only affect particular areas; my area is pretty badly affected, too. In my constituency I have the port of Liverpool, so colleagues can imagine the amount of traffic that goes along the A5036: about 40,000 movements a day. Not all of them are for the port, but about 10% or 15% are. There is a huge amount of traffic, and lorries make up a huge amount of that figure. We have the problem of fly-parking on that route and on surrounding roads. I do not think we can get to the point where we finesse this so much that we have a counsel of perfection of what we want to do, but we certainly have to have a clear, much more co-ordinated idea of what we can do to resolve the problem.

All the enforcement in the world will not make much difference unless, as hon. Members have said, we make provision for lorry parks. Even lorry parks will not necessarily be the solution for everyone. There may be different solutions for different areas, and Government policy should reflect the diversity across the country and address the impact that fly-parking has on particular areas. In reality, I do not know the effect that fly-parking is having in Kent any more than colleagues know what is happening in Merseyside, Bootle or Liverpool. However, we recognise that the problem exists and it needs to be dealt with.

On the grand issue of infrastructure, the Government need to recognise that lorry parks should be part of the transport infrastructure. They should not be something that somebody else provides, whether that be local authorities, hauliers or the Highways Agency, or Highways England as it is now known. There has to be a combined and co-ordinated effort by us all to try to find a solution to the problem—a solution that may be different in different areas. We have to recognise that across the piece. There is also, in the grand sense, the issue of thousands upon thousands of lorry movements up and down the country, and it is important to put into the mix the question of trying to move freight off roads and on to rail. We have a multi-modal transport system, and the ability to move freight from roads to rail may be part of the solution. I do not say it would be the whole solution, but a theme is beginning to develop. There is more than one way to skin a cat, and we have to recognise that.

In my area we have a consultation going on at the moment about upgrading the A5036 or having another road going through a country park. The cost ranges from £120 million to £300 million, depending on which solution is arrived at. To the best of my knowledge, although I am willing to stand corrected, as part of the consultation on that potential development, nobody has talked about a lorry park in that huge expenditure. I do not know where the lorry park might be. It is for others to try to determine the best fit and the best solution, but a lorry park should be considered.

We therefore have a consultation being undertaken about a very expensive road to a port that, thankfully, is expanding, but there is no really co-ordinated discussion about lorry access and where lorries may or may not park. If I may say so, this is a good opportunity for the Minister to put my plea into the mix of the consultation. I think that would go some way to helping to solve the problem—not tomorrow, not next year, but perhaps in five or 10 years' time, because in five or 10 years' time we could still be talking about this matter and going around the houses.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the issues that affect my area. Notwithstanding the points made in graphic detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello), it is important that we have everything on the table to get the matter going. Finally, I am really pleased that I had a very light lunch before I came here today.

3.15 pm

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Turner. On behalf of the shadow Transport team, I welcome the Minister to his place. In his reincarnation he brings a wealth of experience to the Department. I thank the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) for securing this debate and I pay tribute to her hard work highlighting the inconvenience that fly-parking by HGVs has caused her constituents and others across Kent. I also thank her for highlighting the wider concerns associated with the management and transportation of freight in and around Kent generally.

As we have heard, fly-parking, whereby heavy goods vehicles park in areas not intended for them, such as motorway hard shoulders, rural verges or local streets, is a significant problem both in Kent and across the country as a whole. It is a problem for residents, as we have heard, also for the drivers and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) so graphically illustrated, those who work in the recovery industry. Although fly-parking in Kent is closely linked with the implementation of Operation Stack and proximity to the port of Dover and the channel tunnel, as has already been fully explained by hon. Members, illegal parking by HGVs is a challenge nationwide. There have been shortcomings in the Government's handling of the road haulage sector as a whole. Of course, fly-parking affects not only Kent but ports generally, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) has pointed out.

I will recap the situation, although I will try not to repeat too many points that have already been well made by hon. Members. A study of national lorry parking published by the Department found that on-site lorry parking facilities in the country were unable to meet the demand for spaces. Kent County Council's 2012-16 action plan stated that problems associated with parking off-site, particularly when close to residential areas, included lorry-related crime; road safety; damage to roads, kerbs and verges; environmental health issues; littering; visual and noise intrusion; and reduced personal safety. The same action plan also cited evidence from the Department, which found that at peak times many on-site lorry parking facilities in Kent exceeded full capacity. For instance, it found that facilities in Maidstone

were at times 100% full, facilities at Gravesham and Ashford were 75% to 100% full, and facilities in the Medway Council area were 75% to 100% full.

Highways England suggested last year in its consultation on managing freight through Kent that there was a shortage of lorry parking spaces in the county. Indeed, while a number of commercially operated sites exist, they are often full, with lorries being turned away. As we have heard, lorry drivers rightly have to abide by strict rules as to how long they can drive between breaks, and the duration of those breaks, and if no formal parking is available, drivers stop where they can, inevitably leading to fly-parking.

The problem seems likely to intensify. Highways England reported last month that over recent decades the number of lorries crossing the English channel has increased sevenfold. It suggests that almost 90% of all UK roll-on/roll-off international freight goes through the strait of Dover, which means putting 11,000 lorries on Kent's roads every day. It is further estimated that by 2025 the number of lorries travelling through Kent each day could double, putting huge pressure on the road network.

As I have already suggested, it is difficult to discuss the problems associated with the inappropriate parking of HGVs in Kent without talking about Operation Stack. As we have heard, in the summer of 2015 Operation Stack was implemented on an unparalleled scale, which the hon. Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) detailed fully. It clearly caused severe disruption to communities in Kent, the local economy, and the road haulage sector because it was in place almost continuously between 23 June and 1 August 2015.

It has been suggested by some that the Government's response to the trials of that summer—the idea of building a lorry park the size of Disneyland California and larger than the Vatican City—could kill two birds with one stone, because it could keep freight moving irrespective of cross-channel disruption, and also circumvent fly-parking by providing additional on-site capacity for parking HGVs. Indeed, the Government's consultation on the location of the lorry park had the stated aim not only of

“seeking to solve the problems associated with the queuing which arises whenever there is a lack of capacity at the Port or Eurotunnel”, but also of asking

“whether a permanent lorry area could help address the issue of illegal and other inappropriate parking.”

In August, Highways England said it was exploring whether to use the planned Stanford West lorry park, which will have considerable capacity, to hold 3,600 lorries, provide overnight lorry parking, and stop lorries parking on roads not intended for their use. Building work on the site is due to start “as soon as possible”. I know that Kent Members have broadly welcomed the building of the facility, but it is worth pointing out that Stanford parish council has expressed concerns, as does the Kent branch of the Campaign for Rural England. That is hardly surprising, but the local communities that will be most closely affected should always have a full opportunity to be involved throughout the decision-making process.

Damian Collins: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that although Stanford parish council objected, the proposal has the support of the county and district councils, and overwhelming support from the people

who responded to the initial consultation. We are responding to what residents want, and are being directed by the responses to the initial consultation on the siting of the lorry park.

Daniel Zeichner: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's comments; as I have suggested, it is perhaps hardly surprising that local communities may express concerns in such processes. Whatever the consensus, the Select Committee on Transport has been more directly critical, and has questioned the wisdom of building a permanent lorry park for the considerable sum of a quarter of a billion pounds. It has suggested that so far the Government have proved neither that the benefits will outweigh the costs of construction, nor that the lorry park will ultimately help to keep the M20 open and traffic flowing. In the view of the Committee the decision is both hasty and disappointing, and has been made despite a lack of information and analysis. There has been little certainty about how the lorry park will be operated and the costs of doing so.

It is right that the Government should work to find an alternative to Operation Stack that will not bring Kent grinding to a halt and that will improve driver welfare. It is also welcome that direct access to the lorry park from the M20 will be provided, to avoid a detrimental impact on the local road network. Yet creating a huge lorry park in one location does not really address the wider problems that are manifest in the sector. It is also perhaps worth noting in passing that the cost of the lorry park is roughly equal to the entire annual cycling budget.

I fear that a new lorry park may have much less impact than hoped in terms of providing a solution to fly-parking by HGVs in Kent. The Transport Committee heard strong arguments that parking capacity to address fly-parking is needed across much of Kent, rather than concentrated in a single location. That, as has been mentioned, is because drivers are compelled to stop as and where they can when they have reached the limit on the number of hours they are legally allowed to drive. Furthermore, the Committee has pointed out that the provision of further paid-for parking capacity will not address the problem of those drivers who fly-park to save money, as the hon. Member for South Thanet (Craig Mackinlay) pointed out to us. In fact Kent County Council also suggests that the causes of fly-parking are

“excess demand, the cost of using truckstops and sometimes unclear signing.”

We really need more smaller, cost-effective parking facilities in several locations across Kent, as well as across the entire country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman), who chairs the Transport Committee, said:

“Before a spade is put in the ground, the government must show it has given proper consideration to all possible alternatives.”

Damian Collins: With respect to the Committee, people have been looking at this issue for decades, and a huge amount of work has been done. The Transport Committee may have given itself a few weeks to look at it, but the consultation is very detailed and the result of many years' work. Any solution will also pose questions, but the reason for the lorry park's size, and for where it is sited, is that it is big enough to hold Operation Stack

[Damian Collins]

phases 1 and 2, which is what we have 95% of the time. It is where the police and Highways England say it needs to go, which means that it is integrated into the motorway network and is as close as possible to the channel tunnel and the port of Dover.

Daniel Zeichner: The hon. Gentleman makes his points forcefully, but I am merely pointing out the issues raised by the Transport Committee, which I think are certainly worth considering. It has proposed a range of alternatives that should at least be considered, including upgrading the M20 and the A2/M2, increasing the capacity of cross-Channel services or, crucially, building a network of smaller lorry parks. Indeed, one could say that what is needed is a comprehensive plan to deal with the issues facing the freight industry, as comments by my hon. Friends have already suggested. Many of us would like a modal shift to rail, in particular, to decrease congestion and take the pressure off our roads, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle pointed out. A single freight train can, after all, take up to 80 HGVs off the roads, and rail freight produces 76% less carbon dioxide per tonne moved than road freight. Of course, as we have also heard, the road haulage industry has a driver recruitment crisis. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South made his points about that very well. With the average age of an HGV driver now around 56, the Government desperately need to take steps to recruit new drivers to the profession. Making it more attractive must be one of the answers.

More truck stops and better parking facilities would not only tackle fly-parking and improve the lives of local residents, but would improve the lot of hard-pressed lorry drivers and might make it easier to recruit as well. I congratulate the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent on obtaining the debate, and hope she will join us in pressing the Minister and the Department for the improvements that we all want.

3.26 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John Hayes): It is a delight to speak in this debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) on securing it. It is understandable that she has done so, and I well understand the problems that she and other hon. Members have highlighted. I know many hauliers, not least because road haulage is an important part of the economy of my constituency; it is vital to our whole economy as well. The high concentration of heavy goods vehicles passing through Kent is a subject of particular concern, however, in view of the deleterious effects outlined by a number of the contributors to this short debate. It is a matter on which I have cogitated as Roads Minister, in both my previous and current incarnations in the Department. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) said, I am visiting Kent tomorrow to look at exactly the matters in question, to meet councillors, and to look at the proposed site of the park, which has been mentioned a number of times.

As I said, HGVs are vital to the economy. They carry what we need to where we need it, and take what we make, grow and fashion to those elsewhere who want to

buy it. Nevertheless, the presence of heavy goods vehicles on local roads and public highways can present a challenge and cause difficulties of the kind that have been outlined. In addition, parking is often at a premium. Those who park should of course keep in mind the effect on their neighbours of what they do. Careful and lawful parking is never more important than when the vehicle is a lorry. We hear regularly from the haulage industry that there is a shortage of affordable, good-quality facilities for lorries and their drivers. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet (Craig Mackinlay) said—incidentally, I do indeed know the Thanet Way extremely well, and was in Broadstairs on holiday again this summer—there is a question of incentive, or carrot, and penalty, or stick, in dealing with the problem. I shall try to deal with both carrots and sticks in my short and pithy but none the less impressive speech.

The last national survey, in 2011, suggested that facilities on or near the strategic road network were underutilised, on average, across England, but not in Kent, where there are particular problems, which local stakeholders have reported repeatedly.

Robert Flello: It is good to see the right hon. Gentleman return to the Department. He referred to the study on underutilisation, but the big problem is that a lot of the stops are in the wrong place. It is not surprising that they are underutilised outside Kent, because they are not where the lorry drivers want them to be.

Mr Hayes: I am inclined to agree with that, which is why I want to do a new piece of work on it. I have decided today that, as a result of this debate, we will look at the issue afresh. We need to do a new study that takes account of the current circumstances and the distribution of supply and demand, as the hon. Gentleman says. I send a message to Members in this Chamber and to my officials, whom I like constantly to surprise, that we will, as a result of this debate, have a fresh look at the provision and location of parking space. The hon. Gentleman is right.

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): I do not wish to try your patience, Mr Turner, so I will endeavour to be as brief as I can.

It is vital that we, as Kent Members, make the point that if the taxpayer is to get value for money, the lorry park proposed for Stanford West needs to be a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year facility, not just an Operation Stack facility. That will take a considerable amount of pressure off the M20 road system, but it will not help the M2, the A2 or the Thanet Way, which my right hon. Friend the Minister knows very well.

Given that we cannot waste Manston airport as an Operation Stack overspill for much longer—we need it back as an operational airport as quickly as we can—will my right hon. Friend the Minister undertake to look very carefully at Brenley Corner when that bit of the road system is sorted out properly? There is an opportunity there to create some lorry parking. When the gap in the A2 between Canterbury and Dover is dealt with, can we also look very seriously at parking facilities there? It really is time that we learned one or two lessons from the French.

Mr Hayes: It is right that we look at this issue more widely, and not simply at the provision of this additional facility. We must look both at the capacity challenges on the roads to and from Dover and, as my hon. Friend says—he has comprehensive knowledge of the locality—at additional facilities that could be put in place above and beyond the advantages we will get from the large new park. I will talk a bit more about that in a moment. I take my hon. Friend's point. We should consider these things strategically, as a number of hon. Members, not least the hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd), have suggested, rather than on a piecemeal basis. My hon. Friend has made his point powerfully, and I will ensure that it is built into our thinking.

The clearer picture that I seek through that fresh strategic work will be conducted with Transport Focus, to understand better the current provision and road users' expectations. As well as looking at the impact of Operation Stack, we will take account of projections of the growing use of the road network in Kent and elsewhere—this is not just an issue for Kent, as a number of hon. Members emphasised, including my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling).

Operation Stack is only ever used as a last resort, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe said, that last resort might be brought about by a variety of causes. Its growing use at a particular period of time is illustrative of precisely that.

Damian Collins: My right hon. Friend the Minister is absolutely right that it is used only when necessary, but the trouble is that there is no alternative to its use. If the port or the channel tunnel is not operational, at the moment there is no alternative other than parking the lorries on the motorway. That is the nub of the problem, which is why we require a different solution, and we are glad that the Government have found the resources and strategy to implement it.

Mr Hayes: Yes, and when Operation Stack is used it demonstrates just how significant the effect of the disruption on the M20 can be on businesses, local people and hauliers themselves. That is why I am determined to deliver an alternative solution. As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent said, we have committed £250 million for the lorry area, and now we are looking to make that a reality. I take the shadow Minister's point that that needs to be done carefully and on a considered basis. We must not rush into this. We need to take into account all cost-effectiveness measures. This will be a significant project, so it has to be done properly and cautiously. That is an argument not for delay but for getting it right. I am sure all hon. Members in this Chamber and beyond want that to be the approach adopted by a responsible Government.

Helen Whately rose—

Mr Hayes: I can see that my hon. Friend wants to add further value to these considerations.

Helen Whately: I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his thoughtful and full response. I want to emphasise the point about the Operation Stack lorry park, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) is incredibly knowledgeable; he has done a huge amount of work

on it. As he said a moment ago, it has been talked about for at least a decade, yet nothing has happened. Although it should not be rushed—it is a substantial investment—the desire to get absolutely everything right needs to be balanced against the need to ensure that we do not have another summer with Kent at a standstill, with all the awful knock-on effects. Can we manage doing it carefully alongside getting on with it?

Mr Hayes: My rich experience of Government, to which the shadow Minister so generously alluded in his welcome, has taught me that there is always a plausible argument for doing little and a pretty convincing one for doing nothing. I am not inclined to fall foul of either of those approaches, but it is important that we do this in a way that takes local stakeholders with us, takes local authorities' views into account, engages the local community, is satisfactory for hauliers and becomes an attractive option for them as well as a necessary one when stacking occurs. A number of hon. Members said that the facility needs to be available above and beyond Operation Stack, for the very reason that led my hon. Friend to bring the debate to the Chamber today.

Damian Collins: The Minister is being very generous in giving way. I thank him for making that point. Although I and my county colleagues regard the creation of this facility as vital, we need to take into account the needs of a number of residents who live close to the site and have very special needs. Special consideration must be given to the needs of the residents and businesses. I know that the Department has already flagged up that issue and is looking at it in detail, and I am glad that the Minister has made that point.

Mr Hayes: That is one of the reasons why I am going to Kent tomorrow. My hon. Friend is right that we need to take fully into account the specific concerns in the locality. I will ask Highways England to work closely with residents and local stakeholders to ensure that the design of the new lorry area minimises the social and environmental impact while addressing this issue for users of the road network. Highways England is also exploring the use of the lorry park for the overnight parking requested by my hon. Friends. We are seeking feedback through the consultation, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe and others know, is going on presently, on how that can and should work.

This is not just about Operation Stack and the new facility. It is a national problem that requires the Government, local authorities and industry to work together. Overnight parking of HGVs on the highway and in various business parks has been a significant and growing problem for a considerable time, and the wider effects are various. There is a problem with noise, nuisance, litter, safety and environmental damage, as a number of hon. Members described. Dogs were brought into the equation by my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet, who said that the solution requires a carrot and a stick. I thought it should be a bone and a stick—the stick to throw and the bone to feed.

Nevertheless, a variety of challenges arises from that important concern. To that end, I want to have ongoing discussions with motorway service area and lorry park operators and with the freight industry. I want to see

[Mr John Hayes]

what can be done nationally to improve the availability of quality, safe and secure parking areas. In Kent, Members, councillors and others will play their part.

I am aware of illegal parking by HGVs on the hard shoulder of motorways and local roads in Kent. On the motorways, last winter, in a concerted effort by Highways England and Kent police called Operation Kindle, Highways England traffic officers patrolled key locations systematically and advised drivers of illegally parked vehicles to move on. If they did not do so, the traffic officers informed the police. Fixed penalty notices were issued—if drivers refused to pay, their vehicles were moved to a secure location where they were immobilised until the fines were paid. Graduated fixed penalty notices allowed officers to issue cumulative fines measured against the number of offences and their severity. I understand that operation to have been successful in clearing the targeted areas. For example, on the night of 9 December last year, the police moved on 153 illegally parked vehicles on the M20 and M2, and more than 50 drivers were fined.

Many such vehicles are foreign-owned, which causes a particular problem, as changing the law to allow enforcement of tickets given to foreign-registered vehicles would require an international treaty. When I was told that by my Department, I said that I would quite like to sign an international treaty—it sounds so grand and important, doesn't it? If that is what we need, that is what we will do, make no mistake. The important thing is to solve the problem, not to focus continually on the obstacles to doing so.

Robert Ffello: I thank the Minister for giving way. He is being generous with his time.

Forgive me if I have the figures slightly incorrect, but I understand from the Department's own statistics that in the past two years alone there has been a 50% increase in the amount of freight carried by overseas-registered vehicles, so the issue will grow and grow. The sooner those treaties are on his desk and his pen is in his hand the better—that sounds like a very good move.

Mr Hayes: The treaty is not on my desk yet—I would not want to deceive the hon. Gentleman or anyone else. Certainly, however, we need to find the solution to the problem of foreign-owned or foreign-driven vehicles. Even if we get the rest right, if we do not solve that problem I suspect we will have only a partial success. Whether any solution involves clamping or seizing those foreign-owned vehicles I do not yet know, but I will certainly ask for further advice on what might be done to tackle that particular issue, which he is right to emphasise again.

Let me sum up and move to my exciting peroration. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent asked for many things. She focused her attention on the possible benefits of any solution for Operation Stack, but she also stressed that that was not the whole story. She talked about needing more space more generally in Kent—my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet emphasised that point—and we will certainly consider that. She asked me to be more specific about the timing of the provision of a new lorry park, and I will endeavour to do that. I want to get this right, and she is right that if

we are to do it, we need to set out a timetable for it, so I understand the anxiety that we should do so. She and others have made that point well. She talked about enforcement and fines, which I will come on to in a moment, and about foreign vehicles, which we have heard about, and she also called for a meeting.

Let me tell the House what I think we should do. I take the view that debates in Westminster Hall and elsewhere in this place must deliver outcomes, rather than simply allow Ministers to repeat what they have already thought or, more especially, been told. This is what we are going to do: I will look at whether we can improve enforcement, if necessary through a change in the law. If we have to put in place new measures to allow enforcement, we will look at doing so. I will seek further advice on that, and will bring further information to the House accordingly.

I am happy to look at new long-term solutions for overnight parking, as I described in my response to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South. We also need more information—reasonably quickly, actually, as we cannot delay further—because relying on a survey from some time ago is not good enough. I am happy, too, to approach hauliers' groups directly about the advice they give to drivers. My hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet made a point about sat-nav, which, personally I do not use, of course, but I understand others do. It can often divert people, unhappily, to routes that are not only unhelpful but injurious to the interests of local communities. We need to work with hauliers on that, and I am happy to meet the Road Haulage Association to talk through what advice it might provide to drivers about parking. I will do so as a result of this debate.

I want to do more on litter. Litter came up in the debate, but I did not raise it with my officials earlier, so this is another delightful surprise for them. I want to do a lot more about litter. I began the fight when I was previously in the Department, but I was moved on to the Home Office and was not able to complete the work. We need to do a lot more about litter in areas such as lay-bys, but also more widely on our road network.

At root, of course, the problem is one of how people treat litter. If they throw things out of car windows, it is pretty hard for Highways England or any local authority to cope. None the less, we can do more about the provision and emptying of bins and the clearing of lay-bys. Also as a result of this afternoon's debate—I have listened carefully to what people have said—I will ask Highways England to look again at a new initiative on the littering of our roads and, in particular, areas where people stop or park.

I want to look at motorway service areas. A point made forcefully by a number of hon. Members was that the alternatives to parking in lay-bys are not sufficiently attractive. That is sometimes to do with the security of those areas. Someone who parks overnight in a heavy goods vehicle will be concerned about who might get access to that vehicle. The provision of adequate security at the alternative sites is an important element of the solution. I want to look at motorway service areas, the kind of alternative that they are offering, the security of that alternative, its attractiveness and, by the way, its cost. As a number of hon. Members argued, if something is too costly, drivers will avoid it. We need to look at whether the better offer, as it were, is competitive and attractive.

Sir Roger Gale: Briefly on that point, when my good friend Robert Key, the former Member of Parliament for Salisbury, was Roads Minister—when God was a boy, that was how long ago it was—I put it to him that the French road system has regular aires de repos. I was told by Robert that the British road system could not accommodate such areas because land was too scarce and journey distances too short. We can live with that no longer, and we have to get to grips with the situation. We absolutely have to provide off-road, properly landscaped areas, with lavatory facilities, and with parking not only for domestic cars but, significantly, for lorries. It is time we did that.

Mr Hayes: I agree. My hon. Friend is immensely widely travelled, which is why he is so well informed. I tend to limit my own travel to the east of England, which means that I am not as well informed, and therefore rely on advice that I receive from him and others. I will say, however, that part of this business of looking closely at the provision of parking for HGVs is to consider more widely—as he has just described—the sort of roadside services that we provide generally. I am not convinced that the roadside services that we provide in this country are generally good enough. Of course there are exceptions, and I recognise them, but again as a result of today's debate, I may ask for some further work to be done on the quality of roadside services more generally—the problem we are discussing is a part of that issue. My hon. Friend makes a powerful point, based on his wide travel and deep understanding of all such matters, that encourages me to do that. I have already mentioned foreign drivers, and that is in response to my study and the argument that has been made by a number of colleagues.

Finally—I hope that this will excite my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent and others—I am more than happy to agree to a meeting, but I do not think that we should have just a small and insignificant meeting, not that any meeting with me is insignificant. We should have a round-table meeting with the people I have described. We need the hauliers; we need the providers of private lorry parks; we need the motorway service stations; we need the local councillors; and we

need colleagues—and the meeting needs to be bipartisan. I am very happy to agree now to hold that kind of round-table meeting, where we can thrash out the range of important issues that have been raised in the debate.

Returning to where I started, I strongly support the principle and practice of moving goods by road. That is an important part of what we do as a country—let us be clear about that—but it needs to be done in an ordered way. Edmund Burke said:

“Good order is the foundation of all good things.”

My friend Evi Williamson, with whom I was discussing this very issue yesterday, affirmed just that idea in anticipation and preparation for the debate. The ordered use of our roads and ordered parking are beneficial to those who park and all those whom they affect. That is precisely why my hon. Friend has brought forward this debate in her constituents' interests, championing their wellbeing as she always does. She can be assured that my Department and this Minister will respond in the same spirit. I thank her again for giving me the chance to give those particular and specific commitments in response to this important and valuable debate.

Mr Andrew Turner (in the Chair): Helen Whately may wish to sum up.

3.52 pm

Helen Whately: Thank you very much, Mr Turner; I will do so briefly. I thank colleagues from Kent and elsewhere for their helpful contributions and the knowledge that they have brought to the debate from the perspective of residents, drivers and road hauliers, which has made this conversation valuable. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his comprehensive response and the list of actions that he will take, which makes me feel that this conversation has been worthwhile. I look forward very much to following up with him in due course on his progress.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered fly-parking by HGVs in Kent.

3.53 pm

Sitting suspended.

Enderby Wharf Development

[MRS ANNE MAIN *in the Chair*]

3.56 pm

Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Enderby Wharf development in Greenwich.

It is a pleasure to see you presiding, Mrs Main. I am pleased to see the Minister in his place; as the Minister for Housing and Planning and the Minister for London, he is the perfect person to respond on behalf of the Government. I am sure that he will have been briefed, and I hope that he can assist us. It is no surprise to see my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook), who has worked hard on this issue.

I first raised concerns about the Enderby Wharf development in 2014, when the matter was brought to my attention by my constituent Ralph Hardwick, who was subsequently joined by Howard Wynne, Martin Young and many others. Although this issue is in one sense complex, it is essentially simple: it is about air quality. As the Minister will know, there is a lot of evidence of the poor air quality in London. Evidence reported by the *Evening Standard* and others demonstrates that EU and UK Government clean air targets have been breached. There is clear evidence of the impact of poor air quality on human health. It adds significantly to the number of premature deaths and impairs our children's healthy development.

Those data are not in dispute. We know that we have poor air quality and we know about its negative impact on our health, so why on earth are we allowing additional emissions to be pumped into our atmosphere in the centre of our great city, prospectively 24 hours a day, 155 days a year, by some of the biggest diesel engines ever seen on the Thames? Not only that, but why are we doing that when there is a simple, affordable and—most importantly—clean alternative already being used by other European cities and international ports? Indeed, it is required by many.

We are talking about cruise ships being moored on the Thames between Greenwich and Tower Hamlets. Let me be clear: I support the building of the terminal. Tourism is very important in London and we need the homes. I support more use of the Thames for business, commuting and tourism, since that is still cleaner and more efficient than other modes of transport, such as road transport. As a former shipping Minister and shadow shipping Minister, I also support the development as well as shipping generally, but why require these visiting vessels to run their diesel engines for the duration of their stay in London when a shore-to-ship energy source could power the ships more efficiently and more cleanly? Why not? This is where it gets complicated.

That is not required because there are no rules, regulations or laws obliging ships to connect to the grid. I have been raising this matter since 2014, when I wrote to the shipping Minister at the Department for Transport, but apparently it is not a transport issue. I wrote to the Planning Minister, the Minister's predecessor, at the Department for Communities and Local Government, but apparently it is not a planning matter—certainly

not for the Government. I wrote to the air quality Minister at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but it is not singly an air quality issue, except that it is, it is and it is—it is all three. That is the problem: nobody has sole responsibility for this issue.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is not—or was not—empowered to make it a planning requirement. It could have made it one, but I understand that it was advised against that and it was worried about legal challenge because it would have had no legal authority to require the developers to connect to the grid and use a shore-to-ship power supply. Therefore, although it cannot be held wholly responsible, it is the start of the problem.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has no locus because the development is on the south side of the Thames, even though Tower Hamlets residents—my constituents—will be primarily affected. The Port of London Authority has no locus for land-based developments. The Greater London Authority cannot overturn the decision of the Royal Borough of Greenwich because it is a local planning matter. I understand that the former Mayor of London reluctantly approved the scheme because he could not challenge it and although the new Mayor of London, our former right hon. colleague, is taking a keen interest in addressing poor air quality, there is no power to overturn the decision of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich who comprise the East Greenwich Residents Association and others have tried legal challenges, but so far there has been no success there, either. Therefore it is down to the developers, who could do the honourable thing and build a power source into their new development and still show a healthy profit, but they do not have to do that and, if that is not a requirement, why should they do that? Why should they do it? Because it is the right thing to do. The amount of money they would have to spend on that compared with the profit to be made off the site is negligible. I will come back to the developers later.

After I went through all the other Departments and having submitted a number of parliamentary questions and raised the matter in the Chamber, in Westminster Hall and in a variety of debates, the previous Minister of State responsible for air quality at DEFRA, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart), before he was reshuffled, had promised to bring all the players together around the table to see if a voluntary deal could be agreed. However, he is in a new position and we, as Members of Parliament, local residents and campaigners, are almost back at the starting gate. As I explained informally to the Minister just before the debate started, it almost feels as if we are starting over again. We have had two years of campaigning on this, so I hope it will not take us two years to reach what I hope would be a successful conclusion. My question to the new Minister is: will he convene the meeting that was proposed and promised by the previous Minister at DEFRA, with his air quality ministerial colleague at DEFRA or off his own bat, because he outranks her, to get together with the developers, the Royal Borough of Greenwich, my hon. Friend and I to see if there is a way forward? Will he also look at the aspect of the planning regime and bring forward proposals to close the gap that exists not just for London but for other ports

around the country? Especially with Brexit having been approved, we do not need European permission to introduce new regulations—even though other European ports in countries that are members of the Union do have such regulations while we do not. Why are we second class citizens when we could improve the situation for residents of our great ports and great cities?

The Minister may well be aware that the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently held an inquiry into air quality. It looked specifically at this issue.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con) *indicated assent*.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I can see that the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary is nodding. She and I are on the Committee and she will remember the exchanges with the air quality Minister. We looked specifically at this issue. Our report is about to be published—in fact, I am surprised to see her here because the report is being discussed right now in the Select Committee. We should both be there, but obviously we are here for this debate.

I am not aware of the final recommendations, nor the Government's response because that is being discussed, but I hope that the Minister will look closely at that report when it is published this weekend. I would be happy to meet him to examine that aspect of the report, because I am pretty confident that the matter will be covered, that there will be recommendations and that there will be a Government response, which may move this matter on.

In terms of the developers, Barratt, I checked its website this morning, which advertises properties at Enderby. There are some lovely graphics that advertise flats from £425,000, which I suspect is a one-bedroom version, to £785,000, which I suspect is for the three-bedroom versions. It says that residents will be the “envy of south London”, with views of Canary Wharf and the City. I was curious about why the balconies of the flats are enclosed in glass. Every other development that has taken place in east London that has balconies has left them open to the air. Given that I have been here 19 years, I am a cynical person. Perhaps it is because the developers do not want diesel fumes from the cruise ships coming into the brand-new flats that they are selling for £700,000-plus. As I said, that is my cynical interpretation—that may very well not be the case.

I have to say to Barratt that I expected more from it, being one of our premier building corporations. The development should be an even better showcase, not a cheaper, second-best, dirtier option. It would not surprise me in the slightest if the matter has been raised internally. These days, shareholders take a much greater interest in environmental responsibility and community responsibility and I hope that Barratt might be prepared to engage with us in respect of what more it can do to improve what we know will be a very difficult situation.

As I described at the start, this is a simple matter of air quality and trying to improve that which we have in London by not adding to the emissions already present owing to an absence of regulation. We have DCLG, DEFRA, DFT—the Department of Health will be picking up the pieces—RBG, LBTH, PLA, GLA and

the Mayor of London, and no one is able to sort this out to the satisfaction of the residents. We all know that transport contributes about 20% to 25% of emissions and shipping is a fraction of that total, but, for those living on top of the new cruise terminal, that will be a significant contributor to poorer air quality as well as that of their community, east London and London generally.

Something needs to be done. We need a champion in Government. We almost had one, but he has been reshuffled. I say to the Minister: there is a vacancy, sir. He could fill that job and be the saviour who makes sure that air quality in London does not deteriorate any further. I hope he will think seriously about this issue, be that champion, engage with my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich and me, the Royal Borough of Greenwich and the developers and try to ensure that the situation not only does not deteriorate any further but improves and gives a lead to ports and cities around the rest of the UK to ensure that no one else finds themselves in a similar situation.

4.8 pm

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): Thank you for allowing me to catch your eye, Mrs Main. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. As my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) said, this is an extremely complex and contentious matter and we have only a short time for the debate, so my remarks will be brief. I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate, which is of the utmost importance to our respective constituents.

Very few of my constituents are implacably opposed to the siting of a new cruise liner terminal at Enderby Wharf. Indeed, most recognise that the new terminal has the potential to make a positive contribution to Greenwich in terms of boosting tourism, creating jobs and supporting local businesses. What they will not accept—they are right not to do so—is those benefits coming at the expense of local amenities and air quality. Air quality is not a frivolous concern: the toxic and illegal levels of air pollution across our country and in our capital are an invisible hazard that contributes to the ill health and premature deaths of tens of thousands of people each year. It is nothing short of a public health crisis and it is one that requires a response commensurate with the harm it is causing. We know that shipping emissions in the form of nitrogen oxide and dioxide, as well as sulphur, are a major source of that pollution. Indeed, if things are left as they are, shipping will be the biggest single emitter of air pollution in Europe by 2020.

In recent years, a range of technical measures to reduce harmful emissions from ships have been introduced—the addition of scrubbers and the adoption of cleaner fuels to name but two—but none is a panacea. For example, low-sulphur fuel reduces sulphur dioxide levels and some particulate matter but does not remove all harmful toxins. Given the potential health implications of constructing a cruise liner terminal that would berth vessels emitting hazardous toxins into the air in the vicinity of a high-density residential area that is already an air pollution hotspot, it is little surprise that local residents and the East Greenwich Residents Association have organised to oppose it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse said,

[Matthew Pennycook]

what makes many of them particularly angry is that when it comes to this unique scheme, there is an obvious solution already available: ship-to-shore power, or “cold ironing”.

Before planning authorisation, the developers and their consultants provided the Royal Borough of Greenwich’s planning board with an assessment that asserted that cold ironing was not feasible in this instance for three reasons. First, they argued that very few cruise ships worldwide have the ability to link up to shore-based power. Secondly, they argued that ship electrical requirements differed from those supplied by the UK national grid, meaning that an on-shore power supply would be an extremely complex task to undertake in this instance. Thirdly, they asserted that the costs associated with providing such facilities could be prohibitive to both the provider and user.

The independent consultants tasked by the council to look over the assessment accepted each of those arguments. However, I remain unconvinced that each has been properly investigated. It may be that only a small proportion of cruise ships worldwide are currently equipped with the necessary technology, but most operators are fully aware that shore-to-ship power is the future, that a growing number of ports in north America, Asia and Europe are investing in it, and that they will have to adapt at some point in the future. The electricity grid and on-board ship systems do use different frequencies, but the technology exists to render them compatible.

What is disappointing in the case of the Enderby Wharf terminal is that the developers have made seemingly little effort to explore the range of grid connections that might have been available through the various distribution network operators that serve the area. There are upfront capital costs to install shore-to-ship power infrastructure, but there are good reasons to question whether such costs are necessarily prohibitive over the long run. Indeed, several studies suggest that over time there are significant savings to be made for cruise lines in terms of fuel not expended while stationary in port, which could easily, with an agreement, be shared between the terminal operator and the cruise lines.

What is required in the case of Enderby Wharf is a serious examination of the feasibility and benefits of installing shore-to-ship power—not just today but in terms of the cost of avoiding the expense of retrofitting the terminal in the years ahead—and, more importantly, a genuine willingness on the part of those involved to approach the issue with an open mind. I hope the Minister will give us his thoughts on how that process can be initiated. If, instead, the developers insist on ploughing ahead with the scheme as currently proposed, they will do so in the face of widespread hostility from the local community and continuing negative coverage before a single shovel has even been put in the ground.

4.13 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Gavin Barwell):

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Mrs Main. I congratulate the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) on securing the debate and the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook) for his contribution.

They both vividly described their constituents’ concerns about this particular development and were both powerful advocates for the communities they represent.

I will start by addressing one of the points that the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse made at the outset, which is that this is a complicated issue because it engages the policy of a number of different Departments. I am determined to do my best to speak not just on behalf of my own Department, but for the Government as a whole. When I was a constituency MP, one of the most frustrating things was receiving piecemeal responses from different bits of the Government on a complex issue, so I will do my best to respond to all the issues that he so forcefully raised.

If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will start with the issue that I am responsible for—the planning history in relation to the site. He made one point particularly powerfully: that the planning system has a difficult job to do, because it has to balance competing interests. He was commendably honest in saying that there are a lot of good things for London about the development, such as the contribution it will make to our tourism and the new housing units that will be built, even though they may be more expensive than the three of us would wish to see given the needs of Londoners and their ability to afford them.

By way of background, I point out that planning permission for a new docking jetty for cruise ships, plus a hotel, residential units, a skills academy and other infrastructure, was originally applied for in November 2010 and was granted by the Royal Borough of Greenwich in March 2012. As part of that planning application, planning obligations of about £400,000 towards the monitoring of emissions and improving air quality in the immediate vicinity were agreed. My Department did not receive any requests for the Government to call in the original planning application.

A further application was submitted last year to revise the terminal element of the development and other features, including by replacing the hotel with two residential towers. The 2015 proposal was subject to an environmental impact assessment, which identified no significant impact on local receptors. Though it was technically outside the scope of the application, because the principle of the jetty had already been agreed to in the original application, my understanding is that the Royal Borough of Greenwich commissioned consultants to undertake a detailed air quality assessment. The results of that assessment showed that vehicle emissions would not lead to any exceedances of the relevant air quality objectives for all pollutants, with the exception of short term nitrogen dioxide concentrations, which I think we would all agree are still a very serious issue. Those concentrations were calculated using the worst case scenario, and the results showed that it was highly unlikely that they would combine to result in exceedances of the directives. Interestingly, there was also no objection from the Environment Agency in relation to the application.

A number of residents in the constituencies of the hon. Members for Poplar and Limehouse and for Greenwich and Woolwich have recently campaigned vigorously against the development on air quality grounds, as has been explained, and asked for the 2015 application to be called in. I think the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse also wrote to the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells

(Greg Clark), requesting that. He considered those requests, having regard to the national call-in policy thresholds that we set to determine when applications should be called in, and decided not to call in the application in this case. The Government are committed to giving councils and communities more power to make decisions on planning themselves and believe that, wherever possible, those decisions should be made locally.

As the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse said, a resident then took the case to judicial review, on the grounds that Greenwich council had failed to require, or take into account the need for, an assessment of the total cumulative effect on air quality, including the effects of ship emissions. The High Court held that Greenwich council had considered the air quality issues in line with the relevant planning policy and guidance, and had made no error in law in its decision.

On air quality as whole, as a Londoner I completely understand the strength of the concerns that local residents have expressed and that the two hon. Gentlemen have articulated in this debate, including the cumulative impact on local air quality. It is worth remembering that, since December 1997, each council in the UK has had to carry out a review and assessment of air quality in its area. If a local authority finds places where the objectives are not likely to be achieved, it must declare what is called an air quality management area. It is an indication of the scale of the issue that we face in London that the entire borough of Greenwich is designated as an air quality management area. Anyone listening to the debate will understand why both residents and their representatives have particularly strong concerns about the issue.

The planning policies and guidance issued by the Government include strong protections to safeguard people from unacceptable risks from air pollution, and new regulations on sulphur emissions from ships have also recently come into effect. The national policy statement for ports is clear that decision makers—in this case, the Royal Borough of Greenwich—

“should generally give air quality considerations substantial weight where a project would lead to deterioration in air quality in an area, or leads to a new area, where the air quality breaches any national air quality limits.”

The national planning policy framework, for which my Department is responsible, explains that those national policy statements are relevant to local authority planning decisions.

We have set out in the national planning policy framework that planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its particular location and that the effects, including the cumulative effects, on the existing background levels of pollution should be taken into account. It also sets out that planning policies should

“sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas”—

as I said, the whole Borough of Greenwich is an air quality management area—

“and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan.”

There is strong evidence that national planning policy gives significant scope for the consideration of those issues in the determination of planning applications.

I turn to shore-to-ship electrical provision, which both hon. Gentlemen mentioned. The national policy statement for ports—which, for clarity, is a Department for Transport lead, although I am not trying to pass the buck at all—sets out that all proposals should either include “reasonable advance provisions” to allow the possibility of future provision of shoreside fixed electrical power infrastructure or should

“give reasons as to why it would not be economically and environmentally worthwhile to make such provision.”

We have made clear that national policy statements form part of the overall framework of national planning policy, so that statement would have been a material consideration in decisions on the planning application. Ultimately, however, it is a matter for individual local authorities—in this case, the Royal Borough of Greenwich—to consider what conditions should apply to a planning application to make the development in question acceptable in planning terms before consent is given.

The hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich set out with commendable clarity the three tests that have been applied in this case, and the fact that Greenwich Council—or its advisers, it sounded like—had accepted the three arguments put forward. He also laid out why he remains unconvinced on those three points, which we might wish to return to outside this debate.

The Government take air pollution very seriously and are committed to improving the UK’s air quality, reducing health impacts and fulfilling our legal obligations. Not only this Government but the Labour Government who preceded us have improved air quality significantly over recent decades. Since 1970, sulphur dioxide emissions have decreased by 96%, particulate matter by 83% and nitrogen oxides by 61%. None of those figures, however, mean that the situation faced by many Londoners, and indeed people in other parts of the country, is satisfactory. There is clearly further progress to be made, and I entirely understand the concerns raised by the two hon. Gentlemen today and by their residents and constituents.

I understand that colleagues in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Transport who lead on air quality and shipping and maritime policy respectively will be examining the issue of shipping emissions as part of the UK’s national emissions ceiling directive implementation plan. Shore-to-ship electricity is one feature that might control emissions. Clearly, we should consider all technologies and all possible regulatory levers.

We have made sure that local councils have the tools they need to ensure that developments are appropriate for their location and to prevent unacceptable risks from pollution. However, I end by saying that I am very happy to meet with the two hon. Gentlemen and to talk to my ministerial colleagues in order to look further into this case. I commend both hon. Gentlemen for raising their constituents’ concerns in the House.

4.24 pm

Jim Fitzpatrick: As I have a two-minute response to the Minister in this half-hour debate, I will make three quick points. First, I am grateful for the response and for the opportunity of a meeting. Secondly, the High Court obviously does not believe that Greenwich had the powers in question, because the judicial review said

[Jim Fitzpatrick]

that the guidelines were complied with. Thirdly, and most importantly, it defies logic and common sense that a borough that exceeds the current air quality limits and is going to have cruise ships sitting in the middle of the Thames, giving additional emissions, will not suffer worse air quality as a result of that. The law does not cover that, because the High Court has said it does not, but I am very grateful for the Minister's offer of a meeting with myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook). We certainly look forward to taking him up on that.

Question put and agreed to.

4.25 pm

Sitting suspended.

Badger Culling/Bovine TB

4.30 pm

Dr Paul Monaghan (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Badger culling and bovine TB.

Bovine tuberculosis—bTB—is a disease affecting beef and dairy cattle herds in England and Wales. Scotland is officially free of the disease and Wales is increasingly considered to be bringing the disease under control, but its incidence is rising in England.

Bovine tuberculosis is caused by the organism *Mycobacterium bovis*, which is excreted by infected cattle on to the land they graze where it survives in the soil. It can be and is then passed to other cattle and other species, including badgers, rats, cats, deer, foxes, moles, hedgehogs, worms and, I understand, even flies. However, the predominant mode of transmission in cattle is nose to nose and of course through trading, which promotes it between herds.

In recent years, the disease has spread extensively northwards and eastwards from the areas of original prevalence in the south-west of England, and that spread continues. In fact, the number of new herd breakdowns appears to double approximately every nine years, and in the last decade alone the UK Government has slaughtered 314,000 otherwise healthy cattle in an attempt to control the disease.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the spread he is talking about would be far better controlled by regular cattle testing than by a cull, which is simply not cost-effective and is inhumane?

Dr Monaghan: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point and I will come to it shortly.

In 2013, more than 6 million bTB skin tests were performed in England in an attempt to identify the disease, leading to the slaughter of more than 26,000 cattle. These tests are only 20% to 50% effective. One quarter of herds in the south-west and west midlands regions of England have been placed under movement restrictions at some point, and in the last decade the rising incidence of the disease has cost the UK taxpayer more than £500 million. Today, 20% of all new herd breakdowns are detected in the slaughterhouse, such is the ineffectiveness of current testing programmes.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The cost of culling is around £5,000 per badger compared with just £700 for a badger vaccinated. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that not only is culling counterproductive and cruel, but it is a vast waste of money?

Dr Monaghan: The hon. Lady is ahead of me. I am just coming to that point.

In 2014 the UK Government's inability to bring the disease under control resulted in a cost to UK taxpayers of almost £100 million, with additional costs to farmers estimated to run to tens of millions of pounds annually. There is also a significant human cost. Bovine TB causes misery for farmers. I suspect that many Members here today will have heard stories of farms effectively being closed because of the disease, farmers being made

bankrupt and, sadly, some farmers even taking their own lives, such is the impact on businesses of the failure to address the disease effectively.

If the UK Government do not begin to manage the rising incidence of this disease in England, there will be not only an increase in the number of beef and dairy herds affected, but further geographical spread and a consequent spiralling cost to UK taxpayers over the next decade of potentially £1 billion. That figure comes from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman, who is a colleague on the EFRA Committee, on securing this debate. It has been suggested that one way of solving the problem is to have more frequent cattle testing. How will that resolve the problem and eradicate the disease?

Dr Monaghan: The hon. Gentleman flags up an important point, which again I will come to. We agree that this is a crisis that must be dealt with now. It affects mainly English cattle farmers, and their families and their communities, and the impact cannot be overstated. If the disease continues to increase unchecked in England, it will begin to threaten herds in other nations that are currently free of the disease, such as Scotland. I want to avoid that happening.

Inexplicably, some people hypothesise that the rising incidence of bovine TB in England is attributable to badgers. I say “inexplicably” because research shows that even in remote areas of England where bovine TB is rampant, 86% of badgers are clear of the disease, with just 1.6% of the badger population considered capable of transmitting it. The role of badgers in the transmission of bovine TB to cattle is controversial.

Badger culling was conducted under a number of schemes throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. These included at different times the use of snaring, gassing, cage-trapping and shooting. Many thousands of badgers were killed prior to the introduction of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. However, no effort was made to evaluate empirically the effectiveness of badger culls relative to reducing bovine TB incidence in cattle until the Natural Environment Research Council initiated the randomised badger culling trial in 1998.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman talked about evidence. Does he agree with Professor Rosie Woodroffe of London University, who says that the mismatch between killing badgers and the spread of bovine TB is

“a huge disappointment for evidence-based policy making”?

Dr Monaghan: It is indeed a huge disappointment. I spoke to the professor on that very point just the other day.

The field trial I mentioned ran for seven years to 2005 and was overseen by the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB under the chairmanship of Professor John Bourne. The study found that reactive badger culling resulted in a significant increase in cattle TB to the extent that reactive culling was abandoned early in the trial. Proactive culling of badgers resulted in an average reduction of TB in cattle of approximately 23% in proactive culling zones compared with control areas,

but an increase of approximately 24.5% on neighbouring land not subject to culling, which was thought to be due to the perturbing impact of culling.

The Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB concluded: badger culling can make no meaningful contribution to the future control of TB in cattle; deficiencies in cattle testing regimes mean that cattle themselves contribute significantly to the persistence and spread of disease in areas where TB occurs—that is, cattle are the disease reservoir; cattle-to-cattle transmission is the main cause of disease spread to new geographic areas; substantial reductions in cattle TB incidence could be achieved by improving cattle-based control measures; and it was unfortunate that agricultural and veterinary leaders continued to believe, despite overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary, that the main approach to cattle TB control must involve some form of badger population control. No substantial or respectable body of scientific work has ever been produced to contradict the conclusions of the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB.

In short, scientific evidence does not identify a causal relationship between the presence of badgers and a rising incidence of bovine TB in cattle, nor do scientific data suggest that culling badgers reduces the prevalence of the disease in beef and dairy herds.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing this matter to the Chamber. I presume that many hon. Members have a different opinion from him. In Northern Ireland, there has been a five-year programme costing some £5 million. After trapping, testing and vaccinating badgers and removing any that tested positive, it was decided this year for the first time—

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): Order. Will the hon. Gentleman make his point very briefly?

Jim Shannon: It was decided after five years of deliberation that diseased badgers must be culled. What does the hon. Gentleman think about the position in Northern Ireland?

Dr Monaghan: I do not think the hon. Gentleman’s suggestion is borne out by scientific evidence. Indeed, experience in Wales and the Republic of Ireland contradicts what he is suggesting. In fact, the data suggest that badgers are contracting TB from cattle rather than cattle contracting TB from badgers. Worryingly, there is a possibility that other species may also be contracting TB from cattle and that that this is not being monitored. It is an unavoidable truth that if the UK Government hope to control bTB in English herds and to protect the wider environment through culling, they should logically cull not just badgers and cattle but bats, cats, dogs, mice, moles, rats, hedgehogs, sheep, goats, llamas, slugs, worms and even flies, all of which are capable of sustaining the disease. That proposition is clearly ridiculous, but it serves to highlight precisely how ridiculous the current persecution of badgers is, and that is exactly why the Welsh and Irish Governments have abandoned badger culling and why the European Union has never agreed with the UK’s policy in this area.

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): Culling never actually occurred in Wales. The hon. Gentleman needs to be reasonably

[Simon Hart]

accurate about his points, but he also should take note of the fact that the incidences of TB within the vaccination area in Wales are exactly the same as they are on the outside. There is no distinction between the two areas, so before he paints vaccination as the answer, he needs to look at the Welsh result.

Dr Monaghan: I am arguing here today that the UK Government must begin to protect beef and dairy farmers in England and alter planned programmes of action to begin reducing the disease in existing herds in England. Anything less does a disservice to English farmers and undermines their work in support of local economies.

Oliver Colville (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the one animal that is attacking the hedgehog is the badger and that hedgehogs have declined by 50% over the last 15 years? What action can we take to protect them?

Dr Monaghan: I will stick to bovine TB. I predict that the recently announced plans to extend badger culling to a further seven areas will result in further new herd breakdowns and increased prevalence of the disease across England.

Danny Kinahan (South Antrim) (UUP): Just for information, I point out that I had a herd of Chital deer and we had to put them all down because of TB. I do not believe that badgers were the carriers; we think it was something else—probably a wild deer that came in. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we should be putting more funds into tracing what else carries TB?

Dr Monaghan: I absolutely agree and I thank the hon. Gentleman for that helpful point.

To make my point clear, it is worth noting that figures to May 2016 show that Wales has reduced new herd breakdowns by 14% without killing badgers, while at the same time bovine TB has increased in England by 26% along infection edge areas owing to inadequate testing, uncontrolled cattle movements and the distraction of killing badgers.

In 2015, the British Veterinary Association stated that there was a

“disproportionate focus on badger culling in the public debate about bovine TB”.

I agree and suggest that that focus is the result of the unscientific, ineffective, expensive and inhumane nature of culling policy; additional public concerns in respect of wildlife protection and welfare; and the inappropriate use of public funds.

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. He has mentioned the skin test. How effective has he found it to be, from the evidence? From a Northern Ireland perspective, I have found that it has resulted in animals being put down that should never have been put down.

Dr Monaghan: I will come to the skin test shortly, but I think that there are more appropriate alternatives to it.

Returning to the point about public funds, it is instructive that the UK Government have never published the total costs of culling to the taxpayer or farmers. However, we know that the first two years of the two pilot culls in Somerset and Gloucester cost the taxpayer more than £14 million; that includes policing costs. That equates to £5,766 per badger killed and compares with an estimated cost of just under £700 per badger vaccinated in Wales.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): Part of the trial culls is taking place in my constituency of Tewkesbury. This may be anecdotal, but the farmers there assure me that the incidence of bovine TB in those areas has been reduced since the trial culls began.

Dr Monaghan: It must be anecdotal because it certainly does not appear to be borne out by the scientific evidence.

In 2016, the UK Government admitted that the full costs of culling in 2015 had not been worked out but that policing costs alone for three areas were just under £2 million. The additional costs to farmers of the cull repercussions have never been released. In January this year, it was reported that the European Commission had provided the UK Government with half the Commission's entire budget of €62 million to tackle bovine TB: €31m, then worth £23 million, went on just four programmes. That money, earmarked for dealing with and controlling TB in cattle, as opposed to badgers, is obviously now at risk because of Brexit. In sum, the UK Government's current policy wastes an estimated £20 million per month and will generate a cost of approximately £2 billion to the taxpayer by the 2038 target. In addition, the UK Government no longer collect data on humaneness. One wonders why. What are the actual costs, Minister, and what do data show on humaneness?

I am arguing not that we should do nothing, but that the UK Government should abandon the TB skin test as the primary means of identifying infection and new herd breakdowns and should adopt modern methods and technologies to address this disease. Specifically, the UK Government should adopt gamma interferon tests—that is, blood testing—and robust systems of biosecurity. Combined with a co-ordinated badger vaccination policy in high-risk areas for bovine TB in England and restricted movement, that course of action would be a more progressive and intelligent option than the relatively crude skin testing and redundant killing of badgers and would realise results within months. It would also be more humane.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): I support further research into vaccination, but is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is a global shortage of bovine TB vaccine? It is the same vaccine as is used in humans, it needs 10 times the dose, and it needs to be repeated every five years. There is no possibility of an injectable vaccine roll-out at this time, and the programme has even been suspended in Wales.

Dr Monaghan: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that information. However, it does not address the fundamental point that killing badgers is not helping the situation, either.

Following the introduction in Wales of the regime that I have just identified, the incidence of tuberculosis in cattle has declined sharply: a 30% decline over a 12-month period was recorded in 2012. The sharpest fall was in the area where the disease was at its worst. In Dyfed, 36% less cattle were slaughtered over two years, with a saving to the taxpayer of £6.5 million in compensation, and of course untold misery was avoided.

It is the case that 84% of the public are against badger culling. Like scientists, the public know that culling badgers is cruel, unjustified and expensive. It divides rural communities, damages the balance of nature and perpetuates disease. It gives false hope to farmers and sets a dangerous precedent that we can ignore this disease. Minister, look to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Recognise the importance of cattle welfare and husbandry. Combine that recognition with rigorous blood testing regimes and effective movement controls to reduce the risks of cattle-to-cattle transmission, and introduce a centrally co-ordinated comprehensive badger vaccination policy in high-risk areas for bTB in England. Start to reduce the incidence of this dreadful disease and stop the regressive and medieval practice of badger culling, which diminishes our collective humanity.

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): As of now, I am imposing a two-minute limit on speeches.

4.48 pm

Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): I enjoyed listening to the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan), but he is about five years behind the times. To suggest that culling does not work and vaccination would be a substitute is unfair and unfortunate, given the evidence provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston).

The reason why we are all here is that bovine TB is caused by a species-jumping bacterium, and it affects people. That is why this is such an important subject, and it is no good saying that it is all about badgers. The Government's record on it is superb. By identifying the edge areas, they have made it clear that a huge part of our country has badgers with no infection. There is a clear, healthy population of badgers, and they need to be protected from the badgers in my constituency, which have a high incidence of infection. If we lose sight of that, we do no favours to the people who love badgers or to the badgers that are not infected. We all know the reason why TB is a horrible disease, because the hon. Member for South Antrim (Danny Kinahan), with his Chital deer, reminded us. These animals are our pets that we care about and that we like to see, and they need to be protected. By doing nothing we are being irresponsible and letting down both healthy badgers and the people whose livelihoods depend on cattle farming.

I have nothing but praise for my hon. Friend the Minister; he is doing what is right by protecting healthy badgers. We need to continue to look at the evidence, and I hope that the pilot schemes will start to publish successful evidence soon. During the recess I read that the incidence of outbreaks in Wales and in the edge areas where vaccines are being trialled has actually gone up, which is a disaster for those of us who want vaccines to work, but in among that gloom is a little sparkle of hope to all of those who voted to leave the EU, because

when we are out we will potentially be allowed to vaccinate our cattle, which is illegal in the EU at the moment.

4.50 pm

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): It is an honour to serve with you in the Chair, Mrs Main. I thank the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan) for securing this timely debate.

Animal rights and welfare is an issue I am very passionate about. The culling of badgers to prevent the spread of diseases is not a new concept and has gone on across Europe since the '70s, but it was largely abandoned in the UK during the 1980s and is now completely prohibited in many European countries. The 10-year randomised badger culling trial, which started in 1998, demonstrated the ineffectiveness of culling, but despite the evidence the Government implemented a full programme.

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that culls without evaluation or monitoring are ineffective?

Christina Rees: Yes, I completely agree, and I will come on to that in a while. The absurdity of such a process is that it directly contravenes the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which prohibits the wilful killing or injuring of a badger. Badger culling has time and again proven ineffective. Arguments against culling are not only emotive but factual: it is expensive, with the Government's own figures showing it will cost more than it saves; it is not proven to work in any substantial or sustainable way; and Lord Krebs, who led the culling trials of the '90s, has opposed further culling on the grounds that it is ineffective.

The Welsh Labour Government have rejected the culling of badgers as a means of controlling and eradicating bovine TB. However, as a rural country Wales is not without its problems in this area, and in a bid to control the spread of TB in 2012 the Welsh Government began a badger vaccination programme. That work has been targeted at an intensive action area, which has some of the highest incidence of bovine TB in Europe. Although the effectiveness of vaccination remains disputed, it is surely a better option than the equally disputed, and much more contentious, process of inhumane killing.

I am appalled that the current UK Government have not only ignored evidence, fierce campaigning and the experience of some devolved regions, but have actually taken the notion of culling even further, recently extending the programme to seven new areas across England. I urge the Government to reconsider their commitment to badger culling. How can the random slaughter of one animal to protect another ever be justifiable, logical or humane?

4.53 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): Three years ago I had the honour of being the mayor of my home town of St Austell, and one evening I went to visit the local sea cadets. I will never forget that memorable evening, because at the end of the evening, as I usually did, I asked the young people what they would like to see in our town that would make it a better place. I got all the usual answers—better shops, better leisure facilities,

[Steve Double]

a skateboard park—and then one young man standing in front of me, who was about 12 years old, leant forward and said, “A badger cull.” I figured out very quickly that he was clearly a farmer’s son.

The point that I want to make is that this debate is about people; it is about the livelihood and wellbeing of beef and dairy farmers in this country. We must never lose sight of the fact that as we debate Britain’s biggest rodent, we are actually talking about the livelihoods of our farmers. Let us be clear that every time cattle are tested, our dairy farmers go through anguish. They stand there watching the test take place, not knowing whether this time it is going to be positive, and then many of them have to watch as their life’s work is destroyed as a result of a positive test. We must never lose sight of the fact that at the heart of this debate is our local farming community. I have spoken to many beef and dairy farmers in my constituency, and every one of them has told me that they are convinced we need to control the badger population to eradicate this disease.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. Speaking as a farmer’s daughter, I understand how devastating TB can be in a cattle herd, but I also absolutely despise the shooting and culling of badgers. Will the hon. Gentleman identify the scientific evidence that supports badger culling?

Steve Double: I believe that there is a great deal of evidence from other nations that have eradicated TB, where part of the programme of eradication has been the control of wildlife that carries the disease. There is evidence from around the world that supports that view. Our beef and dairy farmers have a very clear view, and I have learned over the years to listen to those most closely associated with an issue when forming an opinion.

Let us be clear: controlling the badger population will not, in and of itself, be the silver bullet that eradicates this disease, but I am convinced that it has to be part of a comprehensive programme, including vaccination and controls on movement where appropriate, if we are to move towards doing so. I will continue to support our farming community, the Minister, who has great experience of farming in his own right, and the Government on this issue.

4.56 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate, Mrs Main. The hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan), who introduced it, and I obviously have different opinions. I want to express mine clearly in the two minutes that I have.

I have a deep interest in the rural community; I live in the middle of it, and most of my neighbours are milking farmers. They have large herds and depend on the stability of those herds for their incomes and those of their families. With that in mind, they want and need badgers to be controlled.

First, I want to refer to what we have done in Northern Ireland in a wee bit more detail. We are currently in the third year of a selective badger cull project to tackle

bovine TB in Northern Ireland. The test and vaccinate or remove wildlife intervention research project—they call it TVR—is under way in a 100 sq km area around Banbridge in County Down. I live in an area that has some of the highest milk yields in the whole of Northern Ireland and the whole of Ireland. The project was involved in trapping badgers, testing them for TB, vaccinating clean badgers and removing any that tested positive for the disease. With all that research and information, this will be the first year that it has culled diseased badgers. Clearly the scientific method has not worked. With great respect to hon. Members, I hear some say that the scientific evidence is not there, but it is in Northern Ireland. The worldwide shortage of the BCG vaccine, which was used in years one and two, meant that it was unavailable for purchase in the third year.

As I have said before, my constituency has one of the highest levels of TB. It would be unwise and unfair of me not to come to this Chamber and say clearly that badgers need to be culled, because the cost to farmers and the £100 million in compensation over the last few years cannot be sustained. I want my farmers to be able to support and look after their families, and I want to make sure that the milk yield from my area can continue as well. That being the case, I am very sorry to say that I cannot support the hon. Gentleman.

4.58 pm

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan) on securing this debate. He laid out very clearly the science behind this policy area and exposed the Government’s wilful abandonment of it. First, they ignored the recommendations of the independent scientific review group. Secondly, they ignored and rode roughshod over the independent group that looked at the review of the first year of culling, and in particular its recommendations on humaneness. They have also ignored the BVA, which has made it clear that culling should not take place on the basis of controlled shooting. Now that farmers are free to shoot on a controlled basis, there will be very little caging and trapping. The Government have ignored all that, and now on top of that we have a significant relaxation of the criteria for the roll-out of culling areas.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend share my concern that the farmers are also casualties of the situation, as the reality is that the culling of badgers is not an effective solution to TB? Does she therefore agree that the Government should at least think again?

Angela Smith: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. What we are going to hear from the Minister is probably what we have heard in the past: first, that TB was dealt with in New Zealand by culling possums. Well, I will say once again that badgers are not possums, and this is not New Zealand; it is the United Kingdom and the ecology is completely different. Secondly, we will hear that TB has never been tackled effectively without tackling it in the wildlife reservoir. There is new evidence on the table to challenge that concept. It has been established that there is very little evidence of direct transmission between badgers and cattle, so that needs looking at again.

Finally, we will hear a point about farmers, and that is exactly where I would agree strongly with the Minister. I agree that this disease has to be tackled, but we are doing farmers no favours by pretending that the policy of culling badgers, which is the linchpin of the Government's approach to this awful problem, is going to work, because it is not.

What we have not heard at any point from the Minister—I would like him to address this in his closing comments—is answers to questions on two issues. First, at what point will we get a thorough and independent assessment of the outcome of the first two culls in west Gloucestershire and west Somerset? We are in the final year of the culls in those areas. Secondly, how will the Government assess the new research on transmission between badgers and cattle? Will they look properly at that evidence and make sure that it is thoroughly investigated, and will Parliament be informed of the outcome?

5.1 pm

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): I am not going to go over the pros and cons of the debate about culling; I want to be quite parochial in the couple of minutes that I have just to highlight the issue in East Sussex, which is not only a high-risk area, but an edge area along the A27. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double) about the devastation that TB can cause for farmers and their families. Even so, East Sussex is quite low down the list of priorities for DEFRA. We have talked to the Minister about being a trial area for a vaccination programme and he has been very supportive of farmers in East Sussex. We would be ideal because we are an edge area and have support from our farmers, the National Farmers Union and our residents. We also have a trained and licensed group of volunteers ready to go, and the support of the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Evidence from a vaccination programme from 2005 to 2009 in Gloucestershire showed that vaccinating can reduce the number of badgers testing positive by 54% to 76%. That would make a significant difference to my local farmers. I acknowledge that there is a shortage of vaccine and I take the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) that the badgers would need vaccinating yearly for a period of five years and need 10 times the amount of vaccine that a human would need. However, we need to do something. We would also be keen to look at the Northern Ireland programme of TVR—test and vaccinate or remove. We think there would be some merit in that vaccination programme for East Sussex, but we await the results of that programme.

Farmers in East Sussex, given that it is on the edge, are worried that it will stop being an edge area and become a completely high-risk area, so I would welcome further discussions with the Minister, who has been so supportive of the farmers in East Sussex.

5.3 pm

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan) on securing this important debate and on the clear and robust way he opened it. Like many MPs—I think there were 36 here at the start

of this debate—I have received much correspondence from constituents about badger culling. My constituents feel outraged and upset that the Government are continuing with the programme of culls. Many say that the badger cull is cruel, costly and ineffective and I agree with them.

We have heard in this debate—this is one of the key points I want to make—that the Government have failed to take account of scientific evidence and advice on this matter. Culling is expensive, ineffective and in some cases is not being carried out in a humane way. The previous Labour Government carried out a 10-year randomised trial on badger culling, which concluded that culling will not achieve a lasting reduction in bovine TB. Indeed, the trial found that culling risked making things worse for farmers in neighbouring areas. I understand that new evidence released this year has called into question the likelihood of direct transmission of the disease from badgers to cattle.

As we have heard, the Government have failed to take scientific advice and assessments into account. An assessment of the first year of the pilot culls by an independent expert panel was highly critical of the Government's practices and policies. David Macdonald, the former chief scientific adviser to Natural England, described the culls as an "epic failure". The pilots raised significant concerns that badgers were being shot inhumanely, and the way the culls had been carried out meant that there was no chance that they could be effective, with a number of culls failing to achieve their targets.

Instead of reviewing the culling programme and accepting that other forms of intervention were necessary to prevent the spread of bovine TB, the Government disbanded the expert panel and continued with the culling programme. Professor Tim Coulson described the Government's approach as "wilfully" ignoring the concerns of their own scientists. I think that is appalling.

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): Order. The hon. Lady has a few seconds to conclude her remarks.

Barbara Keeley: Yes, indeed. I will end with the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) made: there are two important questions for the Minister to answer, particularly in the light of what I just said. When will we have a thorough and independent assessment of the two pilot culls? And when will the Government assess the research on transmission?

5.6 pm

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): Mrs Main, I draw attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests that states I am a farmer. I represent one of the country's greatest agricultural constituencies; sadly, it is also one of the constituencies that is most badly affected by bovine tuberculosis, so I speak with some experience on this issue.

The choices we face are stark. TB is an indiscriminate and profoundly unpleasant disease. In 2015 alone, 28,000 once perfectly content and otherwise healthy cattle were slaughtered as a result of contracting this horrible disease. The Government have stated that the cost to the taxpayer was £100 million; on current trends that will be £1 billion cumulatively over the next decade.

[*Geoffrey Clifton-Brown*]

As my hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double) said, Opposition Members never mention the human stress caused to the farmers involved. Add to that the cost—

Dr Paul Monaghan: If the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard*, I think he will find that I did make the point about the stress and hardship that farmers face as a result of the UK Government's programme on badger culling.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: I am intrigued that an hon. Member from Scotland has secured this debate, because I did not realise that it was a problem in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman must have few problems with his own constituents to have time to bring forward this debate.

As well as the emotional stress for the farmers involved, the cost to them is tens of millions of pounds. Add that to the costs to the taxpayer and this is a really serious problem. As my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) said, the only legal vaccine for badgers is the injectable BCG vaccine. It is in such short supply that it is needed for human use and therefore the vaccination trial in a quarter of the area of Wales has had to be curtailed. I hasten to add that I believe DEFRA is right to budget tens of millions of pounds to try and achieve an oral vaccine for badgers. That is the nirvana and when we get that, we will really make progress.

My constituents in the new badger cull area in Gloucestershire, with whom I have worked very closely and to whom I pay tribute, have had to go through an incredibly rigorous process to get the licence from Natural England. They are responsible for all the training and recruiting of firearms experts—forgetting all the equipment. I say to Opposition Members that they would not go to that huge amount of trouble and expense unless they really believed that a badger cull was the answer, so I think the Government are exactly correct in their 25-year vaccination strategy. We have to use all the tools in our box.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I met people from Natural England a few months ago and they very much gave me the impression that the process was little more than a rubber-stamping exercise and they took their steer from DEFRA as to whether they would go ahead. It came across to me as a political decision rather than, in any way, an academic exercise.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: I invited the hon. Lady, when she was the shadow Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister, to come to my constituency and meet some of these farmers, and I invite her to come and meet some of the people who have been involved in this licensing programme. She will find out the hours, days and weeks they have had to spend on this to get a licence. She will be amazed.

Angela Smith: The hon. Gentleman is kind to give way. Does he believe that free shooting is acceptable?

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: I believe that the best way to cull badgers is with traps. Unfortunately in Gloucestershire, protesters have removed and damaged traps, which has

made it essential to have free shooting in our armoury, as well as shooting badgers in traps. If there were no interference with the traps, I believe we could—as they have done in Somerset—operate culls on a much greater basis by caging badgers.

I repeat that the 25-year elimination strategy that the Government have announced is exactly right. We must use all the tools in our armoury, including ring vaccination, culls, vaccinations and, indeed, as the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross said, tightening biosecurity. On farms, we legally have to do so. Every year DEFRA has tightened biosecurity, the regulations on pre and post-movement of cattle and the regulations on skin testing. Those are the directions in which we need to go, but we need to eliminate this terrible disease.

5.10 pm

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship, Mrs Main. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan) for securing the debate and for setting out a detailed position. It is a well-attended debate, which shows the significance of the issue to us all—to farmers and animal welfare advocates alike. The issue is significant to the public and forms a huge part of my mail bag, as I would imagine it does for many other MPs.

Some 150,000 people signed the petition and more than 70% of the population oppose the cull of badgers. We have heard that the subject divides rural communities. I also suggest that it has divided the House, although not officially. It is a devolved issue, so I will speak a bit about what we are doing in Scotland, and try to outline the main issues that various hon. Members have spoken about. The issue should not divide us because we must learn from good practice and from what works across the UK. We obviously have differing strategies in place currently and, therefore, we need to review the evidence and examine it closely.

In Scotland, the risk of bovine TB has historically been very low, and there is no evidence whatever of a wildlife reservoir of bovine TB. The Scottish Government have recognised a need for confidence on the issue and have introduced a stringent package of measures including tissue sampling at farm visits, an epidemiological risk assessment, tracing cattle, contiguous herd assessments, and two consecutive tests with negative results to retain bovine TB-free status. In October 2009, Scotland was added to the long list of European Commission member states and regions that are declared free of bovine TB. The Commission attributed that to the success of Scotland's livestock industry working in conjunction with the Government.

I will attempt to summarise the issues that have been raised very briefly, as I am aware that I only have three minutes or so remaining. Some of the main issues appear to involve the crisis in farming. Farmers have already been significantly affected by pricing and they may be feeling the impact of Brexit. There are export issues and issues in being price competitive with comparators. Those problems are fundamental to the stress experienced by farmers.

The other issue is whether culling is effective. The independent scientific group has apparently stated that the culling is ineffective and the previous 10-year randomised

trial, which was undertaken by the Labour Government of the time, also indicated that it was not effective. We must base what we do upon evidence. Some evidence indicates that cattle-to-cattle transmission is the main issue and that, in some instances, badgers may even contract TB from cattle. It is important to look at alternatives.

The experts have even cited a huge disappointment about the lack of an evidence-based policy, which is extremely concerning. It must be cost-effective but the UK Government's route does not appear to be. Policing costs alone have been cited as £2 million, with culling at £20 million a month. The estimated cost by 2038 is £2 billion. However, there are difficulties because there is a shortage of vaccines, and that must be looked at within the scientific community. We must also look at the humanity of culling, as we have heard grave concerns about the relaxation of regulations and free shooting.

We are in a time of austerity. Our most vulnerable are suffering. The disabled are suffering. The bottom line is that any policy enacted by this Government must be evidence based. These are extortionate pilot studies. Culling has been described by professionals in the field as a wilful abandoning of science, and we are beginning to ignore independent outcome trials. We are going down the wrong route, and it is an expensive route that we can little afford.

I suggest a review of the policy, the research and the pilot evidence, which is, indeed, urgent. Policy must be evidence based. We cannot give farmers false hope by going in the wrong direction. We cannot base policy on desperation, anecdotes and experience. In all my time as a scientist practitioner in the NHS, belief has never equated to evidence. We are looking for evidence-based practice to ensure that we give the general public a cost-effective solution that works for all.

5.16 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Main. I thank the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan) for bringing forward today's important debate.

Over the summer, I have been listening to the frustrations and concerns of those working with cattle about the ongoing risk that they continue to carry about the prevalence of bovine TB. They want solutions that work, which is why it is so important that we examine the evidence and look at the scientific research, which really does conclude that since 2011 when the strategy was put in place, research has moved on and we must move on with it.

The Republic of Ireland, after 32 years of culling, now recognises the flaw in it and has, therefore, switched to badger inoculation. In Wales, a fresh approach has been taken, which has seen 94.6% of herds TB-free and incidence continues to fall at a rapid rate—17% in the past year. I know that the Government want to be seen to be acting, but there are better ways of doing things. Therefore, they have a responsibility to farmers to ensure that they take an evidence-based approach.

There have been failings in the programme that has been put forward. Figures that have come from freedom of information requests show that the number of badgers culled has fallen far short of the Government's criteria

for an effective cull, so trapping has been used to support it. Therefore, when we trap a badger, why not inoculate it as opposed to exterminating it? The cull has failed on effectiveness and on humaneness. It simply has not delivered. Instead, we should take a different approach. This is about a public health issue and, therefore, we need a comprehensive health strategy and not just a simple sticking plaster to try to deal with part of the problem as opposed to the complete problem.

Bovine TB is a commutable disease. Understanding the pathogen transmission process is vital in understanding the associated disease management strategy. New research coupled with scientific analysis has unveiled more about the disease. Evidence-based policy making should engage with that. Ultimately, farmers are being let down if the Government do not act on the back of that. Research has shown that badger-to-cattle transmission is not through airborne routes and that it is likely to be through badger excrement, but more research is needed in that area.

Lady Hermon: May I add that recent research by the Department in Northern Ireland has shown that there is a potential that the spread of cattle slurry on pasture could be one of the contributing factors? That may be worth looking at.

Rachael Maskell: I thank the hon. Lady for making that intervention about how we manage the environmental impact of bovine TB. Looking at slurry and manure spreading is one way of achieving that and it is an important point that I was going to come to later. However, cattle-to-cattle transmission is the key issue to address. Therefore, we need a comprehensive strategy that puts investment into more measures around biosecurity, which is really important to address the issue in a strategic way.

We also know that the culls that have taken place have not delivered the decrease in the badger population necessary to reduce the spread of TB, as identified by the independent expert group. As the years have progressed, scientists say that population estimates are becoming more inaccurate, so the effectiveness of culls is falling further year on year.

We also know that the new criteria, which seven out of 10 respondents rejected, will mean that the cull is less effective in years to come. We have therefore seen the prevalence of bovine TB increasing in the four culling areas, which clearly does not satisfy farmers. As the independent scientific review group has concluded,

“badger culling can make no meaningful contribution to cattle TB control in Britain”.

We know that the cull has failed on effectiveness. The cull has failed on humaneness—between 7.4% and 22.8% of badgers are alive after five minutes. We know that badgers are not shot in the target area—only 45% are shot in the target area. We know that the cull has failed on cost, and we have heard today that the vaccine costs a tenth as much as killing a single badger. That money could be repurposed to support farmers.

Dr Wollaston: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): I am afraid that the hon. Lady cannot give way because the Minister must be called and we need a minute for Dr Monaghan to sum up.

Rachael Maskell: New measures need to be introduced on biosecurity and testing, and we have heard about the gamma interferon test, which has a far higher level of accuracy but is not being widely used. The DIVA test is coming on board, and it will clearly differentiate between infected cattle and vaccinated cattle. We understand that that will be ready in about five years' time. We need to look at the vaccination programme and build up vaccine stock.

Mrs Anne Main (in the Chair): I ask the hon. Lady to bring her remarks to a close.

Rachael Maskell: Of course. Farmers continue to pay the price for a lack of evidence-based policy making. The Government are using a one-pronged approach. We need to see scientific evidence and a proper biosecurity strategy at the heart of addressing bovine TB.

5.22 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice): I congratulate the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Dr Monaghan) on securing this well-attended debate, which shows the importance of the issue.

Scotland, of course, has a very low badger population density. Scotland is also the only part of the UK to be officially TB free, but England, Wales and Northern Ireland have this big challenge. TB is a difficult disease to fight. It is a slow-growing, insidious disease. Diagnostics are difficult because the disease does not show up quickly. The only vaccine we have is the BCG vaccine and, despite decades of research, no one has come up with a more effective vaccine—the BCG vaccine is only partially effective. TB is having a huge impact on our agricultural industry and is causing huge trauma for farmers, with some 28,000 cattle a year being slaughtered.

We have put in place a comprehensive 25-year strategy to address bovine TB, and cattle control is at the heart of that strategy. Several hon. Members have said that cattle control is the answer, but I will explain what we have. We have annual testing in the high-risk area and four-yearly testing in the low-risk area. We have annual testing in the edge area and six-monthly testing in hotspots in the edge area, and we continue to consider rolling that out. We have contiguous testing in the high-risk area where there is a breakdown, and we have radial testing in the low-risk area, going out to 3 km, where we have a breakdown. We are now consulting on greater use of the gamma interferon test so that we can pick up the disease faster. We are also looking at what more can be done in other species. We are constantly trying to refine and improve our cattle movement controls, but I put it to hon. Members that for years we have been doing everything that everyone has said we should be doing.

We continue to work on vaccination. We are spending millions of pounds on trying to develop an oral vaccine for badgers because I believe that could give us an exit strategy from the cull once we have completed a reduction in the population of some areas. We are also continuing to work on cattle vaccination to develop a DIVA test. That work takes time and costs millions of pounds, but we are doing it.

In recent years we have set up an edge area vaccination programme, with a number of volunteer groups taking part. As my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes

(Dr Wollaston) said, the World Health Organisation has asked everyone to stop using the vaccine we have on badgers, and we followed the Welsh Government's lead in doing so. We will resume our testing when those stocks come back on stream.

We are doing a huge amount of work to improve biosecurity. In a few weeks' time I will launch a cattle health certification standards—CHeCS—accreditation scheme to try to incentivise farmers to do more for biosecurity. We have grants available so that farmers can invest in water troughs that make it harder for badgers to gain access and in fencing to keep badgers away from farmyards. We are constantly trying to improve the management of slurry, and there is already a suite of measures on farmyard manure management. We are also looking at other novel things, such as genetics. Holstein UK is working on whether genetic improvement might be able to breed partial resistance into the dairy herd in particular. I have already asked our chief scientific adviser to find out whether further work could be done to enhance that.

The badger cull is just one part of our strategy but, as I have said before, there is no example anywhere in the world of a country that has eradicated TB without also addressing reservoirs of the disease in the wildlife population. A number of hon. Members have raised questions about the science. TB was first isolated in badgers as long ago as 1971. In 1974 a trial was conducted to remove badgers from a severely infected farm, with the result that there was no breakdown on that farm for five years. Between 1975 and 1978 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food funded extensive work that demonstrated conclusively that there is transmission and a link between badgers and cattle, and subsequent work in Ireland has reaffirmed that finding.

The Krebs review observed that between 1975 and 1979 TB incidence in the south-west fell from 1.65% to 0.4% after the cull, a 75% reduction. Subsequently, in the late '70s and early '80s, more extensive work was done in three exercises. One was in Thornberry, where the TB incidence fell from 5.6% in the 10 years before culling to 0.45% in the 15 years afterwards, a reduction of 90%. In Steeple Leaze there were no breakdowns for seven years after badgers were cleared. In Hartland the incidence dropped from 15% in 1984 to just 4% in 1985, a reduction of more than two thirds.

There were claims that those experiments lacked a control, which is why the randomised badger culling trial took place. Despite having the challenge of the foot and mouth crisis smack in the middle of it, the RBCT concluded that in the four years after culling there was a significant reduction in the incidence of TB. The RBCT supported what the previous trials had shown. In fact, 18 months after the culling ended in the RBCT there was a 54% reduction in the incidence of the disease, so I am afraid that hon. Members who say that we have not followed the science have themselves not read the science. The science and the veterinary advice are clear.

Angela Smith: Will the Minister give way?

George Eustice: I will not give way.

This is an evidence-based policy. We cannot remove and eradicate TB without addressing the reservoir of the disease in the wildlife population. I would not

sanction a cull of badgers unless it were necessary. Apart from anything else, it is incredibly expensive but I am also not the sort of person who wants to kill wildlife for fun. I would not sanction this unless it were necessary, and I believe that it is necessary.

I urge hon. Members to show some sense of perspective. I live next to Bushy Park and at this time of year, every year, a sign goes up on the gates saying, “We are afraid that the park will be closed for the next few weeks because we are having a deer cull.” Nobody bats an eyelid. They go somewhere else to have their picnic. We do not get protesters running around the park at night. Is that really so different? The level of scrutiny that we put on the culls and the requirements that we attach to licensing are incredibly thorough. We have rules on the distance that hunters have to be before they can take a shot and on precisely the type of rifles that they should have. We have rules saying that the badger must be stationary before a shot is taken. We are doing our utmost to ensure that the badger culling and shooting are done in the most effective way, more effective than for any other wildlife.

In conclusion, I believe that this is necessary. It is an evidence-based policy, which is why we continue to roll out the cull.

5.29 pm

Dr Paul Monaghan: This has been a lively debate, but I think everyone in the room agrees that we must do everything possible to eradicate bovine TB in cattle. Everyone would also agree that the crucial issue is a human and a humane one. In Scotland we have introduced a stringent package of evidence-based measures that include blood testing and tissue sampling at farm visits, epidemiological risk assessments, cattle tracing, contiguous herd assessments and two consecutive tests with negative results in order to retain TB free status. The Scottish Government have also passed legislation that allows for certain specific non-bovine animals to be subject to the regime of bovine TB controls. Scotland, as we now know, has been officially TB free since 2009. We are proud of that, and we want to stay that way.

The hon. Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) will be interested to know—

5.30 pm

Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).

Written Statement

Wednesday 7 September 2016

HEALTH

Wachter Review

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):

Today an independent review has been published which makes recommendations about how to support the effective implementation of IT systems in the health system in England.

In October 2015 I asked Professor Robert Wachter, a US clinician and authority on the issues and challenges of implementing IT and digital systems in healthcare, to undertake a review of implementation of IT in the NHS, with a particular focus on the introduction of electronic health records in the acute sector. It was to draw on recent experience in both England and the US and make recommendations on how to introduce such systems more effectively in the NHS. The review started in February this year and was supported by an advisory board drawn from digital healthcare experts in the US and UK, as well as a representative from Denmark.

The independent review has now been completed and the full report is attached and available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-information-technology-to-improve-the-nhs>.

Healthcare, like other areas of life, needs to make effective use of technology to deliver services as efficiently and cost effectively as possible, while meeting the needs of patients and their expectations of a modern public service. If we are to deliver on our ambition to deliver the safest, most efficient healthcare possible for NHS patients we must make the most of these technologies, moving away from paper-based records to a system that provides every health care professional with the information they need, at the point of care, so that they can make safe, effective treatment decisions, and that provides patients with easy access to all the information they need to be active partners in managing their health and wellbeing.

Digital technology is increasingly in use in many parts of the NHS but there are still some organisations that have yet to embrace its use, and many more that have found the task of implementing systems very challenging. The result is that despite already making investments in digital technology, local NHS organisations are often not getting the expected benefits for patients, health care professionals or the system.

Professor Wachter's review identified a number of critical factors for success and has made 10 recommendations that focus on:

The importance of clinical engagement and leadership to successful implementation.

The need to improve workforce capability in the use of technology in the delivery of care, in particular the need for more clinician-informaticists (clinicians with informatics expertise) to lead implementation of clinical IT systems, including for a National Chief Clinical Information Officer (CCIO).

A phased approach to funding and implementation that reflects the level of readiness and existing digital maturity of NHS Trusts with initial support for those Trusts which have already made good progress in digitising and are ready to go further, or which are demonstrably ready to make good progress.

Interoperability as a core characteristic of the system from the outset to support clinical care, innovation and research.

I am grateful to Professor Wachter and his advisory group for their work on this important area for the future development of a NHS that is sustainable and meets our expectations of a modern service.

Today I am also presenting plans to start to implement those recommendations with the announcement of:

The first Global Exemplars. These Trusts are judged to be the most advanced in the use of digital technology in England, and which we expect to move to become world leaders at an accelerated pace:

Each Global Exemplar will be supported via international partnerships and will be expected to share their learning and experience across the NHS to show how care can be enhanced across the whole health system using digital technologies. Each of these Trusts will be able to bid for up to £10 million of funding.

The creation of a group of National Exemplars. These Trusts, although not yet as advanced as our Global Exemplars, are ready to make good progress in implementing digital technology and each can bid for up to £5 million of funding.

A competition to find a UK university partner to set up a Digital Academy to provide improved workforce capability in use of technology in the delivery of care.

The first Global Exemplars will be:

City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
Luton & Dunstable University Hospital NHS Trust
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust
Salford Royal Hospitals NHS Trust
Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust
University Hospitals Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

NHS England has also already announced, in July, the appointment of Professor Keith McNeill as NHS Chief Clinical Information Officer. Professor McNeill will have a key role in providing national leadership for this important agenda that will increase the speed and scope of the NHS's adoption of digital technologies to support the transformation needed to deliver NHS services fit for the future. He will act on behalf of the whole health and care system to provide strategic leadership, also chairing the National Information Board, and acting as commissioning 'client' for the relevant programmes being delivered by NHS Digital (previously known as the Health and Social Care Information Centre).

It can also be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-09-07/HCWS134>

[HCWS134]

ORAL ANSWERS

Wednesday 7 September 2016

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
CABINET OFFICE	313	CABINET OFFICE—continued	
Anonymous Voter Registration: Domestic		Government Estate (Modernisation).....	313
Violence Victims	318	Topical Questions	320
Boundary Commission	316		
Cross-Government Departmental Resourcing	317		
Digital Technology.....	319	PRIME MINISTER	323
Electoral Law Reform	314	Engagements.....	323

WRITTEN STATEMENT

Wednesday 7 September 2016

	<i>Col. No.</i>
HEALTH	9WS
Wachter Review	9WS

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned, and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons,*

**not later than
Wednesday 14 September 2016**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 7 September 2016

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 313] [see index inside back page]

*Minister for the Cabinet Office
Prime Minister*

G20 Summit [Col. 335]

Statement—(The Prime Minister)

Neighbourhood Planning [Col. 363]

Bill presented, and read the First time

Workers' Rights (Maintenance of EU Standards) [Col. 364]

*Motion for leave to bring in Bill—(Melanie Onn)—agreed to
Bill presented, and read the First time*

Opposition Day [7th allotted day]

Paris Agreement on climate change [Col. 367]

Motion—(Barry Gardiner)—agreed to

Garden Bridge [Col. 430]

Debate on motion for Adjournment

Westminster Hall

Psychosis: Early Intervention [Col. 141WH]

Loughinisland Murders [Col. 165WH]

HGV Fly-parking: Kent [Col. 172WH]

Enderby Wharf Development [Col. 195WH]

Badger Culling/Bovine TB [Col. 204WH]

General Debates

Written Statement [Col. 9WS]

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
