

**Monday**  
**19 December 2016**

**Volume 618**  
**No. 84**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Monday 19 December 2016**

---



# House of Commons

*Monday 19 December 2016*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### EDUCATION

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Free Childcare

1. **Andrew Bingham** (High Peak) (Con): What progress her Department is making on the provision of 30 hours of free childcare to working parents. [907938]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Caroline Dinenage)**: We are committed to ensuring that we have the high-quality, affordable childcare that families need, and are on track to deliver 30 hours of childcare to working parents. We are investing record funding of £1 billion per year by 2020 and have announced a fairer early-years funding system. Eight early implementer areas are already providing nearly 4,000 places one year early.

**Andrew Bingham**: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Last week I visited Hadfield Nursery School in my constituency. That excellent and very well respected local nursery is a maintained nursery. It is concerned about the level of funding it will receive when the 30 hours provision comes in. Will she give us some reassurance on that, and would she like to visit Hadfield Nursery School, because it does a great job and everyone there would be delighted to see her?

**Caroline Dinenage**: I thank my hon. Friend for that very kind invitation. I would be more than happy to visit both him and the Hadfield Nursery School in his beautiful High Peak constituency. He is right to highlight the importance of maintained nursery schools. We have committed to providing local authorities with an additional £55 million per year for nursery schools until at least the end of this Parliament.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): On the same subject, is it not really the case that the 30 hour promise is being funded by stealing resources from state-run nurseries that employ fully qualified headteachers and staff? Will the Secretary of State tell us what analysis she has undertaken of the damage that will be done by the cuts she is making to the funding of state-run nursery schools?

**Caroline Dinenage**: That is a rather churlish comment, if you do not mind my saying so, Mr Speaker. We are investing more money in this policy than any Government have ever spent on it before, some £6 billion. The hon. Gentleman needs to be a little more appreciative.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): I assure the Minister that working parents in my constituency very much welcome 30 hours of free childcare for their children. Will she set out for them, and in particular for those with disabled children, how she will make sure there will be sufficient funding to give disabled children the best start in life through that 30 hours scheme?

**Caroline Dinenage**: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. I was at Sheringham Nursery School in Newham last week, which is an early implementer and is already seeing the massive difference the scheme is making to working families. There is an inclusion fund that will go to children with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I hope the Minister agrees that the early-years pupil premium provides vital support to some of our most disadvantaged children. Like the hon. Member for High Peak (Andrew Bingham), we know that nurseries are facing financial pressure now, and many worry that they will not be able to care for the most vulnerable children when the 30 hours scheme is introduced. Will she therefore guarantee that all of the £50 million early-years pupil premium money will go to our most vulnerable children, and that that vital resource will not be cut this Parliament?

**Caroline Dinenage**: Yes. The pupil premium, which we introduced, will continue and will continue to go to the most vulnerable children.

#### Good and Outstanding Schools: Places

2. **Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to improve the number of available places in good and outstanding schools. [907939]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening)**: We are committed to making sure that as many children as possible have a good place at school. The latest Ofsted annual report clearly shows that standards have risen compared with 2010, with almost 1.8 million more pupils now taught in good or outstanding schools. Proposals on additional measures to increase the supply of good new school places are set out in the “Schools that work for everyone” consultation.

**Wendy Morton**: I welcome that very encouraging reply from the Secretary of State. One issue raised with me by constituents and school governors is securing school places for siblings so that brothers and sisters can attend the same school. Will my right hon. Friend look at that as part of her plans to improve the number of places available?

**Justine Greening**: Any changes to the overall operation of the code would of course be scrutinised by this House. My hon. Friend will probably be aware that admissions authorities are responsible for setting their own admissions arrangements, but the code already allows them to prioritise siblings, and some admissions authorities already choose to do so.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Headteachers in my constituency tell me that their efforts to get their schools to become good or outstanding are sometimes stymied by changing expectations from Government and changes that they feel are not evidence-based. Will the Secretary of State reassure headteachers in Bristol West that expectations will not keep changing without a very good reason?

**Justine Greening:** I had a chance to visit a Bristol school last week, which was a fantastic opportunity. That school is working with Bristol University. On our continued reforms, we want to make sure that we see improvements in classrooms. The hon. Lady will no doubt welcome our recent launch of the strategic school improvement fund. That fund is about making sure we can get the investment to schools that need to improve quickly and effectively.

**Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): Good and outstanding secondary school provision must include the provision of technical and professional education, which is essential for our skills base for the future. Does the Secretary of State agree that university technical colleges play a really important role in that and can and should be good or outstanding?

**Justine Greening:** I agree. As with all schools, we expect them to deliver high standards. I had the chance recently to go to Didcot UTC, which provides a fantastic education—a very different education perhaps, but one that works for them and their interests. It is getting very good results because of that.

**Heidi Alexander** (Lewisham East) (Lab): It is my understanding that in the past two years, over 60 schools have been rated inadequate where an academy order has been issued but a sponsor has yet to be identified. How does that uncertainty help to improve standards in those schools?

**Justine Greening:** We are committed to ensuring, when we see schools not achieving the results they need for their children, that we have a strong approach that steadily improves the schools and works with them to improve. Where they cannot improve, we want to ensure that, through academisation, changes take place in terms of leadership and school sponsorship that mean schools have the flexibility and the freedom to be able to get better.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): As a former Acton resident, the Secretary of State will I am sure share the concern of local parents that the Ark primary school—secured with much fanfare in East Acton to match its near neighbour, which has an outstanding reputation—now has a full roll of students and a secured site but no physical building. Will she do everything she can to pressure the education funding authority to find the shortfall that Balfour Beatty wants for its bid price? East Acton is the most deprived ward of Ealing borough. It is in the bottom decile for the whole country and—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Lady has made her point with great force and eloquence, but it does not need to be made at any greater length.

**Justine Greening:** As the hon. Lady recognises, I very much enjoyed living in Acton. It is important to raise standards in Acton schools. I will look very carefully at the particular issue she raises and perhaps write to her to find out what we can do to speed things up.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Easingwold school in my constituency—I must declare an interest as two of my children attend this school, but so do 1,000 other children—has been placed in special measures and will now, of course, become an academy, which I support. The choice of academy has been announced and subsequently retracted, pending surveys of the school. Clearly, either the process is flawed or the way this has been handled is flawed. Will the Secretary of State look at this matter urgently to resolve these problems?

**Justine Greening:** I am aware of this matter, because my hon. Friend has played his role as a fantastic local MP and already raised it with me. The Department is looking to see whether we can make sure the barriers preventing the school from getting a great sponsor that will help to improve it, not just for his own children but for all the children, can be quickly removed.

### Special Needs Schools Multi-academy Trusts

3. **James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): What assessment she has made of the potential merits of special needs schools multi-academy trusts. [907941]

**The Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families (Edward Timpson):** Multi-academy trusts enable the sharing of staff and expertise that can help to foster truly excellent special educational needs provision. Special schools can be successful both in multi-academy trusts that specialise wholly in supporting children with special education needs, as well as in multi-academy trusts that offer special provision alongside mainstream provision. Some examples of multi-academy trusts that offer special provision can be found in our new good practice guidance, published on 9 December.

**James Duddridge:** I was going to ask the Minister to issue further guidance. I do not think the 9 December guidance had been issued when I tabled the question, so I am grateful for that and encourage him to look at special needs schools operating within multi-academy trusts solely as special needs schools. There is an enormous difference in special needs schools between thousands of pupils and hundreds of pupils.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope the hon. Gentleman is encouraged by the power of his own question tabling.

**Edward Timpson:** I expect nothing less from my hon. Friend in terms of the pressure he is able to bring to bear on the Government. He raises an important issue. We continue to support and provide guidance for the growing number of MATs in this area. I encourage any newly forming MATs to get in touch with their regional schools commissioner, who will be able to support them and help to direct them towards further sources of support.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): I thank the Minister for meeting me a few weeks ago to discuss the contents of my ten-minute rule Bill on special needs and, in particular, on the admission of autistic children to schools. He mentioned at that time that the arrangements were not ideal and needed some adjustment. He mentioned a consultation. Can he please give us any more information on that?

**Edward Timpson**: I welcome my hon. Friend's private Member's Bill and have a lot of sympathy for the cause it enshrines. I can commit to a consultation early in the new year, and I know that he and others who are interested in this issue will want to contribute.

### Improving Educational Outcomes

4. **Lucy Frazer** (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to support teachers in improving educational outcomes. [907942]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening)**: Great teachers are critical to improving educational outcomes. Teaching is a profession, and we support the professional development of teachers, including through the new £74.2 million teaching and leadership innovation fund and the new charter college of teaching. We are also investing in improving curriculum expertise and specialism, particularly in maths, which I saw for myself first hand on a recent visit to Shanghai, China.

**Lucy Frazer**: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. In "Education Excellence Everywhere", a paper produced in March 2016, there was a good proposal for a free national teacher vacancy website to ensure that the costs of recruitment were kept down for schools. What progress is the Secretary of State making on that proposal?

**Justine Greening**: My hon. and learned Friend mentions the commitment we made in the March White Paper to a website offering a free route for schools to advertise teacher vacancies and, in doing so, providing teachers with easier access to information about job opportunities. We have worked closely with schools and teachers, and we are testing out different approaches to how to deliver that website most effectively, so we can make sure that it will be of maximum value to all schools.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): Whenever I meet young people in my constituency, they tell me that the thing that could most affect their educational outcomes is a curriculum for life and compulsory personal, social and health education in all schools. The curriculum is inadequate, having been last updated before Facebook was even invented, and teachers go unsupported and untrained. If yesterday's briefings to the newspapers are to be believed, the Government are considering bringing in compulsory PSHE. Is this true and, if so, when will it happen? It is urgent.

**Justine Greening**: I was very clear in my first Education Committee appearance that I felt this was an area that we needed actively to look at, which is what we are doing. It is not just a question of updating the guidance; it is about the schools where it is taught—and, I would say, the quality of the teaching that happens as well.

14. [907956] **Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): As someone who did pure maths and applied maths, as well as physics and English at A-level, I am very keen on mathematics teaching, and I was just wondering what is the Secretary of State's assessment of the recent mathematics teacher exchange between the United Kingdom and China.

**Justine Greening**: I think it has worked fantastically well so far. Over the last two years, we have seen 131 teachers from England visiting Shanghai and 127 teachers from Shanghai visiting English schools, and through that exchange our teachers have observed Shanghai teaching methods. In the 48 schools participating in the study, the teachers have implemented changes, which have led to increased enthusiasm for mathematics—hopefully as strong as my hon. Friend's was at school—deeper engagement, increased confidence and, critically, higher attainment.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): One of the best ways to support teachers in improving educational outcomes, particularly for children with special needs, is through the pupil premium. Will the Secretary of State therefore explain why the level of the pupil premium has been frozen at current levels through this Parliament?

**Justine Greening**: The pupil premium was introduced by the previous coalition Government and it is continuing to be supported throughout this Parliament precisely to make sure that funding gets to those children who need it most. Last week, I announced the national funding formula, which also prioritises resources going towards disadvantaged children.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): The Secretary of State will know how traumatic it is for students and teachers to get children through GCSE maths and English resits, which can often blight their post-GCSE studies. Can we have a curriculum that is vocationally based for numeracy and literacy, which would give people the skills they need for work—without having to go through this traumatic and often wasteful experience?

**Justine Greening**: It is important that all children leave our education system with something to show for their names, particularly in maths and English—ideally at a level congruent with their potential. We brought in the GCSE resit policy, because we think that students who achieved a D grade and were therefore pretty close to the better standard should have another go at doing so. However, the functional skills qualifications have been well received by employers and we want to look at how they can also play a role in enabling all our young people to show their accomplishments.

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Grammar schools represent the Prime Minister's flagship policy for improving outcomes, but according to today's edition of *The Independent*, officials in the Department have said that there is no chance of a new selective school before 2020. Will the Secretary of State tell us how many selective schools will be built during the current Parliament?

**Justine Greening:** The consultation finished last week, and we will now look at the responses. However, I think we should recognise that we need an education system that provides more good school places, especially for children living in parts of the country that do not have access to them. I hope that, rather than carping without making any suggestions, we can have a good debate following the consultation, and also provide those additional grammar school places.

### Teacher Shortages

5. **Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): What assessment she has made of trends in the level of teacher shortages. [907945]

**The Minister for School Standards (Mr Nick Gibb):** The school workforce census reports a fairly constant vacancy rate of 0.2% of teachers in post. New analysis, published in September, of the proportion of schools with at least one vacancy showed some variation between regions since 2010, with London consistently having the highest proportion of vacancies. The Department is trying to identify the schools that are experiencing the greatest teacher shortages and help them to meet those challenges.

**Bridget Phillipson:** Good teaching depends on retaining good teachers in the profession. Does the Minister not accept that the consistent underfunding of schools in disadvantaged areas such as the north-east makes retaining teachers very difficult? Will he look again at the area cost adjustment of the national funding formula, which could well have the perverse effect of sending money away from disadvantaged areas and into more affluent ones?

**Mr Gibb:** We have protected the core schools budget in real terms throughout this Parliament and the last. Moreover, we have grasped the nettle and introduced fair funding, which the Labour party failed to do throughout its time in office. One of the elements of that fair funding is ensuring that there are sufficient funds to tackle disadvantage and lower prior attainment.

**Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): Schools in Somerset have great teachers, but find it hard to recruit. Does my hon. Friend agree that adjusting the funding formula will help rural areas such as mine to attract and retain excellent teachers?

**Mr Gibb:** My hon. Friend is right. Authorities around the country, particularly those in the f40 group, have been underfunded for many years. As I said to the hon. Member for Houghton and Sunderland South (Bridget Phillipson), we were the first Government to grasp the nettle and introduce a much fairer system to replace those historic, anachronistic and unfair national funding formulas.

**Derek Twigg** (Halton) (Lab): Following last week's announcement of the proposed funding formula, may I ask the Minister how it will help us to recruit and retain teachers, given that all but one of the secondary schools in my constituency will lose money as a result of the formula?

**Mr Gibb:** The national funding formula has been introduced to ensure that we have a fair funding system. We shall be consulting on that fair funding system over the next 14 weeks, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will send in his representations.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): If an outstanding academy in the New Forest, minutes from the seaside, is finding it difficult to recruit an English teacher, what hope is there for schools anywhere else?

**Mr Gibb:** My right hon. Friend has raised an important point. The national fair funding formula will help schools to acquire the resources that will enable them to use the discretion that we have given them in respect of how they reward teachers, especially teachers of certain subjects whom it is difficult to recruit.

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): May I take this opportunity to wish the House Nollaig Chridheil agus Bliadhna Mhath Ùr?

The Association of School and College Leaders has warned that opening new grammar schools may worsen teacher recruitment. Does the Minister not think that priority should be given to incentivising teacher recruitment and retention, rather than taking the retrograde step of providing new grammars that will do nothing for teachers, pupils or parents?

**Mr Gibb:** We are prioritising teacher recruitment. We met 94% of our target last year and 93% this year, and we are recruiting more teachers in sciences than before. I think that the hon. Lady should take account of the number of teachers who are entering teacher training. She should also acknowledge that there are 456,000 teachers in our schools today, which is an all-time high, and that there are 15,000 more teachers today than there were in 2010.

### Careers Advice

6. **Danny Kinahan** (South Antrim) (UUP): What steps her Department is taking to prepare young people for their future careers. [907946]

**The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Robert Halfon):** May I take this opportunity to thank the hon. Gentleman for the work he does in the all-party group on education?

Helping all young people to get the careers education and guidance they need to climb the ladder of opportunity is crucial to delivering real social mobility, and that is why we are investing £90 million over the Parliament to ensure that every young person has access to advice and inspiration to fulfil their potential. This includes further funding for the Careers & Enterprise Company to continue the excellent work it has started, including £1 million for the first six opportunity areas.

**Danny Kinahan:** I thank the Minister for that answer. The all-party group on education is conducting an inquiry into how we prepare young children for the careers of the future, and specifically that seems to require not just the academic skills, but the also the soft skills. Do the Government feel they are doing that ably

enough, or are there to be changes? Also, will the Minister attend the launch of our document when it is produced on 7 February?

**Robert Halfon:** The hon. Gentleman makes an incredibly important point: not enough schools are encouraging their children to do not just soft skills, but all skills, and technical education and apprenticeships. We are working hard to change that. We have made sure that schools have to talk about apprenticeships and skills when giving careers advice. As I have said, we are investing many millions of pounds into the Careers & Enterprise Company, which is going to look after 250,000 students in some of the areas of the country that have the least careers provision. We are doing everything we can. In terms of the important event the hon. Gentleman mentions, I will do my best to attend, but will have to check the diary.

**Ben Howlett (Bath) (Con):** The Minister is right: the introduction of the Careers & Enterprise Company will do a great deal to improve careers advice among secondary school students. However, to encourage more girls into a science, technology, engineering and maths career we have to start earlier, in primary schools. Can he confirm that increasing diversity in STEM careers that lead to greater productivity will form a central part of the STEM-related industrial strategy, and will he work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to do so?

**Robert Halfon:** My hon. Friend is right: we need to do everything possible to ensure that young people do STEM subjects and that we encourage them to do so. That is why we are investing a lot in STEM apprenticeships. It is also why the get in, go far campaign focuses heavily on STEM subjects and encourages more women to do apprenticeships and to have the skills we need.

**Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab):** I am glad to hear the Minister's support for young people studying STEM subjects. Does he therefore share my disappointment that GCSEs in environmental science and environmental and land-based science have now been discontinued?

**Robert Halfon:** There are alternative qualifications, but I would add that we are creating a state-of-the-art technical education system with 15 different pathways, which will have important technical routes and qualifications. They will have prestige and give employers the qualifications they need.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):** The Minister knows that university technical colleges can be a fantastic route into apprenticeships, degrees and jobs. The proposed Gloucestershire university health UTC will be a magnificent example of this, but when will the delayed deadline for UTC applications be announced?

**Robert Halfon:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight the importance of UTCs, and he has been an incredible champion of apprenticeships and skills in his own constituency since being elected. I will speak to my noble Friend Lord Nash, the UTC Minister, about the specific question he raises.

### Leaving the EU: Funding for Further Education

7. **Natalie McGarry (Glasgow East) (Ind):** What assessment she has made of the effect on further education institutions of the potential loss of access to the (a) European social fund and (b) European regional development fund after the UK leaves the EU. [907948]

**The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Robert Halfon):** Following the European Union referendum on 23 June we are considering all aspects of how the vote of the people of the UK to leave the EU might impact on further education institutions. This includes consideration of institutions' access to EU funding sources. We are committed to ensuring the FE sector remains effective in delivering learning that provides individuals with the skills the economy needs for growth.

**Natalie McGarry:** The Chancellor of the Exchequer has committed to stability and certainty in the period leading up to our departure from the EU. Further education institutions in Glasgow—including Glasgow Kelvin College in my constituency—and across the UK will need that certainty in any post-Brexit scenario. Those colleges have benefited from European social funding to the tune of £1.5 million this year alone. Brexit was not a matter of Scotland's choosing or of Glasgow's choosing. Will the Government commit to abandoning the empty "Brexit means Brexit" rhetoric, publishing detailed plans, providing certainty and standing by our colleges on funding?

**Robert Halfon:** Leaving the European Union will mean that we will want to take our own decisions on how to deliver the policy objectives previously targeted by EU funding. The Government are consulting closely with stakeholders to review all EU funding schemes in the round, to ensure that any ongoing funding commitments best serve the UK's national interest while ensuring appropriate certainty.

**Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab):** Given that all EU spending in Britain is simply returning part of our gross contribution to the EU budget, would it not be sensible for the Government simply to commit now to replacing EU funding with UK Exchequer funding, thereby keeping everyone happy?

**Robert Halfon:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. As I have just said, the fact that the British people voted to leave the EU means that the United Kingdom Government will decide how best to spend the money that was previously going to the European Union.

**Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP):** Colleges Scotland has received more than £250 million in EU funding in the past 10 years to help fund capital projects. Given that it was this Government who gambled away Scotland's EU membership, what is the likelihood of their replacing this type of vital funding in the years ahead?

**Robert Halfon:** I find it interesting, given that the hon. Lady's party's position is to campaign for more powers to go from Westminster to Scotland, that she would rather have funding decisions made by an authority in the European Union than by one in Scotland. Having

said that, she will know that the Chancellor has announced that the Treasury will guarantee structural and investment funding bids that are signed before the UK leaves the EU. This includes funding for projects agreed after the autumn statement, provided that they represent good value for money and are in line with the Government's strategic priorities, even if they continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU.

**Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab): Our further education colleges benefit hugely from European structural funds such as the European social fund, as has been mentioned. The Government told me in February that the Skills Funding Agency had received £725 million from the European social fund, and that in 2014-15, £120 million went directly to FE colleges from European funding. That money guarantees thousands of apprenticeships, jobs and new skills. Can the Minister guarantee that the Government will replace that £120 million after Brexit? Will FE colleges that provide higher education courses then get the same Government guarantees on replacement funding as universities?

**Robert Halfon:** I had hoped that, in the spirit of Christmas, the hon. Gentleman might have welcomed the 900,000 apprenticeship participation figure, the highest on record in our island's history. As I have said, access to European funding is just one aspect of college business that will be impacted by the decision to leave the European Union. We are considering all the aspects of how FE colleges could be affected. It is also worth noting that, by 2020, the adult FE budget will be the highest in the nation's history if we include apprenticeships and adult learner loans in the budget as a whole.

### Apprenticeships

8. **John Howell** (Henley) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to help people from disadvantaged backgrounds to take up apprenticeships. [907949]

**The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Robert Halfon):** All this getting up and down is good practice for Christmas—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. If the Minister knows that he is going to answer the next question, he is very welcome to remain standing at the Dispatch Box. No one would think that there was anything disorderly or unreasonable about that, and he should feel welcome to do so.

**Robert Halfon:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, but it is good for the calories in advance of Christmas.

We are committed to ensuring that apprenticeships are as accessible as possible to all people from all backgrounds, and we are making available more than £60 million to support apprenticeship take-up by individuals from disadvantaged areas. Our get in, go far campaign aims to encourage more young people to apply for an apprenticeship and more employers to offer opportunities. We are increasing the number of traineeships to further support young people into apprenticeships and other work.

**John Howell:** What measures is the Minister putting in place to overcome the barriers to accessing apprenticeships and to ensure that schools' promotion of apprenticeships is good?

**Robert Halfon:** I mentioned that we are putting £60 million into deprived areas to encourage trainers to take apprentices from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We are putting a lot of funding into helping 16 to 18-year-olds into apprenticeships by supporting businesses and providers. We are supporting health and social care apprenticeships if the local authority has a health and social care plan. We are also supporting apprentices with disabilities and giving £12 million to the Union Learning Fund. This Government are committed to ensuring that the most disadvantaged people can do apprenticeships and get on the ladder of opportunity for the jobs and skills of the future.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): From next April, many schools will have to pay the apprenticeship levy—yet another cost. For one Hounslow school, it will mean an additional cost of £15,000. Will the Minister agree to meet me, my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Seema Malhotra) and concerned headteachers in Hounslow to discuss the levy's impact on schools and academies?

**Robert Halfon:** I am of course happy to meet the hon. Lady, but the whole idea of the apprenticeship levy is to change behaviours and ensure that we become an apprenticeship and skills nation. If the school that she describes has apprentices that meet the needs of the levy, not only will they not pay any levy but they will get 10% on top.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Small businesses often give apprentices the best experience, but they find it difficult to offer the time and resources to support them. What steps is the Minister taking to encourage small businesses in particular to take on more apprentices?

**Robert Halfon:** My hon. Friend is a champion of small business, both in his constituency and in the House. We are doing huge amounts to support small businesses to take on young apprentices, including a huge financial incentive for both providers and businesses. Very small businesses do not have to pay any training costs if they have 16 to 18-year-olds. We have also cut national insurance contributions for employers when apprentices are aged under 25.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The apprenticeship scheme must be and should be better publicised both in high schools and, I suggest, in primary schools to encourage those who do not feel comfortable in academia to understand that other options are available. Will the Minister specify how the Department plans to implement any such publication system in schools?

**Robert Halfon:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, as he so often does. Wherever I go around the country to meet apprentices, I often find that they have not been encouraged by their schools. We are looking hard at how to ensure that careers guidance encourages skills apprenticeships and technical education. As I said, we are investing £90 million in careers, including in the Careers & Enterprise Company, which has some 1,300 advisers in schools around the country getting kids to do work experience and acquire the skills they need.

### Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy

9. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What plans the Government have to respond to the independent review by Sir Nick Weller, “A Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy”, published in November 2016. [907951]

**The Minister for School Standards (Mr Nick Gibb):** We are committed to tackling educational inequality so that all pupils can fulfil their potential. We welcome the important contribution that Sir Nick Weller’s report is making towards delivering that objective, including its recognition of the benefits of an academic curriculum and robust governance structures.

**Diana Johnson:** Northern schools have been improving, but there is more to do. A northern powerhouse challenge that is as well funded as the London Challenge programme was under the Labour Government would be welcome for schools such as the McMillan Nursery School in my constituency—an outstanding school led by an excellent headteacher, Andrew Shimmin, and his staff. What support will be available to schools such as that, which is already doing its best in a disadvantaged area?

**Mr Gibb:** As Sir Nick’s report shows, there is an achievement gap between the north and the south, which is why the Chancellor announced in the March 2016 Budget £70 million of new funding between now and 2020 to support a northern powerhouse schools strategy.

**Mr Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): The Minister knows that Trafford is the best performing local authority area in the north of England, yet it is also one of the f40 group of worst-funded authorities. I am sure he can imagine the concern that last week’s draft funding formula will lead to all secondary schools and a number of primary schools being worse off. Will he look at the nature of the funding formula as a matter of urgency to ensure real fairness to those authorities that have been underfunded?

**Mr Gibb:** Overall, f40 authorities will see significant gains through the national funding formula—some £210 million in total. I acknowledge that in Trafford there is a loss of 0.4%, but the current local formula there underfunds primary schools compared with secondary schools. Trafford gives £4,212 for each key stage 3 pupil but the figure for primaries is only £2,642. Under the proposed NFF, Trafford’s secondary schools will lose but its primaries will gain.

**John Pugh** (Southport) (LD): The Education Policy Institute found that academy trusts are no better at raising standards than local authorities, so why does Nick Weller’s report say that expanding multi-academy trusts is

“key to driving up standards in the North”?

Is it because he is very well paid by a multi-academy trust, or is there perchance any evidence for what he suggests?

**Mr Gibb:** It is because he is experienced in running a very successful MAT. We know that sponsored academies increase standards very rapidly, certainly more swiftly than the predecessor school.

**Mr David Nuttall** (Bury North) (Con): One cause of the underperformance in northern schools that the report identifies is the challenge of teacher supply. Does the Minister agree that one way of improving that would be to recruit more former members of the armed forces into our teaching profession?

**Mr Gibb:** Yes, I do, and we have a scheme that does just that. As the years go by, it is recruiting increasing, albeit small, numbers of highly qualified, experienced ex-military personnel.

### Secondary School Closures

10. **Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Whether her Department has closed any state secondary schools within three years of their conversion to a single trust academy. [907952]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening):** We have not permanently closed any converter academies within three years of their conversion to a single trust academy. However, we have rebrokered or merged converter academies.

**Steve McCabe:** If no school has been closed within three years of such a conversion and no academy closed solely as a result of a bad Ofsted report, and if there is no reliable estimate of the costs of closure or of the availability of alternative places, future demand, real travel patterns and journey times to alternative schools, how do the Government justify renegeing on their promise to pupils and parents to rescue Baverstock Academy in my constituency, rather than close their school?

**Justine Greening:** No decision has been taken yet by Ministers on the future of Baverstock Academy, which has twice now been put into special measures by Ofsted. Ministers are going to consider all options, and of course the view of parents and the community, before reaching a final decision. The key factor will be ensuring that children get good access to a good education.

### Increasing Educational Opportunity

12. **Mr David Burrowes** (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to increase educational opportunity for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. [907954]

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening):** Increasing educational opportunity for disadvantaged pupils underpins our commitment to make sure that our country works for everyone, and through the pupil premium, worth £2.5 billion this year alone, we are narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. That can be seen in Eversley Primary School in Enfield, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate it on its excellent work on the pupil premium and on winning the high aspiration award.

**Mr Burrowes:** I thank the Secretary of State for that response, recognising the great work of Eversley school, among others, in my borough. I wish to draw on the responses from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills and touch on the “Getting ready for work” report. Given that school links with

local employers have let down the most vulnerable, in particular, may I commend to the Secretary of State the good example of Transport for London's Steps into Work programme, which is bucking the national trend; instead of only 6% of those with learning disabilities getting into work, some 57% are doing so.

**Justine Greening:** I am aware of that programme, and indeed as part of our opportunities area work we are working with both the CBI and the Careers & Enterprise Company to strengthen links between employers and schools. The TfL programme shows how, when we get a closer relationship between employers, local schools and young people, especially those with learning disabilities, it can really make a difference in employment rates.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State must know that there is a serious problem whereby disadvantaged young people are identified to be clever and bright up to the age of 11, in good primary schools, but then we lose them and they fail in secondary. I know she is reluctant ever to answer a question about skills and apprenticeships, but is she also aware of how many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are locked into the further education system, unable to get their GCSEs in maths and English? When is she going to do something about that? We are talking about tens of thousands of young people.

**Justine Greening:** At key stage 4, the attainment gap between more disadvantaged young people and those who start off from better backgrounds has been getting lower. That is, in part, because we are putting resources into the system, but we are also steadily improving the system itself. The hon. Gentleman talks about further education: one of our key aims across this Parliament is to make sure that technical education delivers the same gold-standard education as academic education delivers for those following academic routes.

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): In answer to my earlier question, the Secretary of State failed to commit to building a new selective school during this Parliament. Today the Education Policy Institute has released evidence showing that the 11-plus test cannot be tutor-proofed. Does she agree that selection at 11 will favour families that can afford it and do nothing to improve the educational outcomes of the most disadvantaged pupils?

**Justine Greening:** I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. As usual, we have had criticism from the Opposition, but no alternative policies whatever—and, indeed, a continued failure to set out whether they would close existing grammars. It would be fantastic to get clarity at some stage on Labour party policy. We want more good school places for children, particularly disadvantaged children. We know that disadvantaged children on free school meals who get into grammars see their attainment gap close by the time they leave.

### Times Tables

13. **Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): By what age pupils are expected to know the times tables up to 12; and what proportion of children of that age in (a) Northamptonshire and (b) England know those times tables. [907955]

**The Minister for School Standards (Mr Nick Gibb):** The new national curriculum that came into force in September 2014 expects every pupil to know their multiplication tables to 12 times 12 by the end of year 4.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): One hundred and forty-four!

**Mr Gibb:** Well done! We have strengthened primary maths assessment to prioritise fluency in written calculation and we have removed the use of calculators from key stage 2 tests.

We have not made an assessment of the proportion of children in Northamptonshire or England who know their multiplication tables by heart, but we have pledged to introduce a multiplication tables check for primary school pupils in England to ensure that every child leaves primary school fluent in their times tables up to and including 12 times 12, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lichfield (Michael Fabricant) says, is 144.

**Mr Speaker:** We are all very much better informed.

**Mr Hollobone:** Does the Minister agree that learning the times tables is an absolutely essential part of success at maths? What is the Government's official view on the best way for times tables to be taught and learned?

**Mr Gibb:** We do not have an official way for times tables to be taught, but we expect every child to know their tables. The provision is inserted into year 4 so that children are fluent in their tables, can recall them with automaticity and can then tackle long multiplication and long division in years 5 and 6.

### Physical Exercise in Schools

15. **David Rutley** (Macclesfield) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to encourage physical exercise in schools. [907957]

**The Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families (Edward Timpson):** We want all pupils to be healthy and active and have the opportunity to engage in sport and physical activity. That is why physical education remains a compulsory subject at all four key stages in the national curriculum. Since 2013, we have given more than £600 million directly to primary schools to improve the breadth and quality of PE and sport provision; that will double to £320 million a year from 2017.

**David Rutley:** Given the urgent need to tackle child obesity and physical inactivity, will my hon. Friend say what steps he is taking to work with organisations such as ukactive, the Outdoor Industry Association and The Daily Mile foundation, as well as local organisations such as Active Cheshire, to follow the example of Upton Priory School, where my daughter goes, to take forward more Daily Mile initiatives?

**Edward Timpson:** As a fellow Cheshire MP, I am aware of some of the excellent work that local schools and local groups, such as Active Cheshire, do in partnership. We welcome initiatives such as the Daily Mile, and I will be meeting the foundation in the new year. They all help teachers who have the autonomy to make good decisions on behalf of their pupils to have an array of excellent quality initiatives to use. We continue to promote those through county sport partnerships.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister is too modest in declining to take the opportunity to say that he has, over many years, led by example through his repeated and impressive marathon running, with which the whole House should by now be well familiar.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Physical activity is really important to equip the next generation with the skills to contend with both their physical and mental health. Alone, however, it will not contend with our nation's obesity crisis; we know from the child measurement figures how challenging that issue is for our country. Will the Government be bringing forward compulsory personal, social, health and economic education so that we can equip the next generation with the knowledge and skills to know what they should be eating as well as what physical activity they should be doing?

**Edward Timpson:** I have already told the House that PE is compulsory at all four key stages. The Secretary of State has set out the need to improve the access to, and the quality of, PSHE, and we are continuing to look at that very carefully. Just to stop the press, I will be taking part in the London marathon again next year to continue my efforts to lead by example.

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is genuinely a hero in his own times.

### Topical Questions

T1. [907927] **Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Education (Justine Greening):** May I, too, wish everybody in the House a happy Christmas?

The latest Ofsted figures show that there are now nearly 1.8 million more children being taught in good or outstanding schools than in 2010. Our Schools that Work for Everyone consultation has now ended, and we look forward to responding to that in due course. In the past few weeks, we have announced a £140 million strategic school improvement fund and published the next stage of the consultation on our national fairer funding formula for schools across England, which will finally bring an end to the historical postcode lottery on school funding. I also had the chance to see our excellent teacher exchange programme in Shanghai, China, earlier this month, as well as to visit many great schools in our own country.

**Nigel Huddleston:** Team GB gave an incredible performance at this year's Rio Olympic games, bringing home 67 medals. One third of the medal winners went to private schools, compared with 7% of the population. What else are the Government doing to encourage even greater participation in sport in our state schools?

**Justine Greening:** Since 2013, we have provided over £600 million to primary schools through the primary PE and sport premium, which is steadily starting to make a difference. In fact, in independent research, schools reported an 84% increase in participation in extracurricular activities. But we know there is a lot more to do, which is why we have doubled the premium to £320 million a year from autumn 2017.

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I, too, would like to wish the Secretary of State and all Members of the House a merry Christmas, but it ain't going to be a very merry Christmas for our schools. The recent Government consultation document says there will be a floor on schools' funding so that no school will lose more than 3% of its funding per pupil as a result of the changes to the funding formula—a hugely necessary protection, as some schools face cuts that are too severe to manage. Not only has the National Audit Office shown that, despite the floor, schools are facing funding cuts of 8% per pupil, but it has criticised the Department for failing to make the scale of the coming cuts clear. The Secretary of State has two choices—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Lady will resume her seat. I am sorry, but if we are going to have a right for the Opposition Front Bench to come in on topicals—I make this clear now, with immediate effect—it must be done very briefly; otherwise, it completely absorbs the time that is for Back Benchers. A single sentence from the hon. Lady will suffice.

**Angela Rayner:** Thank you—sorry, Mr Speaker. The Secretary of State has two choices: will she cut the funding in 2020, or will she issue guidance to schools on what those cuts will be?

**Justine Greening:** We are consulting on proposals for a new national funding formula. I think everybody accepts the current system is unfair, untransparent and out of date, and it does not support our aspiration for all children to be able to reach their potential and succeed in adult life. There is often little or no justification for the differences that local areas and schools get at the moment. The consultation is now under way, and I have no doubt that hon. Members on both sides of the House will want to respond to it.

**Angela Rayner:** The former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), is the most recent senior Conservative to say that the Prime Minister's plans to include international students in migration figures are not sensible. Will the Secretary of State join the Opposition and commit to doing everything she can to reverse this foolish policy and to ensure that students are removed from the migration statistics?

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Joseph Johnson):** We value the very significant contribution that international students make to our universities. We welcome them, and we have no plans to introduce a cap on intake. As the Secretary of State recently announced, we will shortly be seeking views on the study immigration route, and all interested parties, including the Opposition, should ensure their point of view is heard.

T2. [907928] **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): Getting it right early on is so crucial for life chances. Pen Green in Corby offers flagship nursery provision and early intervention, which local families very much appreciate and value. Would the Minister be willing to come and visit Pen Green, or to meet representatives of it, to discuss how the funding reforms can best support this provision?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Caroline Dinenage):** Maintained nursery schools are a very small but very important part of the early years sector, providing high-quality childcare and education often in areas of disadvantage. They have a potentially important role in shaping best practice with other providers in their area. I would be happy to meet my hon. Friend and representatives of Pen Green to discuss this further.

T3. [907929] **Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that many schools, including the primary school in the most deprived part of my constituency that contacted me on Wednesday, are struggling financially as a result of, among other things, the overheads that are being heaped on them, and that children with special educational needs are likely to suffer most from the financial squeeze?

**Justine Greening:** In fact, under the national funding formula that we announced last week in relation to starting the consultation on high needs, no local areas will lose out. Indeed, we have been able not only to do that but to ensure that the areas that have been underfunded will be able to gain up to 3% over 2018-19 and 2019-20.

T5. [907932] **David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): Following the publication of the key stage SATs results on Thursday, we saw that whereas the national average pass rate was 54% and the Lancashire pass rate was 54%, the pass rate in my constituency was 47%. What steps are the Department taking to look at best practice in schools such as those in my constituency with a pass rate of 78%, and what can it do to help the schools that are underperforming?

**The Minister for School Standards (Mr Nick Gibb):** I share my hon. Friend's justifiable concern. We want all schools to use evidence-based teaching such as systematic synthetic phonics and maths mastery. To help spread effective practice, we have established a national network of teaching schools, as well as school partnerships led by schools that excel in the teaching of maths, phonics, and science.

T4. [907931] **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): International students are vital to the economy, contributing about £7 billion, according to Universities UK. Will the Minister confirm whether this Government plan to use the new teaching and excellence framework to link student visas to the quality of course and institution as a means of cutting immigration?

**Joseph Johnson:** No decision has yet been taken on the best way to differentiate in order to allow our best institutions to continue to attract international students. The Home Secretary has indicated that she will start a consultation in the new year, and all parties are encouraged to contribute to it.

T8. [907935] **David Rutley** (Macclesfield) (Con): Recognising the mental health challenges faced by an increasing number of young people, what steps is my hon. Friend taking to work with third sector bodies such as YoungMinds and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to help young people and their parents to tackle self-harming, which is blighting the lives of too many children?

**The Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families (Edward Timpson):** Every child and young person should be able to enjoy good mental health and well-being. My hon. Friend is right to raise the serious concerns about self-harm. That is why we are working closely with the Department of Health to tackle it by funding guidance for schools on teaching about it, and information and training for professionals and parents through the MindEd web portal, as well as providing funding to the YoungMinds parents' helpline and to the NSPCC's invaluable Childline. However, we know that there is more to do.

T6. [907933] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): The higher education sector in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland supported SNP amendments to the Higher Education and Research Bill to ensure fair, UK-wide representation on the board of UK Research and Innovation. Does the Secretary of State have any plans to look at this issue again, or is she happy to ignore the respected HE voices within the devolved nations?

**Joseph Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman will have seen the amendment that the Government tabled to the Bill ensuring that there will be at least one member of the UKRI board with experience of the excellent research that goes on in at least one of our devolved Administrations.

T7. [907934] **Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): Universities such as Sunderland do a fantastic job in supporting part-time and mature students into higher education. Ministers claim to want to support this, so why was funding for widening participation cut by 50% in the autumn statement?

**Joseph Johnson:** The hon. Lady will be encouraged to see that spending on access agreements will increase to some £800 million in the next financial year, up from about £400 million when the previous coalition Government came into office, almost doubling the amount being spent on this important area.

**Sir Hugo Swire** (East Devon) (Con): The Secretary of State will remember the historical and ongoing problems with flooding at Tipton St John Primary School. Will she announce an early Christmas present for the people of Tipton St John and of Ottery St Mary by announcing that her Department is going to contribute to the funding solution to relocate the school to Ottery St Mary?

**Mr Gibb:** Following my right hon. Friend's meeting on 12 October with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and county representatives to consider plans to relocate the school, a feasibility study was submitted to the Education Funding Agency. Officials have reviewed the report and have been in dialogue with Devon County Council to address outstanding issues. Once those are resolved, a decision can be taken about whether any central funding contribution can be made, and whether my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire) will have a Christmas present.

**Roger Mullin** (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP): Given the contribution of EU nationals to the overall numbers of teachers and lecturers, what contingency plans do Ministers have should that source of recruitment diminish?

**Joseph Johnson:** As I said in an earlier answer, this Government welcome strongly the contribution that EU and international students make to our higher education institutions. There is no plan to introduce a cap on the number of international students. We continue to welcome EU students.

**Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The superb schools across my constituency of Wealden face the double financial whammy of being both rural and small. Under the new funding formula, only eight schools will get an uplift. May I urge Ministers to look again at the schools in Wealden that do not regularly hit the traditional markers of deprivation?

**Justine Greening:** We have kicked off a consultation on introducing a national funding formula. As my hon. Friend points out, we have tried to make sure that it reflects factors that affect schools in more remote locations, as well as those with higher cost bases under the additional costs allowance. She has obviously looked at the impacts on her local schools and I am sure that she will want to provide input into the consultation.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): Last Tuesday, more than 2,000 people filled Nottingham's royal concert hall to hear hundreds of schoolchildren singing and playing together in the Nottingham Music Service "Christmas in the City" concert. Does the Secretary of State agree that the opportunity to learn to play music is hugely important in building children's confidence and their enjoyment of school, and will she visit Nottingham Music Service to hear more about the wonderful work it is doing in our city schools, where more than 8,000 students are learning to play a musical instrument?

**Justine Greening:** We have announced £300 million for music and the arts. As someone who had the chance to play music during my school years, I know how

important it is. I very much hope that those children will get the benefit of the ongoing investment that this Government are putting in.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Shortage of time is good reason to call a master of brevity: Mr John Redwood.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): When will pupils be able to take up places in the new grammars envisaged in the Secretary of State's policy?

**Justine Greening:** Once we have got through the response to our consultation and, I hope, had the chance to change the law that prevents grammars from being opened, I hope that we will be able to make some progress.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Finally, whether she is a mistress of brevity or not, I call Fiona Mactaggart.

**Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough) (Lab): Headteachers in Slough schools were very grateful to the Minister for School Standards when he met them to discuss teacher shortages. Unfortunately—I am sorry to bring this to the Chamber—I have reminded him twice since then that they have not received the letter that he promised them at that meeting. Can I expect it to be sent before Christmas?

**Mr Gibb:** I will do my utmost to ensure that they receive a letter. I enjoyed meeting them and they raised some very important points, but we are ensuring that we are filling teacher training places. There are more teachers in our initial teacher training system now than there were last year.

**Mr Speaker:** Well done.

## European Council 2016

3.33 pm

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on last week's European Council.

Both the UK and the rest of the EU are preparing for the negotiations that will begin when we trigger article 50 before the end of March next year, but the main focus of this Council was, rightly, on how we can work together to address some of the most pressing challenges that we face. These include responding to the migration crisis, strengthening Europe's security and helping to alleviate the suffering in Syria. As I have said, for as long as the UK is a member of the EU we will continue to play our full part, and that is what this Council showed, with the UK making a significant contribution on each of those issues.

On migration, from the outset the UK has pushed for a comprehensive approach that focuses on the root causes of migration as the best way to reduce the number of people coming to Europe. I have called for more action in source and transit countries to disrupt the smuggling networks, to improve local capacity to control borders, and to support sustainable livelihoods, both for people living there and for refugees. I have also said that we must better distinguish between economic migrants and refugees, swiftly returning those who have no right to remain and thereby sending out a deterrence message to others thinking of embarking on perilous journeys.

The Council agreed to action in all these areas, and the UK remains fully committed to playing our part. We have already provided training to the Libyan coastguard. The Royal Navy is providing practical support in the Mediterranean and Aegean. We will also deploy 40 additional specialist staff to the Greek islands to accelerate the processing of claims, particularly from Iraqi, Afghan and Eritrean nationals, and to help to return those who have no right to stay. Ultimately, we need a long-term, sustainable approach, for that is the best way to retain the consent of our people to provide support and sanctuary to those most in need.

I turn to security and defence. Whether it is deterring Russian aggression, countering terrorism or fighting organised crime, the UK remains firmly committed to the security of our European neighbours. That is true now, and it will remain true once we have left the EU. At this Council we welcomed the commitment from all member states to take greater responsibility for their security, to invest more resources and to develop more capabilities. That is the right approach, and, as the Council made clear, it should be done in a way that complements rather than duplicates NATO.

A stronger EU and a stronger NATO can be mutually reinforcing, and that should be our aim. We must never lose sight of the fact that NATO will always be the bedrock of our collective defence in Europe, and we must never allow anything to undermine it. We also agreed at the Council to renew tier 3 economic sanctions on Russia for another six months, maintaining the pressure on Russia to implement the Minsk agreements in full.

I turn to the appalling situation in Syria. We have all seen the devastating pictures on our TV screens and heard heartbreaking stories of families struggling to get

to safety. At this Council we heard directly from the mayor of eastern Aleppo, a brave and courageous man who has already witnessed his city brought to rubble, his neighbours murdered and children's lives destroyed. He had one simple plea for us: to get those who have survived through years of conflict, torture and fear to safety. Together with our European partners, we must do all we can to help.

The Council was unequivocal in its condemnation of President Assad and his backers, Russia and Iran, who must bear the responsibility for the tragedy in Aleppo. They must now allow the UN to safely evacuate the innocent people of Aleppo—Syrians whom President Assad claims to represent. We have seen some progress in recent days, but a few busloads is not enough when there are thousands more who must be rescued, and we cannot have those buses being attacked as they have been.

On Thursday afternoon my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary summoned the Russian and Iranian Ambassadors to make it clear that we expect them to help. Over the weekend, the UK has been working with our international partners to secure agreement on a UN Security Council resolution that would send in UN officials to monitor the evacuation of civilians and provide unfettered humanitarian access. That has been agreed unanimously this afternoon, and we now need it to be implemented in full. President Assad may be congratulating his regime forces on their actions in Aleppo, but we are in no doubt. This is no victory; it is a tragedy, and one we will not forget. Last week's Council reiterated that those responsible must be held to account.

Alongside our diplomatic efforts, the UK is going to provide a further £20 million of practical support for those who are most vulnerable. That includes £10 million for trusted humanitarian partners working on the front line in some of the hardest-to-reach places in Syria to help them to deliver food parcels and medical supplies to those most in need, and an additional £10 million to UNICEF to help it to provide life-saving aid supplies for Syrian refugees now massing at the Jordanian border. As the mayor of Aleppo has said, it is, sadly, too late to save all those who have been lost, but it is not too late to save those who remain. That is what we must now do.

I turn to Brexit. I updated the Council on the UK's plans for leaving the European Union. I explained that two weeks ago this House voted by a considerable majority—almost six to one—to support the Government by delivering the referendum result and invoking article 50 before the end of March. The UK's Supreme Court is expected to rule next month on whether the Government require parliamentary legislation in order to do this. I am clear that the Government will respect the verdict of our independent judiciary, but I am equally clear that whichever way the judgment goes, we will meet the timetable I have set out.

At the Council, I also reaffirmed my commitment to a smooth and orderly exit. In this spirit, I made it clear to the other EU leaders that it remains my objective that we give reassurance early on in the negotiations to EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in EU countries that their right to stay where they have made their homes will be protected by our withdrawal. This is an issue that I would like to agree quickly, but that clearly requires the agreement of the rest of the EU.

Finally, I welcomed the subsequent short discussion between the 27 other leaders on their own plans for the UK's withdrawal. It is right that the other leaders prepare for the negotiations, just as we are making our own preparations. That is in everyone's best interests.

My aim is to cement the UK as a close partner of the EU once we have left. As I have said before, I want the deal we negotiate to reflect the kind of mature, co-operative relationship that close friends and allies enjoy: a deal that will give our companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate in the European market and allow European businesses to do the same here, and a deal that will deliver the deepest possible co-operation to ensure our national security and the security of our allies, but a deal that will mean that when it comes to decisions about our national interest, such as how we control immigration, we can make these decisions for ourselves, and a deal that will mean our laws are once again made in Britain, not in Brussels. With a calm and measured approach, this Government will honour the will of the British people and secure the right deal that will make a success of Brexit for the UK, for the EU and for the world. I commend this statement to the House.

3.41 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for the advance copy of her statement. As we approach the end of this year, I think we can all agree this has been a year of enormous change in this country and the rest of the world, but with that change comes a great deal of division. As we move swiftly towards the triggering of article 50, I want to appeal to the Prime Minister not only to work harder to heal those divisions in Britain, but to make sure that her new year's resolutions include a commitment to build better relations with our European partners so that we get the best deal for the people of this country, not just a Brexit that benefits big business and bankers.

At the moment, it is clear that the Prime Minister and Britain are becoming increasingly isolated on the international stage. If we are to build a successful Britain after Brexit, it is more vital than ever that our relationship with our European partners remains strong, cordial and respectful. It is also clear from my own discussions with European leaders that they are becoming increasingly frustrated by her shambolic Government and the contradictory approach to Brexit negotiations. The mixed messages from her Front Bench only add to the confusion. This Government fail to speak for the whole country; instead, we hear a babble of voices speaking for themselves and their vested interests.

For instance, last week we were told by Britain's permanent representative to the EU that a Brexit deal may take 10 years, contradicting what the Secretary of State for Brexit told a Select Committee that day, when he said a deal could be struck in 18 months. There is a bit of a difference there. We also heard from the Chancellor, who told us that Britain was looking for a transitional deal with the European Union, only for the Secretary of State for International Trade to warn against a transitional deal, saying any arrangements close to the status quo would go against the wishes of those who voted to leave. The people of Britain deserve better than this confusion at the heart of Government.

Confidence is being lost. The Office for Budget Responsibility made its own judgment on the Government's Brexit plans in November, when it published new forecasts for 2017: growth was revised down, wages revised down and business investment revised down; the only thing the OBR raised was its forecast for inflation. The Government are risking even weaker growth than they have delivered so far and an exodus of financial services, and hitting manufacturing industry very hard.

I welcome the fact that the Government have now accepted Labour's demands for a published Brexit plan, but it is still unclear how the plan will be presented and when we will receive it in Parliament. Can the Prime Minister today do what the Secretary of State for Brexit, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for International Trade and the permanent representative to the EU all failed to do last week and give this country some real answers? Can she tell us when the House will receive the Government's plan for article 50 and how long we will be given to scrutinise that plan? Can she also tell us how long the Government envisage the whole process taking? Can she tell us whether the Government will be looking for an interim transitional deal with the European Union? These are basic questions that have still not been answered, nearly six months after Britain voted to leave the European Union.

There were also reports last week that the UK will be asked to pay a €50 billion bill to honour commitments to the EU budget until 2020. Can the Prime Minister tell this House if that is the case? Can she update us all on the Government's contingency plans for those projects and programmes in the UK that are currently reliant on EU funding after 2020? There is much concern in many parts of the country about those programmes.

I welcome the Prime Minister's desire to bring forward and give greater clarity on the issue of rights of EU citizens in the United Kingdom. However, if she is serious about this, why wait? Why will the Government not end the worry and uncertainty, as this House demanded in July, and give an unequivocal commitment to guarantee people's rights before article 50 is triggered, as both the TUC and the British Chambers of Commerce called for this weekend? Not only is it the right thing to do; it would also send a clear signal to our colleagues and our European friends that Britain is committed to doing the right thing and committed to a friendly future relationship.

With that in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Austrian President, Alexander Van der Bellen, on his election. I am sure we all agree that his victory in the presidential elections represents a victory for respect and kindness over hate and division, and is a signal against the dangerous rise of the far right across Europe.

I am also glad that the European Union Council leaders discussed the other pressing global issues last week, notably the terrible situation in Syria. I therefore want to use this opportunity to renew the calls I made in a letter to the Prime Minister last week for an urgent and concerted effort from the Government to press for an end to the violence and for a United Nations-led ceasefire, along with the creation of UN-brokered humanitarian corridors and the issuance of effective advance warnings of attack to the civilian population, as well as urgent talks through the UN to achieve a negotiated political settlement. It is clear that the rules

[Jeremy Corbyn]

of war are being broken on all sides. Labour has long condemned attacks on civilian targets on all sides, including those by Russian and pro-Syrian Government forces in Aleppo, for which there can be no excuse.

I also know that Cyprus and reunification were raised at the Council meeting. Will the Prime Minister give us an update on what was said on this issue? Britain is after all a guarantor of Cypriot independence under the 1960 treaty.

There is a lot to do in 2017, with a lot of important decisions to be made. I make a plea to the Prime Minister to represent all sides, whether they voted to leave or remain, and to make the right decisions that benefit not just her party but everyone in this country.

**The Prime Minister:** On the issue of Cyprus, President Anastasiades updated us on the talks that had taken place. These are important talks. I think we all accept that we have perhaps the best opportunity for a settlement in Cyprus that we have seen for many, many years. The talks have been taking place under UN auspices between the two leaders. They have been encouraged and generated by the two leaders on the island, and it is important that we recognise the leadership they have shown on this issue. The right hon. Gentleman is right. There are three guarantors: Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom. We stand ready to play our part, as required and when it is appropriate for us to do so. There is a meeting coming up in January, and there is a possibility that it will be attended by others such as the United Kingdom. In the EU Council's conclusions, it said that it stood ready to participate if that were part of helping the deal to come through.

On Syria, the right hon. Gentleman wrote to me asking for us to take action through the United Nations. We have consistently taken action through the UN. We have been working over the weekend to ensure that there was a UN Security Council resolution today that was accepted. As all Members will know, Russia has vetoed a number of previous Security Council resolutions, and the most recent one before today was vetoed by both Russia and China. It is very clear that we now have a resolution that has been accepted by Russia and China, and accepted unanimously by the Security Council. It provides for humanitarian access and for UN monitoring of people leaving Aleppo, which is important.

The right hon. Gentleman spent most of his comments on Brexit. He started off by talking about our wanting a deal that benefits the United Kingdom. Yes, I have been saying that ever since I first came into this role. We want to ensure that we get the best possible deal, but I have to say to him that we do not get the possible deal in negotiations by laying out everything we want in advance. That is the whole point of negotiations.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about isolation. The point is that the UK is going to leave the European Union. We are leaving the group that is the European Union. In due course, they will meet only as 27 members, because we will no longer be a member. It is clear from what happened at the EU Council that, as long as we are a member, we will continue to play our full part with the European Union.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about EU funds, and funds that are currently intended to continue beyond the date at which we would leave the European Union.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the position very clearly some weeks ago. Those funds will continue to be met provided they give value for money and meet the UK Government's objectives.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the length of the process. As he knows, once we trigger article 50, the treaty allows for a process that can take up to two years. Of course, how long it takes within that period depends on the progress of the negotiations that take place. He then spoke about uncertainty and the need for investment in the UK. He gave the impression of a bleak economic picture, but I remind him that ours is the fastest-growing economy this year in the G7. Let us look at the companies that have announced new additional investment since the Brexit referendum: Honda, Jaguar Land Rover, Nissan, Aldi, Associated British Ports, CAF, Facebook, Google, GlaxoSmithKline, Sitel and Statoil. The list will continue because this is still a good place to invest and a good place to grow businesses.

The right hon. Gentleman then talked about confusion on the Front Bench. Well, he has obviously been looking at his own Front Bench. Let us take one very simple issue: immigration. The shadow Home Secretary suggests that freedom of movement should be maintained; the shadow Chancellor said that we should have a fair deal on freedom of movement; and the shadow Brexit Secretary says we should have immigration controls. They cannot even agree on one aspect of leaving the European Union. With the Leader of the Opposition's negotiation technique, if he were in office, we would as sure as goodness be getting the worst possible deal we could get for the United Kingdom.

**Mr Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): When my right hon. Friend was at the Council and reminded the Council leaders of her generous offer to allow EU citizens here in the UK to remain, and for UK citizens to receive the same privilege, did she manage to take Donald Tusk to one side and ask him simply why, when his own Government was keen to agree to that, he turned round and vetoed it?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is right that I made it clear once again that I hope the issue of EU citizens living here and UK citizens living in EU member states can be dealt with at an early stage of the negotiations. The other member states and the Council have been clear that they are not prepared to enter into negotiations before article 50 is triggered, but I will continue to remind them of our hope, for a very good reason: we want to give certainty and reassurance to people that this issue can be dealt with at a very early stage and then the people concerned can get on with their lives.

**Angus Robertson** (Moray) (SNP): May I begin by thanking the Prime Minister for advance sight of her statement and, as it is the last opportunity to do so, wish colleagues a very merry Christmas, happy Hogmanay and a fantastic 2017?

It is now more than six months since the Brexit referendum, when more than 62% of voters in Scotland voted to remain in the European Union. Tomorrow the Scottish Government will become the first Administration in the UK to publish their plans in detail. The Prime Minister has said that she will seriously engage with the

Scottish Government, which is to be welcomed, and that she has a respect agenda. Will she therefore commit to meeting the First Minister to incorporate priorities of the Scottish Government in the UK negotiating position?

On security, the Prime Minister's statement welcomed commitments on capability, including on cyber threats. Without going into details, for obvious reasons, is she confident that enough safeguards are in place regarding democratic institutions in the UK, including political parties?

The violence in the middle east was discussed in the Council, and across the House we welcome any initiatives that make a difference in Syria, but there was no mention in the Prime Minister's statement of Yemen. Is it true that senior Ministers have known for some time that UK cluster munitions have been used in the current conflict in Yemen? When was she told about that, and when will the UK join our European partners in starting to have a more ethical foreign policy on both Saudi Arabia and Yemen?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman will have seen that the Defence Secretary will make a statement on Yemen later this afternoon. The issue was not discussed at the European Council. We focused on the issues I mentioned in my statement.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about cyber-security and political parties. Maintaining their cyber-security is a matter for individual political parties. It is up to them to look at how they undertake that.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the document that the Scottish Government will publish tomorrow. I took a call from the First Minister this morning, in which I assured her that we will look very seriously at the proposals that the Scottish Government are bringing forward. I welcome the fact that they have been looking at their priorities. We have been encouraging all the devolved Administrations to do so, so that those priorities can be taken into account in the UK negotiations on leaving the European Union.

There is already a structure in place that enables us to discuss those priorities with the devolved Administrations. The Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations will meet in early January. It has been meeting regularly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. There will be a further session of the JMC plenary in January. That normally meets only once a year, if that, but we are increasing the number of its meetings precisely so that we can engage with the devolved Administrations on these issues.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that people in the Opposition and in business who say that we should make compromises by offering money or some control over our laws or borders to get a deal are bidding against our country, making it more difficult to achieve a good deal and misunderstanding what the majority voted for?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my right hon. Friend that the public want us to get on and get the best possible deal for the United Kingdom. They want us to leave the European Union and deliver success in doing that. It is absolutely right that we do not give out every detail of our negotiating strategy because, as I say, that would be the way to get the worst possible deal.

**Mr Pat McFadden** (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): On Friday, along with other hon. Members from Wolverhampton, I met UTC Aerospace, which employs 1,600 people in high-value manufacturing jobs in Wolverhampton. That company raised with us membership of the European Aviation Safety Agency. When the Prime Minister says that Brexit means Brexit, does she mean that we will no longer participate in the European Aviation Safety Agency and many other such agencies, including for example the European Medical Agency?

**The Prime Minister:** It is precisely because we need to look with great care and consideration at the wide range of our relationships with Europe that we have taken time before we trigger article 50. This is exactly the sort of work the Department for Exiting the European Union is doing: looking at the range of organisations, some of which are linked to membership of the European Union and some of which will not be so linked to membership of the European Union, and making a decision; and, crucially, talking to each sector about what is important for them, so we understand what really matters to business.

**Mr Peter Lilley** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): While welcoming my right hon. Friend's calm, considered and thorough preparations before triggering article 50, does she agree that a speedy conclusion of the subsequent negotiations will be in this country's interests, both to put an end to damaging uncertainty and because, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility, every week's additional delay in leaving the EU costs this country £250 million net per week?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said in an earlier response to the Leader of the Opposition, the treaty sets out a potential two-year process of negotiations. For how long, over those two years, it is necessary for the negotiations to take is a matter for the progress of those discussions and talks. My right hon. Friend makes a very valid point that the sooner certainty can come the better that will be for business, but we need to make sure we are getting the right deal for the United Kingdom.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): Perhaps the Prime Minister could then tell us with some certainty when her plan for exiting the European Union, which she has agreed to present to this House, will be ready. Presumably, it will be some time before she triggers article 50.

**The Prime Minister:** Yes.

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): In their joint statement of 15 December, the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, and the Heads of State of all 27 member states, unanimously insisted that "access to the Single Market requires acceptance of all four freedoms"

including freedom of movement and the European Court of Justice. Does my right hon. Friend agree that such an ultimatum is unacceptable and that it will not be accepted by the British people?

**The Prime Minister:** I have said all along that I believe that underlying part of the vote to leave the European Union was the desire of the British people to have control over immigration, and for decisions on

[*The Prime Minister*]

immigration to be made by the Government here in the United Kingdom. We should deliver on that. I look at these issues in terms of the deal we want to negotiate and the outcome we want, which is the best possible deal for trading with, and operating within, the single European market, but that should be commensurate with the other requirements we have: British laws made here in Britain and control on immigration.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement and for advance sight of it. Following the European Council, it appears that the Prime Minister is leading our country not just out of the European Union but out of the single market and the customs union, neither of which were on the ballot paper last June. If instead remain had won by a whisker last June, would the Government have had a mandate, I wonder, for a hard remain? Would Mr Cameron have been stood there bouncing us into the euro and Schengen? Does the Prime Minister agree that, ludicrous as that sounds, it is no more ludicrous than the extreme rewriting of the referendum result that she now seeks to impose on the British people?

**The Prime Minister:** The majority vote in the referendum was for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. That is what we will be delivering. Once again, the hon. Gentleman raises questions about means rather than ends. What we want is the best possible outcome in the trading relationship between the UK and the European Union, and for operating within the European Union. That is where our focus should be—not on particular processes to get there.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): The Council conclusions stressed the Union's continued resolve to deepen and strengthen its relationship with Ukraine in the face of current challenges. How strongly does the Prime Minister expect her Government to support Ukraine after we have left the European Union?

**The Prime Minister:** It is absolutely right that the European Council was concerned and wanted to ensure that we have that continuing relationship with Ukraine. The UK is already supporting Ukraine in a number of ways. When we leave the European Union, we will look at our continuing bilateral relationships with countries across the European continent. We are already providing money to establish the national anti-corruption bureau in Ukraine and we are supporting energy reform to reduce the country's dependence on Russian gas. We are offering defensive training to Ukrainian armed forces and supporting internal reform with the Ukrainian ministry of defence. We already have a number of areas in which we are supporting Ukraine. I expect that we would continue to want a good bilateral relationship with Ukraine once we have left the European Union.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister update us on any discussions about how successful the European Union views its arrangements with Turkey in respect of control of the border and flows of immigration?

**The Prime Minister:** We support the continuing EU-Turkey deal. It has had an impact on the migratory movements across the Aegean, but there are of course elements to the EU-Turkey deal, particularly visa liberalisation, with which the UK is not involved because we are not one of the Schengen member states. That matter of visa liberalisation is still being discussed by members of the Schengen border zone. As I say, the UK is not part of that, but we should recognise that the arrangements in place so far have had an impact on movements into Greece from Turkey. Crucially, we need to ensure that the process of returning people who have no right to be in Greece is operating as smoothly as possible. That is one reason why we are offering extra staff to Greece, so that the process of dealing with those claims can be carried out more smoothly.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell** (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): The whole House will welcome the focus on Syria and Aleppo that my right hon. Friend has reported from the meeting. Most welcome is the additional British humanitarian support, including for UNICEF, that the Prime Minister has announced, and the part played by British diplomats and the Government over the weekend in securing the successful UN resolution along the lines of the debate here last week. Will she ensure that over the Christmas and new year holiday, the full span of Government attention will continue on securing unfettered access for humanitarian workers, medical supplies and food, bearing in mind that there are still more than 50,000 people out in the open in Aleppo who are very frightened and living in temperatures well below freezing?

**The Prime Minister:** With his experience, my right hon. Friend recognises that it is about not just agreeing a resolution, but ensuring that it is then implemented, so that making humanitarian aid available to people and enabling them to leave safely can be put into practice. I assure my right hon. Friend that we recognise the importance of getting momentum going on this. It will be important to do that over the coming days and weeks. Our focus on it will continue.

**Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): May I ask the Prime Minister about the risks of the cliff-edge in April 2019, which is already prompting some of our key financial institutions, such as Lloyd's of London, to think about moving some of their business out of Britain? Does she agree with the Chancellor, who said that it would be helpful if we started to discuss a transitional arrangement going beyond that particular deadline, and started discussing it now?

**The Prime Minister:** The Chancellor reflected the comments I made when I spoke to the CBI, recognising the desire for business to have some certainty beyond that point of leaving the European Union. That is one of the reasons why we have already announced that we are going to bring EU law into domestic law in the UK at that point, so that people can have some certainty about the point of movement from membership of the European Union to being outside it.

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con): At the end of November, Ilse Aigner, the Christian Social Union economy Minister of Bavaria, gave a clear warning to her coalition partners in Berlin that uncertainty

could damage the Bavarian economy, as the UK is one of its most important trading partners. Does the Prime Minister appreciate that there will be significant forces in Europe supporting her timetable to trigger article 50 at the end of March in order to bring to a conclusion the arrangements for free trade that exist between us and Bavaria?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend raises an important point, specifically about Bavaria, but the overall point is a very simple one. This is not just about what is in the interests of the United Kingdom; it is also about what is in the interests of the remaining 27 members of the European Union. As we negotiate that deal, I expect us to negotiate one that will be right for the UK but that will retain a strong European Union, with which we will be trading and working together on matters of mutual interest.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): I welcome the extension of sanctions against Russia for a further six months, but there has been very little visible progress on the Minsk accord in recent months. What does the Prime Minister think the extension will achieve, and how can we move the process forward?

**The Prime Minister:** The Council was updated by Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande, who have obviously been leading in relation to discussions on the Minsk agreement. Everyone is concerned about the fact that the agreement still has not been put in place. I believe that we needed to roll over the sanctions in order to show our continuing rigour, and our continuing expectation that Russia will abide by the requirements.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Ah, yes, the good doctor. Dr Julian Lewis.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): We see EU countries dangerously duplicating NATO's structures, but without American participation. Would it not do much more for the defence of Europe if France and Germany, and other EU states that are members of NATO, spent a minimum of 2% of their GDP on defence?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my right hon. Friend. We want to see other countries step up to the plate. This country is spending 2% of its budget on defence; we think that others should be doing the same, and I have been encouraging them to do so.

**Mr David Winnick** (Walsall North) (Lab): It is clear that there are many differences among Conservative Members over freedom of movement, but is it not also clear that if the free movement of labour continued, it would make a mockery of a majority decision made by the British people in a referendum?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said earlier, I think one of the things that underlay the vote was people's desire to see the British Government control immigration from the European Union. If the hon. Gentleman does not think freedom of movement should continue, I suggest that he talk to his own Front Benchers about it.

**Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): As my right hon. Friend knows, more than 10,000 Ukrainian servicemen have been killed since the beginning of the Russian-backed conflict, and progress on Minsk appears to have stalled. Does she agree that, as signatories to the Budapest memorandum, we have a special responsibility? Will she look into what further pressure we can put on Russia, and also what additional assistance we can give the people of Ukraine?

**The Prime Minister:** We do consider what more we can do. My right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary announced recently that we would undertake an extension of the training of Ukrainian forces, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is looking into whether there are other ways in which we can ensure that the Minsk agreement is implemented in full. However, I think it important for us also to work through the European Union, and to put the pressure of the EU behind the process.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Did the Prime Minister discuss with fellow leaders interference by Russia in the political processes of western democracies, including our own, through the use of propaganda and cyber? What action is she taking to investigate what may already have happened in this country, and what is she doing to prevent it from happening in future?

**The Prime Minister:** I think that everyone is aware of the way in which Russia is currently operating, and of the more aggressive stance that it is taking in a number of respects. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not expect me to go into detail about how we look at these matters, particularly cyber-related matters—which were mentioned earlier by the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson)—but I assure him that we take the issue of state-sponsored intervention and cyber attacks very seriously indeed.

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): The Prime Minister's steadfast commitment to reassuring 2.8 million EU citizens about their position in the United Kingdom is highly welcome, but will she look at the cross-party "British Future" report, on which I worked along with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) and the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green)? It includes suggestions on how to regularise the immigration status of the 1.8 million EU citizens who are on track to gain permanent residence, but who we suggest should be granted a bespoke indefinite leave to remain.

**The Prime Minister:** I am aware of the report my hon. Friend refers to and can assure her that we do of course look very seriously at any proposals that come forward on this and other matters relating to Brexit.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): May I press the Prime Minister on the reply she gave to the parliamentary leader of the Scottish National party, the right hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson), on Yemen? I appreciate she was the only leader of a foreign country to address the Gulf Cooperation Council recently and the Foreign Secretary has spoken courageously about the situation in Yemen. While we celebrate Christmas on Sunday, the people of Hudaydah will be eating grass and drinking sea water in order to survive. What does it

[Keith Vaz]

say about politics in 2016 that the richest club in the world is unable to find time to discuss one of the poorest countries?

**The Prime Minister:** I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we take the situation in Yemen very seriously indeed. There are a number of ways in which we are acting in relation to that, not least in the provision of humanitarian aid. The Foreign Office Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), was in Riyadh yesterday, and one of the issues he was discussing was the possibility of the opening of the port so that supplies can be got through to Yemen.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): My reading of the Council conclusions both on migration and on defence and security co-operation demonstrate the strength of British influence, rather than the weakness, which was the Leader of the Opposition's conclusion. Given that we do spend 2% of our GDP on defence and that we spend 0.7% on aid, addressing both sides of that argument, are we in a good position to make this case, and does it not show that when we have left the EU our European partners will still want that close relationship with us, which is why we will get a good deal?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. We should be proud of the fact that in this country we spend 2% on defence and 0.7% on international aid. That is recognised not just across the EU, but internationally, and it often enables us as the United Kingdom to take the lead on a number of these issues. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right: from everything we saw—from the position and role the UK has played in European Council discussions—it is clear people will want to continue to have a good relationship with the UK, and that puts us in a good place for getting the right deal.

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate the French and British diplomats in New York who got the Security Council resolution today, but is the Prime Minister aware that the Assad regime's representative immediately denounced it? It is quite clear that the Syrian Government are not going to be happy about this. Will she take practical steps to ensure the resolution is actually implemented, and particularly to protect those people who are witnesses to crime and those who, like the White Helmets, have been so brave in east Aleppo but now could be at risk from Hezbollah, Iranian militias or the Assad regime?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to congratulate UK and French diplomats, who worked very hard to make sure this resolution would be accepted by the Security Council. We now have to ensure it is put into practice. He refers to the evidence of crime, and we have been taking action to make sure people are equipped and trained to gather evidence of crimes that have taken place, so that they can be properly investigated.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): Earlier the Prime Minister said she wants that

“when it comes to decisions about our national interest, such as how we control immigration, we can make these decisions for ourselves”.

I commend that statement. When she finally presents her plan to Parliament, will she keep it brief, focus on outcomes not means, and simply say we are leaving the EU, we are leaving the internal market, and we are going to reclaim control of our borders and our laws, but that nothing in that militates against concluding a free trade deal which is overwhelmingly in the interests of our European friends and allies?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right that we need to ensure that we get the best possible deal, and he is also right to focus on the outcome of the deal that we want rather than the particular means to achieve that outcome. It is absolutely clear that it is possible for us to get a deal that will be a very good trade deal for the UK, but which will also be in the interests of the EU.

**Mr David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister confirm that remaining in the European arrest warrant regime, in Eurojust and in Europol will be in the best interests of the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman knows that I have stood at this Dispatch Box on previous occasions and argued that we should indeed remain within those aspects. The whole question of security and co-operation on crime will of course be part of the negotiations, but this is not just a question of what is in the UK's interests. When we work with partners in the European Union, it is in their interests too.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): What are the chances that the proposed European defence fund will add new money to collective European defence and security, and what is the Prime Minister's attitude to the linked matter of the revision of the Athena mechanism that is due next year?

**The Prime Minister:** The European defence fund is referred to in the Council's conclusions. The matter of how it will operate in the future has yet to be fully fleshed out. One issue that was discussed by European Council members was a concern to ensure better procurement of defence equipment across the European Union, and it is in that context that these issues are being considered.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I push the Prime Minister on the matter of security? Viewed from Moscow, Europe must look so much more disunited and weak since June. The fact is that we have 100,000 men and women in our armed forces—you could fit them all inside Wembley stadium. What would happen if tanks did roll across borders in this unstable period of European history? What would we do?

**The Prime Minister:** The Secretary of State for Defence has told me that the figure is 200,000 rather than 100,000, but let us look seriously at the hon. Gentleman's question. I spoke in my statement of the importance of NATO as the bedrock of our security and that of our allies. That organisation is important in ensuring our defence. What are this Government doing in relation to defence? We are spending 2% of our GDP on defence

and committing more than £170 billion over a number of years to investment in defence equipment, ensuring that we have the defence that we need—the forces and the equipment—to keep us safe.

**Craig Whittaker** (Calder Valley) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend tell us how our support for the Syrian people through our aid budget is helping to alleviate some of the horrendous suffering over there?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right to raise this issue. As we focus on the specific question of Aleppo, it is easy to forget the significant contribution that the UK is making, through its aid budget, to the humanitarian effort to help the refugees from Syria. Of course, much of that is going to refugees in the countries around Syria—Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. We are the second biggest bilateral donor of humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees and we have now committed £2.3 billion. That means that medical supplies, food and water are getting through to people who would not otherwise have them. It also means that children are being educated as a result of the money that is being spent by the United Kingdom, and it is absolutely right that we should do that.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the Prime Minister for her solid and strong stance on Brexit. However, 27 EU members met without her being in attendance. Is this the beginning of a cloak and dagger approach by the EU? What steps are being taken to ensure that we are not kept in the dark, that everything is open and transparent and that the British viewpoint as expressed at the ballot box is sacrosanct and remains a priority?

**The Prime Minister:** The 27 members of the European Union met for, I think, 25 minutes to discuss aspects of the process of the UK leaving the EU. It is absolutely right that they should meet together as the 27 because, when we trigger article 50, we want to ensure that the process is as smooth and orderly as possible. That is in our interests and in the interests of our economy. It is also in their interests and the interests of their economies. So I welcome the fact that they are meeting as the 27 to discuss the process and to make preparations, just as we are doing, for what will happen when we trigger article 50.

**Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): It is certainly absolutely right that we maintain good relationships with the 27 member states of the European Union, but what steps is the Prime Minister taking to ensure that we talk to European countries that are not in the EU to gain insight into their experiences of being in that position and the plan for the future?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend raises an important point that is about our relationship not just with the EU as a whole, but with individual countries that are members of the EU and those that are not members. We do hold such discussions. I have had bilateral talks, and I reassure those to whom I speak that a United Kingdom that is outside the EU will not be leaving Europe. We want to continue to have good relations with our friends and allies across Europe. We want good bilateral relationships that enable us also to trade well with those nations.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): One of the key aspects of security co-operation across Europe is the ability to impose sanctions through the EU sanctions regime. What discussions has the Prime Minister had with her EU counterparts about the UK's involvement in that regime after we leave the EU?

**The Prime Minister:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that our focus is on ensuring that the UK's voice is heard when we put forward our opinion on matters such as the sanctions against Russia and the importance of maintaining those sanctions until the Minsk agreement is implemented.

**Mr Speaker:** In the pursuit of a soothing, emollient and understated voice, I call Philip Davies.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Something on which both sides of the EU referendum campaign can agree is that one of the big issues during the campaign was the amount of money that we give to the EU each year. Will the Prime Minister therefore pledge that when we leave the EU we will not be paying any money towards the EU budget? Even contemplating that would surely be to contemplate betraying what people voted for in the referendum.

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously, while we remain members of the EU, we will continue to have obligations as members of EU. What is important is that when we leave the EU, people want us to ensure that it is the British Government that decide how taxpayers' money is spent.

**Heidi Alexander** (Lewisham East) (Lab): The European Council stressed that those responsible for breaches of international law in Syria must be held accountable and that the EU is considering all available options. No one would disagree with that sentiment, but will the Prime Minister set out what it means in practice?

**The Prime Minister:** Where people have breached international humanitarian law, the UK Government's position is that that should be investigated and properly dealt with and that people should be brought to justice as a result. As for the available options, some further sanctions have been considered. This is an issue that the UK has raised in the past and one that we continue to look at.

**Oliver Dowden** (Hertsmere) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that her first duty is to defend the rights of British subjects? It would therefore be a foolish negotiating strategy to guarantee the rights of EU nationals here unilaterally—much as we would like to—until we have achieved reciprocity for UK nationals residing in other states.

**The Prime Minister:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It is fairly obvious that the UK Prime Minister should have concern for UK citizens. We do not want UK citizens who live in other EU member states to be left high and dry, which is why our position has always been that we will guarantee the status of EU citizens living here provided that UK citizens living in EU member states have their rights guaranteed as well.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Will Brexit deliver what the Prime Minister's three Brexiteer Ministers promised in the referendum and what the majority of voters supported—namely a £350 million a week payment to the national health service? Or will we get a bill of £50 billion for which nobody voted?

**The Prime Minister:** When we leave the EU, we will be delivering on what my colleagues who campaigned to leave the European Union campaigned for and what the people voted for: the UK no longer being a member of the EU and therefore being able to take control of how taxpayers' money is spent, how our laws are made and our immigration.

**Mr Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): In the Prime Minister's conversations with our EU partners, will she make it clear that, whatever deal we strike with the European Union, we will be offering free trade? Will she ask them why anybody is considering a reversion to protectionism and tariffs, particularly in view of the fact that paragraph 5 of article 3 of the treaty on European Union enjoins the EU to contribute to "free and fair trade"?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend raises a very important point: this is about getting a good trade relationship with the European Union, which is in their interests as well as in ours. Lots of reference is made to the process in relation to trade, but actually what we want to focus on is the outcome: the best possible deal in terms of trading with and operating within the European Union.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): Under this Prime Minister's leadership, Britain has opposed strengthening trade defence measures and has watered down action on the lesser duty rule, which has crippled the UK steel industry. Will people not be right to think that when this Prime Minister takes control of future British trade deals, both British workers and British industry will be more exposed than ever before?

**The Prime Minister:** Actually, the trade defence arrangements that have been in place have had a significant impact on the dumping of steel. Of course everybody recognises the importance and impact of the overcapacity of steel in China, and the Government have taken a number of steps to reduce the costs in relation to climate change and energy for the steel industry—more than £100 million has now been made available to the steel industry as a result of that. We have ensured that other factors can be taken into account when people are looking at procurement of steel—social and economic factors can be taken into account. On the trade defence arrangements that take place in Europe, we think, yes, we should ensure that we are looking at the impact on producers, but we also need to look at the impact on consumers. What we call for is a balance in dealing with these issues.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): As the Prime Minister reaches her first Christmas in her role, may I commend her for the sureness of touch she has demonstrated as Prime Minister, commend her for setting up a fresh new Department so that we can leave the

European Union, and remind her that in Kettering 61% of people voted to leave and want her to get on with it as soon as possible?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. I assure him that I am focused, as is the Department for Exiting the European Union and everybody across government, on delivering what overall the British people wanted, which is leaving the European Union.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): May I press the Prime Minister: how will our Government hold President Assad to account for the decimation of Aleppo?

**The Prime Minister:** This is a matter that we and others in the international community will be looking at. Of course, at the moment President Assad is still there in Syria. We have said from the beginning that we want to see a political transition away from President Assad, but we are very clear that we need to look carefully at all the actions that have been taken in relation to the conflict in Syria and ensure that people are held to account for those actions, including, obviously, the ones that break international humanitarian law.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on, and thank her for, the robust stance she took in representing the United Kingdom at the recent EU Council meeting. Will she say whether any of the leaders of the 27 expressed a wish not to want to trade with the UK in goods and services?

**The Prime Minister:** I am very happy to tell my hon. Friend that when I have been meeting leaders bilaterally, they have been very keen to express their desire to continue to trade and have a good trading relationship with the United Kingdom.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): What has happened in Aleppo has not just been a tragedy—it has also been a series of acts of deliberate brutality by Putin and his regime. The Prime Minister is absolutely right to say that those responsible must be held to account, but there is something she could do immediately: she could sign up to the amendment to the Criminal Finances Bill tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) and the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Mr Raab), which would take the assets of those who have been involved in human rights abuses and in these war crimes off them.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point, but we already have legislative capacity in relation to such matters. That is why the amendment has been considered not to be necessary and not to take us forward.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): Assuming that a humanitarian corridor to Aleppo, supported by a clear United Nations mandate, is a possibility, would Her Majesty's Government be prepared to consider using our military forces, perhaps in small teams, to monitor such an arrangement—something in which we have considerable expertise and to date have had considerable success?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The Prime Minister could always introduce an addendum to her last answer, which would doubtless bring great happiness into the life of the hon. Member for Rhondda.

**The Prime Minister:** I must apologise to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant); I was thinking of the Magnitsky law, which he frequently raises in connection with Russia. I apologise for that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart), of course, has personal experience of providing support in circumstances where we need to provide humanitarian aid and support to people. The matter will be taken up by the United Nations, of course; the role that the United Kingdom can play will be a matter for consideration and discussion under the UN's auspices.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): Towards the end of the Prime Minister's remarks, she talked in quite broad terms about the kind of mature, co-operative relationship that she wants for Britain outside the European Union. Which of the deals for European countries that are not in the European Union does the deal that she wants for Britain most closely resemble?

**The Prime Minister:** I have said consistently that we are not looking to try to duplicate or replicate a model that is there for some other country within Europe. What we will be doing is negotiating the deal that is right for the UK, and we will be ambitious in doing so.

**Mr Julian Brazier** (Canterbury) (Con): While strongly commending the pivotal role that Britain is playing in Lebanon, Jordan and other neighbouring states in coping with the miserable outflow from Syria, may I urge my right hon. Friend that a high priority in our dealings with the incoming Administration in Washington must be tackling the growing military hegemony of Russia and its ally Iran in that region?

**The Prime Minister:** It is important that we look very seriously at the actions of Russia. As I indicated earlier in response to the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw), it is important that we look at the actions of Russia across a whole range of activities that it is now involved in. One of the significant elements of the conclusions of the European Council was that it now also identified Iran as backing the Assad regime. That is a very important step forward and we should continue to make the point that it is not just Russia; it is Iran as well.

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): It is very welcome that the UN Security Council has unanimously voted to approve UN personnel in eastern Aleppo to monitor the evacuations and access to humanitarian aid. However, I am concerned that a requirement to co-ordinate with involved parties, such as the Syrian regime, Russia and Iran, could see the monitors denied access. What diplomatic role does the Prime Minister think Europe could play in ensuring that access is not restricted in that manner?

**The Prime Minister:** It is for all of us in the international arena to ensure that we provide the maximum support to the United Nations in being able to do what has been

set out in the Security Council resolution. It is significant that the resolution has been accepted unanimously by the Security Council—it has not been vetoed by Russia, unlike previous resolutions that have been in place. The European Union, through its high representative Federica Mogherini, has already been involved in the international arena, as has, of course, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, in urging all parties to ensure that this humanitarian aid can get through and that people who wish to leave can be evacuated safely.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): My right hon. Friend is clearly right to report back from the Council that Iran is the other major actor in Syria. What steps will the Council be taking to have discussions with Iran so that the atrocities committed in Aleppo are not merely committed again in other towns and cities in Syria?

**The Prime Minister:** My understanding is that the European Union High Representative has already been having discussions with Iran, particularly about the humanitarian aid, which it is necessary to get through. But as I have just indicated in response to a previous question, it is absolutely right, as my hon. Friend says, that we have identified Iran as a backer of the Assad regime. We should continue to do so and we should continue to press Iran and Russia on the fact that we now have a Security Council resolution in relation to the evacuation and humanitarian aid for Aleppo. However, there is a lot more to be done if we are going to get a stable and peaceful Syria for its people in the future.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): I am very glad to hear about the additional aid being granted to Syrian refugees massing at the Jordanian border, but what pressure or assistance are European leaders agreeing to use to help Jordan to process the hundreds of thousands of refugees trapped in the no man's land—the Berm—between Syria and Jordan?

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously, part of the work that we are doing as the United Kingdom, and that other individual member states are doing, is putting aid into countries like Jordan to help them in dealing with those refugees—particularly those refugees who are already in Jordan. As I indicated, some of the money that we will be making available will be specifically for those who are now massing on the Jordanian border.

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her thoughtful statement. Does she agree that “Brexit means Brexit” means that we leave the EU and all the EU regulations? Does she agree that that is the certainty that this country is looking for?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for repeating that Brexit means Brexit—it does indeed. On the EU regulations, it is important that, at the point at which we leave the EU, EU regulations are brought into UK domestic law. It will then, of course, be open to this Parliament to decide which of those regulations it wishes to continue with and which it wishes to change.

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): On the citizens who have come to live in the UK, does the Prime Minister agree that the

[Drew Hendry]

principle of protecting those who make a positive contribution to our communities should be a core responsibility of her Government?

**The Prime Minister:** I recognise the positive contribution that is made by EU citizens living here in the United Kingdom. I have said on many occasions that I expect to be able to, and wish to be able to, guarantee their status here in the UK, but we do need reciprocity—we need to have care and concern for UK citizens who are living in the European Union.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): Did the Prime Minister have any discussions with her counterparts on how quickly the EU can make progress on tackling multinational tax avoidance and particularly on when the EU will go ahead with country-by-country reporting, which we took the powers for in this year's Finance Bill?

**The Prime Minister:** I have to disappoint my hon. Friend; this matter was not discussed at the European Council. However, as my hon. Friend indicated, the whole question of tax avoidance is one that the UK has led on with the measures we have taken, and it is an issue that I raised at the G20 earlier this year.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Did the discussions the Prime Minister had with her European counterparts touch on the exchange rate for sterling, and how many euros did she get for her pounds on her trip?

**The Prime Minister:** No, we did not discuss that.

**Bill Wiggin** (North Herefordshire) (Con): It is characteristically modest of the Prime Minister to mention only an extra £20 million of practical support. As it is the festive season, perhaps she could talk a little more about all the other things that we are funding in that region.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to do so. I will not list everything that we are funding. As I have said, we are making a contribution that has now committed £2.3 billion to help Syrian refugees. That is about medical supplies, it is about water, and it is about the opportunity for young people to be educated. Some £10 million of the £20 million that I indicated earlier will be for those who are now massing on the Jordanian border—so very specifically for those who are vulnerable as a result of the most recent actions that have been taken. It is right that we are putting this support in, and the House should be proud of the efforts that this country has undertaken to support Syrian refugees.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): A major poll last week in Wales noted that the overwhelming Brexit priority of the people of my country was to put continued single market membership over controls on immigration. If the Prime Minister intends to abandon the single market, will she support sub-state membership status for Wales to ensure that the Welsh economy is not shackled to a sinking UK ship?

**The Prime Minister:** It is the United Kingdom that will be leaving the EU, and it is the United Kingdom that will be negotiating the deal that we have for leaving the European Union, but we will be working with the devolved Administrations and taking into account the particular priorities that they have. But I repeat what I said earlier: the hon. Gentleman makes a reference to what is essentially a means or a process in relation to trading; what we want to focus on is the outcome we want, which is the best possible deal for trading with, and operating within, the single European market.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): May I congratulate the Prime Minister on her determination to raise the issue of reciprocal rights despite the fact that it was not formally on the agenda? She is right: this is an issue of serious concern for EU citizens living here and our citizens living in Europe. May I also congratulate her on raising this with individual member states as well? May I urge her to continue with these talks and ensure that we put people first, before process?

**The Prime Minister:** I assure my hon. Friend that I will continue to do that and continue to press for these matters to be looked at at an early stage in the negotiations to give people the reassurance that they want.

**Mr David Burrowes** (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): The negotiations of immediate concern to many of my constituents relate to the unification of Cyprus. Can the Prime Minister confirm whether the European Union will be present at the multi-party talks on 12 January? When she, or the Foreign Secretary, attends those talks, will she ensure that the UK finally fulfils its historical legal duty to guarantee the independence of Cyprus?

**The Prime Minister:** We recognise the importance of the talks that are taking place. The UK's position is very simple. As a guarantor, we stand ready to do what is necessary to play our part, but it is important that that is primarily led by the two leaders, who have pushed these discussions in Cyprus under the auspices of the United Nations. We do therefore stand ready to attend the talks on 12 January. The European Union, which currently has observer status in these matters, has also indicated its readiness to be present. We are all saying that we will be present if that is going to aid coming to a settlement. We must focus not on whether we want to be there but on the result that we are going to get. The aim must be to see a settlement and reunification.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Ah yes—a notable legal egghead: Mr Robert Neill.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

It is accepted that business wishes to see the maximum possible certainty in which to make its investment decisions. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that certainty is not achieved by equivocation or obfuscation about our intention to trigger article 50, but is better served by triggering it promptly and then being flexible and business-focused in the terms of our negotiation and the implementation of the final deal?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. That is precisely why I indicated in October that we would trigger article 50 by the end of March to give people some certainty about the timetable. He is also absolutely right that we need the maximum flexibility thereafter in order to ensure that we can meet business needs and the needs of the UK generally.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):** The Prime Minister's approach is absolutely right, especially for constituents whose jobs depend on trade and investment, and students or residents from the European Union, who want us to focus on the key ingredients of success. Does she agree that her pragmatic focus on outcomes is much more likely to unify the country than some political parties' determination to define Brexit as a boiled egg, whether soft or hard?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that the British people want us to get on with it—to do the deal and get a good deal for the United Kingdom, and that is exactly what we want to do.

**Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con):** I would not expect the Prime Minister to comment on today's events, but was there a discussion at the European Council on how the European Union will work to maintain the stability of Turkey, not just as a key NATO ally but as an applicant country?

**The Prime Minister:** There was some discussion, notably in the context of the migration deal with Turkey, about the relationship with Turkey. As I indicated in response to an earlier question, that relationship is important. The EU-Turkey deal on migration has led to a significant reduction in the number of people crossing from Turkey into Greece. However, we need to ensure that the deal is being properly undertaken. That is why we are giving some extra support to Greece. Other aspects of the deal, such as visa liberalisation, are for the Schengen member states to consider, not for the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, we are all very clear about the significance of Turkey and its relationship with the EU.

**Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con):** I very much welcome the Prime Minister's statement. Paragraph 26 of the communiqué talks about "condemning" the actions of the Assad regime, Russia, and Iran. Apart from condemning, was there a strategy to look at countering the Iranian aggression in Syria and destabilising activity in the wider region?

**The Prime Minister:** First, it was very important that the conclusions that came out of the Council identified Iran, as well as Russia, as being one of the backers of the Syrian regime. It was in the context of condemning what had taken place in Aleppo that that was specifically raised.

As regards Iran more generally and, indeed, what is happening in Syria more generally, of course we continue as a European Union and as a United Kingdom to look for ways to put pressure on those who are backing President Assad, to ensure that we can do what I think everybody in the EU wants, which is to move to a peaceful and stable Syria with a political transition and a proper political process for doing that. That means continued pressure on Russia and Iran.

**Ben Howlett (Bath) (Con):** May I also congratulate the Prime Minister on her calm and measured approach to EU-UK relations since taking office? Given that the UK Government dedicated resources to understanding the UK-US position with regard to both the Trump and the Clinton campaigns, will she confirm that we will dedicate resources to understanding not just governing parties, but potential governing parties in the EU, in order to help our renegotiation process?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, we are in discussions with a number of people to ensure that we understand the approach that is being taken in other member states by various parties. This is not just about political parties, though; it is also about understanding business and other interests in the member states with which we are negotiating. That will make us better able to come to a deal that is good not only for the United Kingdom, which, as I have said, is the deal that we want, but is good for the EU, because I think that a deal that is good for the UK will be good for the EU as well.

**David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con):** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's priorities in Syria must extend beyond vital humanitarian aid, to preparing a post-conflict political settlement and a reconstruction plan that will benefit the citizens of Syria and help bring stability to the middle east?

**The Prime Minister:** Obviously, bringing peace and stability to Syria and, therefore, helping that part of the process of bringing stability to the middle east is important. I apologise to my hon. Friend, because I was just looking at what I believe is breaking news that the Russian ambassador to Turkey has been shot. That has yet to be confirmed, but it is a matter of concern.

**Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con):** Inevitably, in the months ahead there will be a great deal of speculation about the precise nature of the deal that will be made when we leave the European Union, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that when we leave, the European Court of Justice will no longer have any jurisdiction over this country?

**The Prime Minister:** This is an issue on which my hon. Friend has campaigned for a considerable time. Part of the vote that people took was about this Parliament determining laws here in the United Kingdom, and that means not being under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

**Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con):** A diplomat friend of mine from Sweden told me last week that it is not just the budget that they will miss after Brexit. They will also miss the English nationals—the British nationals—who work for the European Union, who he says are organised, systematic and imaginative, and provide quite a contrast to many of the others who work for the secretariat. Will my right hon. Friend join me in wishing them well for the future and, I guess, a happy Christmas?

**The Prime Minister:** I am happy to do so. There are many excellent British officials working inside the European Union, including, of course, our commissioner, Sir Julian King, who has a very important portfolio on

[The Prime Minister]

security matters. I certainly wish them all well for the future, and I wish them and the whole House a very happy Christmas.

**Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): Would we be prepared to spend more than 2% of GDP on defence—on carrier battle group support, for example—to underpin security in Europe and elsewhere as part of the constructive ongoing relationship between the EU and the UK?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, we have the commitment to spending 2% of GDP on defence, and that is an important commitment that we have given. I understand that the support will be there for the carriers. I think it is right that we encourage others within the European Union and within NATO to increase their spending to the same sort of level.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Shortly before the Council met, the 15th round of the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership talks ended, predictably enough, once again in stalemate. At the same time, the prospects for a bilateral UK-US deal appear to be on the rise—a deal that would not compromise sovereignty between our two nations and that would not require a new supranational body to organise disputes, because we respect each other's legal systems. Will my right hon. Friend make such a deal the heart of our relationship with the incoming Administration?

**The Prime Minister:** First, for as long as we continue to be a member of the European Union, we will continue to press the advantages of the TTIP deal and encourage discussions on TTIP. But, yes, I am looking forward to discussions with the United States of America about the possibilities of a trade deal that we will be able to have with them in due course.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): In Libya there seems to be instability in Tripoli, but there seems to be stability in Benghazi. Were there any discussions at the European Council towards helping to stabilise the situation, so that there is no migration of people from Libya?

**The Prime Minister:** There was some discussion of Libya, because of the recognition that it plays an important role in relation to the migration of people from the rest of Africa across the Mediterranean into Italy. Of course, Royal Naval vessels have been in the Mediterranean saving people's lives, and they continue to be there. They are also, as I indicated in my statement, training the Libyan coastguard, which is an important part of the process of preventing that migration from taking place. It is important that we have the Government of National Accord in Libya and that we are able to interact with that Government. We would encourage, and we wish to see, stability across Libya so that we can further ensure that we are dealing with this issue of migration.

## HMP Birmingham

4.57 pm

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Elizabeth Truss):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the serious disturbance at HMP Birmingham on Friday. I begin by paying tribute to the bravery and dedication of the prison officers who resolved this difficult situation. I also want to give thanks to West Midlands police, who supported the Prison Service throughout the day, and to the ambulance crews and the fire service, which also provided assistance. This was a serious disturbance. I have ordered a full investigation, and I have appointed Sarah Payne, adviser to the independent chief inspector of probation and former director of the Welsh Prison Service, to lead this work. I do not want to prejudge the outcome of the investigation.

As we currently understand it, at 9.15 am on Friday at HMP Birmingham, six prisoners in N wing climbed on to netting. When staff intervened, one of them had their keys snatched. At that point, staff withdrew for their own safety. Prisoners gained control of the wing and subsequently of P wing. G4S immediately deployed two tornado teams. At 11.20 am, gold command was opened, and a further seven tornado teams were dispatched to the prison.

At 1.30 pm, prisoners gained access to two more wings. Gold command made the decision that further reinforcements were needed and dispatched an additional four tornado teams to the prison. At 2.35 pm, the police and Prison Service secured the perimeter of all four wings, which remained secure throughout the day. Shortly after 3 pm, there were reports of an injured prisoner. Paramedics and staff tried to intervene but were prevented from doing so by prisoners.

During the afternoon, a robust plan was prepared to take back control of the wings, minimising the risk to staff and prisoners. It is important in this type of situation to make sure that the right resources are in place before acting. At 8.35 pm, 10 tornado teams of highly trained officers swept through the wings. Shortly after 10 pm, the teams had secured all four wings. The prisoner who had been reported injured was treated by paramedics and taken to hospital, along with two other prisoners. Throughout the day, the prisons Minister—the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, my hon. Friend the Member for East Surrey (Mr Gyimah)—and I chaired regular cross-Government calls to make the necessary preparations and ensure that the Prison Service had all the support it needed. I want to thank the tornado teams, prison officers and emergency services for their exemplary work.

As I have said previously, levels of violence are too high in our prisons. We also have very worrying levels of self-harm and deaths in custody. That is why we are reforming our prisons to be safe and purposeful places, and taking swift action to deal with drugs, drones and phones. It is important to remember that these problems have developed over a number of years, and it will take time and concerted effort to turn this situation around.

While the reforms take hold, we are continually working to reduce risk and ensure stability across the prison estate. The Prison Service is leading gold command to collect intelligence, to deploy resources and, in particular,

to manage the movement of prisoners. That includes managing two incidents at Hull yesterday morning, which were quickly dealt with by staff. To date, we have moved 380 prisoners out of Birmingham, and we continue to assess the level of damage on the wings. The prisons Minister chairs daily meetings with the chief executive and senior members of the Prison Service to monitor prisons for risk factors that might indicate the potential for violence and unrest. Where necessary, we are providing governors with immediate and targeted support, ranging from extra staff and resources through to the transfer of difficult prisoners and speeding up repairs to or replacements of facilities.

As we manage the difficult current situation, we are implementing our reform programme, which will reduce violence and cut the £15 billion cost of reoffending, as laid out in the White Paper. In September, we rolled out tests for dangerous psychoactive drugs in prison; we are the first country to do so. We are rolling out new technology, starting with three prisons, to prevent mobile phone use. We are recruiting for a new £3 million national intelligence unit to crack down on gang crime. We are increasing staffing levels by 2,500 officers, and we are taking steps to train and retain our valued staff, including a new apprenticeship programme, a graduate entry scheme, fast-track promotions and retention payments. We are putting an extra £100 million into that. We are modernising our estate, with a £1.3 billion investment programme, and we are empowering governors to manage their regimes locally to get people off drugs, get them the skills they need and get them into work. Importantly, for the first time ever, we will make it clear in the prison and courts Bill next year that the purpose of prisons is not just to house prisoners, but to reform them. Together, these reforms are the right way to address issues in prisons so that they become purposeful places, where offenders get off drugs and get the education and skills they need to find work and turn their backs on crime for good.

The issues in our prisons are long-standing ones, and they are not going to be completely solved in weeks or even months. We are working to ensure that our prisons are stable while we deliver our reforms. Of course, this is a major task, but I am committed to it and so is the Prison Service, as I know are governors and prison officers as well. The next few months will be difficult, but I am confident that we can turn this situation around. We can turn our prisons into places of safety and reform, and this is my absolute priority as Secretary of State. I commend this statement to the House.

5.3 pm

**Richard Burgon** (Leeds East) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for giving me advance sight of her statement. I want to pay tribute to the tornado teams, the prison officers and the emergency services, but the Secretary of State has a prisons crisis on her hands, and it would be helpful if she finally admitted this to the House and to the country. The riot at the privately run Birmingham prison on Friday has been described as

“probably the most serious riot in a B Category prison since Strangeways”,

which was back in 1990. However, this riot is not the crisis; it is a symptom of the crisis. In recent months there have been disturbances at Lincoln, Lewes and Bedford, and incidents at Hull and elsewhere. Assaults on prison staff are at an all-time high, and prison

officers are leaving the service in such great numbers that 8,000 will need to be recruited to meet the Secretary of State’s 2,500 target.

The Secretary of State has questions to answer, and so do the Government as a whole. When the independent monitoring board said back in October that an urgent solution was needed to the prevalence of synthetic drugs in Birmingham prison, what action did the Secretary of State take? How much has Friday’s disorder cost, and who is footing the bill for the damage? Will G4S be reimbursing the public purse for the use of public sector staff to sort out the disorder? Does the Secretary of State think it is acceptable that private sector prisons do not have to reveal staffing levels in the way that prisons in the public sector do? If, like me, she does not believe it is acceptable, is she going to do anything about it? Does she regret her vitriolic attack on prison officers in the Chamber on 15 November? It even shocked many of her colleagues. Is it not about time that the Secretary of State starting listening to prison officers on the front line?

Of all prisons in 2015, Birmingham had the highest number of assaults on staff. There were 164 assaults on staff in 2015 alone. The Prison Officers Association, the Public and Commercial Services Union and the Prison Governors Association have warned of this crisis since 2010. It is about time that fundamental questions were asked about the way our prison system is working—or not working. The Secretary of State needs to consider whether or not it is right that private companies such as G4S at Birmingham or Sodexo at Northumberland, where there are also big problems, should be making profit from prisons and from society’s ills.

The Secretary of State needs to turn her mind to the fact that where rehabilitation fails and prison education is cut, reoffending rises. This is a failure to protect society. Privatisation of the probation service, savage cuts to prison staffing, overcrowding in our prisons and cuts to through-the-gate services all stop prison working and put the public at avoidable and increased risk. The Secretary of State should admit that in her overcrowded, understaffed prisons, shorter-sentence prisoners are leaving prison with drug addictions that they did not have when they went in and are leaving more likely to commit more serious crimes than those they were put away for in the first place. This is not protecting society; it is endangering society.

Such is the crisis in our prisons that the Secretary of State needs to develop an open mind on the future of our prisons. Is there anything we can learn from how prisons work in other countries? Perhaps we can learn from some of the experiences in Norway and elsewhere. But one thing is for sure: the USA model of huge, privately run super-prisons is not the way to go.

To conclude, 380 prisoners have been transferred from HMP Birmingham. Where have they been transferred to? Is G4S back running things in Birmingham now? Will the Government review the role of G4S and private companies in running our prisons? Does the Secretary of State finally realise that it was wrong and dangerous to cut 6,000 front-line prison staff in the first place? The crisis in our prisons is a symptom of a failing Government who have lost control.

**Elizabeth Truss:** Since I was appointed Secretary of State for Justice in July, I have been absolutely clear that we need to improve safety in our prisons and that the

[Elizabeth Truss]

levels of violence we currently have are unacceptable. We are investing a further £500 million over the next three years, which was announced in the autumn statement, as part of our prison safety and reform plan to do just that.

The hon. Gentleman talked about psychoactive drugs and asked what we had done about them. We have put in place tests to detect those drugs and also trained up officers to detect them. We have rolled that out across the prison estate. We are also rolling out new measures to deal with mobile phones and investing in a £3 million intelligence unit.

The most important thing is our staff. I have huge respect for prison officers and their work. That is why we are strengthening the front line by 2,500 officers. That will ensure that we have one officer for every six prisoners, which will enable us not only to make prisons safer, but to turn lives around. We are getting a new apprenticeship scheme and creating a fast track so that we train existing officers and get them promotion within the service. That is a long-term programme—we are taking immediate action but hon. Members need to recognise that it will take time to bring those people online and get them trained up. In the meantime, we are ensuring that there is a full investigation at HMP Birmingham. There is a full police investigation and the perpetrators of the incident will feel the full force of the law. The reality is that their actions put both staff and prisoners at risk.

The hon. Gentleman asked about G4S. It will cover the cost of what happened at HMP Birmingham, including the resources employed by the public sector, but we need to be honest that this is a problem across our prison estate—we have seen issues at our private sector prisons and our public sector prisons. That is why our staff investments will be across the board, and why our reform measures and increased transparency, which the hon. Gentleman asked about, will apply to both public sector and private sector prisons.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the prison population. The reality is that it rose by 23,000 under the Labour Government between 1997 and 2010. It has been stable under this Government since 2010. He talked about short-sentence prisoners. The number of short-sentence prisoners has actually gone down by 1,500 since 2010; the increases have been in the number of, for example, sex offenders rightly being put away for those heinous crimes.

We are reforming our prisons but it will take time. We have the right measures in place to turn the tide, and we need to turn our prisons into places of safety and reform. We have taken immediate action to reduce risk across the estate, but everyone in the House must recognise that it will take time to ensure that our prisons become the places we want them to be.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement and her frankness about the seriousness of the situation, which does her credit. I join her in paying tribute to the professionalism of prison staff, especially the tornado teams and others who operated very efficiently. She is right to say that the problem has built up over many years, and it is one for which all parties must accept a measure of responsibility.

Will she ensure that the report not only looks at the immediate issues that arise from what has happened in Birmingham prison, but learns the broader lessons about how best to deal with dispersing disruptive prisoners; how to deal with pressures on the estate under those circumstances; how to deal with contractual difficulties with repairs to the estate, which sometimes create tensions; and how to deal sensibly with the problem of retaining experienced officers? I have just received an email from a prison officer indicating that one reason he is leaving after years of service is the failure of senior management to listen consistently to the concerns of officers on the line. Can we learn those lessons so that we can turn the tide around, which will take time?

**Several hon. Members** rose—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is the illustrious Chair of the Select Committee covering these matters, and that he does not wish any concept which at any time might be in any way material to be excluded from his interrogation, but I advise other Members that, although they may seek to emulate his erudition, they should not seek to rival his length.

**Elizabeth Truss:** I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He is absolutely right—those issues will be looked at in the investigation that is taking place. On staff retention, we are working on retention bonuses and on giving governors additional powers, but I can assure him that I have asked for further investigation into precisely how we improve retention. The prisons Minister and I have been meeting prison officers around the country and listening to their concerns on career progression and training, and we will take action on them.

**Shabana Mahmood** (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): To those of us who have been following the crisis in our prisons, nothing that happened in Winson Green in my constituency on Friday came as a shock. The independent monitoring board report on HMP Birmingham found that staff resource constraints gave “cause for concern” and that there was a lack of capacity to run the full prison regime. What action did the Secretary of State take when the report was published? Will that action, or lack of it, be part of the investigation she has now promised? Will she tell us whether there are other things that she knows about but as yet has failed to act upon?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I am very happy to have a discussion with the hon. Lady about HMP Birmingham specifically. Staff retention and issues with psychoactive substances are issues across the prisons estate. The prisons Minister has a daily meeting to look at stability and make sure that we are providing every governor, regardless of whether they are in the public or private sector, with the support they need.

**Victoria Prentis** (Banbury) (Con): Mobile telephones are used in prisons for the furtherance of crime and violence, and indeed for recording violence when it takes place. The Secretary of State hinted that there might have been some progress in stopping their use in prisons. Will she enlarge on that, please?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right that alongside the rise in the use of psychoactive substances we have seen a rise in the use of mobile phones in prisons.

We have been working with the mobile phone companies on a technical solution, which is rolling out; we are starting to test it fully in three prisons. That will give us the means of preventing those crimes.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): May I press the Secretary of State further? When she received the report from the independent monitoring board, did she read it and take action, or do we have a situation in which we had the riots and then the warnings from the independent monitoring board, but nothing happened in between?

**Elizabeth Truss:** We read the reports of the independent monitoring board and take action. We read that report. The prisons Minister and I are in constant touch with governors on these specific issues.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Some reports suggest that up to 75% of the inmate population have one or more mental health problem. Does the Secretary of State agree that we are unlikely to be able to reform our prisons fundamentally until we get to grips with mental health in the criminal justice system?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have been discussing with the Health Secretary how we can improve mental health provision in prisons and in the criminal justice system overall. We are giving governors power over mental health commissioning jointly with the NHS to make sure that we have the right services in our prisons.

**Mr Khalid Mahmood** (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): Further to the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), did the Secretary of State read the report and take absolutely no action at all?

**Elizabeth Truss:** We are talking to governors across the estate, including the governor at HMP Birmingham. Many of our prisons face these issues. That is why we have already taken action on psychoactive substances, are taking action on mobile phones and are recruiting staff, including at HMP Birmingham.

**Richard Drax** (South Dorset) (Con): The matter of whether prisons are state-run or privatised is for another day, but for the record I believe they should be state-run. In my recent Adjournment debate I asked whether my right hon. Friend would introduce any new laws to act as a deterrent to prisoners—so that, for example, if they assaulted a prison officer, there would be an automatic extension to their sentence. I believe she was going to look at that. Will she inform the House of any moves being made on that?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I will look at the issue that my hon. Friend raises.

**Karl Turner** (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): I thank the Justice Secretary for the time she afforded me earlier to discuss the incident at HMP Hull at the weekend. She will know that Rob Nicholson, the Prison Officers Association rep in Hull, described the situation at the weekend as a

“powder keg...waiting to go off.”

The prison was put on lock down and was said to be on the brink of riot. Prison officers tell me that they are afraid to go to work. What can she do to assure the public and those prison officers that they are safe to go to work?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I have discussed with the head of the Prison Service the two specific incidents at Hull, which were dealt with. The issue is being dealt with across the board.

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): I welcome the Government's commitment to closing old Victorian prisons that are now no longer fit for purpose and to investing unprecedented amounts of money to build new prisons. When will the Secretary of State be in a position to update us on which prisons will close and which new prisons will open?

**Elizabeth Truss:** We have a £1.3 billion building programme. The first prison, which will open in February next year, is HMP Berwyn. It will bring an additional 2,100 places, which will help to reduce overcrowding across the estate.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I understand, listening to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) about what happened in Hull, that the prisoners involved had been dispersed from Birmingham. Can the Secretary of State say something about her view on that dispersal policy and how well it is working?

**Elizabeth Truss:** Given the condition of the wings in HMP Birmingham, the Prison Service needed to disperse those individuals across the prison estate. The Prison Service, which is experienced in dealing with these issues, is managing that process very carefully. There were incidents at HMP Hull and they were dealt with. We are dealing with some very difficult individuals, but it is being looked at very, very closely.

**Bill Wiggin** (North Herefordshire) (Con): My right hon. Friend mentioned the discussion she was having with mobile phone providers. Is she doing the same with drone manufacturers?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is correct. We are working closely with drone manufacturers to create no-fly zones over prisons and deal with the scourge of contraband entering our prisons.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): I can remember a time when a Minister coming before this House after such a serious incident might have had to show a degree of contrition. Since the Justice Secretary mentions staffing levels, can she confirm that G4S has made a profit at HMP Birmingham because it has reduced the number of experienced but more expensive staff and replaced them with cheaper but less experienced officers?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I have been very clear that we need experienced staff. In fact, 80% of staff working for the Prison Service have been with us for five or more years. I am very keen to ensure we retain them—we offer them promotion opportunities. Staffing levels are not set

[Elizabeth Truss]

by G4S. They are set by our overall prison policy, which I am changing to ensure they are sufficient. We are investing an extra £100 million a year in staffing to ensure we have the right staffing levels in both private and public sector prisons.

**Craig Whittaker** (Calder Valley) (Con): We have already heard about the dramatic rise in psychoactive drug use, mobile phone use and the use of drones. I am told by my local prison officers that that is because prison officer levels have become dangerously low. Until we can recruit and train enough staff, what interim plans will there be?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We do not have sufficient staff in our prisons, which is why the Government are putting in additional investment. We started with 10 of our most challenging prisons, where we needed to recruit an extra 400 staff. We have already been able to put out 280 job offers, which shows that we can recruit. In 75% of our prisons we do not have a problem recruiting. In the areas where we do have a problem, we are offering extra retention payments to achieve our recruitment plans.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Our prisons have had 7,000 fewer prison officers since 2010: a cut of 28%. Two thirds of our prisons are overcrowded. We have seen disturbances at many prisons—not just at Birmingham, which we are discussing today—and the level of suicide in our prisons is at its highest for 25 years. That is a truly shameful record and we have seen very little remorse from the Secretary of State today. Will she now apologise?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I have been very clear about the issues in our prison system. Since I secured this role in July, I have been focused on dealing with them, making sure that we make our prisons safer, invest in prison staff and invest in mental health facilities in our prisons in order to deal with this situation.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): In her statement, the Justice Secretary said that the prisons Minister chairs daily meetings with the chief executive of the Prison Service to monitor prisons for risk factors that might indicate potential violence and unrest. Why was the risk of serious violence at HMP Birmingham not raised in the relevant daily meeting, and if the biggest rise in violence in our prisons for 26 years was not raised, what is the point of having daily meetings?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. I am sure he will recognise that with an operational service such as the Prison Service, we can reduce and minimise risk, but we cannot eliminate it completely. That is what the efforts of the daily meeting are about—reducing the level of violence and giving governors what they need to keep our prisons as safe as possible. When the incidents occurred, they were dealt with extremely effectively by the tornado teams. I want to see a more stable prison estate, which means building extra capacity so that we do not have overcrowding, and investing in staff so that our prisons can be staffed at a

proper level. I have to tell Members that this will take time. While we are seeking to minimise risk, we cannot of course prevent every incident from happening.

**Mr David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Given that the level of assaults on staff and prisoners and that the level of disorder in prisons generally is higher in the private sector per 100 prisoners than it is in the public sector, will the Secretary of State tell us how many of these extra staff are going to be employed by the private sector, over whose recruitment she has no direct control?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his question. If he looks at the way we review prisons, he will find that the performance of the private and public sectors is relatively equivalent. There is not a significant difference between performance in the private and public sector. We set the levels of staff that the private sector has to employ. We are moving towards a 1:6 ratio in both the public and private sectors. All our evidence suggests that that will be enough to make sure that we keep prisons safe and, importantly, to reform prisoners to reduce the cost of reoffending.

**Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough) (Lab): The Secretary of State said in her statement that these matters had been developing over a number of years, but is it not the case that between 1997 and 2010 there were no cat A escapes and no riots like the ones we have seen? Since that time, there have been two category A and many other escapes, record numbers of suicides and record numbers of homicides in our prisons. Why should we trust the right hon. Lady's party to run the Prison Service?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I have said absolutely that we have seen significant rises in violence over recent years. That is why we launched the prison safety and reform plan. The first thing I did when I became Secretary of State was to make sure that we dealt with those issues. We have faced new challenges such as psychoactive drugs and mobile phones, which were not an issue before. I say to the right hon. Lady that since the inception of prisons we have not seriously impacted the reoffending rate, which is a challenge we face as a country. It is costing us £15 billion a year. It is important that we make our prisons safe, but also make them places of reform where we can reduce reoffending. Prisons need to follow both purposes.

**Mr David Winnick** (Walsall North) (Lab): It is very clear that the Prison Service is in a state of acute crisis, and it is a pity that the Secretary of State is not willing to admit that. Why was G4S involved in staffing the prison in the first place? We should look at its past. [Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), an illustrious Government Whip, is very excited in the approach to his wedding. I advise him that the descent on him of a Zen-like calm will aid his preparations.

**Mr Winnick:** G4S was the organisation that had to pay back £109 million to the Secretary of State's own Department for overcharging. There were problems in the Medway secure training centre, the Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre and many other cases where this organisation has been involved. It is time that G4S was told very clearly that it is no longer needed in our Prison Service.

**Elizabeth Truss:** I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that the decision to put HMP Birmingham out to private tender was a Labour decision, in 2009. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I appreciate that the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) is an illustrious former prisons Minister, eager to make his point with great force and alacrity—*[Interruption.]* Order. Mr Gyimah, I know that you are trying to aid matters, but you are disadvantaging me in seeking to facilitate good order. Your assistance might be required at some unspecified point in the future, but it is not required at the moment. We must hear the answers from the Secretary of State.

**Elizabeth Truss:** Let me also say to the hon. Gentleman that the underlying causes are the increase in psychoactive drugs, which the prisons and probation ombudsman has described as “a game-changer”; insufficient staff numbers, which I have addressed in the White Paper “Prison safety and reform”; increased use of mobile phones; and gangs, drugs and bullying. Those issues are common to both the public and private sectors, and they are the issues that the Government are addressing.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State now acknowledge that the root cause of these difficulties is the cutting of £700 million from the Prison Service since 2010? Will she now apologise to the House, and say that that was a false economy?

**Elizabeth Truss:** As I have said, since I started this job in July I have made clear that we need additional staff in our Prison Service to face new challenges such as psychoactive drugs, mobile phones and gangs. We are putting the money in—that was announced in the autumn statement—and we have a comprehensive programme for reform, but many of the problems in our prisons have existed for a decade. That is why, for the first time ever, we are making clear in legislation that reform is a key purpose of prison.

**Mr Speaker:** Before he beetles off to some other no doubt important commitment, let us hear the fellow from Wrexham.

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): I am very grateful, Mr Speaker. You are most accommodating.

The Secretary of State has already mentioned HM Prison Berwyn in Wrexham, which will open in February next year and will be the largest prison in western Europe. In due course, 2,000 men will reside there. Will she meet me so that I can discuss with her the arrangements for the opening, to allay some of the concerns of my constituents, which, as she can imagine on a day like today, have risen somewhat?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I should be very pleased to meet the hon. Gentleman.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): If the Secretary of State is looking for some light reading over Christmas, she would do well to acquire a copy of a book by the hon. Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), “Doing Time: Prisons in the 21st Century”, which contains a number of ideas. If I heard you correctly, Mr Speaker, you mentioned the hon. Gentleman’s intended marriage. Perhaps, if the Secretary of State were able to buy a copy, that would help with the cost of the wedding.

There are currently 9,971 foreign nationals in our prisons. In order to reduce the prison population, what further steps are being taken to return them to their countries of origin?

**Mr Speaker:** Book sales will no doubt increase manifold.

**Elizabeth Truss:** I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the book already has pride of place on my bookshelf. I have read it thoroughly, and I recommend it to every Member in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman) is very committed to prison reform, so much so that he agreed to become a Whip in my Department to keep an eye on us and make sure that we are on the right track.

The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right about foreign national offenders, and we are very much dealing with the issue.

**John Pugh** (Southport) (LD): First the prison was taken over by G4S, and then it was taken over by the prisoners. The report on the prison by the Independent Monitoring Boards states explicitly that staff shortages are a major issue, observing that

“on too many occasions, in many areas, the service was reduced by there being insufficient staff”.

That was the very theme of the report. Brutally, whose fault is this, the private operator’s or the Government’s?

**Elizabeth Truss:** Clearly, there are issues across our prison estate. There is not sufficient time out of cell, and that is one of the things we are going to be measuring in our new reform measures. We also do not have sufficient staff to be able to keep our prisons safe and reform offenders, which is what we need to do.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): It took three written parliamentary questions from me to get the Government to confess that only one prison in Britain was free of illegal drug use. It took a fourth question to get the information that that prison had no prisoners because it had closed down. This is symptomatic of the Government being in denial of the corruption and chaos in our prison service. Have not the Government’s policies for the past six years been, like the Minister’s statement today, evidence-free and ignorance-rich?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his assiduousness in asking parliamentary questions, which have elicited an answer. If he reads the “Prison safety and reform” White Paper, he will see there is a whole section on how we deal with the issue of drugs: testing offenders on entry and exit, and making sure that governors are held accountable for getting people off drugs. That is the way we are going to crack this problem.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon), the shadow Secretary of State, has pointed out, this is the worst prison disturbance since the Strangeways riot of 1990. The Woolf report on that riot recommended that

“no establishment should hold more prisoners than is provided for in its certified normal level of accommodation”,

[Liz McInnes]

but it is reported that HMP Birmingham was overcrowded by almost a third last year. Have this Government learnt no lessons at all from the riots of 26 years ago?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I have discussed the issue the hon. Lady mentions with Lord Woolf. She is right that the disturbance at HMP Birmingham was very serious; that is why we are investing £1.3 billion in our prison build programme to create extra capacity and eliminate overcrowding in the prison estate.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The Howard League published a report in the summer indicating all Welsh prisons had seen a fall in the number of officers compared with last year, so what is the Secretary of State doing to ensure the Welsh prison estate is equipped with sufficient staff, especially as it is the policy of the UK Government to build in Wrexham a Titan prison, one of the largest in Europe, primarily, as she has said in this debate, to house prisoners from overcrowded prisons in England?

**Elizabeth Truss:** We have great recruitment plans and programmes in place. We have already recruited a significant number for the first 10 prisons, including one in Wales, and we will follow that through with new apprenticeship programmes and graduate entry programmes and by making sure staff in our prison service are able to gain promotion and get the training they need to progress.

**Rob Marris** (Wolverhampton South West) (Lab): John Thornhill, president of the National Council of Independent Monitoring Boards, says the boards are “frustrated” by the lack of response to the issues raised in their annual reports, so can the Secretary of State tell me three specific and substantive actions taken as a result of the relevant monitoring board’s latest annual report into Birmingham?

**Elizabeth Truss:** The White Paper is very clear about reforming and making sure IMB recommendations are taken seriously, and about working closely with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons, because at the moment there is no duty for the Secretary of State to respond. We are putting that in place, to make sure it triggers action.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): How many staff were on duty when the riot started, and what is the Secretary of State’s estimate of the cost of the disturbance?

**Elizabeth Truss:** I have recounted the events of the day as far as we are aware of them, but there will be a full investigation that will make all those facts clear.

**Stephen Pound** (Ealing North) (Lab) *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is a noted thespian and I know he will therefore greatly enjoy the warm acclamation he receives when he now rises again from his seat.

**Stephen Pound** *rose—*

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

**Stephen Pound:** No one could seriously attempt to deny that there is something rotten in the prison estate in this country at the present time. However, I would like to give the Government credit for finally considering the issue of post-release employment. Many inmates believe that, when you ain’t got nothing, you’ve got nothing to lose. The Secretary of State has on her Benches probably the greatest expert in Parliament on that particular subject. Would she consider seconding the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Edward Timpson), to her Department—he might not thank me for my suggestion—to produce a report to the House in, say, six months’ time on what the Government are doing on post-release employment? The issue really is that crucial.

**Elizabeth Truss:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that it is vital to ensure that people have a job to go to when they leave custody. I am already working closely with that Minister’s “family” on this, and the prisons Minister will publish a report on the issue next year. We are examining plans to ensure that governors are held accountable for their effectiveness in getting offenders from their prisons into work.

**Mr Speaker:** Order—

**Mr Hanson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I would like to seek clarification from the Minister, if I may.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope this is not a continuation of the debate, but the right hon. Gentleman has an honest face and I will give him a chance.

**Mr Hanson:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Lord Chancellor indicated that the Labour Government had privatised HMP Birmingham. Would she acknowledge, however, that the Ministry of Justice announced in March 2011 that G4S was to take over the prison? [Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Gentleman has made his own point in his own way. We must hear the response of the Secretary of State, if she wishes to offer one.

**Elizabeth Truss:** The point I made was that the decision to put HMP Birmingham out to tender was made by Labour. [Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. There is quite a lot of eccentric gesticulation going on, and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West (Rob Marris) is shaking his head feverishly. I simply say to Members: consult the record. It will be very useful to read and digest the *Official Report* tomorrow morning over breakfast. The hon. Gentleman will probably find that therapeutic. I am grateful to the Secretary of State.

## Yemen

5.41 pm

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Sir Michael Fallon):**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on an announcement that was made in Riyadh earlier today on the conflict in Yemen. In 2014, Houthi forces and those loyal to former President Saleh took over the capital, Sana'a, and forced out the Hadi Government. Houthi forces have subsequently attacked Saudi territory, shelling border villages daily and killing Saudi civilians. A 10-country Saudi-led coalition intervened to restore the Hadi Government, to deter further Houthi aggression and to defend the Saudi border. United Nations Security Council resolution 2216 condemned the Houthis' actions. The United Kingdom fully supports both the coalition and the right of Saudi Arabia to defend itself. Instability in Yemen, where there is a long-standing al-Qaeda presence and a growing threat from Daesh—seen tragically in Aden this weekend—threatens not just the Gulf but our security in western Europe.

Concerns have been raised in this House and by non-governmental organisations about our export of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf. There have been allegations about breaches of international humanitarian law. As we operate one of the strictest arms export control regimes in the world, we take any such allegations very seriously and do our best to ensure that they are properly investigated by the coalition.

Following the air strike on the Great Hall in Sana'a on 26 October this year, for example, I spoke to the Saudi Defence Minister, the Foreign Secretary spoke to his counterpart, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), travelled to Riyadh to underline our concerns in person. The coalition's joint incidents assessment team—the JIAT—subsequently announced interim findings within a week. The coalition committed to review its rules of engagement and its command and control systems, and to take action against those held responsible. We acknowledge the progress they have made and look forward to the completed investigation of that incident.

The coalition continues to investigate other allegations. The findings of eight investigations were announced on 4 August and a further five on 6 December. We are pressing the coalition to complete all the remaining investigations as quickly as possible.

One specific allegation that UK-supplied cluster munitions were used in January this year was raised in this House on 24 May. The UK signed the convention on cluster munitions in 2008 and has not supplied any such weapons to Saudi Arabia since 1989—over a quarter of a century ago. Our initial view, as set out by the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), and based on the information we held at the time, was that a UK weapon had not been used, but we committed to analyse the allegation and to seek a full investigation by the coalition.

That investigation has now concluded. The coalition confirmed earlier today that a limited number of BL755 cluster munitions that were exported from the UK in the 1980s were dropped in Yemen, including by a coalition

aircraft in the incident alleged by Amnesty International not far from the Saudi border. The coalition, whose members are not parties to the convention, has said that the munitions were used against a legitimate military target and did not therefore contravene international humanitarian law. However, Saudi Arabia has now confirmed that it will not further use BL755 cluster munitions. I welcome that.

This particular instance shows that, in complete contrast to Russian and Syrian air strikes, where allegations are made, and with our support, the Saudi-led coalition is prepared to investigate thoroughly, to publish the findings and to take action where appropriate. I assure the House that we will continue to keep current sales of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf allies under review, in accordance with our arms export criteria. I commend this statement to the House.

5.47 pm

**Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab):** I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for advance sight of it. We are all deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict in Yemen and the dire humanitarian situation it has caused. As the House is aware, there have been widespread allegations that both sides in the conflict have violated international law. The latest revelation that UK-made cluster munitions have been used by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen is deeply worrying. Not only are such weapons immediately dangerous, but they come with a toxic legacy, lying on battlefields and threatening civilians, especially children, long after a conflict has ended.

In 2008, the previous Labour Government signed the convention on cluster munitions. The strikes that the Secretary of State has described today amount to the first confirmed use of UK-made cluster bombs since that date. Will the Secretary of State tell the House when he was first made aware of the possible use of such weapons by the coalition in Yemen? Why has it taken so long to confirm that those weapons were used?

A few days ago, the Obama Administration blocked the sale of guided-munitions kits over concerns about civilian casualties. That followed the United States blocking a sale of cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Secretary said that the test for continued British arms sales

“is whether those weapons might be used in a commission of a serious breach of international humanitarian law.”

I note that the Defence Secretary confirmed that a limited number of cluster munitions supplied by this country were dropped in Yemen by a coalition aircraft. Although the cluster munitions were exported in the 1980s, will the Government commit to examining whether their current policy needs to be changed? There have been wholly unacceptable actions, and this country cannot sit on its hands.

The Government have consistently rejected calls for an independent, United Nations-led investigation into possible breaches of humanitarian and international law in Yemen. In the light of what we have learnt today, I implore the Government to heed calls from Opposition Members, as well as from the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee and the International Development Committee, to have an inquiry. We need such an inquiry so that we can have independent verification of the actions of both sides in this conflict.

[Wayne David]

Finally, on the humanitarian situation, will the Secretary of State set out what action is being taken to help the 14 million people in need of urgent food and the 13 million Yemenis who lack access to clean water? In particular, we would like to know what is being done to help those children who are suffering so desperately in this conflict.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that. We all want to see this conflict brought to an end, and I hope we would be even-handed about that; more than 90 Saudi civilians have lost their lives in this conflict, through shelling over the border into Saudi Arabia, and more than 500, including women and children, have been injured. It is important that those things are set alongside other allegations of civilian casualties in Yemen itself.

The hon. Gentleman asked when we first became aware of this allegation. We were made aware of it in the spring. It was brought to the Floor of this House in May, and our analysis began. I wrote back to Amnesty at the end of June telling it that we had commenced work on our own analysis, but that could take us only so far, as the investigation itself was a matter for the Saudi authorities. That investigation continued throughout the autumn and has concluded only in the past few days. We, too, have been frustrated by the length of time it has taken, but the investigation has been carried out by the Saudis and it has now got us to the transparent admission that has been made this morning.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the United States stopping the supply of munitions, and we should be careful here; the US has stopped only one munitions licence, and it continues to supply combat aircraft, attack helicopters and other munitions to Saudi Arabia. Only one licence has been paused. As he has described, we have a different process—an arms control process that we keep under continuous review. He asked what our current policy on cluster munitions weapons is. It is exactly the same as it was left under the Labour Government: we oppose the use of cluster munitions. Let me make it very clear to the House that we are signatories of and parties to that convention, and we oppose the use of cluster munitions. We have made that very clear to the Saudi authorities and we therefore welcome their announcement today that they will no longer use cluster munitions. That is a result from this investigation and the pressure we have been putting on them.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me about an independent inquiry. We have been clear throughout that an allegation such as this is, first, a matter for the Saudi authorities and the coalition authorities to investigate. They have shown through this process that they are able to do that. They have investigated, and they have today announced the findings and taken action as a result.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Have the Saudis explained why they used these British-supplied weapons, presumably in the knowledge that it would cause considerable embarrassment to the British Government? What plans do the Saudis have to dispose of their remaining stocks?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The Saudis have made it clear that they used these munitions in a border area—just a few kilometres from the Saudi border—inside Yemen

and they used them against a legitimate military target that may have been responsible for some of the attacks and deaths they had been suffering on their side of the border. They therefore state that, as they are not party to the convention, the use of these cluster munitions does not contravene international law. As for stocks, they have made it clear that they are not going to use UK-supplied cluster munitions in future, and we should all welcome that.

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Scottish National party Members have been clear for many, many months that there have been undeniable violations of international humanitarian law by Saudi Arabia in its conflict in Yemen. There is overwhelming evidence that the Saudis have been failing to conduct military operations lawfully, a situation that caused the US to join the Netherlands and Germany in suspending arms sales to Saudi Arabia very recently. Once again, the Saudi regime stands accused of routinely using cluster bombs against the Yemeni people; that is a weapon even this Government describe as “unjustifiable” because it is designed to kill and injure civilians. Today's revelations are not particularly new, but unless the Government act immediately to end arms sales to Saudi Arabia the court of public opinion will find them guilty of collusion in violations of international humanitarian law.

I have a couple of questions: will the Secretary of State tell the House when he first saw the analysis confirming the UK cluster bomb? Is *The Guardian* article today correct in saying that he first saw it a month ago? If so, why is this House finding out only now, after it appeared in the press? His statement says that the cluster bombs were used against legitimate military targets and therefore did not contravene international humanitarian law, but how can we continue to do business with a regime that routinely uses cluster bombs against civilian populations? This country is a signatory to the treaty, which obliges us to stop other people using such munitions. Finally, what does a regime have to do—how many breaches of international humanitarian law must it commit?—before this Government deem it an unacceptable partner to deal in arms with?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** First, I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman was listening, as the United States has not suspended arms sales to Saudi Arabia—he is incorrect about that. The US has suspended one sale of munitions, but it continues to sell munitions generally to Saudi Arabia, and to supply aircraft and attack helicopters. Secondly, there is no evidence that cluster munitions have been routinely used in Yemen—on the contrary, this allegation stood out for what it is. It has been thoroughly investigated and, as a result of that investigation and of our pressure, we now have an undertaking that Saudi Arabia will not use cluster munitions of this kind in the future and indeed that it is now considering becoming a party to the convention.

The hon. Gentleman asked when I first became aware of the analysis that we were doing. My hon. Friend the then Minister for Defence Procurement told the House in May that we would look hard at this allegation, and we began our analysis, but of course we were not investigating this allegation; only the coalition could investigate it, because only the coalition had access to all the information that would be needed to see whether this particular allegation was justified. I concede that

the investigation has taken a long time, but we now have the result, and we have the admission from the Saudi authorities that cluster munitions were used, together with the undertaking that they will not be used in future.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Are the Saudis correct in seeing the existence of an Iranian-backed Houthi regime on their southern border as an existential threat to the Kingdom?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** In a word, yes. The Saudis are seeing villages being shelled on a daily basis from across their border. I have yet to hear any Opposition Member condemn that shelling or take any note of the innocent lives that have been lost on the Saudi side of the border, along with, of course, the innocent lives that have been lost in the conflict in Yemen. Absolutely, Saudi Arabia has the right to defend itself.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): I am glad that Yemen is being discussed again in the House today, but I am sad and disappointed that we are doing so for these reasons. Of course I accept the assurances given by the Minister, and I know he will ensure that the Saudi Arabian Government will also keep to their promise, but what the people of Yemen need over the next few days is a ceasefire. We are seeing bombs, famine and cholera, and a country starving to death. It desperately needs that ceasefire. The Prime Minister said that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), who has done so much work on this issue, was in Riyadh yesterday. Can we therefore be given any further information as to how we can get this ceasefire, so that the aid can start getting through to save the people of Yemen before it is too late?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The right hon. Gentleman's approach is very constructive. I know of his interest: he chairs the all-party parliamentary group on Yemen. We are trying, as a Government, to do two things. First, to bring about the ceasefire that he seeks and we have all sought in Yemen, by getting the parties together. In the end, there has to be some kind of political settlement in Yemen, and we have been working towards that end.

Secondly, there is the issue that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), was working on in Riyadh just yesterday. We urgently need to get the ports, including Hudaydah, properly open so that we can get humanitarian aid in—particularly for the civilian population, who so desperately need it now.

**Bill Wiggin** (North Herefordshire) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend talk a little about our relationship with Saudi Arabia and how it keeps our streets safer here?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. Saudi Arabia is a key partner in our fight against terrorism. We depend on each other's intelligence. There are terrorist plots to this country of which we have been forewarned by Saudi Arabia. It is essential for our own security that we keep our relationship with Saudi Arabia in good repair.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I am sorry to say this, but for those of us with long memories, this is a reminder of the sort of discussions we used to have on arms to Iraq. Eventually, through the Scott inquiry, we found that Ministers had misled us; I will not put it any stronger than that. Those who were here at that time should reflect on the kind of answers that were given to us. We knew what was going on in Iraq. We know what is going on in Yemen. How can we possibly support continuing to send arms to Saudi Arabia that are being used in that country?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** As somebody who was here part of the time during that process, I certainly recall the very close attention that the House eventually paid to the sale of arms to Iraq. We have, partly as a result of exactly what happened in the 1980s, a very tough arms export control regime. We keep our arms sales under continuous review. We weigh up each successive licence when it is brought before Ministers. But we also need to be very clear that Saudi Arabia has the right to defend itself and that it is quite legitimately answering the call of the legitimate Government of Yemen in coming to their aid.

**Craig Whittaker** (Calder Valley) (Con): Earlier, I was a little surprised to hear that it is almost three decades since we last sold cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia. It was also heartening to hear that it has agreed to use them no longer. Will my right hon. Friend say whether, since we signed the convention in 2008, any UK personnel have been involved in supporting continued maintenance or given other support to enable the Saudis to use their cluster munitions?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am happy to give my hon. Friend that very specific assurance: no United Kingdom personnel have been involved in the storage, transport, maintenance or deployment of any cluster munitions in Saudi Arabia.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I am sure that everyone in the House would condemn the murder of Saudi civilians as they do Yemeni civilians, but what we are talking about is the sale of UK weapons to Saudi. How many times have cluster munitions been dropped? Have they been dropped on any occasions by UK-supplied aircraft? Is the UK satisfied that all those targets were legitimate military targets, and what was the UK involvement in the targeting?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We are only aware of this single allegation that has now been fully investigated by the Saudi authorities: a single allegation that cluster munitions were used in this particular incident around the turn of the year. As the Saudis have made clear today, they had been dropped by a coalition aircraft. I am sorry; what was the right hon. Gentleman's second question?

**Tom Brake:** Is the UK satisfied that all those targets were legitimate military targets and what was the UK involvement in the targeting?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The Saudi authorities have said today that these munitions were used against a legitimate military target in the border area on the Yemeni side of

[*Sir Michael Fallon*]

the Saudi border. On UK involvement, we are not involved in approving or selecting targets for the coalition in Yemen.

**Seema Kennedy** (South Ribble) (Con): Iran, North Korea, Cuba: we see what happens when countries are shunned by the international community. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is positive engagement through our diplomatic service with our ally, Saudi Arabia, that will influence this process—not shunning it, as some on the Labour Benches suggest?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Exactly. There is nothing to be gained from shunning or boycotting Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia is on the cusp of enormous social and economic reforms. As well as being a key security, trading and investment partner in our own country, Saudi Arabia is now on the cusp of a major reform programme of its economy and society. We ought to be playing our part in that rather than constantly cavilling from the sidelines.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Secretary of State be very clear? On what specific date did the Saudis inform him or his other ministerial colleagues that they had in fact used UK cluster munitions in Yemen? Given the wide range of other allegations that still do not have any answers—in fact, Médecins sans Frontières is already questioning some of the Joint Incidents Assessment Team investigations—why should we trust that Saudi Arabia has in fact conducted operations lawfully and appropriately?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The official confirmation about this particular allegation has come today—this afternoon—from Riyadh. I thought it right that Parliament should be informed as soon as that announcement was made in Riyadh. Other allegations are outstanding and we continue to press the Saudi authorities to get those investigations wrapped up, publish the findings and then take action if there are weaknesses in their command and control procedures, to get them remedied. It is only through that that they will continue to demonstrate that the assurances they give us and their other allies are properly valid.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): What analysis has the Defence Secretary made of the humanitarian consequences of the illicit redistribution of cluster munitions, including BL755, from chaotic, failed and post-conflict states, on civilian populations throughout the middle east and north Africa, and much further afield?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Clearly, we oppose the use of cluster munitions. We do not keep records of how the stocks that may have been accumulated by countries in the middle east have later been distributed or sold on, but clearly we oppose their use in any conflict now.

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, but it is simply not the case that these British-made cluster munitions were used against a legitimate military target. They were dropped on farmland in northern Yemen, creating de facto minefields that have killed and injured civilians. It has taken more than six months for

the Saudi-led coalition to admit using them. Why does the Secretary of State now give it the benefit of the doubt over their use when such breaches of international humanitarian law are being alleged?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I have seen no evidence that the dropping of this particular munition has resulted in any civilian casualties. On the contrary, this was a munition that, from all accounts, had not in fact exploded—probably because of its obsolescence; it was a very old weapon. However, if the hon. Lady has evidence that any civilians have been killed or injured, we would very much like to see it.

As I have made clear, the investigation has taken a while. We have continued to press the Saudis on the fact that when something such as this is alleged, they need to be as transparent as possible, get on with the investigation and reassure their allies by simply publishing the findings, and, if something went wrong, then admitting it went wrong and putting it right. That is not what happens when we consider the Russian bombing of completely innocent civilians in Aleppo.

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement to the House today. Will he say a few words on the regional situation that has led to this conflict? Clearly, the Iranian invasion in Yemen is causing many of the issues. While he is talking about the regional situation, will he join me in offering condolences to the family of Russia's ambassador to Turkey, Ambassador Karlov, who was tragically murdered today? Does he agree that, just because we condemn Russian violence in Aleppo, that does not mean we support other violence against Russia in other parts of the world?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am sure the House will join my hon. Friend and me in condemning the murder of the Russian ambassador to Turkey—a shocking act involving a diplomat, who should otherwise, of course, enjoy proper protection, and whose murder does not bring any conflict in the middle east closer to resolution. There are, however, too many states in the middle east that are acting beyond their borders—such as Iran, clearly involved behind the scenes in prolonging a conflict that only perpetuates the suffering of the Yemeni people.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I commend the Defence Secretary for making a statement rather than being dragged here to answer an urgent question. That is an important part of the way we do our business, and I commend him for it.

I support what the Defence Secretary says about Saudi Arabia having the right to defend itself, but surely not at any cost and not in any way—that is all we are trying to get at. When the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), who is an honourable man, and who I do not think for an instant wanted to mislead the House, said in May that, based

“on all the information available to us, including sensitive coalition operational reporting, we assess that no UK-supplied cluster weapons have been used”—[*Official Report*, 24 May 2016; Vol. 611, c. 401.]

had he been lied to by our coalition allies, and, if so, can we really trust anything the Saudis say today?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** No, as I made clear, that was his view at the time, based on the only information that we had available. That was long before the investigation that has concluded today had properly started. That was the best information he had at the time.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, yes, the purpose of international humanitarian law is to recognise that states do have the right to defend themselves, but they have to do so in a way that is necessary and proportionate, that avoids hitting the sick or the wounded and that properly distinguishes between combatants and non-combatants. That is the basis of international humanitarian law. Now, the Saudis believe—he may not accept this—that, in this particular instance, they did respect international humanitarian law.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** How many BL755 cluster munitions were exported from this country to Saudi Arabia before 1989, what is their shelf life and how many were used in this particular incident?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I do not have to hand—and I am not sure, indeed, that we still have—the records from right back to the 1980s as to exactly how many cluster munitions were exported. I am sorry to tell my hon. Friend that I am not so much of an expert as to know the precise obsolescence of this particular weapon. I am told it would have been getting pretty obsolete now, but if he will allow me, I will write to him on both those technical points.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** May I, too, welcome the Minister's statement? When I was on the Defence Committee, we, along with the Chairman, who is sitting here as well, attended a joint meeting of the Committees on Arms Export Controls, which some of the Ministers here were at as well. We were assured that if evidence was proven to be true, action would be taken. The proof has been provided by the Minister today in his statement. What action—what sanctions—will be taken against Saudi Arabia? Is it too much to ask that the blanket, indiscriminate bombing of Yemeni civilians—the murder of innocents—should stop immediately?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** As I have made clear throughout this evening, there are innocents being killed on both sides in this terrible conflict, and there are Saudi innocent civilians who are being killed by Houthis through the shelling and constant attacks across the Saudi-Yemeni border. The hon. Gentleman asks what action we are taking. We are the ones who have pressed for this allegation to be properly investigated, and although it may not satisfy him, we have the result today—we have a decision by the Saudi Government that they will no longer use cluster munition weapons. That is a result for us.

**Oliver Colville (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con):** What implications would it have for Britain if we did not have a close relationship with Saudi Arabia?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We would certainly be weakened in our fight against terrorism. Our security services would lose the co-operation we have with the Saudi authorities. But more than that, Saudi is an investor in our country, it is a key trade partner of ours in the Gulf, and it is an important ally in securing the stability we all want to see in the middle east.

**Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab):** The Secretary of State continues to use the word “allegation”, but this is no longer an allegation—it is a proven fact that a British cluster bomb has been used in the conflict in Yemen. Given that it has taken seven months for the Saudi Arabian authorities to, in his words, be “transparent”, is he honestly saying that the Government's sanction on Saudi Arabia is merely to accept its reassurance?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** The hon. Gentleman is right that from today we should probably describe this as a fact rather than an allegation. I was calling it an allegation because that is what it was when it was first brought before this House back in May, but now we have the confirmation from Saudi Arabia that coalition aircraft did drop one of these cluster munitions around the turn of the year. As far as sanctions are concerned, it is this country, as I have said, that has pressed for all these allegations—some of them are still allegations—to be properly investigated, for the findings to be published and, where necessary, for evidence to be provided by the Saudi coalition authorities that changes have been made in their command-and-control, rules-of-engagement or targeting procedures. Those are the results that we want to see.

**Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con):** I am pleased to hear the news that Saudi is no longer using cluster munitions, but will the Government also encourage the Saudis to destroy any remaining cluster munitions they have?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I can tell my hon. Friend that we have put that request to the Saudi Government, and I hope they will accept that suggestion of hers and ours.

**Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab):** Yemen is said to be one step away from famine, so can our Government help to open the ports and the airports so that humanitarian aid can be shipped to its people?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Yes. The key now is get aid into the country, and that means reopening the ports that have been damaged in the fighting—particularly Hudaydah—and making arrangements that will allow the charities and the non-governmental organisations to get on with their vital work. The hon. Gentleman is right that the country is on the brink of famine, and it is probably beyond that now. There is not enough food, oil or other essentials getting through to the people.

**Chris White (Warwick and Leamington) (Con):** With the limiting of US arms, even by one sale, as well as this new evidence on cluster munitions coming to light this week, will the Secretary of State outline the circumstances in which the Government would suspend UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia and call for an independent UN-led investigation into potential breaches of international humanitarian law?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** If we had evidence that international humanitarian law had been breached, that, of course, would be a serious factor in considering whether to agree to future licences or to suspend existing licences. If we felt that the Saudi authorities were not properly able to investigate allegations of this kind, we would also, of course, support the call there has already been for an independent inquiry, but the events of the last few weeks and months have shown that, thanks to our

[*Sir Michael Fallon*]

pressure, the Saudis have been able to investigate these allegations, and they have today, as a result, made the announcement that they have.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Given our very strong diplomatic relationship with Saudi Arabia, and given its saying that it will no longer use cluster bombs, could it be stressed very strongly to the Saudis that, as a gesture of good faith, the independently verified destruction of the cluster bombs they have would go a long way towards restoring the faith of the international community in what they say?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I will make sure that that suggestion is conveyed to the Saudi authorities. As I have said, we have already offered to help them to destroy the BL755 cluster munitions, which are the only ones that we supplied to Saudi Arabia.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for prior sight of it. He was careful to say that the Saudis confirmed that they will not further use BL755 cluster munitions—that is, the British-supplied ones. Do they hold stocks of similar munitions supplied by others, and have they stopped their use as well?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me another opportunity to clarify that the Saudis' statement does relate to BL755 cluster munitions—the only ones that we sold them, which have been at the centre of these allegations. I am not able to comment on whether they hold stocks of other cluster munitions. Perhaps he would allow me to write to him on that.

**Robert Jenrick** (Newark) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend think that if the UK had ended arms exports to Saudi Arabia, as some have argued for, thereby weakening,

or possibly irretrievably damaging, our relationship with an old friend, the investigation that he is announcing the results of would have been more, or less, likely, and that the UK would have more, or less, influence over events on the ground in Yemen?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. Had we refused to sell particular arms or munitions to Saudi Arabia, our place would undoubtedly have been taken by some less scrupulous arms supplier who would not have pressed for this kind of investigation. We have had the investigation, we have had the confirmation from the Saudi authorities, and we have now had the result that the coalition will no longer use BL755s.

**Dr Tania Mathias** (Twickenham) (Con) *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Finally, the prize for patience goes to Dr Tania Mathias.

**Dr Mathias:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I declare my interest as an Amnesty International member. I welcome the fact that the UK Government will help with the destruction of the stockpile. How many BL755s are in Saudi? Will the Government also help with the clearing of the bomblets—one bomb produces 147 bomblets—from the villages in Yemen?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We do not have records going back right through the 1980s of exactly how many cluster munitions were sold to Saudi Arabia. We have offered to help to dispose of any remaining stocks that the Saudis hold. I am not able to offer UK help in a conflict zone to deal with any unexploded ordnance. My best information is that this particular munition did not explode, and that therefore the bomblets, as they are described, are still in the area, but if I am wrong about that, I will write to my hon. Friend.

## Points of Order

6.23 pm

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The deliberations on the statement we have just had show why it is absolutely vital that we have robust parliamentary scrutiny of UK arms exports. In that light, have you or Mr Speaker received any notification of any Committee attempting to withdraw from the Committees on Arms Export Controls structure, which exists to scrutinise UK arms exports and has done so for many years, formerly as the Quadripartite Committee?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing)**: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order, but I think he knows, as does the House, that it is not a matter that I can address from the Chair. However, he wished to make a point, he has made it, and I am sure that those on whose ears he wished it to fall have heard what he said.

**Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. As I understand it, that Committee, whose Chairman is sitting on the Government Benches, has withdrawn from the Committees on Arms Export Controls. When we were deciding on our report on Yemen, there was considerable pressure, with visits from Saudi Arabian Ministers. It is right that the House should know that there are pressures going on here. In the past, the Committees on Arms Export Controls were quite strong, revoking 50 licences in the previous Parliament. In this Parliament, their regrouping was delayed by six months. I think that speaks for itself.

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: The right hon. Lady knows that that is not a point of order. She wished to raise a point of political interest in the Chamber, but it is not a point of order, and I can say nothing further on it.

**Danny Kinahan** (South Antrim) (UUP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that this is a point of order; it is on a different matter entirely. Today I tried to submit an urgent question on the recall of the Northern Ireland Assembly, which was debating a motion of no confidence in the First Minister. Could the Speaker explain, perhaps at a later time, why the question was not selected, as the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has responsibility for political stability in Northern Ireland, especially at such times of crisis and failure of the Executive?

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point, and this is a matter about which he and other Members may well be concerned, but I absolutely cannot address it from the Chair here in the Chamber. Nor will Mr Speaker give, now or at any time, an explanation as to why he has or has not granted an urgent question. That is not a matter that should be brought up in the Chamber, and not information that can be disclosed from the Chair.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Further to the previous points of order—

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: Further to the previous almost points of order, I give the right hon. Gentleman the benefit of the doubt that this might be a point of order.

**Dr Lewis**: I think that this one might actually be a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Although the Defence Committee has not withdrawn from the Committees on Arms Export Controls, I am aware of the serious concern that was caused by the leak of a draft report that those Committees had drawn up. Do you agree that it is of absolute importance that if Select Committees, or quadripartite composite Committees like this, are to function, there must be no question of draft reports being leaked for political purposes, as happened in this case?

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: That may or may not be a point of order in relation to order in the Chamber, but it is a point about which Mr Speaker will be extremely concerned, and we should all be extremely concerned, because the leaking of reports undermines the work of the Committees who are working hard on them. It is not honourable behaviour becoming of hon. Members of this House to leak reports.

**Chris White** (Warwick and Leamington) (Con): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you clarify whether any Committee of this House should be disbanded if there is a leak?

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: That is not a point of order. It is not for the Chair to opine on whether a Committee should or should not, in any particular circumstance, be disbanded. However, it is a matter that I am sure hon. Members will address in another forum in another way, and the hon. Gentleman has made his point.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not want to prolong this discussion, but I wonder whether anything could be done through your or Mr Speaker's good offices to get together the Chairs of the Committees that make up the Committees on Arms Export Controls to try to get this impasse resolved for the benefit of our constituents, who want robust arms export controls in this House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker**: The hon. Gentleman makes a very fair point. However, although not many things are outwith the competence of Mr Speaker, it is outwith his competence to require any action by the Chairmen of Committees. However, once again, the hon. Gentleman has made his point. I am quite sure that the Chairmen of the relevant Committees will have heard the concerns expressed in the House and will act accordingly.

## Exiting the EU: Science and Research

*[Relevant document: Seventh Report from the Science and Technology Committee, Leaving the EU: Implications and opportunities for science and research, HC 502.]*

6.30 pm

### **The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Joseph Johnson):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered exiting the EU and science and research.

I am pleased to introduce today's debate about science and research, which is one of a number of debates about our exit from the European Union. It is important that we continue to give Members of this House the opportunity to discuss and debate Brexit and the impact it will have on our country.

I would like to say up front that the UK's science base is not only one of this country's most impressive national achievements, but one of the strongest in the world. Within the G7, we have the most productive science base in terms of papers and citations per unit of GDP. With our world-class universities, four of which are in the world's top 10, and 18 in the world's top 100, we have a long-established system that supports and attracts the brightest minds throughout their career and enables them to generate high-quality research. With less than 1% of the global population and just over 3% of global research and development spend, the UK produces almost one fifth of the most highly cited research articles.

The benefits for our economy are very real. The World Economic Forum ranks the UK among the top four nations in the world for university-industry collaboration in R and D, and we ranked third in the global innovation index in 2016.

If hon. Members want a specific example, they might look at the space sector—a high-growth, high-productivity industry that showcases UK research strengths in a global market. Earlier this month at the European Space Agency Council of Ministers, the Government showed their confidence by investing an extra £1.4 billion in ESA, so that we support the world-class science and innovation underpinning this high-growth sector of the economy. Our investment of €170 million in the exploration programme will bring tangible benefits, ensuring, for example, that the ExoMars rover, which is being built in Stevenage is completed and launched.

Thanks to our investments we now lead the research and innovation programmes in ESA for telecoms, Earth observation and navigation, thereby positioning the UK to seize opportunities in those growing markets. I also signed a new memorandum of understanding with ESA to ensure that its European centre for space applications and telecommunications at Harwell, which is a fast-growing space cluster in Oxfordshire, is the focus for the agency's commercial exploitation of space data.

Those and earlier investments are delivering results. The space sector in this country is growing strongly. It is now worth £13.7 billion a year to the UK economy, employing just under 40,000 people, and we are ambitious for it. We want to increase our share in the global sector to 10% by 2030, creating 100,000 new jobs.

Space is one of a number of success stories that are in part due to Government investments in collaborative structures with international partners in Europe and around the world—a story that we plan to continue writing long after we have left the European Union.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The Minister has mentioned collaboration with EU partners and others around the world. I represent a university that has given us Dolly the sheep and, indeed, Higgs boson, so we know that collaboration works, but the only reason that Dolly the sheep and Higgs boson are associated with the University of Edinburgh is that it was able to lead those collaborative projects. We are hearing already that the prospect of leading such collaborative projects is being jeopardised, because of the decision to leave the European Union. Will the Minister do all that he possibly can to ensure that universities such as Edinburgh in my constituency are protected in our exiting the European Union?

**Joseph Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. That is why the Government have, in various announcements, given assurances to UK institutions and institutions across the European Union that we remain full members of the European Union and that we are eligible to lead European bids and to compete successfully in bids for funding streams. We continue to do so and we want institutions such as that which the hon. Gentleman represents in Edinburgh to continue to be as successful as they have been in the past.

This Government recognise that our world-leading science and research must be at the very heart of our industrial strategy, and we are matching rhetoric with resources. At the autumn statement, the Chancellor announced an additional £2 billion a year for R and D by 2021. That is the single biggest uplift in research and innovation spending in decades and it is an opportunity for us to make Britain, in the Prime Minister's words, the "global go-to place for scientists, innovators and tech investors".

**David Rutley** (Macclesfield) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an important point. Does he agree that that investment and commitment also builds business confidence? This week, AstraZeneca opened a £120 million investment site, which demonstrates its commitment to the UK economy because of the support that he rightly highlights.

**Joseph Johnson:** My hon. Friend is exactly right. It certainly boosts not only the confidence of our research communities, but that of the business community, which sees that we are putting innovation at the very heart of our industrial strategy. For every pound of public investment in research, we get back more than £7 of net economic benefit, both at local and national level. When we invest in research, we invest in our wider prosperity.

**Chris White** (Warwick and Leamington) (Con): Although the Chancellor's announcement that the Government will continue to fund EU projects such as Horizon 2020 was welcome, it is still important to make sure that our universities continue to collaborate. What further measures will the Minister take to ensure that that happens?

**Joseph Johnson:** Our universities are successful in winning European funding bids. In fact, we have the top four slots of all European institutions, in Oxford,

Cambridge, Imperial and University College London—*[Interruption.]*—in terms of the share of participations. That underscores the strengths of our university system and we want them to continue to be able to bid successfully for as long as we are members of the European Union.

We want that level of economic benefit to continue long after we leave the EU, which is why we are setting up the industrial strategy challenge fund. It will back priority technologies such as robotics and biotechnology where, just as in the space sector, the UK has the potential to turn research strengths into a global, industrial and commercial lead. Although our research and innovation system is world leading, we are working to ensure that it stays that way by being even more effective. That is why we are implementing Sir Paul Nurse's recommendation that we should establish a single strategic research and innovation funding body—UK Research and Innovation—which will be a strong and unified voice, championing UK research and innovation nationally and internationally.

The EU is, of course, important for the UK's research base, but it is not the only game in town. The UK was a place of learning before many of the EU's member states even existed. Some of our universities have been centres of research excellence for nearly a millennium. The UK will, of course, continue to play a leading role in major, non-EU research collaborations that take place here—from CERN in Switzerland, to the European Space Agency. We are a major partner in the new Square Kilometre Array, the world's largest radio telescope, whose global headquarters will be based at Jodrell Bank. In the LIGO Scientific Collaboration, it was UK researchers, working with their counterparts, who made the dramatic gravitational waves discovery possible.

All that said, it will, of course, not be lost on many hon. Members that there are many valuable interactions between UK and EU scientific institutions. We work closely with our European neighbours on issues that affect our planet as well as everyone on it.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Chancellor has promised to guarantee projects that win funds from Horizon 2020 before we leave the EU. He has set two further tests for those guarantees, namely that projects should be good value for money and in line with domestic strategic priorities. However, when researchers apply for Horizon 2020 funds, it is not clear how they will know whether their projects are “good value for money” and in line with the Government's strategic priorities. Will the Minister please explain, for the benefit not just of the House but of academics, what they are supposed to do to meet the Chancellor's criteria?

**Joseph Johnson:** The Chancellor's statement of 13 August was an extremely important one, and it did a great deal to help to put aside the uncertainty of the science and research community about its ability to participate in competitively won funding streams. The Treasury has made it clear that it will be good for guaranteeing payments that fall due to UK institutions after the moment of Brexit. That has significantly helped to reassure our scientists and researchers that they can confidently bid for funding streams in the months ahead.

It is not in our interests to turn away from our long-standing partnerships. That message was reinforced by the Prime Minister when she stated that the Government are committed to a positive outcome for UK science as

we exit the European Union. Our priorities in that respect can be broken down into two core issues: continuity in international research collaboration and maintenance of the factors that make the UK the location of choice for some of the best minds on the planet. With regard to a smooth departure from the EU, the two core inputs into those issues are funding and people.

On funding, as I have just said, the Chancellor announced in August that the Treasury will guarantee all successful, competitively bid-for EU research funding that is applied for before the UK leaves the EU. That means that UK participants and their international partners can be confident that they will have the funding necessary throughout the life of their Horizon 2020-funded project. The UK, as hon. Members know, has benefited strongly from Horizon 2020, with more than 5,200 participations and more than €2.6 billion of funding support since 2014. We are top of the table for participations and second only to Germany in funding won.

In addition to underwriting the competitively bid-for research funding, the Chancellor has confirmed that funding will be guaranteed for structural and investment fund projects signed before the UK departs from the EU. We have worked closely with the European Commission to provide swift reassurances. Commissioner Moedas stated immediately after the referendum that

“as long as the UK is a member of the European Union, EU law continues to apply and the UK retains all rights and obligations of a Member State.”

That helps us to reinforce the message that we still have the same terms of access to European research funding, including Horizon 2020, for as long as we are a member of the EU.

When it comes to people, we recognise the significant contribution to our research base made by non-UK EU nationals. The Prime Minister made it clear again earlier today that during negotiations she wants to protect the status of EU nationals who are already living here. As a global hub for research excellence, we will always welcome the best and the brightest. Others are concerned about EU national students and the rules regarding their student loans from the Student Loans Company, and I reassure the House that those rules are unchanged and remain in force.

**Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): The Minister is giving an eloquent description of our current situation, but I am thinking post Brexit. The key question is this: do the Government intend to seek associate country status for Horizon 2020? That would give us some continuity.

**Joseph Johnson:** These are important questions, which, my hon. Friend will understand, will form a significant part of the overall discussions around our future relations with the EU. We recognise the benefits of collaboration with European partners, and we will seek to ensure that we can continue to derive strong collaboration arrangements all around the world.

**Ben Howlett** (Bath) (Con): My hon. Friend has been a strong advocate for our university sector since he took up his post. One of the key concerns of my university, and of others across the country—he probably knows what I am about to say—is in relation to international student numbers. Given the opportunities available to us in a post-Brexit world, we have to be better at communicating what immigration looks like in our country.

[Ben Howlett]

For me, and probably for most universities across the country, it is important that we split up our international student numbers from our overall immigration figures. That has the support of 70% of the public. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree on that point.

**Joseph Johnson:** Whenever I get the chance, I reiterate that we welcome international students and value the contribution that they make to our universities and our economy. I am pleased to be able to repeat that there is no cap on the number of international students who can come and study here, and there is no plan to introduce one.

It is important that we make it clear that EU students continue to be able to access our loan book and come here to study on home fee status, just as domestic UK students do. The Government have been very quick to make that clear to students applying in 2016-17 and to those who will be applying in 2017-18. We will decide the policy for the 2018-19 academic year in plenty of time for the start of that application process.

**Jim Dowd** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): May I come back to the point raised by the hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael), the Chair of the Select Committee on Education? Non-EU nationals may be more reluctant than they were to come to this country for as long as our international relationships with the rest of the EU remain unclear.

**Joseph Johnson:** As I have said, we want to encourage international students to come to the UK. They bring enormous benefits to our universities and to our economy, and we have no plans to introduce a cap. We have a great higher education system, and the fact that we attract the second-largest group of international students of any country testifies to the quality of our institutions. That will continue after Brexit.

**Mr Peter Lilley** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): Will my hon. Friend tell us how much it costs to fund the loans to which EU students are entitled—unlike non-EU students, who pay the full fee and help to subsidise the rest of us—given that only 16% are repaying their loans at present? Should that cost not be taken into account when we talk about the costs and benefits of university education in this country?

**Joseph Johnson:** Of course, we weigh up the costs of enabling EU students to access our loan book—a right that they have for as long as we are a member state of the European Union—and additional costs after the moment of Brexit will be taken into account as we put in place arrangements for EU students for the longer term. For the time being, while we are still members of the European Union, they have a right to come here and access higher education, as home fee students do, and to access our student loan book.

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I am pleased to hear what the Minister has to say about students in the UK. Has he had any indication from his interlocutors in the rest of Europe about the status of the increasing number of British school leavers who wish to study in European countries, and the relatively favourable fees that they are expected to pay?

**Joseph Johnson:** We wish that more UK students took the opportunities that are available to them to study overseas. International mobility is a great life enhancer. It improves employability, and it is something that we want to encourage. We are doing so through programmes promoted by the British Council, such as Generation UK-India and Generation UK-China. Those are valuable programmes that we want to promote.

In the first meeting of my stakeholder working group on EU exit for universities, research and innovation, I was impressed by the positive, outward-looking approach of key decision makers in the UK research and innovation community. As we prepare for the negotiations ahead, no stone can be left unturned in learning about the opportunities ahead for the UK. If we are to win in the global marketplace, we must win the global battle for talent. Britain has always been one of the most welcoming places in the world for brilliant minds, and it will remain so.

Throughout our exit of the European Union, we will continue to build on our ambitious global partnerships, including with our friends in the EU. We will put the UK at the forefront of international research on emerging global challenges, and we will continue to make sure that UK researchers have access to, and leadership of, world-class research facilities. We will continue to do everything we can to make sure that our proud history in science and research has a bright future.

6.49 pm

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The American physicist Dr Michio Kaku calls science “the engine of prosperity”, and that is certainly true for us in the United Kingdom. In 2015, the Campaign for Science and Engineering found that for every £1 invested by the Government on research and development, we got back 20p to 30p each and every year in perpetuity.

I am a strong believer in science for science’s sake—it is part of our innate humanity to seek to push forward the bounds of knowledge—but we must also recognise that as far as the UK economy is concerned science investment is the gift that keeps on giving. Our world-renowned science sector plays a huge role in economic growth and the creation of jobs: 20% of the UK workforce are employed in science roles, and employees earn 40% more than the average wage in these high-skilled, well-paid jobs.

The UK punches above its weight on science. As the Minister said, we represent just 0.9% of the global population, but we produce a staggering 16% of the world’s most significant research citations. We are the home of Stephen Hawking, Ernest Rutherford and the discoverer of the Higgs boson. Peter Higgs may have been at Edinburgh University, but I am proud to say that he was born in Elswick in Newcastle.

Despite such a proud history, we lag behind on investment. Since 2012, UK public sector spending on science has fallen to below 0.5% of our GDP, the lowest level in any G8 country. The UK has long been known for its research and development, but we are at risk of losing that reputation and the rewards we reap for our economy and jobs if the Government refuse to support science through Brexit.

The UK’s world-leading position in technology, research and development is thanks in part to our integration with and the contribution of our soon-to-be ex-partners

in the European Union. The Minister mentioned Horizon 2020, and £1 in every £6 spent on science by the European Union is spent in the United Kingdom. I know from my own constituency that scientists benefit not only from EU funding, but from the highly skilled researchers and scientists it brings with it.

Newcastle University employs nearly 600 staff from various European Union countries. European Union funding allows it to retain and attract talented researchers through prestigious European Research Council grants. For example, there are the Marie Skłodowska-Curie individual fellows, 50 of whom are hosted by Newcastle University, which equates to €11 million in research funding. Some of Newcastle's leading research centres would not be possible without European Union staff. For example, in the John Walton muscular dystrophy research centre team, which is pioneering treatments for children with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, more than 30% of staff are European and three of its four lead academics are from the European Union. Many right hon. and hon. Members will have similar examples in their constituencies.

Leaving the European Union presents our science and research sectors with numerous challenges in relation to process, timing, funds, skills, creativity and resources, and the Government have a duty to address those challenges. However, as highlighted in the Science and Technology Committee's most recent report, the Government's communication of its Brexit and science strategy—the Minister's speech notwithstanding—has been woefully insufficient. Why is science not at the heart of the Government's Brexit strategy when it is at the heart of our economy?

The Government say they will match the funding until the Horizon 2020 programme expires, but that suggests they are planning to withdraw from the scheme thereafter. The Royal Society has estimated that the programme accounts for 22.2% of global research programmes, which is higher than either China's or the US's contributions to global research. Why would we seek to withdraw from such a scheme? We receive significantly more from the EU than we pay in: we received €8.8 billion between 2007 and 2013, as against the €5.4 billion we paid in. We do not have to lose access to the framework programmes, because 13 non-member states currently enjoy associate country status, which gives them full access to Horizon 2020 funding and the same status as member states.

The benefits of involvement in European Union programmes are not confined to funding. Contrary to the picture painted by many in the leave campaign, EU science and technology institutions actually reduce bureaucracy and streamline administration processes. For example, they prevent the same work from being done in different labs, they spread good practice within the European scientific community and they harmonise clinical trial regulations. The last is absolutely critical for the diffusion and adoption of innovative new treatments on which many lives depend.

In addition, cross-border and cross-discipline collaboration has benefits for innovation and creativity that cannot be expressed in pounds, shillings and pence—or in euros. If the Government pursue their commitment to ending existing European Union freedom of movement arrangements, these benefits will be jeopardised. In 2014, Switzerland held a referendum blocking free movement for Croatian nationals, and that led directly to their suspension from Horizon 2020.

The Conservatives cannot call themselves the party of business while actively working to undermine our science and technology sectors. The Prime Minister's astounding refusal to reassure European Union nationals living in this country that they will continue to be able to do so and the Home Secretary's reported plans to halve student visa numbers highlight their failure to recognise the potency of British scientific research in the wider British economy. We are entering a fourth industrial revolution and technological advancement is central to the way in which we work, but the Government are seeking to curtail our access to the brightest and best in science, as well as curtailing opportunities for our own citizens to work and study abroad.

The Conservatives' current policy is more about short-term political point scoring than their now forgotten long-term economic plan. We do not hear so much about that now, do we? Indeed, as the vice-chancellor of one of our leading universities recently said about student visas, "politics is trumping economics". Of course, the Tories have form in this area. Under the last Tory Government, science spending was squeezed. Indeed, the Save British Science campaign was launched in 1986 in response to the then Thatcher Government's woeful record on science and research. However, between 1997 and 2007, Labour more than doubled the science budget, from £1.3 billion to £3.4 billion, reaching almost £4 billion by 2010. The Save British Science campaign had to be renamed the Campaign for Science and Engineering, because British science had been saved by Labour.

The boost to the R and D budget in the autumn statement has been widely welcomed, but we must set it against the backdrop of six years of subsistence spending. Not only are we now the lowest funder of science of any G8 country, but our spending as a proportion of GDP has fallen to its lowest point in 20 years. The increases in forecast expenditure also assume that all other spending commitments for science and research will remain in place, safe from sweeping Conservative cuts. Given the party's previous actions, I believe we should remember the motto of the world's oldest scientific institute, the Royal Society: "Take nobody's word for it".

I began by saying how important science and research are to our economy, and that is why today's debate is so critical. Science provides the inventions and the infrastructure that propel our industry forward. It uncovers the challenges that we face today and provides our industries with a vision for the future. We in the Labour party recognise that in order to have an industrial strategy that works for each and every member of our society, a thriving science community is key. I asked the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy last week whether he would give the UK economy the Christmas present it deserves: an industrial strategy. Sadly, it seems that Santa's elves are nowhere near ready on this one.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich South (Clive Lewis), the shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, has said, we believe that an industrial strategy should be mission orientated. When it is mission orientated, one of the roles of public spending is to lay down the foundations for new opportunities, which then galvanise businesses—the private sector—to invest. Mariana Mazzucato, the world's leading economist on mission orientated innovation, has shown

[*Chi Onwurah*]

how business investment should not be assumed, but created via ambitious public investment policies. However, no matter how excited businesses may get, they will invest only when there is a potential market.

Government can help to create new markets and enlarge existing ones through procurement and, critically, trade agreements. The European Union is possibly the most successful trade agreement in history. It has benefited British companies for decades. Forty-four per cent of UK goods and services went to the European Union in 2015.

**Mr Julian Brazier** (Canterbury) (Con): The hon. Lady said that the European Union was the most successful trade agreement in history. That was certainly true for a generation or so, but does it not worry her that it is now the slowest growing economic bloc in the world and that that 44% has fallen more than 10 points over the last few years and continues to fall?

**Chi Onwurah:** I am glad the hon. Gentleman agrees with me that the European Union was the most successful trade agreement in history. He makes a point about the economic growth of the European Union, but it is still one of the largest and most successful economies in the world. It is still a huge market for our goods and services and has some of the richest people in the world. Although economic growth may have been slow over the last few years, I hope he agrees that, as one of the biggest trading blocs in the world, it still represents a huge opportunity. We should obviously be looking outside the European Union for trade opportunities, but we need to be trading with the European Union. There are a lot of people who buy a lot of our goods who need to continue to buy them.

It is clear that a hard Brexit would significantly reduce the size of that market for British companies. On top of that, Brexit will reduce European Union-financed research and development investments. That means that an existing problem in this country—low private sector investment in research—may get worse because the market for goods will be smaller. Given the Government's claim to be focused on reducing public debt—although, as we know, it has gone up hugely under this Government—it is ironic that, by reducing private investment, public investment in research and development will need to take more of the strain. We in the Labour party believe in public investment, but it should not make up for a lack of private sector investment. We have committed to raise the total investment in research and development in science to 3% of GDP, but we expect the private sector to do its bit.

I urge the Minister to try to get this right for British science. If not, once again the next Labour Government will have to make up for the economic, scientific and social mess that a Tory Government have left behind. The history of these isles speaks of a people who have a verve for technological and scientific endeavour. All we ask is that the Government provide the conditions for continued investigation and inquiry. We cannot have an economy that relies on cheap and insecure labour. A high-tech, knowledge-intensive economy must be Britain's future. This Government and the people of Britain cannot afford to suffocate our sciences in the smoke of Brexit.

7.6 pm

**Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Thank you for calling me so early in this important debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I also thank the Government for putting aside Government time to discuss this important issue and for agreeing to tag the recent report by the Select Committee on Science and Technology, "Leaving the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research"? I am very appreciative.

Before I turn to the report and its obvious relevance to this debate, as this is the first opportunity I have had to address the House since my election as Chair of the Science and Technology Committee may I place on record my gratitude to the House for electing me to this important role? I hope I can live up to the example set by my predecessors. I pay particular tribute to my immediate predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Nicola Blackwood), for her stewardship of the Committee over the last 15 or so months. She moved quickly to launch the inquiry back in June, and I am sure the report's findings will inform today's debate. I also pay tribute to the interim Chair, my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Dr Mathias), who stepped into the breach prior to my election. I am very grateful to her as well. I also thank the Clerks and the staff of the Committee for all their support and guidance in these first few months. Finally in the thank yous, I would like to thank the more than 270 individuals and organisations who took time to provide written evidence in response to the Committee's call for evidence in the preparation of the report.

I had hoped to talk a little about Brexit itself, but because time is short and there is a great deal of interest in this debate, I will leave that for another time, except to say that Brexit was not about science, which was one of the casualties, along with many other sectors that got caught up in a much bigger argument.

As we have heard, our report identifies five key themes in the concerns of the science and research community, all of which I expect will feature in hon. Members' contributions this evening—indeed, they already have. They are: funding; people; collaboration, leadership and influence; regulation; and facilities. I will talk properly about funding and people, but as for collaboration, leadership and influence, it is of paramount importance that UK researchers continue to be part of multinational projects and continue to influence the EU's research agenda. On regulations, it is important that those which facilitate research collaboration and EU market access are retained while others that hinder innovation are revised. As for facilities, we will have to work hard to ensure ongoing access to the multinational research facilities hosted in other countries and to protect those based in the UK.

Our report outlines some of the opportunities arising from Brexit that should be maximised, such as the opportunity to embed science and technology at the heart of the Government's industrial opportunity; the opportunity to look at genetic modification regulation, and to improve on the EU's overly cautious approach; and the opportunity to revise VAT rules to stimulate university and business collaboration. However, above all the Government need to set out a truly ambitious vision for science in the context of Brexit, to send the message around the world that Britain's position as a science superpower will continue to grow. They are starting to do that, but merely being

open for business is not enough if we do not have any customers. The Government must think beyond the “open for business” model.

As time is short, I will concentrate on the two main issues: people and funding. My Committee agreed to highlight people as a significant theme. We called on the Government to make an immediate commitment to exempt EU citizen scientists and researchers already working in the UK from wider potential immigration controls. Telling EU scientists and researchers who are already working in the UK that they are allowed to stay is one way in which the Government can reduce uncertainty. I have heard many warm words from the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, from the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), and from the Prime Minister. Taking that extra step to provide reassurance for the 40,000 people to whom that applies is not a particularly big ask. Along with the risk of brain drain, the risk is that the UK will become a less attractive place for EU scientists to live, work and study.

On funding, when our report was published, I said that the autumn statement would be a chance for the Government to demonstrate their commitment to science and research in the context of Brexit, so hon. Members can imagine how delighted I was when the Chancellor responded by increasing Government investment in research and development to the tune of £2 billion a year by 2020. That is a huge step in the right direction, and a step towards meeting that 3% of GDP commitment to which all hon. Members want to sign up.

Our report noted that the Government had provided welcome and helpful short-term reassurances for the science community following the referendum, including underwriting EU funding for research and maintaining access to student loans. It is clear that the Government have done the right thing in the short term but my Committee is worried that there is no comprehensive communication strategy for those messages of reassurance. The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation has said all the right things, but I worry that not everyone has heard him. That was brought home to me this week when I met the interim chief executive of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, who said that she attended a meeting at which someone said they had not heard about those reassurances. There is more to be done. The message is good, but do the Government know whether it is being received? The Government clearly cannot do all the communication, but they can have a strategy for providing reassurance, a clear idea of who their message needs to reach, and an idea of who is best placed to reach those people. The recommendation from my Committee is simple. The Government have taken some very helpful first steps, but they need a clear strategy for getting that message out to everyone who needs to hear it.

As we have heard, another key concern is that science and research is not at the heart of DExEU thinking. That was highlighted to the Committee during the inquiry by the fact that a chief scientific adviser is yet to be appointed to DExEU. I hope the Minister addresses that in his closing remarks.

The Government will respond to our report in due course, but I hope its themes give hon. Members an overview of the big issues for science and research. Science and research is the jewel in the UK crown, and

needs to be front and centre of the Government’s thinking. If we get this right, we can go from strength to strength and support major life science industries here in the UK, but if the needs of science are forgotten, our position as a science leader will diminish. Science is not a zero-sum game. We can create a Brexit that is both a win for UK science and a win for EU science, but that comes with a warning. Getting it wrong will not only damage the UK, but hold back the cause of science, along with our understanding of the world and our ability to exercise appropriate stewardship of it, and our capacity to make it a better place to live.

I apologise in advance for my conclusion. It is the season of good will and Christmas is coming. The Chancellor has given us some gold. We now need some frankness, some sense, and a sustainable, sensible and suitable im-myrrh-gration policy.

7.15 pm

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): I will not attempt to follow that. My goose would be roasted.

I declare an interest as both a scientist and an EU national—I hold an Irish passport. As such, I feel strongly about what is happening during the debate. Brexit makes no sense for many of us, but it goes against all normal rules for the scientific community and threatens a key activity that is central to their work. Scientists do not see a person’s nationality, class or ethnicity. They see only a mind and a personality. If that mind is brilliant, and if that person has a contribution to make and a part to play, they are part of the community.

We have heard arguments describing the importance of science and its impact on our economy. We have heard about the importance of continued or enhanced funding for science, and we know how important international collaborations are for science excellence. The Minister spoke of the importance of the space sector, but the UK’s continued participation in projects such as the Galileo programme is under serious threat. Galileo is the EU’s answer to the US-based global positioning system—Galileo is needed because the US can block GPS access in times of conflict, and Europe needs an independent system it can rely on. The UK could now be frozen out of both systems, which is a dangerous possibility.

The single most important element in ensuring that we continue to maintain the UK’s position as a science superpower is protecting and valuing the people who make UK science so impressive. I was delighted to welcome to Parliament a fortnight ago Professor Anton Muscatelli, the principal of Glasgow University. He provided us with some interesting statistics. He told us that 20% of the teaching staff and 50% of the research staff at Glasgow were EU nationals. There are two different types of staff. We have the typically young 20-something postgraduate or post-doctoral researcher, who is less likely to have family ties that would make it difficult for some to leave and go elsewhere. They are a highly mobile group of people who have chosen the institution because of its speciality. However, by the nature of science, many other institutions in Europe will have expertise in similar areas.

The next group of staff is more established—they would hold senior research or lecturer positions, and would be in charge of large projects or teams. They may

[Carol Monaghan]

well have family ties that make it difficult for them to leave. Both groups have doubts over their futures. The UK Government might well say that nothing will change for them in the short term, but I keep hearing about the requirement for other EU states to offer reciprocal arrangements for UK citizens.

These scientists are some of the very best minds in the world. They are the very people enabling the UK to maintain its position at the forefront of world science. They contribute to the UK economy—in Scotland we know our world-class academic sector of 19 universities creates an annual economic impact of £7.2 billion. Those people are being compared to non-economically active pensioners living in Spain. How insulting is that to those top scientists—to be used as bargaining chips in negotiations on rights to remain? Which of us would hang about where we are not wanted? My own husband, an engineer, is an EU national. His 17 years of service in the UK armed forces have been reduced to details of his place of birth.

Thankfully, in Scotland the First Minister has made robust statements on the importance of our EU nationals, and has thanked them for choosing to make Scotland their home. But we need similarly strong leadership on this from the UK Government. We need the assurances called for in the recent report on leaving the EU by the Science and Technology Committee. That report's recommendations, which have already been highlighted, include an immediate commitment to exempt EU researchers already working here from any wider potential immigration controls. But we need to go further. We should be looking to exempt any researcher with the required skills, whether or not they are already resident in the UK. If we do not offer such assurances, plenty of countries are ready to snap those scientists up.

I move on now to the subject of EU students. There is the potential for a serious impact on the higher education sector if we are not clear about their immigration and fees status post Brexit. Again, that represents a potential lost funding stream. In its submission to the Science and Technology Committee the University of Liverpool stated that if it had no new EU students coming to study, by 2018-19 its loss of fee income would be £6.2 million. In Scotland, EU students contribute massively to the local economy and increase the diversity and improve the student experience for all involved in higher education. Indeed, the financial loss is only one aspect, and we need to consider how we will protect the talent streams that come from the EU. In the UK we cannot currently fill our science, technology, engineering and maths courses with UK students. The EU students who come to study in our institutions provide future talent in areas of key shortages.

I therefore ask the Minister the following questions. What student recruitment strategies are being considered in key STEM areas, at home and abroad? What fee structures will be in place post Brexit—an attractive UK university will quickly become less attractive if EU students are asked to pay international student fees? Visa restrictions already pose major hurdles for non-EU scientists hoping to come to the UK for short study visits. What will happen post Brexit when an EU researcher hopes to collaborate with a UK group? We keep hearing

that Brexit means Brexit, but does Brexit really mean that the UK's international reputation for science should be threatened?

Leaving the EU presents major challenges for the future of UK science, but there is no science representative in the Brexit negotiations. Science must have a voice in any negotiations. The clock is ticking. We need action now to prevent fundamental and lasting damage. It is said that Albert Einstein said, "Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe". The Government need not be infinitely stupid as they gamble with this most important area of the UK economy.

7.24 pm

**Mr Peter Lilley** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow North West (Carol Monaghan), with whom I agree on some aspects, in particular the importance of giving assurances to EU nationals in this country, whether scientists or not, that they can stay.

What the Minister and the shadow Minister have said about our universities is, if anything, an understatement. Our universities are every bit as good as has been said, and more. I would argue that they are too modest. They underestimate how attractive they are and will be as collaborators to universities not merely in the EU but throughout the world. They underestimate their ability to persuade their own Government of the importance of funding research, given that they have been successful in persuading EU institutions to fund that research. Given their success in attracting students from outside the EU, our universities also underestimate how successful they will be at continuing to attract students from within the EU once we are no longer a member. The universities have been too modest and too afraid of change. They should look forward positively to the opportunities that will open up when we are no longer in the EU.

Three issues have been raised. The first is money. The claim is that 10% of publicly funded UK research and development comes from the EU. That is a grossly misleading figure. During the referendum campaign there was much debate about the use of gross figures for our contribution to the EU rather than net ones. For instance, the gross figure of £350 million a week on the side of the leave bus was criticised. I always used the net figure, and we now know from the Office for Budget Responsibility that the net amount we will get back when we are no longer members of the EU will be £250 million a week. But anyone who criticised the £350 million figure should be equally critical of those who quote the gross receipts from the EU without netting off our contributions to it—the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) mentioned those contributions. With the Horizon programme, we should not be talking about the gross figure of £8.8 billion but the net figure of £3.4 billion over the period 2007 to 2013, which was of the order of half a billion a year. I will come back to that quite significant figure.

Overall, we are net contributors to the EU to the tune of more than £13 billion a year—again, that is from the OBR figures. It should therefore not be too difficult for our universities to argue for the continuation of the money they currently receive from the EU directly from the Treasury, instead of indirectly via the EU, because

the Treasury will be £13 billion better off after meeting all the commitments currently funded from EU funds.

I come now to collaboration. It is obviously important that we continue to provide opportunities for UK researchers to collaborate with high-calibre researchers not just in the EU but across the world. Our universities and researchers are of such high calibre that they will be in demand as partners and should be given opportunities to work with partners from across the world.

If there are barriers to collaboration with researchers in north America, Asia, Australasia and Latin America, I would like to know about them. I constantly hear of and meet researchers from those countries in the UK. If we look out the figures, it turns out that alongside the 32,000 EU citizens working as academics in the UK we have 21,000 from non-EU countries. There does not seem to be too much difficulty in getting researchers and academics from outside the EU. If there are such problems, why have I never been lobbied by the universities to overcome the problems of bringing in citizens from non-EU countries? Do they not like Americans, Latin Americans and Asians? Do they prefer Europeans? Should we not be seeking opportunities worldwide, and not narrowly in the EU?

**Carol Monaghan:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr Lilley:** I am afraid it has been hinted that I should make progress rather than take interventions.

If there are such difficulties, let us overcome them and make sure they do not apply to EU academics in future.

On student numbers, Universities UK talks about increased barriers to recruiting EU students. I understand there are some 115,000 EU students in the UK. They are entitled to loans from the British taxpayer, and to the right to stay and work after they cease studying. By contrast, our universities are spectacularly more successful in recruiting students from outside the EU, even though those students pay the full cost of their education and effectively help to subsidise all the other students, British and European, at university. Their rights to remain and work in the UK are more restricted. When we introduced full fees for foreign university students, the universities claimed that that would make it impossible for them to recruit from abroad. Happily, they were wrong—spectacularly wrong. I have no doubt that they will be equally wrong about their ability to continue to recruit EU students once we are no longer a member of the EU. The EU countries are closer and richer than many of the countries from which we recruit students who pay full fees.

When assessing the costs and benefits, we ought to take into account the cost to this country at present of giving loans to EU students, which are, inevitably, much more difficult to get back when they have left. Indeed, the official figures show that only 16% of EU students are currently repaying the loans they have received from the British taxpayer. *[Interruption.]* I do not know what the figures are, but I will venture some so that people can knock them down and come back with better ones. Supposing that 60% of the students—*[Interruption.]* Would the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) like to intervene if he has a funny point to make? *[Interruption.]* No, we do not have any facts or

figures; I am trying to elicit them. There are 115,000 students. I do not know how many of them have loans. Let us say that 60% take out loans. If only 16% repay them, that means it would cost the British taxpayer over £500 million a year to subsidise EU students. I hope that the Minister or Opposition Members can tell us the sum is less than that, but perhaps they are not interested. Perhaps they like dishing out British taxpayers' money without calculating how much is at stake and for whom.

Universities are also rightly worried about whether immigration controls will impinge on our ability to recruit students from the EU. They have reiterated their demand that student numbers be excluded from the immigration figures. That is a somewhat disingenuous request—it is not what they really want. If students return to their home country after they have studied here, their net contribution to the net immigration figure is zero. What universities mean, therefore, is not that they want the figures excluded, but that the limitations on students' right to remain be lifted. They want to, as it were, sell university places by offering the added benefit of being able to get around our immigration controls. They want that in the present for those coming from outside the EU, and they want to maintain it in future for those coming from the EU when we are no longer a member.

That is not the right way to approach the issue. We should, of course, have immigration rules that allow us to recruit students from abroad but ensure that they return later, and that allow us to recruit academics from abroad, as we do at present, without creating added difficulties. If we have sensible and affordable policies to continue our funding and to recruit from abroad, which we ought to be able to do, and we do not impose any new restrictions on recruiting academics, the opportunities for British universities will be far greater than they imagine. I urge them to put their excessive modesty behind them, set aside their fear of change and embrace the opportunities that Brexit will give them.

7.35 pm

**Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me and giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech today. It is a privilege and an honour to be standing here as the elected representative of Richmond Park, which brings with it a great responsibility that I shall use my best endeavours to fulfil.

I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr Zac Goldsmith, and thank him for his excellent constituency work on behalf of my fellow residents of Richmond Park over the past six years. In particular, we owe him our unending thanks for his efforts to block plans to build a third runway at Heathrow. The fact that he felt he could no longer be a part of a Conservative party that approved expansion demonstrates beyond all question his passion and commitment to the cause. It is a cause that I take up willingly on behalf of constituents who know that the claimed economic benefits of expansion will not compensate for the impacts of the increased noise and air pollution that millions will suffer if expansion goes ahead. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of his predecessor, my fellow Liberal Democrat Susan Kramer, who fought the third runway for so many years. I look forward to working with parliamentary colleagues from all parties as we continue to make the case against expansion.

[Sarah Olney]

It is a particular honour to be elected to represent Richmond Park, not just because it is my home and the place where I have been bringing up my family, but because of its great history and wonderful environment. Richmond takes its name from the Earl of Richmond, later Henry VII, who built his great palace in what was then called Sheen in 1500. Henry VII was the king who, having won a great victory against an unpopular king at the battle of Bosworth, came to power at a time when the country was catastrophically divided by the Wars of the Roses and urgently needed leadership to bring it back to harmony and prosperity.

Britain today is a divided country, split asunder by the decision taken in June this year to leave the European Union, and it is hard at this moment to see how these divisions can be healed. It is my belief that Parliament can be a positive force in bringing together the two sides of the Brexit debate. If the arguments can be aired openly, questions answered thoughtfully and votes taken on all the significant points of difference, then each British citizen will see that their point of view is being represented, whichever way they voted in June. There can be no question of people being silenced or sneered at for their opinion on Britain's future within the European Union.

I make no secret of the fact that my own opinion is that we should remain. I believe that the will of the people is the same today as it has always been: to live in a prosperous and stable society. Our responsibilities as parliamentarians are the same as they have always been: to act in the best interests of our country. We have a duty to future generations to bequeath them a society in which they can thrive. Evidence and instinct both suggest that collaboration with our nearest neighbours benefit our trade, our education, our environment, our security and our individual wellbeing. Such benefits should not be carelessly thrown aside without a careful, sober and detailed examination of what the consequences will be.

The impact of Brexit will be wide ranging and not just financial. In my constituency, our hospital relies on the hard work and dedication of migrants from Europe. Many of my constituents work in financial services, which rely on our privileged position inside Europe. Many of our businesses import from and export to the European Union, and rely on the tariff-free access and the harmonised standards of the single market for their success. Many families—hard-working, community spirited, warm, friendly people—have come to our little corner of London from across Europe and made it their home.

In the area of science and research, there is no doubt that the UK has benefited hugely from its membership of the European Union. I had the enormous privilege, before being elected as MP, to work for a world-renowned science and research organisation, so I have had some experience of the discussions and concerns that the prospect of Brexit has raised among the science community. The obvious impact will be the lack of access to research funding provided by the EU. There is no question but that the UK is currently a net beneficiary of this: between 2007 and 2013, we paid in €5 billion to the Horizon 2020 fund and received €8 billion back in grant funding.

But the impacts go deeper. One of the biggest concerns is that by being shut out of access to EU funding, UK scientists will also be excluded from cross-EU collaborative

projects and lose access to specialist laboratory facilities across Europe. This will result in a loss of opportunities for UK scientists to participate at the very forefront of research. UK laboratories and research facilities currently benefit from the ability of scientists from across the EU to come and work here. If Brexit inhibits the ability of EU nationals to move to the UK, UK-based science and research will suffer. The success of the UK's science and technology industries will be critical to our future economy, and we should be doing all we can to nurture and promote them.

I did not aspire to be a politician. I did not ever expect to be standing here addressing hon. and right hon. Members as I am today, but I felt compelled by the events of the last few months—not just the referendum result, but the Government response in the aftermath and the divided society that has resulted—to put myself forward.

I wish to close by thanking my fellow MPs from all sides of the House for the warm welcome they have extended to me since my election. Unexpected though my election was, I am enormously excited by the opportunity I have been given and look forward to playing a full part in the business of this House.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Natascha Engel):** Order. We will now apply a limit of seven minutes for Back-Bench speeches.

7.41 pm

**Mr Julian Brazier** (Canterbury) (Con): Let me be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) on her maiden speech, particularly on the generous tribute she paid to her predecessor and on the very real knowledge she brings to this debate from her professional background. She clearly feels passionately about this issue and the wider implications, and I look forward to hearing further contributions from her. She referred to the Brexit vote as “deeply divisive”, leaving us as a country divided. I would gently suggest that for some of us it seemed before the vote that we were becoming a divided country. Now that those people who found themselves so many times on the wrong side of the divide have spoken out, the hope is that we might find a way forward that eventually suits everybody.

I am proud to be the representative of the largest student body of any constituency in the country, with the University of Kent, Christ Church University and one of the campuses of the University for the Creative Arts in my constituency, amounting to more than 20,000 students.

In answer to some of the earlier points raised about visas, it seems to me that there is a clear middle way to follow. It is essential that top-quality academics have access to visas to come here, and indeed that those who are already here from the EU should feel completely secure in their jobs. I am with those who have already spoken out on that point, but I see nothing inconsistent in also believing that a sensible immigration policy, which is what the country wants, must include clamping down on abuses of the student route. The fact that we have closed 800 phony colleges is an important part of that.

I especially welcome what the Minister said about accepting Sir Paul Nurse's recommendations. I am a strong supporter of the need for an industrial strategy. For too many generations, this country provided the cutting edge of research only to see it exploited by successful organisations outside this country. We need an industrial strategy and a focused research policy in order to ensure that we get the best response to our very successful university research programmes.

The University of Kent has facilities in Brussels, Paris, Athens and Rome, and calls itself the European university. I am delighted to say that a withdrawal from the structures of the EU should certainly not mean a withdrawal from Europe. There is not time to list the university's successes in the space world, but just in the past month on the medical side another grant from Horizon 2020 for a research network addressing biometric solutions to the use of mobile devices led to a successful bid for a £2 million grant for the Relate programme designed to step-change how nature underpins human wellbeing.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Mr Lilley), I see nothing to be afraid of in breaking out into the world. *The Times* league of international universities puts 24 out of the top 25 in the English-speaking world, including five British ones. Intriguingly, the only exception is the formidable ETH Zürich, and Switzerland, like most English-speaking countries, has a structure in which universities are free-standing institutions, which is sadly not really the case in most continental countries, where universities are much closer to the Government Departments.

Although there may be a short-term concern, which we have heard expressed several times by Opposition speakers, that we might somehow lose out on collaborative ventures—even though we are putting in the money to compensate—on account of attitudes from the other side that are not in their best interests, the fact that we have so much excellence will, I firmly believe, win through.

We have another advantage that is particularly relevant to medical research. When we are dealing with America, which has the largest concentration of excellence in the world, we have a massive advantage, because we do not have the third party of the insurance companies constantly creating a drag on research. If patients want to be part of an experimental programme to access an experimental drug, perhaps as their last chance to stay alive, they can sign up for it in a way they cannot in America without permission from their insurance companies. That is why, for example, our first 14 experimental cancer medicine centres are attracting so much interest from American pharmaceutical companies.

I end by saying how very strongly I support the bid from Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent to create a group of healthcare centres of excellence, with a view to establishing in the long run a medical school in Kent. We are the largest area in the country without its own medical school. The inspirational leadership of Dr Abdol Tavabie would make sure that the medical school addressed the very buzz words that we keep hearing we need to fix in the NHS. It is no good talking about things such as ending silos, transferring things from secondary to primary care and closer links between social and NHS care, which people have been talking about for 30 years, unless we hardwire them into medical training, together with feedback mechanisms

to make sure that people are brought up to date on new skills automatically—they need to be programmed into the lecturers. Those are just some of the ideas that this incredibly innovative programme leader is pushing for in the new medical school.

I am about to run out of time. It is a sad fact that of the thousands of university students, including my own son who is a medical student, who come through our hospitals, relatively few of them stay. That is because areas do not have a medical school of their own backing them up. I end by recommending to the Minister that we do something about that.

7.48 pm

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): The straight banana syndrome, whereby some commentators would blame everything on the European Union whenever anything in the world went wrong, seems to have flipped on its head. I would now call it the Private Frazer syndrome, whereby the moment anyone mentions Brexit, everything is doom and gloom, with forecasts of everything going haywire and wrong. My advice to the Government on science and technology is the same as it is on other issues that run into Brexit—get on with it! It is the uncertainty that causes problems. The article 50 vote should have taken place in July, and if we were too busy with internal elections, we could have had it in September. It should already have been passed. Delay and uncertainty is what industry tells me they do not like and do not wish to see.

Let me advise the Government on what to do when the repeal Act comes—I hope they will listen. Make it simple. Every single piece of EU law should be brought into British law. If the Conservative or any other party wants to change that in the future, they will have plenty of opportunity if it is British law. Every single thing should become British law in one Bill in one swipe. That would help to remove uncertainty, and it would save us a lot of time to concentrate on other matters in the House.

I agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow North West (Carol Monaghan) that science does not see nationality. That is the problem with the European Union when it comes to science and technology, and, indeed, any other specialism: it sees nationality, but it sees nationality within the European Union. I have been involved in bidding for money, and I know that within the EU structures and rules, this or that EU country, this or that body, must be incorporated to provide the full mix, to the exclusion of the rest of the world—the other 170 nations, with all their expertise. That has been a strength on occasion, but it has far more often been a weakness in the EU. We should not see nationality when we are looking at science and research collaboration; we should see where the best expertise is.

I have spoken to many of my constituents, and several thousand have been polled. Something of a consensus is emerging in my area, and I want to share it with the House. The vast majority of people who voted remain feel that reducing immigration is critical to Brexit, while the vast majority of people who voted leave find access to the single market, in whatever form, perfectly acceptable. I think that the consensus is far greater than Members are prepared to admit.

What kind of immigration are we talking about? I do not think that my constituents will complain if Parliament decides that the big universities should accept students,

[John Mann]

teaching staff and experts in science and technology from abroad. Indeed, I will go a step further: I should like regional work visas to be introduced. My constituents do not have a strong view on which people Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland allow to work in those countries. They care about what happens in my locality. They care about whether we can stop Mr Ashley of Sports Direct employing 3,200 people from abroad and preventing them—my constituents—from applying for jobs, or reducing wages in adjoining industries. That is what they are bothered about. I think that, when it comes to where we need to be, the solutions are straightforward, although negotiations will always be complex. We need to get on with them.

We should bear in mind what we have missed out on. We were the leaders 30 years ago. We were world leaders in analogue technology, because we had the scientists, but our weakness was always to do with turning that expertise into manufactured products. Then there was the digital era. In digital microphones—indeed, in all forms of digital technology—we were world leaders 30 years ago, but we were wiped out because we were incapable of turning the technology into effective products, and the EU did not assist us in that regard.

We were also world leaders in the energy sector, but, classically, when it comes to science, technology and energy, the EU goes in 10 directions at once because of national pressures, and does not have the necessary coherence. Europe lags behind in energy technology. In the 1980s, we were world leaders in robotics—our academics were the greatest in the development of robotic technology—but neither we nor others in Europe were capable of delivering the jobs that others did. We skipped a generation in terms of application, and that applies to the whole computer industry even more graphically. We did not protect our embryonic industries and companies because we were not allowed to protect them, but now we are.

There is nothing wrong with control and protection when a new sector is emerging. It would be good for us to use our freedom to protect the blockchain technology sector, for instance. The geothermal sector will clearly be the next development in energy: we have that capacity again, and we should use our freedom to protect the sector and allow it to develop. We now have a great opportunity; we have always had the necessary ingenuity. We must allow our universities to retain their partnerships with, for example, German, French and Italian scientists and technologists, but also to have partnerships with countries in the rest of the world. We must use our freedom to protect embryonic industries, so that there will be production, jobs and wealth in this country as well as ingenuity and innovation.

7.55 pm

**Dr Tania Mathias** (Twickenham) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) on her excellent maiden speech. I look forward to working with her on many matters that affect residents of both our constituencies.

I thank the Government for granting time for this important debate, and I offer very special thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe) for his kind words. It was

an absolute joy to be interim Chair of the excellent Science and Technology Committee. Having chaired one of its sessions, I can tell the House that although some of its members, like me, voted to remain and others voted to leave, the Committee was unanimous when it came to the report on the EU and the opportunities and risks for science and research, and is unanimous in wanting Brexit to work for the science community and for research. That is why I am especially proud of the report.

The United Kingdom is a science superpower. As the Minister and others have said, we make up less than 1% of the world's population, but 15.9% of its most frequently cited research articles come from the UK. However, as we said in our report, science is a global and a mobile endeavour. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock pointed out, people were the major factor in the evidence that we heard. The Minister was right to say that the UK should be a go-to place, but, as the report shows, the Campaign for Science and Engineering has said that it is not enough to allow EU scientists and students to be in our country; we must fight for them, to enable our science and research to succeed even more. It is great that there are guarantees for EU students, and I note that the Minister has repeatedly confirmed that they will be available to current students and those who come here in 2017-18 for the duration of their courses, but it must be said that the communication programme is not enough. That needs to be worked on.

We are also glad about the guarantees for Horizon 2020, and applaud the important information that the funding guarantees will not be taken from the science budget, but will be additional to it. After the publication of the report, the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), met several of my Twickenham science businessmen and researchers, and I valued that greatly. I know that he noted many of the detailed points that were made to him. I hope he will also note that Horizon 2020 may end, and, as the leader of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist has said, we need to establish our own transitional research projects.

The hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) spoke of concern about some of our EU researchers already leaving the UK. The Committee said that we needed proper metrics before, during and after Brexit negotiations. Are we losing people? Are we still heading those research projects? As has already been mentioned, there is a big negative.

The Department for Exiting the European Union needs a chief scientific adviser, because it needs guidance on the metrics and on the regulations. I know that the Minister has received evidence from the British Pharmacological Society. The position in relation to the European Medicines Agency is critical. We were leading on the regulations for clinical trials in pharmacovigilance. We have also received evidence from Twickenham businesses such as Ikon, LGC and Mindsoft about the unitary patent system. The Department needs a chief scientific adviser to address what it is going to do. It has to fight for the students, the scientists and the researchers from the EU, and it has to fight for the funding to maintain those research projects. In this Christmas season we have heard lots of wishes that should be on the Department's Christmas wish list, but primarily it needs Santa to give it a chief scientific adviser.

8 pm

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): I am pleased to follow the hon. Members for Twickenham (Dr Mathias), who made an informed speech, and for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney), who made an excellent maiden speech.

The importance of science to Britain's industrial revolution is well known: Newtonian physics, Faraday's electrical magnetism, Jenner's vaccination. These scientific advances were not simply great intellectual achievements; they also made a difference to the way of life of everybody in this country and across the entire world, and that is still true today.

The quality of our scientific research is not only valuable in itself; it also underpins our economic performance, standard of living and quality of life. It imbues our values as a civilised country, and it is what distinguishes us from our medieval forebears.

The leading clinical geneticist Professor Sir John Burn of Newcastle University, who was born in west Auckland, undertook research in 1990 testing aspirin across 68 countries and found that regular doses can reduce hereditary cancer risk. I asked him about the value of pan-EU collaboration; he said it makes things more effective, makes it easier to lure the best scientists on to projects and, despite the bureaucratic hurdles, it produces better results.

My constituency hosts a Glaxo plant. Sir Andrew Witty, the chief executive officer, tells me that the innovative medicines initiative, part of Horizon 2020, facilitates pre-competitive research into questions such as liver toxicity, which is far more economic to tackle at the EU level than it could ever be for an individual country. Currently, Glaxo does 30% of its R and D in the UK; it would be costly to move it, but in a worst case scenario that could happen.

Members have already spoken about the financial benefits to us of joining in the EU programme. A key aspect is that we are at the heart of shaping the research. The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures is currently chaired by a British academic, as is the European Research Area Board. We also host EU facilities and headquarters. Does the Minister think that if we became merely an associated country, or a non-associated third country, we would still be leading the EU direction for this research?

Everyone values Horizon 2020, so I call on the Government to make continued membership of it and its successor programmes a key objective in the negotiating strategy for Brexit. In the Treasury Committee, the Chancellor confirmed he was guaranteeing projects that receive Horizon 2020 money beyond that period, but the Minister was not able to tell us in his opening speech how researchers can know their guarantees meet his two further tests. I hope his ministerial colleague can explain that to us in the winding up speeches.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** To save time in winding up, may I say now that the Treasury will underwrite all successful bids for Horizon 2020 that are approved by the Commission even when specific projects continue beyond departure? Government Departments will not assess Horizon 2020 grant applications; Horizon 2020 is an EU programme independent of the UK Government and grant funding is awarded by the

Commission based on peer review. UK businesses and universities should continue to bid for those competitive EU funds while we remain a member.

**Helen Goodman:** I am pleased that the Minister has given that confirmation. It sounds as if the Chancellor is saying his criteria will be met by successful Horizon 2020 bidders.

Colleagues have spoken about the problems that will come if we lose freedom of movement—at best, discouraging European academics from working here; at worst, preventing people from coming at all. These people make up over 20% of teaching staff in some of the most crucial scientific subjects: physics, astronomy, mathematical sciences, biological sciences, chemistry and material sciences, and computer sciences. We cannot afford to lose them.

I will not repeat what colleagues have said and no doubt will continue to say, but it is vital that Ministers confirm the status of people who are in the country today. Furthermore, the Government should make it clear that they will seek a complete carve out for British and European academics post-Brexit so they can travel and work in each other's universities.

The Government should commit to a shared post-Brexit regulatory structure so that researchers have a level playing field and minimised costs and can continue to run large population experiments in parallel across European countries. In essence this would be an open market in R and D post-Brexit.

We need to remember that scientific development is essentially a collaborative and co-operative part of human endeavour. It does not recognise national boundaries in the quest for truth. This is not a new idea. Writing to Robert Hooke in 1676, Isaac Newton said:

“What Descartes did was a good step. You have added much...If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

8.6 pm

**David Rutley** (Macclesfield) (Con): It is an honour to speak in this debate and to follow the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney), who gave an exceptional maiden speech. Although she is no longer in her place, I wish her well in her future endeavours in this House and in serving her constituents. It took me back to my maiden speech; I spoke on the same day as my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan). We both talked on science, and I congratulate her on the great work she has done since in helping to boost skills in that vital area.

I am delighted to speak on this subject. Science is a vital field, especially at this time of significant change and great uncertainty. Brexit is not something that we should fear. The fundamentals of our economy are good. Indeed, forecasts indicate that our growth will be stronger than that of Germany and France again next year. We should look forward with confidence as we navigate our way forward and realise the opportunities that lie ahead.

We must use Brexit as a spur and a call to action in addressing long-standing challenges that have been a drag on our economy for too long, including the skills gap and below-par productivity. Science and technology have a vital role to play here, as I am sure colleagues across the House will agree.

[David Rutley]

The advanced therapies manufacturing action plan from the Medicines Manufacturing Industry Partnership—both snappy titles—says that, as part of leaving the EU, “it is vital that the UK makes all efforts to retain and continue to improve its fiscal offering in order to secure investments and anchor infrastructure in the UK and give confidence to investors.” That is why I join the Select Committee on Science and Technology in welcoming the Government’s funding guarantee relating to the EU science projects that we have talked about at length in this debate.

I also pay tribute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, because he gets this: he understands how important it is that we build investor confidence and back innovation-led productivity and infrastructure. I welcome the £2 billion a year he announced in the autumn statement; it will be vital to science and innovation. It is an important step and hugely welcomed.

But this is not just about funding. Colleagues have spoken about the importance of collaboration. It is critical that we maintain relationships with European and other international partners and build our commitment to collaborations, not least of which is a science project that is vital to our area, the square kilometre array project at the Jodrell Bank observatory. This project will result in the creation of the world’s largest radio telescope. We must continue to be ambitious in backing world-leading scientific initiatives; that must be a clear priority.

That is why I welcome the Prime Minister’s demand and ambition for a modern industrial strategy that puts a clear value on science. She was right to say, in a speech in Birmingham during her campaign for the leadership of the Conservative party:

“It is hard to think of an industry of greater strategic importance to Britain than its pharmaceutical industry, and AstraZeneca is one of the jewels in its crown.”

AstraZeneca has a hugely significant presence in Macclesfield. The Prime Minister also gets this. She has learned lessons from Germany and Australia, which are setting out clear industrial strategies. We now need to do the same. We must not seek to pick winners; we must seek to create the conditions that will enable winners to emerge without being picked. There is a fundamental difference. I think we are well placed to do that.

When we consider our industrial strategy, it is clear that science and the life sciences have a role to play, particularly given their huge impact not only on job creation—there are 62,000 jobs in the life sciences—but in productivity per employee, which is critical, with £330,000 of gross value added per employee. That is staggering, and we must get behind this industry and other scientific endeavours to ensure that we realise all the available productivity improvements. It is also critical, as we all know in this House, that we tackle the productivity gaps that have plagued us for too long.

Here are some of the asks that I want to put to Ministers. Will they please continue to take action on the infrastructure that will be vital in underpinning our economic performance, not just on HS2 but on trans-Pennine links to unlock the potential in the north? Will they take action on skills and drive up the quality of apprenticeships? I am pleased that the Department for Education’s post-16 skills plan has an emphasis on

health and sciences, as this will be crucial. I also urge Ministers to speed up the adoption of new medical treatments by implementing the accelerated access review. I was delighted to read what the Health Secretary said about this in his recent article in *The Daily Telegraph*. It will be vital for life sciences and for improving patient outcomes.

We need to see more being done in the north. We talk a lot about the golden triangle of Oxford, Cambridge and London, but important clusters are being developed in the north as well, not least in the life sciences corridor in Cheshire that links into the university city of Manchester. That will be key for the northern powerhouse. We will need to expand the network of catapult centres, and I am delighted that such a centre is being launched in the form of the medicines technology catapult at Alderley Park. We also need to have the anti-microbial resistance centre located there. As we do these things, we will build confidence in business. I have already mentioned AstraZeneca’s investment in Macclesfield, which has been most welcome.

**Dr Mathias:** Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the EU regulations on phase 1 clinical trials have not been helpful, and that there will be opportunities in that regard in the future?

**David Rutley:** Absolutely. We need to seize those opportunities and get behind science and the life sciences.

Looking at local examples, we have seen 600 jobs being created in just a couple of years at Alderley Park following AstraZeneca’s decision to relocate to Cambridge. Those jobs are highly important for the north. But this is not just about the life sciences. I have already talked about Jodrell Bank, and I very much hope that Ministers will support my drive to have it nominated as a world heritage site. That will be key in celebrating the science heritage of that site, which will be important for the north and for the visitor economy.

I also welcome the fact that the Government are re-examining their excellent work on research and development tax credits and allowances. This has helped to underline the importance of science and to show that the UK economy is open for business. I am pleased that the Chancellor has indicated that there will be a review of the tax environment to ensure that we can build on the introduction of above-the-line tax credits to make us even more competitive.

I cannot match the Christmas closing lines of the Chair of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe), but I will echo the words of one of my constituents in one of the great Christmas jingles: it is time for us now to look to the future; it’s only just begun.

8.15 pm

**Jim Dowd** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): I would just say to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (David Rutley) that, had my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley and Broughton (Graham Stringer) and I known that the Chair of the Committee was going to write the last line of the report, we would not have voted for it in the first place. [Laughter.] None the less, I am delighted to be here this evening to support the Committee and its

report and to discuss this extremely grave and urgent matter in the few minutes that I have. I shall try to be as brief as possible.

I should also like to congratulate the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) on a very coherent and well delivered maiden speech. I disagree with her on Heathrow, but I agree with her on exiting the European Union. I shall set out my position on that briefly if I may.

I told the then Prime Minister during the statement on 27 June following the referendum that in all my almost 25 years as a Member of this House, when faced with a difficult matter, I have always regarded my primary responsibility to be to the people of Lewisham West and Penge. They voted by roughly 2:1 to remain in the European Union, which is convenient for me because I share that judgment. That is why, the week before last, I voted against the Government amendment to the Opposition day motion on a timetable for article 50. I accept that I was in a substantial minority, and I will probably remain so, but I have told my constituents that I will not vote for anything that could undermine our relationship with the European Union.

My position is that we really should have made more effort to reform the institutions of the EU, but the chance to do that has now gone. I accept what might well happen in the future, but others have written to me to say that my intention is a betrayal of democracy. This House collectively has to try to represent the British people overall, but any individual Member really represents only the people who vote for them. If I have got this issue wrong—that eventuality has been known to occur—I will happily go back to my constituents at the next election and rest on their judgment. I do not believe that leaving the EU is in the best interests of this country, of my constituents or of the city of which my constituency is part, and I will not vote for it. It is no betrayal or denial of democracy, as some have suggested, for Members to represent their constituents to the best of their ability.

The subject of today's debate is extremely important. The UK is among the international leaders in science and research. I know that some people will say that British is best, almost regardless of what they are talking about. They say that something British is the best in the world even when they have little or no experience of what the rest of the world has to offer. In the fields of science, technology and research, however, there is a clear and strong case to be made that Britain is in a strong position, and widespread concern has been expressed, not least in today's debate, about the uncertainty into which the British science and technology community has been placed following the decision of 23 June.

I will now provide an indication of just how much things have changed in the intervening six months. When the Science and Technology Committee did a report into EU regulation of life sciences—it would become the first report of the 2016-17 Session—under its previous Chair, the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Nicola Blackwood), we took evidence in March and April and received 33 written submissions. In compiling the report that is appended to today's debate, as the current Chair pointed out, the Committee held two evidence sessions in July and took evidence from Ministers, one of whom is in his place, in October. Given the entirely changed landscape of the science and research background, that inquiry attracted no fewer

than 264 written submissions. Many came from the research universities and institutions that have been mentioned today, but many more came from individual academics and researchers who are concerned about the position in which they have been left.

I accept that it will not be easy to provide assurances in the short term. I dissent from something said by one of my hon. Friends earlier about getting on with things and getting them done quickly. I accept the value of clarity in the short term, but I want to ensure that we get this right despite my better judgment—I outlined that earlier. It is better to get it right than to get it soon. If it is possible to do both, all well and good.

All Members, not just those here present, will have received numerous submissions about this evening's debate from a wide variety of medical charities, universities, and other organisations. I do not have the time to read it out now, but I particularly commend the submission from the Royal Society, which highlights people, networks and collaboration, investment, and regulation as the key areas to address. On providing clarity, the Government could take the smart step of guaranteeing the position of EU nationals in the UK now. They could then go with a strong hand to the negotiations after article 50 has been triggered for equal treatment of British nationals overseas.

In conclusion, the referendum result has raised serious questions about the future of several vital industries and economic activities in the United Kingdom. Financial services may be particularly exposed, but science and research is at least equally significant to the wellbeing of our people. Amid the numerous complexities of designing our future relationship with the European Union, the Government must do all that they can, as soon as they can, to resolve the serious issues facing the entire science and research community.

8.22 pm

**Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): I welcome the fact that this debate is happening in Government time, and I was delighted to support the Back-Bench application for it. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd). I congratulate the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) in her absence. Had she been here, I would have gently pointed out that Richard III is a rather popular monarch in Leicestershire and has been rather good for our tourist industry.

This debate is important to my constituency, which has Loughborough University at its heart, to my constituents and to our potential life science opportunity zone at Charnwood Campus. It is a shame that the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation is not still in his place, because I had hoped that he might have given us an early Christmas present by announcing life science opportunity zone status for the Charnwood Campus. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union will make a note of that, although I do not expect him to make such an announcement this evening. I must also mention the other businesses and organisations in my local area that rely on science and research, including the University of Leicester. The Science Minister recently visited Loughborough, so he will know that, according to the 2014 research excellence framework, 65% of Loughborough's academic staff are involved in internationally leading research, putting the university

[Nicky Morgan]

17th out of 154 higher education institutions. It ranks 10th in England for research intensity and generates in excess of £40 million a year in research grants. That experience is directly relevant to the university's concerns about EU funding and collaboration.

It is right to recognise the commitment of this Government and previous Governments to science and research funding. I pay tribute to the science Minister—he is now back in his place and if he has not heard from his fellow Minister about my request for an early Christmas present, I suggest he ask now—to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Norfolk (George Freeman) and to the previous Member for Havant, who now resides in the other place, for fighting the science corner in successive Budgets, autumn statements and spending rounds. The Government are delivering on their manifesto commitment to protect the science capital budget, and the science budget of £4.7 billion will rise in cash terms every year in this Parliament.

It is fair to say that science and research funding was perhaps not at the forefront of the campaigning or in the general hubbub around 23 June. People do not always understand—I certainly did not before becoming the MP for Loughborough and thus for Loughborough University—what Brexit might mean for innovation, jobs and Britain's place in the world. The Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee was right when he said that how that aspect of Brexit is handled—I am paraphrasing so I hope that I have got this right—goes to heart of whether we remain an outward-facing nation, leading the world in research and cutting edge science and technology, or whether we cede that position to other countries. One local business put it to me like this:

“Being in the EU puts us in a much larger market than UK alone. It helps to attract and employ the best people to compete in fierce international markets. The UK should be seen as modern, open and inclusive to invite further investment.”

Some on the Government Benches will disagree about the terms on which we conclude Brexit, but we can agree, based on figures already cited, that UK research is enormously influential around the world. What was missing from the discussion before 23 June was just how important EU research funding is in supporting the UK's research and how much that funding is at risk at the moment. It is about not only money, but uniform regulations, which should not be overlooked in future negotiations and agreements.

Advances in research and the consequent benefits to society and the economy could not be realised simply by having the same level of funding go through a UK funding body. Loughborough University tells me that urgent action is required to guarantee UK participation in EU research networks post-Brexit, including continuing to contribute to funding of EU research programmes initiated during the two years after invoking article 50. We will all have anecdotes about research bids in which the UK has been dropped completely as a participant or co-ordinator due to the referendum, but I know of at least one case in which the UK institution was invited back into the project following the Treasury statement in August on underwriting UK participation, which demonstrates how important that announcement was and how important continuing announcements in the same vein will be. I welcome the Chancellor having

given that commitment. We have already heard demands that the UK have associated country status in Horizon 2020—third country status would be much less satisfactory.

A non-university example is Medilink East Midlands, which has supported over 1,000 companies in the development of innovations through the European regional development fund project that it ran between 2008 and 2015. It has three new ERDF projects that will continue that support for the next couple of years, and it is worth noting that ERDF has been the only source of funding for business and innovation projects available to them since 2010. Over the past seven years, Medilink EM has delivered an intensive programme of innovation support to the east midlands life sciences sector. In addition to supporting over 1,000 companies, that has meant producing gross value added of over £8.2 million, creating or safeguarding 480 jobs, and helping over 25 new product launches. As we also heard, however, none of this is possible without talking about people, and this is top of the worry list for those most affected by this debate. We have already heard about how much money international students bring—£11 billion to the UK economy each year—but they also make an important cultural contribution. In 2012-13, 5.5% of students studying in the UK were from EU countries, generating £3.7 billion for the UK economy and sustaining 34,000 jobs in local communities. As a local Member of Parliament representing a large university, I can tell the House that those are not always high-value jobs; we are also talking about the cleaners, cooks and administrators who make a university function, leaving aside the other jobs created locally which rely on the university, such as those in retail and leisure. I echo the call of my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Ben Howlett) that students should not be taken into account in net migration numbers. I welcome the Prime Minister's statement at last week's EU Council meeting that she wants an early deal on the rights of EU citizens, and I shall continue to push Ministers to honour that.

In the short time available, I just wish to say that by 2019 we are going to have new immigration and trading policies, and we look forward to a new industrial strategy, and we must have a new relationship that enables our institutions to take part in EU funding for science and research.

8.29 pm

**Graham Stringer** (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): The debate about leaving the EU and science is not unique in having myths associated with it, and I wish to talk about two today. The first, which has been mentioned by a number of people, concerns problems with scientific collaboration and financing. As has been well documented and elucidated, this country benefits in its research budget: we are a net gainer in research. It has also been pointed out that we are a net donor when it comes to overall European funding. What is often not stated is that we are net contributor to the science budget as a whole—

**Joseph Johnson** *indicated assent.*

**Graham Stringer:** I see the Minister is nodding. Science is funded through the European development funds and other funding, and when we look at that, we see that we are a net contributor. It should be possible, with human ingenuity, to sort out that funding issue.

Secondly, let me mention collaboration. There is not time to go into this fully, but one of my hon. Friends mentioned 17th century science. Isaac Newton put his theory of gravity together while a plague was going on. He used the work of Johannes Kepler, a German who put his work together by stealing work in Denmark and working on Italian and Polish work while the Thirty years war was going on. Science finds a way to collaborate across all sorts of boundaries.

I want to quote from the Science and Technology Committee's report that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) referred to, "EU regulation of the life sciences", which was published about a week before the referendum. It was passed unanimously by the various parties on the Committee, albeit after some debate, and it is worth reading. The myth is that somehow the EU is pro-science and is good for science, but the report states:

"Our predecessor Committee's inquiries had showed some resistance from the European Commission to evidence-based policy making and science, including the hostility to GM Organisms (along with an arbitrary and unscientific use of the precautionary principle), the dilatory approach to revising the Clinical Trials Directive and the Electromagnetic Field Directive, as well as the sacking of Professor Anne Glover."

The EU is hardly a body with a good record on science. The sacking of Anne Glover was a disgrace. She was sacked not because she was a poor scientist, but because she was a good scientist giving evidence about GM foods. Greenpeace, quite disgracefully, lobbied against her staying, and the Commission, spineless as ever, sacked her.

The clinical trials directive has already been referred to. Not only was it a bad directive that led to science leaving the EU because it was ineffective, it took too long and it was inconsistently applied—the EU is now proposing new regulations for 2018, which we hope will be more effective—but it has taken 20 years, while science and scientists have been leaving the EU, to put that directive right. The electromagnetic field directive was relatively quickly rectified, as it took the EU only 10 years to put that right. It was hindering work on machines for diagnosing cancers and other diseases using nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and other instruments.

Then we come to the phthalates. One phthalate was banned, and the EU then banned a series of phthalates. Almost the first lesson that any pupil gets in chemistry is that sodium chloride is essential for life and potassium chloride is a poison. We cannot just say that because one phthalate might poison rats, which was the evidence base the EU was using, all phthalates will poison rats. An over-use of the precautionary principle has meant that the ban on GM foods has continued, and because of that this country does not have the benefit of a blight-free potato and many other beneficial agricultural products. During the referendum debates, we were told how good the EU was for industry. As I never tired of pointing out, our agro-chemical industry had almost disappeared because of the Commission's and the EU's attitude to science.

I will refer to two other non-EU agencies, mentioned in the debate, that show how anti-scientific the EU is. One is the European Space Agency, an excellent organisation that does some very good work indeed. When the Science and Technology Committee visited it in Rome just before the last general election, its senior

scientists were desperate to keep the Commission out of their work because they were worried about its anti-scientific attitude. The Galileo project, which is funded primarily by the European Commission and is also used by the European Space Agency, is three times over budget and only halfway through—it will take about three times as long to complete as was expected.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge said that it was better to get things right than not get them right; I think the EU had its chance to get things right, but there was never any reform. Now we are out, we can look after our own science.

8.36 pm

**Oliver Colvile** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak in this debate.

Following June's historic referendum, I have been working closely with institutions and businesses in my constituency to ensure that, now more than ever, science and technological institutions have the right frameworks to secure as much funding as possible, before and after we leave the EU. I want to put this in context. Plymouth has a global reputation for marine science engineering research, not only through Plymouth University, which is well known for its technology work, but through the Royal Navy, the National Marine Aquarium, the fishing industry, the Marine Biological Association, which was set up in the 1870s to explore whether we could ever over-fish our waters, and Plymouth Marine Laboratory.

Plymouth Marine Laboratory did a great deal of research into CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and global warming. I am not surprised; after all, Captain Robert Falcon Scott was a Plymouth boy. I pay tribute to Stephen de Mora, chief executive of PML, for the work that he and his team have done in preparing me for today's debate. Both PML and the Marine Biological Association do much for science and technological research—not only in the south-west, but throughout the rest of the country. They have links with South Korea, and together they have done much research into the movement of plankton in and around Antarctica—plankton are a key part of the diet of fish; without them, we would not have all those fish that we like eating.

I was pleased that in his recent autumn statement, the Chancellor announced that the Government are committed to making science and research a lynchpin of our economy after Brexit by taking steps towards increasing science spending, as the Science and Technology Committee had previously urged. I am also pleased that the Government have provided reassurance to the science and research community by promising to maintain the funding that now comes from EU grants beyond the point when the UK leaves the European Union. That is more important than ever: a Government study recently found that for every £1 of public investment in research and development, the private sector invested a further 136% on average—a pretty good return, as far as I am concerned.

I am unashamedly pro-science. Science contributes to economic growth, enabling the development of new goods and services, attracting inward investment and creating jobs. In February, when the former Prime Minister formally announced the referendum date, my local paper, the great *Plymouth Herald*, ran an article entitled "19 things EU funding has done for Plymouth".

[*Oliver Colvile*]

In 2020, we will commemorate the Mayflower leaving Plymouth to found the American colonies. Interestingly, the strapline for Plymouth used to be “The Spirit of Discovery”, but then, of course, we did have Sir Francis Drake, and an enormous number of scientists have come from Plymouth. However, an incredible 16 of the 19 projects in that article sit within my constituency, with many involving science and research. In short, the funding is vital for industry and for my constituency, although I recognise that not all EU funding is necessarily generous, and I would encourage the Science and Technology Committee to undertake an inquiry into how the situation could be improved.

Statistics on the EU Horizon 2020 programme, published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy earlier this month, indicated that the UK ranks first in terms of participation. Previously published statistics showed that UK-based researchers lead far more projects in Horizon 2020 than researchers from any other nation.

As we leave the EU, I would like the British Government to continue to invest in R and D and not only to work with research and science organisations in the EU but to use this opportunity to forge new alliances with our non-European partners in the US, where a significant amount of research and development takes place, and the far east, including South Korea. Although the costs of development in global research may be higher in the short term, I hope that market forces will make sure we bring them down.

One contentious issue, which we have heard about today, is immigration. I quite understand the Government's position of not wanting to take the student population out of the figures, but it is really important that we make sure the Government are much more proactive in talking about the number of students. I am very aware that they have to do some work on that.

While I welcome the fact that any non-UK EU citizen who has lived in this country continuously for five years will be allowed to remain here, the Government must get the balance right between protecting those researchers who contribute so much to our science and technology, and listening to the very real concerns about immigration that Members of this House heard on the doorstep during the referendum campaign.

The June referendum's vote to leave the European Union was historic, providing not only uncertainty but huge opportunities for our excellent science and technology sectors. Let us seize this opportunity to show the world that Britain is open for business and ready to lead from the front when it comes to improving the lives of everyone around the world through science and innovation.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. We are going to chop the speech limit down to six minutes.

8.42 pm

**Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): This is a very welcome debate, and I congratulate the Government on recognising that Members of the House are worried

about how the Prime Minister plans to take Britain out of the EU and about what the fine print of Brexit will be—not least for science and research and for the many interlinked sectors and economies.

The impact on our universities and on their ability to maintain their immense contributions to science and research is one of the many concerning and complex challenges Brexit throws up. The wide role played by our universities cannot be overestimated. Universities are engines for so much in our economy and society. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, they generate an annual output of £73 billion and around £11 billion of export earnings for the UK economy. They create jobs, drive innovation, support growth, and are beacons recognised by the rest of the world for their integrity, quality and innovation.

At a regional and local level, their importance is no less noteworthy. The University of Bradford, in my home town, is an important and central part of the city in many different and positive ways. The university supports local and regional growth, encourages enterprise and business development, attracts investment and talent, and provides and creates employment. Bradford is not unique in that regard. Our universities are dynamic, and they make an invaluable contribution to the UK's place in the world. Brexit must not be allowed to undo that intentionally or inadvertently. The Government must protect and enhance the way in which British universities bring about positive impacts on behalf of the UK, not least in science and research.

Collaborative working with the EU in this field makes an enormous contribution to Britain. In its report on the challenges of Brexit, MillionPlus, the Association for Modern Universities, stresses that the value of cross-country collaboration between academics in different EU countries cannot be overstated. This collaborative research, and the relationships that stem from it, need to be promoted as part of the negotiations to leave the EU. That is just as important as guaranteeing funding. In 2014-15, UK universities received £836 million in research funding from EU sources—15% of the total value of all research funding that year. MillionPlus says that this often proves more accessible than funding from UK sources.

As many Members will know, the Alzheimer's Society offers one example of the importance of research and how a bad Brexit may damage Britain. The society points out that Britain is a global leader in dementia research but worries that this position, particularly in relation to funding, could regress as we exit the EU. The Alzheimer's Society and I are urging the Government to prioritise securing continued access to EU funding schemes and programmes for research as they negotiate a new relationship with the EU post-Brexit. That is one example of how EU collaboration and investment can be critical; there are many others.

Collaborations are vital for science. Scientists should be able to work with the best in their field irrespective of their geographical location and institutional affiliation. Researchers collaborate; they overcome all sorts of institutional and financial difficulties by working together and pooling resources. EU funding has played a part in overcoming the sorts of challenges that researchers face. I am sure that I speak for many universities, and all the organisations who are beneficiaries of the research

they do, when I urge the Government to look seriously at how to make up shortfalls in funding for research that arise from Britain's departure from the EU post-Brexit.

I hope that the Government will commit to making sure that any lost research and innovation funding arising from Brexit is replaced. I also hope that they will reassure our research community and preserve our international reputation by committing to a real-terms increase in science funding. Safeguarding what we have and reassuring those with a vested interest is only the first step. The next phase will be to ensure that in the decades to come the way in which Britain works with the world does not lose sight of the vital and specific needs of our universities and the research they carry out. The Government will need not just a long-term plan for leaving the EU but a plan for engaging with the rest of the world on many important and fundamental levels.

8.47 pm

**Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): Scientific research is one of the United Kingdom's biggest assets, and we must ensure that Brexit provides us with an opportunity. We are in a position to critique and improve on aspects of EU legislation that hold back our development, to adopt the policies that have benefited us, and to create a Britain that is increasingly outward-looking and pioneering in science and research.

Many sectors claim that their people are their greatest asset, but this is most clear in the area of scientific research and innovation, where individual qualities count for so much, skills need to be developed over a period of years, and there is a great deal of specialisation. The search for and recruitment of talented engineers and scientists is already very challenging, and the potential for a barrier to go up between the UK and the EU is a great concern. I was pleased that the Prime Minister attempted to resolve this problem to enable the 1.3 million British subjects living in the EU to remain there and the 3.3 million EU citizens to remain here, but disappointed that Donald Tusk, playing politics with peoples' lives, rebuffed the proposal.

When discussing migration, especially in the context of Brexit, we have to get the tone and values right. During the referendum campaign, I talked to hundreds of people about what it would mean to leave the EU, and controlling our borders was a significant concern, although not the greatest. I did not meet anyone who thought that we should stop scientists and engineers from coming to and settling in the UK. There is a desire that Britain should control her borders but also enable those with most to contribute to come here. It should be of huge reassurance to members of the scientific community that the British people greatly value their contribution, no matter from where they came.

Our universities sector is world-leading, with three in the top 10 of the *Times Higher Education* world university rankings. There is only one other European university in the top 10 and it is Swiss. To maintain our global position, it is vital that, post-Brexit, the whole of the UK universities sector not only maintains its attractiveness to EU students, but enables more students to come from countries such as India by removing barriers. Given that students come for a set period of time and for a specific purpose, they should also be taken out of our immigration figures so that the numbers reflect those seeking to remain here.

Although the vote to leave the EU has caused some to raise fears that it will result in our becoming an inward-looking nation, cut off from the world and its opportunities, most prefer to be optimistic. Brexit is an opportunity to ensure that people with the skills and talents that we need come to Britain so that we have an immigration system that works for everyone.

The UK has been a net beneficiary of EU funding for research, benefiting from the collaboration opportunities offered by EU programmes such as Horizon 2020. However, we need to be clear that our overall contributions massively outweighed any financial returns in this particular sector. Some countries receive most of their Horizon 2020 moneys in structural funds to build up their science base, but Britain largely receives money based on excellence. We ought to be clear that scientists from across the EU gain enormously from collaborating with us. We ought not to think that we are in a weak, dependent position, because we are not.

Funding concerns have been raised by the Science and Technology Committee in its seventh report of this Session. I look forward to hearing the Government's response in the new year. Like many, I was encouraged by their recent announcement that there would be guaranteed funding for participation in Horizon 2020 projects, even if the project finishes after our departure from the EU.

The Prime Minister's announcement of an additional £2 billion a year of funding by 2021 for science and innovation through the new industrial strategy is welcome, but I would like clarification on where that money will be spent. Given that we will no longer be a member of the EU, we will not receive any funding from the successor to Horizon 2020. Is it possible or expected that a proportion of that £2 billion will be used to buy into, in part or in full, the successor to Horizon 2020? According to the European Commission's rules, Britain can participate in Horizon 2020 outside the EU, just like Tunisia, Norway and Israel.

Brexit offers an opportunity to correct any failings in EU policy for science and research. For example, the EU clinical trials directive, which was approved in 2001 and introduced in 2004, is widely seen as being a failure due to increased costs, delays and differing interpretations across the EU. It is due to be replaced by the clinical trial regulation, which is widely expected to be much better and is currently due to be implemented in October 2018. That demonstrates how slow the EU can be in amending and changing regulations, with that process taking nearly 20 years.

In conclusion, I am glad to hear assurances on the future of British science and its funding, but the whole scientific community has a responsibility to secure the future of British science. It is for each and every one of our scientists to go across the world and tell everyone that we are open for business and that science has a bright future in the UK.

8.53 pm

**Thangam Debonnaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): I rise to speak in support of UK science and research, particularly in the two world-class universities in Bristol—the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England—one of which is in my constituency and the other just outside it, as well as the business and science incubators,

[Thangam Debbonaire]

the catapults and the other institutions that value and need a good research environment in the European Union.

Since the referendum I have been talking with the universities about the impact on science and research of a possible exit from the EU. The science carried out at the University of Bristol is pioneering, from better early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease to tackling antimicrobial resistance; from food security to understanding how we can prevent and stop violence against women. The University of Bristol has leading researchers doing vital work. Meanwhile, across the city in UWE work is being done on big data, developing flood resilience, improving air quality, shaping sustainable suburbs and improving labour productivity. I am sure we all agree that those are important things.

If I may join in the Higgs boson name-check, Mr Higgs was in the class of 1946 in Cotham school in Bristol West. The school has educated not just Mr Higgs but my nephews and nieces and the sons of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), so I am very fond of it. I am glad to be able to get a Higgs mention in.

There are five key issues of concern for science and research, and they are linked; no single strand stands alone. Those issues, which were set out in the recent report by the Science and Technology Committee, are: funding—that has been mentioned quite a lot today, so I will not dwell on it—people, collaboration and influence, regulation, and facilities. As Professor Ian Diamond, chair of the Universities UK research policy network, explained,

“there is no point having a regulatory framework if you do not have the talent; there is no point having the talent if you do not have access to the grants.”

Kevin Baughan, chief development officer at Innovate UK, said:

“We cannot really look at each of those parts individually. We need a strategy and a plan that allows us to move the whole ecosystem forward, because together they take worldclass science and turn it into jobs and growth; and together they allow businesses to export, to compete in wider markets and to build broader partnerships.”

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), I am in favour of science for science's sake, but I think it is critical that we are clear about the economic benefits of having world-class universities. The presence of the universities in Bristol contributes such a lot, as do the staff and the students, whether they decide to stay on after graduation or beyond the life of their research project. Some are telling me that they do not want to stay, and they feel as though they might as well take an offer from a university in Berlin, Bonn or Copenhagen. Some who have families or partners from the EU say they no longer feel welcome. That is a great worry to me.

Universities UK has said that it wants the Government to recognise that our universities are one of our best exports. They contribute to the economy directly through income generated, and indirectly through longer-term contribution to knowledge. I am not going to say anything else from that page of my speech, because someone else has already said it. I think it is good to junk things when they have already been said.

I have every confidence that the universities in Bristol can compete, whatever the circumstances they find themselves in, but the issues of concern that I have mentioned need to be tackled. As well as big universities such as the ones in my constituency, I am concerned about smaller universities, which often specialise in a particular field but which are less well-equipped than the larger universities, with their economies of scale, to weather any storm arising from the uncertainty about Brexit.

In Aberystwyth, the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences—I have to declare an interest, because my niece is a PhD student there—conducts pioneering research into topics from ways to help crops to resist disease to finding out what microbes live in glaciers; that is the project my niece is involved in. Other small institutes such as the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, various institutes for music and the arts, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Royal Agricultural University all have unique contributions to make. I worry that their size will make it harder for them to weather the storm.

I urge the Government to consider the various options for our relationship with the EU through the lens of what will make it easiest for our universities—of all shapes, sizes and specialisms—to continue to be the world-class institutes that they are. What agreements can we make on free movement of students and researchers? I might as well be honest and open, as I have been in every debate on Brexit so far, about the fact that I am a passionate believer in the value of the free movement of people, and I think that universities have a strong case to make for why that should apply to them.

What is the best regulatory framework for us to be in in order to collaborate with other EU universities? How can we make sure that British people are not delayed access to new medical treatments because of different rules? One way to ensure that the Government keep those things in mind is, as the hon. Member for Glasgow North West (Carol Monaghan) mentioned, to have the voice of science in the process. I am deeply concerned by the fact that, as the report by the Science and Technology Committee mentions, the post of chief scientific adviser at the Department for Exiting the European Union has not yet been advertised. I hope that the Minister will be able to update us on that.

Finally, will the Minister tell us at the end of the debate whether the Government have considered the other recommendations in the report by the Science and Technology Committee? Will the Government commit to keeping student numbers out of the immigration targets and caps? If they have not yet prepared a response to the Select Committee report, when will they do so? I hope that the Minister will be able to answer some—or, ideally, all—of these questions, because the production of knowledge is one of the things we do best in this country and one of the things I am proudest of in my constituency.

8.59 pm

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire).

Whatever our view of the United Kingdom's place in the world, it is probably fair to say it is indisputable that the UK is a science giant. The impact our excellent science and research base has had on the country as a

whole has been profound, particularly in our great universities. As I have said previously, my constituency of Cambridge is particularly productive—a hive of science and innovation. The University of Cambridge has fostered almost 100 Nobel prize winners, and the city and surrounding area is home to a thriving network of life sciences and technology companies.

However, as Baron Rees of Ludlow once cautioned:

“Unless we get smarter, we’ll get poorer”.

Eight years later, at a time when our relationship with Europe is at a crucial juncture, that warning is all the more significant. Unfortunately, in the words of Prospect, the trade union representing many people working in the sector:

“It is inescapable that the decision to Brexit has resulted in an instant reputational hit for UK science.”

Let me begin with a plea to the Government to provide concrete, real reassurances to the EU nationals working in science and research around the country. Existing EU research staff need certainty, which is sorely missing at the moment.

I recently visited a lab at the department of physiology, development and neuroscience at the University of Cambridge as part of a pairing scheme run by the Royal Society. I shadowed a neuroscientist-neurologist, Susanna Mierau, who is studying autism, and spent much of the day with her and her colleagues. It was a brilliant and inspiring day, but what was particularly striking was the number of people working in the lab who were EU nationals. It is the same in labs around the city and across the country.

The Royal Society tells us that there are 31,000 non-UK EU citizens working in research and academia in the UK. The Babraham Institute just outside Cambridge says nearly a third of their employees and visiting researchers are non-UK EU nationals. The Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute, which is on the biomedical park in Cambridge, tells us that EU nationals are a significant and valuable part of their workforce, who are dedicated to beating cancer sooner, with 33% of its PhD students and 39% of its research fellows being non-UK EU nationals. The adjoining Medical Research Council laboratory of molecular biology says that 40% of its research students and 45% of its postdoctoral researchers are from the EU. At the University of Cambridge as a whole, about a quarter of academics and postdocs are EU nationals.

EU nationals are undertaking vital work across the UK to tackle global challenges and improve people’s lives, and they make a huge contribution to UK science and research. Sadly, however, written evidence from the organisations I have mentioned testifies to those people all feeling “very anxious and unwelcome”, “insecure...or even abused”, and

“concerned about their ability to continue working here”.

I find that genuinely horrifying, and I urge the Government to tell EU nationals working in UK science that they are welcome in this country.

The evidence shows that the EU researchers attracted by the UK are at the top of their fields. More than half of European Research Council consolidator grant recipients in the UK in 2014 were non-UK EU citizens. The University of Cambridge argues that UK institutions risk losing this talent and the accompanying European Research Council funding should EU researchers no

longer be attracted to the UK, which is the potential consequence of any restrictions on freedom of movement. Losing access to funding is not just about attracting talent; it is also about retaining it.

All of this is not just about the UK’s standing, but about scientific progress itself. Collaboration and the pooling of international talent are essential to scientific innovation. The famous discovery of the structure of DNA by Watson and Crick involved a visiting US scientist, and monoclonal antibodies were developed by an Argentinian and a German postdoctoral fellow. Science knows no borders, so talented people and their ideas must be allowed to flow freely. If EU citizens are required to apply for a tier 2 visa to work in UK universities, that will pose a risk to universities’ ability to recruit and retain staff. Maintaining researcher mobility and refusing to create barriers to internationalism must be a priority in Brexit negotiations.

I will conclude by briefly mentioning a couple of other vital areas. I have spoken previously about the importance of ensuring that the UK has continued access to the EU regulatory framework for new medicines under the European Medicines Agency. If we reject the importance of that—as, alarmingly, the Secretary of State for International Trade did in extraordinarily cursory fashion very recently—access to new treatments will slow down, drugs prices will go up and our NHS will foot the bill. Furthermore, our life sciences sector will suffer. In Cambridge there are more than 160 life science companies, but if our country is outside the single market and is no longer able to work with the EMA, and if it moves its headquarters from London, parts of the industry will surely follow. Just recently Sweden was reported to have thrown its hat into the ring to host the EMA headquarters.

Likewise, our technology sector is reliant upon retaining the current regulatory system, in this case ensuring that UK data protection rules are at least in line with the new general data protection regulation following Brexit. The cross-border sharing of international data flows is essential if we want our technology and financial services sectors to remain globally competitive. The Minister for Digital and Culture said in response to an Adjournment debate that I secured recently:

“We want a data protection framework that works best for the UK and meets our needs. Those consultations will be forthcoming.”  
—[*Official Report*, 12 December 2016; Vol. 618, c. 594.]

I wonder whether we can now be told when those consultations will be published. He also said that the Government were considering all options for the most beneficial way of ensuring that the UK’s data protection regime continues to build a culture of data confidence and trust, which safeguards citizens and supports businesses in a global data economy. Perhaps the Minister responding today can outline some of those options.

We need better answers from the Government and soon, or we risk seeing the great advantages and opportunities achieved by UK science and tech squandered, at great cost to us all.

9.6 pm

**Danny Kinahan** (South Antrim) (UUP): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner), who I rather feel covered every corner of how important it is for science that the movement of people and scientists is kept in place.

[*Danny Kinahan*]

I do not really apologise for being parochial; I am here to speak on behalf of Northern Ireland. I was vice-Chair of the Committee for Education in the Northern Ireland Assembly for three years. Under the previous Minister, I watched funding cuts for Sentinus, teaching and, basically, the whole of science, yet somehow Northern Ireland remained high up there with its results. However, we should keep in mind that this year it has dropped some six places in the science tables.

I spoke about this the week before last, but it is key to Northern Ireland, being an island off an island and having a land border with Ireland, that we keep our trade and the movement of people, which is becoming even more essential to our economy. The universities want all universities in the United Kingdom to thrive. Queen's University is very much part of the Russell Group. It sees it as absolutely essential to maintain mobility of staff and students throughout the whole of Europe, along with access to research funding and collaboration in projects. That is the key, so when Ministers look at Northern Ireland and Brexit, I ask them to ensure that research and development and the funding for universities are some of our top priorities.

We have Ulster University and Queen's University, with the Magee campus in Londonderry. When it comes to funding, Ulster University has had €9.92 million to date and is looking to try and get another €10.5 million. Queen's has attracted €61 million and wants to get more, but the message that they are sending us is that they need clarity. They want an end to the uncertainty. They know that the funding has been guaranteed up to when we leave, but after that they need to be able to promise something to the people they are trying to attract, so that we hold them there and do not lose them.

To borrow a little bit of the Christmas spirit, someone said to me last week that we should be following the star. All students follow the star: they want to go to the university where that star professor is, so we have to make sure that we keep the key people in the universities. If there is a key message to take on board, that is it. I am grateful for what the Chancellor has said and for the clarification, but in Northern Ireland we need to know that the funding will be ring-fenced and not lost in the Barnett formula and spent with other things. We need to make sure that it comes through to the universities.

I was pleased to see that one of the British Academy's key points was about paying particular attention to Northern Ireland and working with the Irish. Another of its points, which we should all remember, was that 50% of academic papers are written with international partners. That is how it should remain. We should keep working together. That does not mean only Europe—we can and should look outwards to gather in specialists from the whole world.

Northern Ireland is well known for aerospace, defence, pharmaceuticals and medical research—one example would be Frank Pantridge, the cardiologist. Like all hon. Members, I could name plenty of people who have set examples, but we have to ensure that it happens into the future. At the moment, the anecdotes we are hearing tell us that Northern Ireland universities are losing out. People are already looking elsewhere for collaboration. We must ensure that we stop that today. Six per cent. of University of Ulster and 30% of Queen's staff come from Europe. We must ensure that we keep those people.

It is essential to take another point on board. The UCAS tells us that the number of students coming to Northern Ireland is 9% down on last year. We had increased the number every year until this year. We must look at what we are doing on science.

I have pleaded enough. I hate always making Northern Ireland a special case, but it is our home. It is important that we pull all those things together, work and see everywhere thrive.

9.11 pm

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (SNP): Few will be surprised if I approach today's debate from a decidedly Scottish perspective. With five universities ranked in the top 200 academic institutions in the world, Scotland certainly punches above its weight, which is reflected in the world renowned academic research carried out north of border. The University of Edinburgh is one example. The research carried out there is truly groundbreaking. We would be hard-pushed to find someone who has not heard of the Higgs boson or Dolly the sheep. It is little wonder that the University of Edinburgh enjoys such a consistently high placing in international league tables.

We should rightly be concerned when that esteemed university warns of the risk of harm to the quality of its research posed by Brexit. In written evidence to the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee, the institution gives a stark warning that our exit from the European Union could lead to fewer excellent researchers getting permission to apply to universities here; that fewer international universities will be willing to collaborate with UK universities and researchers; and that less funding could be available. It argues that that could lead to a loss of its global reputation, a loss of opportunities for UK researchers and scientists, and less high-quality advice being available to the Government and business. It warns that, in turn, that could seriously impact on our ability to tackle global problems such as clean energy, food security and ageing populations.

The Government seem capable only of sowing more confusion. There are reports that the Home Office is considering plans almost to halve the number of international student visas issued. Forty-two per cent. of students at the University of Edinburgh are EU and international students. Those proposals will only compound the stark Brexit warning it has issued.

One positive measure that the Government could take now is to give clarity that the immigration rights of EU nationals currently living in Scotland will not change in future. Such assurances would help forward planning and the retention of researchers and scientists. I recently received a letter from Professor Craig Mahoney, principal of the University of the West of Scotland, which plans to open a new state-of-the-art campus in my constituency. In the letter, he emphasises the huge importance of international students not only to universities but to our society and economy. He cites a report from BIGGAR Economics, which found that the university generates £538 million gross value added in Scotland and supports almost 4,500 jobs. He stresses that a significant element of the corporate strategy of the university is to grow the number of international students. It is my belief that the uncertainty caused by Brexit seriously jeopardises that.

The immigration status of EU nationals is not some negotiating piece for the Prime Minister, and treating it as such is causing damage.

In addition to clarity on immigration, the Government should start to give answers on future research funding. The University of the West of Scotland has received more than €740,000 of Horizon 2020 funding, with Scottish higher education institutions receiving around €165 million in total. The promise of a Treasury guarantee for current Horizon 2020 funding is welcome, but simply does not go far enough. The Government need to provide the necessary certainty so that academic and research institutions know that they will have enough support for the duration of their projects. We also need a clear sign of Government intent to put in place an equivalent funding framework post Brexit.

The UK already compares very badly with its competitors, and the decision to leave the EU will only further exacerbate the UK Government's failures in the fields of science and innovation. The hugely negative effect that will have on our economy cannot be understated. The Scottish National party Scottish Government take a very different approach, fostering innovation, investment and internationalism. We want Scotland to become a fairer and more competitive economy. Madam Deputy Speaker, you can be assured that those of us on the SNP Benches will not stand idly by and watch the Tories wage war on our world-class education institutions.

Almost six months after the vote to leave the EU, it is time for the Government to get their act together and start coming up with some answers. I hope the Minister will do so tonight.

9.16 pm

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this important debate on a subject that is very close to my heart. As an NHS scientist before I came to this place, I worked in a field that thrived on collaboration and recognised no geographical boundaries.

As many Members have said, our UK universities are rightly held in high esteem worldwide. We have 18 of the top 100 universities in the world, including four in the top 10. Listening to the hon. Member for South Antrim (Danny Kinahan), I was pleased to hear that even the Brexiteers are remainers when it comes to our universities.

**Danny Kinahan**: I'm not a Brexiteer.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I'm one.

**Liz McInnes**: You'll get your chance.

Looking at British science, it is well known that Britain punches well above its weight in the international university league tables. It does so mainly thanks to EU grants. It is not awash with funding, and in fact has the lowest per capita spending on research of any G7 country.

The referendum outcome has led to uncertainty about its implications for the higher education sector. It is easy to trot out the phrase "Brexit means Brexit", but, as ever, the devil is in the detail and, for the sake of the future of science and research in this country, that detail cannot be glossed over in a soundbite. There are two aspects of the human and intellectual cost of Brexit

for universities. The first is the potential for another brain drain. The second is the potential restrictions on overseas research students.

I say another brain drain as it sadly would be nothing new. Many senior figures in British universities remember the lack of support from the Thatcher Government in the '80s and the exodus of scientists abroad. It is ironic that the four British Nobel prize winners this year, Duncan Haldane, David Thouless, Michael Kosterlitz and Sir Fraser Stoddart, are all based in the US, having been forced out during the 1980s brain drain. British research scientists are worried that the Prime Minister's mantra of "Brexit means Brexit" will lead to a lack of funding and grants for British science and the potential for a modern-day brain drain.

Added to that is the potential for UK universities to become less attractive to international research students. The vice-chancellors of the London School of Economics, King's College, London, and Bristol have already voiced their fears about recruitment of international students, and the serious potential financial and human resource consequences for our universities.

The vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, is a stalwart remainder, but in common with many who voted to remain, he is a pragmatist and wants Cambridge to get the best out of Brexit. He says that to achieve this the Government must provide some basic clarity on what exactly Brexit means. He is asking for three things from the Government: clarity on the national status of university staff; a recognition of the collaborative ideal implicit in EU projects; and a Government guarantee of vital university budgets.

I hope the vice-chancellor's requests will be heeded by the Government. He is, after all, what some might regard as something of an expert. Although the people of this country were urged not to listen to experts during the referendum, on this subject, and indeed on many others affected by the Brexit negotiations, it is absolutely vital that the Government pay heed to our finest minds. They are not asking for a running commentary; they are asking for clarity and a coherent, informed plan as to the exact nature and manner of our departure from the EU. The EU makes substantial financial contributions to research in UK universities. Research funding from the EU amounts to around £1 billion per year, while our own national research budget is below international averages.

I represent a Greater Manchester constituency and universities across our region have more than 4,000 EU students currently on campuses. That equates to spending of £90 million per year not just on tuition fees, but on expenditure in the local economy. Manchester University, which is 29th in the world's top 100 universities, received £48 million in research funding in the past two years alone. The loss of such substantial funding and a failure to attract EU students could not fail to have a detrimental effect on our area. I cannot lay claim to a connection with Mr Higgs, but in a recent interview on the effect of Brexit one of Manchester University's most famous academics, Professor Brian Cox—who, like me, was born in Oldham—said:

"The central issue for science is that it's a global pursuit. I work at the Hadron Collider at CERN in Geneva. That's a global project. The thing scientists and universities are most worried about is movement of people around the world. We need to say

[Liz McInnes]

this is a country where you're welcome to live and study and do science. But at the moment, the image we're representing to Europe and the rest of the world isn't the right one."

9.22 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I am very pleased to be able to speak in this debate. As a health spokesperson, I take a great interest in medical research and I am intensely proud of our universities in Northern Ireland, which are top in their field of medical research. I am also very happy to follow the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes).

I always, unashamedly, go out to bat for Northern Ireland and Strangford, and I will do so today. As a Brexiteer—one who voted to leave and was very proud that the people of the United Kingdom and my constituency also made that decision—I see an opportunity. The Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology at Queen's University Belfast is a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary research centre with over 300 clinical and basic researchers from across the world. It achieves the highest quality of research excellence. Research in the institute extends from population studies of cancer etiology, through tumour biology and clinical trials, to outcomes and health services research. The institute is committed to fostering transdisciplinary investigation of areas of cancer control that lie at the interface between fundamental, clinical and population research. The three are currently populated by approximately 250 faculty, graduate and post-doctoral trainees and support staff. Opportunities for graduate and post-doctoral training are offered in partnership with several departments at the university, including: biomedical, anatomy and cell biology, biochemistry, microbiology, immunology, pharmacology and toxicology, community health and epidemiology, mathematics and statistics, oncology, pathology and medicine, and Queen's school of policy studies. All that is done with expertise at Queen's University. The institute is supported by the Terry Fox Foundation, in partnership with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

This high level of research needs a highly qualified and specialised skill set. It is clear that in leaving the EU we need to ensure that that skill set is protected and that our universities are able to continue their priceless work. I support the recent call by the president of the Royal Society in the *Financial Times* to ensure that we continue to build on our position as a world leader in science and innovation. We are doing that in Northern Ireland, and we want to continue to do that. We are looking to the Government simply to make sure that that happens. I have every faith that the Brexit team understands the necessity of the arrangements that need to be put in place to ensure that this knowledge and skill share can and will take place. I see the Minister nodding in appreciation, and I am sure that it will be confirmed further in a few moments when he rises to speak.

It is clear that UK research benefits from the immigration of top foreign researchers to the UK. These include several Nobel prize winners, so we must have in place the ability to ensure that they are able to live and work here for the benefit of the UK and our scientific and research industry. As the President of the Royal Society has said:

"Today, 30% of our academic research staff are from abroad and a third of UK start-ups were founded by non-UK nationals.

We are second only to the US as a destination for global talent. Their presence ensures that we remain first-rate, and importantly, produces a first-rate environment for training home-grown talent. Losing them would be a disaster for our economy. We need to take immediate steps to reassure those who are here that they remain welcome."

And they are welcome; we want them to stay. I hope the Minister will say this very clearly in few moments. The role played by foreign scientists and graduates must not be overlooked or underestimated. They are an essential component in the cog of our industry, and I am taking the opportunity to underline that fact and put it on the record in this Chamber today.

In 2015, over half of the UK's research output was the result of an international collaboration, and these collaborations are increasing. The European Research Council, which is part of Horizon 2020 and funds frontier research purely on the basis of scientific excellence, has established a very strong international reputation. In Queen's University, we have international partnerships with companies and businesses, with other universities across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and indeed across the world—all coming together to bring the needed scientific excellence right there at Queen's University in Belfast in Northern Ireland. Although this funding stream does not require international collaboration, 58% of papers with ERC funding have co-authors who are based in other countries.

Collaboration enhances the quality of scientific research, improves the efficiency and effectiveness of that research and is increasingly necessary, as the scale of both budgets and research challenges grow. I am sure that in his response, the Minister will confirm that the collaboration that already takes place will continue post-Brexit and into the future. The primary driver of most collaboration, however, is the scientists themselves. In developing their research and finding answers, scientists are seeking to work with the best people, best institutions and best equipment that complement their research, wherever they may be. It just happens that most of those good people are in Belfast at Queen's University.

This collaboration must be maintained and enhanced, which brings me back to my foundation point about Brexit: this is an opportunity to put in place mutually beneficial co-operation between countries that we must make the most of. I believe we have an opportunity to do just that. We work better as a team, and Brexit must take the opportunity to put in place the rules that enhance the games and bring the best results. I have every confidence in the Brexit Minister and his team here in this great nation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—we are better together!

9.28 pm

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Before I start to conclude the debate, it is worth noting that, as you will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, while we have been debating this important issue, somebody has driven a lorry into a Christmas market in the heart of Berlin, killing nine people. I am sure that I speak on behalf of the whole House in expressing our solidarity with the German people at this time and our shared commitment to work together to oppose all those who challenge the democratic values that we share across Europe.

This is the third of our general debates on exiting the European Union, and I am sure that at some stage the Government will tot up all the hours we have spent in the Chamber and claim that it in some way represents the involvement of Parliament in the Brexit process. I see the Minister nodding. However, that misses the point. Although we have had a very interesting debate, in which Members on both sides have demonstrated their understanding of and commitment to the importance of science and research in the economic future of our country, we have not been much illuminated on the Government's thinking or plans, which I had thought—perhaps naively—would have something to do with these general debates.

I welcome the many speeches that were made today, particularly the powerful maiden speech from the new hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney). No doubt the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) will pass on my view—which I am sure is shared throughout the House—that her speech demonstrated that she will add real value to this place. She rightly emphasised that we have become a divided country, and spoke of the need for leadership—a leadership which I think is sadly lacking at present.

As I have said, we are no clearer about how the Government aim to protect science and research in the Brexit negotiations. For example, the hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael), the Chair of the Education Committee, asked the Minister a relatively simple and straightforward question—whether the Government would seek associate country status in successor programmes to Horizon 2020—but we received no answer.

Members have pointed out throughout the debate that as we navigate our way in an increasingly competitive world, the future of our economy will depend heavily on research and innovation. Many have talked of our strengths, but there are also weaknesses which we need to recognise. A particular weakness is the lack of investment in research and development. We have slipped from leading the OECD countries in respect of spending as a percentage of GDP in 1979 to trailing behind all our competitors. The United States invests 2.8% of its GDP in R and D, and OECD countries, like the EU, average 2.4%, but the UK invests just 1.7%, less than half the 3.9% invested by South Korea, which, as a result, remains a major manufacturing nation.

As was pointed out by many Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford South (Judith Cummins), one of our strengths—and it is considerable—is the research capacity of our universities. However, that strength will be at risk if the Government get Brexit wrong. What does getting it wrong look like in relation to research and science? What are the risks? In an excellent report published by the Science and Technology Committee, its Chair, the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe), highlighted the five key issues: funding, people, collaboration, regulation and facilities. He also rightly expressed a fear that if we were not careful, science could be one of the casualties of Brexit. I am sure that all of us, throughout the House, share a desire for that not to be the case, in which context it would be useful if the Minister answered the hon. Gentleman's question about when the Department would appoint a chief scientific adviser.

Because our universities are so good, as many have pointed out, we do disproportionately well from EU research funding, better per head than any other EU

country. As we heard from the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan), EU programmes provide nearly 15% of UK university research funding, and we can all agree on the importance of that funding. With it comes critical collaboration, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) was right to refer to the pan-European collaboration that comes through involvement in Horizon 2020 and its predecessor programmes. All that will be at risk if research is not placed centre stage in the Brexit negotiations.

The second point made by the Chair of the Select Committee was about people. Again because our universities are so good, they attract great staff from all over the world. Some 28% of academics are non-UK citizens, and 15% are from EU countries. When it comes to key research staff, the proportion is much higher—more than half in some STEM subjects. As was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), we have all heard stories of jobs declined, or of those already here questioning their future in the UK because the Government will not give the assurance for which the House asked in July: a unilateral commitment that those who are currently in the UK will be able to stay when we leave the EU, on the same terms that they currently enjoy. As the hon. Member for Glasgow North West (Carol Monaghan) pointed out, we should never forget that these are highly mobile people. They do not have to be here; they have lots of other offers available to them. They are not a drain; they are an asset to the UK.

If we leave the EU with no deal on the future movement of workers, we will fall back on current immigration rules which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) pointed out, will not work because there are tens of thousands of early-career academics and researchers who will not meet the tier 2 income threshold, which could create a crisis for our research community.

As with staff, so with students, as the hon. Member for South Antrim (Danny Kinahan) and others pointed out. Around 125,000 of our 436,000 international students are from the EU, and their future is uncertain. A survey before 23 June indicated that one third of non-EU students would find the UK a less attractive destination if we chose to leave. The worst outcome is we could lose more than half of our international students currently in the UK, costing billions of pounds, as my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) pointed out, highlighting the impact on her local economy, which will be repeated in local economies across the country. That will not only cost money and jobs, but will bring into question the viability of many courses, particularly postgraduate courses, and particularly in STEM subjects, which would no longer be available to UK students.

One would imagine that the Government would be seeking to mitigate this risk by setting out a clear strategy for maintaining our position as a destination of choice for international students. But instead the Home Secretary has, extraordinarily, put international students at the centre of her plans to cut migration, making a bad situation worse.

What do we need from the Brexit negotiations? First, we need a plan. I am pleased that the House agreed, and we are looking forward to seeing it so that we can start some meaningful debates to replace the general debates

[Paul Blomfield]

we are enjoying so much at the moment. Clearly the Minister is not going to share the plan at this stage, but I hope he will share his views on a few key questions that will be central to it.

On funding, will the Minister give a clear commitment that the Government will prioritise research and innovation in the negotiations with our partners in Europe, with a view to ensuring continued UK participation in EU research programmes, not just for the full duration of Horizon 2020 but for framework programme 9 and successor programmes? Will he outline beyond the £2 billion already announced—which I think takes our R and D investment as a percentage of GDP from 1.7% to 1.9%, on a rough calculation—what plans he has to strengthen support for research and innovation more widely to mitigate any damage from leaving the EU?

On staff, will the Minister press for the earliest confirmation that EU nationals working in our universities and on research programmes in the private sector can remain on current terms without having to apply for leave to remain, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) argued? Will the Minister go further and say what assurances the Government will give to those who join our universities during the pre-Brexit period until 2019, because if there are no such assurances, recruitment will be made significantly more difficult? What representations is the Minister making about future visa arrangements post-Brexit so that we can continue to enjoy the benefits of securing the services of the best researchers from the EU and the rest of the world?

On students, does the Minister agree that we need early clarity on fee levels and access to student funding for EU students? We have it for next year, but what about 2018-19, and will it apply to postgraduates as well as undergraduates? Does he agree that we need to confirm the immigration status of existing and prospective EU students and their right to remain in the UK for work and postgraduate study?

Among the many issues we face, these are relatively straightforward questions, but an awful lot depends on the answers. If the Minister cannot answer them fully tonight, I hope he will ensure that the answers are in the plan that we will see in the new year, because our economy and our future as a country depend on it.

9.40 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield). First, I should like to echo his comments about the appalling loss of life in Berlin. I am sure that the whole House will join us in expressing solidarity with and sympathy for the victims. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families affected, and we should stand shoulder to shoulder with Germany and our European allies and partners after a terrible incident of this sort.

This has been an excellent debate and I would like to thank all hon. Members who have contributed, particularly the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney), who made an accomplished maiden speech and who spoke about Parliament bringing people together after the referendum. I agree that it is the responsibility of all

of us to aim to do that. This has been the third in the series of debates on important issues arising in the context of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union that was promised by the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis). I would like to note how fruitful my ministerial colleagues and I have found these debates. I am also glad that the hon. Member for Sheffield Central has enjoyed them so much. I had the very first debate in Westminster Hall when the House returned after the summer recess, and it is a delight to conclude this term with the last major Government debate in the main Chamber.

The UK's global status as a science and research superpower is fundamental to our wider economic competitiveness. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) described it as the engine of prosperity. This Government want the UK to be the go-to place for innovators and investors across the world, and we intend to secure the right outcome for the UK research base as we exit the European Union. This debate has highlighted some of the issues that we know we will have to consider as we negotiate to leave the EU, but retaining and building on our science and research base is a top priority that is shared by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, as we have seen today.

Before I begin to respond to some of the helpful points raised by Members, I would like to take time to point to the action that the Government have already taken to secure our place in the world of research and science.

The Government are determined to ensure that all relevant views from stakeholders are reflected in our analysis of the options for the UK's withdrawal from the EU. We are conducting a range of meetings with stakeholders to build national consensus around our negotiating position. This includes a wide programme of engagement within the Department to ensure that the views of the research and science sectors are heard. I should like to reassure the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Liz McInnes) that we are, in fact, listening to experts.

My ministerial colleagues and I have met a number of higher education institutions and groups, including Universities UK, the National Academies, the Russell Group and the Universities of Swansea, Reading, Ulster and Strathclyde, to name but a few. Just last week, I attended the new stakeholder working group on EU exit, universities, research and innovation, hosted by the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Joseph Johnson). The sector strongly supports our ambition to create an environment in which the UK as a whole can continue to be a world leader in research, science and the tertiary education sector.

We are also continuing to talk to representatives of the science and technology sectors. Between myself and ministerial colleagues, we have recently met Sir Mark Walport, the Government chief scientific adviser, as well as the presidents of the Royal Society and the Royal Academies and representatives from the life sciences, environment, chemicals, space and tech sectors. I want to reassure the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner), who spoke passionately about data, that the digital sector has advocated a strong position on the freedom of movement of data.

I have also enjoyed giving evidence to the Select Committee chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe), and I welcome the report, to which the Government will respond in full at a later date. To answer a point raised by him and by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Dr Mathias), I point out that we are working closely with the Government's chief scientific adviser and the Government Office for Science to ensure that we have access to the expertise that we need. I recently visited Surrey Satellites in Guildford to see at first hand the levels of innovation in the UK space industry, which the science Minister was right to praise in his opening speech. We will continue to meet such stakeholders in the coming months.

The Government have already taken action on some of the concerns raised by such groups. The Treasury will underwrite all successful bids for Horizon 2020 that are approved by the European Commission, even when specific projects continue beyond our departure from the EU, giving British participants and their EU partners the assurance and certainty needed to plan ahead for projects that can run over many years. The Treasury guarantee sends a clear message to UK businesses and universities that they should continue to bid for competitive EU funding while we remain a member of the EU. My right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan), with whom it was such a pleasure to work during her time as Education Secretary, gave an important example of where restored funding was a direct result of the guarantee. It will help ensure that the UK continues to be a world leader in international research and innovation.

We have provided further assurance to universities by confirming that existing EU students and those starting courses in 2016-17 and 2017-18 will continue to be eligible for student loans and home fee status for the duration of their courses. We recently extended that assurance to postgraduate support through research council studentships, which will remain open to EU students starting courses in the 2017-18 academic year. The funding support will cover the duration of their course, even if the course concludes after the UK has left the EU. As the Science Minister said earlier, we will decide the policy for the 2018-19 academic year in good time for applications.

The hon. Member for Sheffield Central and his Front-Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, challenged the Government on our science funding, but at a time of tight control over overall public spending it is significant that the Government were able to protect the science budget, with a total investment of £26 billion between 2016-17 and 2020-21. We have been going even further to support a healthy science and technology ecosystem in this country. The Government recently committed to substantial real-terms increases in Government investment in R and D, rising to an extra £2 billion a year by 2020-21, to help put Britain at the cutting edge of science and technology. I join my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock, who is Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (David Rutley) in welcoming that.

A new industrial strategy challenge fund will direct some investment to scientific research and the development of a number of priority technologies in particular,

helping to address Britain's historic weakness in commercialisation and turning our world-leading research into long-term success. To realise the full economic potential of new technologies, we have also announced a review of the support for organisations undertaking research through the tax system, looking at the global competitiveness of the UK offer. The Treasury will look at whether we can make this support even more effective to ensure that the UK continues to encourage innovation actively. Ultimately, we need to ensure that our world-beating science and research base maintains global research excellence in our institutions, innovation in our businesses, and strong local economies across the UK.

It was striking to hear hon. Members from both sides of the House, such as my hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Oliver Colville) and for Canterbury (Mr Brazier), my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough, and the hon. Members for Bradford South (Judith Cummins), for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) and for South Antrim (Danny Kinahan), speak passionately about the benefits that science, universities and research bring to their constituencies. While we can be confident that our fundamentals are strong, we need fully to evaluate the consequences, challenges and opportunities to UK science and innovation of leaving the EU. That will take time, and I am grateful for the support and challenge that we have received from this House and from a wide range of informed sources.

I see continued confidence in the UK as a natural home for and world leader in science and innovation. Since the referendum, for example, we have welcomed many hundreds of millions of pounds of new investment in the life sciences and pharmaceuticals sector from Alnylam, GSK and AstraZeneca, as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield; an £80 million investment in space technology from Seraphim Capital; and important job announcements from Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and IBM, which will build four new data centres here in the UK. A recent survey by the CBI shows that 70% of businesses plan to increase or maintain their innovation spending following the vote to leave the EU. Only 7% plan to reduce their investment. The UK has always been one of the most innovative nations on the face of the earth, and I am certain that it will remain so.

I will now respond to some of the helpful points raised by hon. Members from across the House. We have covered a wide range of topics today, so I want to try to summarise the comments made and what I have learned across three key areas: funding, people, and collaboration.

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation and I have both already set out, UK businesses should continue to bid for competitive EU funds while we remain a member of the EU, and we will work with the Commission to ensure payment when funds are awarded. The Treasury will underwrite the payment of such successful awards, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU. The Government have also reassured organisations that structural and investment fund projects signed before the UK withdraws from the EU will be guaranteed by the Treasury after we leave, up to 2020.<sup>1</sup> These projects will have to provide strong value-for-money evidence and be in line with UK strategic priorities. We have heard submissions from across the House on the

1. [Official Report, 9 January 2017, Vol. 619, c. 2MC.]

[Mr Robin Walker]

future relationship with Horizon 2020, and it is too early to speculate on the detail of our future relationship with that and its successor programmes. The UK Government are committed to ensuring that we remain a world leader in research and innovation.

The views expressed in the House today, including by many who campaigned to leave, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Mr Lilley), my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury and the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), have echoed what we have been hearing from stakeholders on the importance of research mobility. We are carefully considering the impact of this across the sector, but our ambition is to create an immigration system that allows us to control numbers, and encourage the brightest and the best to come to this country.

**Jim Shannon:** May I invite the Minister to visit Queen's University Belfast? That would encourage people there, it would be a chance to show businesses what we are doing and it would allow the partnerships at Queen's University to grow even more.

**Mr Walker:** I would be delighted to accept the hon. Gentleman's invitation. I have already visited one university in Northern Ireland, but I would be delighted to visit another, as soon as the opportunity arises.

There has been no change to the rights and status of EU nationals in the UK, or of British citizens in the EU, as an immediate result of the referendum. The Prime Minister has been clear that during negotiations she wants to protect the status of EU nationals already living here, and the only circumstances in which that would not be possible are if British citizens' rights in European member states were not protected in return. I was glad to hear her repeat in her statement today her desire to see such a deal come early. Looking to the future, I will repeat again what my Secretary of State has said before:

"We will always welcome those with the skills, the drive and the expertise to make our nation better still. If we are to win in the global marketplace, we must win the global battle for talent. Britain has always been one of the most tolerant and welcoming places on the face of the earth. It must and it will remain so."

**Jim Dowd:** Let us get back to the issue of the status of EU nationals in this country. Everybody will have noticed the somewhat embarrassing position in which the Prime Minister found herself at the European Council when she raised this issue; her next remarks apparently were,

"I think I'd better leave",

which got no response at all. I am sure the Minister will not be able to answer this authoritatively, but what is preventing the Government from offering that undertaking now and then going on to article 50 discussions at the later date?

**Mr Walker:** I simply say to the hon. Gentleman that it is very clear that the Government have the ambition of securing that through the negotiations. We have raised the issue at the European Council and the response the Government have received is that there is no negotiation without notification. We need to secure this issue through the negotiations. However, as many colleagues have said, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton

West (Chris Green) and the hon. Member for Strangford, there are opportunities to support the needs of the research and scientific communities to attract global talent in the future. It is a mark of success that the UK is the second greatest destination for international students after the USA.

This debate has underscored what we have been hearing as to just how vital international collaboration is to successful research. We have also heard about the importance of access to European and global research infrastructures. Every international collaboration is different, and we will need to look carefully at all of them to ensure that UK scientists continue to have access to cutting-edge equipment and co-operations. In the majority of cases, UK access to research facilities is not dependent on being a member of the EU. For example, at CERN, we are a member in our own right and this will continue. The European Space Agency is another example of where our involvement is not dependent on the EU, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation has mentioned the continued investments we are making there.

We have taken no final decisions on how our future relationship on research with the EU will look. There are a number of options under consideration, but let me stress that international collaboration in this space is nothing new. We are thinking through how best UK researchers can continue to be able to work with the very best of their international counterparts, both European and more widely. We start from a strong basis: a recent survey showed that 47.6% of UK articles were internationally co-authored. In line with our Prime Minister's vision for a global Britain, we should seek to keep building on that. The decision to double our investment in the Newton Fund was a positive statement of intent in this regard. As my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport made clear, we must take the broader global opportunities. I should add that the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann), who is no longer in his place—[*Interruption.*] Oh, there he is—sorry. I greatly welcome the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of our strategy for the great repeal Bill.

I would like to close by saying that the Government are committed to ensuring that research and innovation in the UK will continue to be a major success story after we withdraw from the EU.

**Thangam Debbonaire:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr Walker:** I will not; I have given way many times already.

As the Prime Minister said earlier, we will negotiate to reflect the kind of mature, co-operative relationship that friends and allies enjoy. That should include the fields of science and research, which are vital to our country's prosperity, security and wellbeing. We are determined to ensure that people and businesses have stability and certainty in the period leading up to our departure from the EU and that we use the opportunities that that departure presents to reinforce our own priorities as a United Kingdom. In the field of research, Britain is not just a European leader but a global one, and throughout the process we will be doing all we can to ensure that we stay that way. The excellence of our research and the attractiveness of the UK as a place to do it are fundamental to our success.

As well as a more or less complete life history of Mr Higgs of Higgs boson fame, we heard a number of bids during this debate: from my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr Brazier) for a medical school; from my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough for a life sciences centre; and from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield for a world heritage site. There was also a request from the hon. Member for South Antrim for extra funding for Northern Ireland.

Although I am afraid I am not in a position to play Santa Claus from the Dispatch Box, I assure those Members that their pleas will have been heard. Speaking personally, I hope they get all the presents that they wished for. Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank hon. Members on both sides for their contributions today and to wish them and you a merry Christmas and all the best for 2017.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered exiting the EU and science and research.

## Business without Debate

### COMMITTEES

**Mr Speaker:** With the leave of the House, we will take motions 2 to 6 together.

*Ordered,*

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

That Margaret Greenwood be discharged from the Environmental Audit Committee and Scott Mann and Joan Ryan be added.

#### FINANCE

That Mark Garnier be discharged from the Finance Committee and Mark Menzies be added.

#### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

That Adam Holloway be discharged from the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and John Stevenson be added.

#### WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

That Mims Davies be discharged from the Women and Equalities Committee and Philip Davies be added.

#### WORK AND PENSIONS

That John Glen be discharged from the Work and Pensions Committee and Royston Smith be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

## Bradford Bulls and Rugby League

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

9.57 pm

**Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): Thank you for granting me this important debate, Mr Speaker. Ten years ago, the Bradford Bulls were the dominant force in rugby league—not just here in the UK, but in the world. In 20 years of the Super League, Bradford have been champions four times, jointly holding the record for the most titles. They won the league twice prior to the creation of the Super League and have been runners up in the top flight five times.

The Challenge Cup has been brought back to Bradford five times from the club's 11 appearances in the prestigious tournament's final. Bradford has won the World Club Challenge, where the European champions take on the champions of Australia, a total of three times—again, jointly holding the record for the club with the most wins in the competition. Bradford Bulls were also the first team ever to win the domestic treble in 2003.

Prior to the Super League, the Bulls were called Bradford Northern and the club was a founding member of the Rugby Football League in 1895. Its stadium at Odsal is in my Bradford South constituency, and it has been the home of the club since 1934. When Bradford moved to the Odsal, it was the biggest stadium in the country outside Wembley and it remains to this day the country's largest rugby league club ground. In fact, the Odsal holds the record for rugby league attendance. In 1954, 102,569 spectators watched Warrington beat Halifax in the Challenge Cup final replay at the Odsal.

But the success of the Bulls extends beyond the field of play. Their connection with and development of rugby at the grassroots and in the community is noteworthy. Bradford's community work is outstanding. Its foundation received the much-coveted Foundation of the Year award this year, and it worked with more than 30,000 people in 2016 alone. It runs 15 separate community projects, including coaching in local primary and secondary schools. The Sky Try project has been one of the most successful and has been delivered in association with the Rugby Football League and Sky TV in over 100—

10 pm

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

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

**Judith Cummins:** In over 100 Bradford schools.

The Bulls are responsible for some truly amazing work growing the popularity and profile of rugby league in their own district. Participation in rugby league has increased by more than 50% in Bradford this year, and the number of women getting involved is increasing. Some 5% of all registered participation in rugby league in the country is in Bradford, and the figure has increased by roughly 1% every year for the past three years. Aside from the Bulls, there are 15 rugby league clubs within a 5-mile radius of Bradford city centre.

[*Judith Cummins*]

The legacy of the Bradford Bulls on the field and their incredible work off the field, as well as their strong contribution to developing rugby league and their work with their local community, demonstrate just how important and valuable Bradford is to rugby league.

**Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to some of the fantastic wins Bradford Bulls have had over many years. Does she agree that, in a place like Bradford, with its high levels of deprivation, we need to do more to encourage young people and women to participate in sport?

**Judith Cummins:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.

Today, however, the Bulls are a shadow of their former glorious selves. Worse still, the club and its impressive legacy are on the cusp of being lost forever. The Bradford Bulls entered administration last month—the third time since 2012. This was devastating news for my constituency. The Bulls are a highly respected institution in my constituency—as a sports club, an employer and a valued and proactive member of the local community. The impact was felt not just by the tens of thousands of loyal fans but, equally, by the city of Bradford and the wider region. It is also a major blow to the rugby league family.

Despite their relegation to the championship, caused by a points deduction from a previous period in administration, Bradford have continued to attract big crowds. In fact, the club has been responsible for just over a quarter of the total combined attendances in the championship for the last two regular seasons. The golden era of Bradford Bulls may have passed for now, but the Bulls retain an enormous presence in the world of rugby league. That presence cannot and must not be lost.

The Bradford Bulls need a solid foundation from which the club can be rebuilt, securing its future for generations to come—for the good of the club, its fans, its players and its staff, for the good of the city and for the good of the sport. Rescued, and with a future in the league and the chance to rebuild, the Bulls could recapture their past glory and continue to be a positive force for Bradford and rugby league.

It seems to me that the Rugby Football League, Bradford Council and, indeed, myself are on the same page when it comes to the future of the Bulls: we agree that rugby league has to be at the centre of any deal that brings the Bulls out of administration. There is a lot of work going on to make sure that that happens and that the club survives. I have met the administrators and know just how much work they, among many, many others, are doing.

My worry is that the site and its stadium—the Wembley of the north—are the focus of many potential suitors. I am worried that rugby is of little to no interest, and at best nothing more than a fleeting interest, to some of those interested in taking the reins at the Bulls—not all, but at least some. There is no doubt that the site at Odsal has considerable potential, which must be realised, but rugby league must be at the heart of that, and I hope it will be. The future does not have to be bleak. People in Bradford should expect top-level rugby league

to be played in our city. Bradford is rugby league's heartland. Bradford has boundless potential to restate its importance to rugby league and to re-establish itself as the spiritual home of the sport. Soon Bradford will be home to a new rugby league museum, which, of course, I welcome.

Bradford Council and the Rugby Football League both have a major interest in the site at Odsal. The council owns a great deal of the land around and near to Odsal. How exciting would that unique partnership be for the owner of the rugby club, right in the heart of rugby league country? Working together, the Bulls could be at the centre of an exciting regeneration at Odsal, and the regeneration of a historic and important rugby club. There is potential for far more. This is where I hope that the Minister will take particular note. The Odsal is the best located rugby ground in the country. It is the biggest, the best connected, and the most accessible, and, as I said, it is right in the heart of rugby league's homeland. It is the northern powerhouse of sport. Bradford can claim to be the national powerhouse of rugby league; I have no doubt of that. The dream of what the Bulls and Odsal could become is very much what the northern powerhouse is all about. All it takes is the right owner, a brave and forward-looking council, the expertise and drive of a committed RFL, and the boldness to invest.

You know as well as I, Mr Speaker, that rugby is a bold sport: it is not for the faint-hearted. However, when push comes to shove, those with a role in this affair—those charged with safeguarding and developing the future of the club and the sport—must not shy away from the difficult challenges that are now apparent.

I cannot fail to mention how we have got here and the broader context within sport today. There is a great deal of work to do, not just by rugby but across sport, to tackle the profiteers who seek to plunder clubs and strip them of their very essence. Be they rugby clubs or football clubs, there is a serious issue with ownership in sport and with some of the people who take on our clubs. This is another point where I trust that the Minister will pay particular attention. How has this been allowed to happen to the Bradford Bulls three times in five years? What is wrong in today's sporting culture that means that proud sporting institutions can be humbled and shamed in such a degrading fashion? Why does the law not successfully protect our sporting institutions? As we too often see elsewhere in sport, the fit and proper person test, although a strong safeguard in theory, does not, all too often, deliver what it should in practice.

The RFL's rules are designed to do two things: first, to prohibit people who have or could have an adverse impact on the game and prohibit any club from controlling or influencing any other club; and, secondly, perhaps more importantly, to protect the long-term health, vitality and viability of our clubs. We are some distance from finding out why the Bradford Bulls have ended up in this position again, but there will be many questions for the RFL to answer. Are its fit and proper person rules too narrow? Do the rules help to create a culture and a vision of integrity in ownership? Do the rules protect the best interests of the clubs who are always the first to be most damaged? Are the rules robust enough? Sadly, I fear they are not.

I hope that the Minister can offer me assurances about the future of community clubs such as the Bradford Bulls. I ask specifically for assurances that our grounds will be protected from property speculators, ensuring that the sport itself is at the centre of any plans rather than the site it sits on, and that ownership of our clubs will be scrutinised more broadly fully to assess who is a fit and proper person. I would appreciate her thoughts on how her Department can help to make sure that this does not happen to the Bradford Bulls again. How can she ensure that the future of rugby league is protected, not just in Bradford but across the country? Will she support my call for a Select Committee hearing on the ownership of sports clubs that would go beyond the Bradford Bulls and beyond rugby league to look at the ownership of sports clubs more generally?

The ownership of the assets of a community sports club is a crucial issue. It sets the direction for the club and it is vital that the owners have a genuine interest in the club. A club's assets, including its name, colours, badge and home, should not be tampered with without the consent of its most powerful stakeholders, the fans.

Rugby league is a sport that has never lost touch with its roots. It is and always has been the sport of working men and women, both on the pitch and on the terraces. Rugby league, led by clubs such as Bradford, is a sport that is strengthening itself at the grassroots and in the community. Rugby league, Bradford, the fans and the people of my constituency deserve better than what has happened to the Bradford Bulls. I hope that the Minister will commit to helping me understand how things have gone so wrong so many times.

10.10 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch):** I thank the hon. Member for Bradford South (Judith Cummins) for calling this debate on the future of the Bradford Bulls and rugby league. Despite being a soft southerner, I am a huge rugby league fan. One of my favourite players is Jamie Peacock, who is a legend of both Bradford Bulls and Leeds Rhinos, which is my team. I am grateful that it is you in the Chair, Mr Speaker, and not your Warrington-supporting deputy.

Before turning to the specific issues that the hon. Lady has raised, I would like to quickly pay tribute to Mike "Stevo" Stephenson, a rugby league legend who stepped down from the commentary box at the end of last season. His enthusiasm for the game was infectious and we armchair rugby league enthusiasts will miss him immensely next season.

I was sorry to hear of the Bulls' recent financial problems and can appreciate that this is a deeply concerning time for the club and its fans. Rugby league clubs such as the Bulls are of huge importance to their local communities in so many ways and have such a positive impact at the grassroots of the sport. The club's proud heritage, both as Bradford Northern and now as the Bulls, dates back to the very formation of the Rugby Football League more than 120 years ago. The Odsal stadium is notable for hosting the record rugby league attendance of more than 102,000 in the 1954 challenge cup final, and the club has continued to have great success over the years, winning the challenge cup five times and being the first club to win the domestic treble in 2003.

Many of the current England pack have come through the Bradford Bulls academy, and the Bradford Bulls foundation was judged foundation of the year at the Kingstone Press championship awards 2016. The foundation has worked with nearly 34,000 people so far this year through 15 separate community projects, including primary and secondary schools coaching, play touch rugby league, the junior bulls academy and activity camps.

As the hon. Lady has said, the Sky Try project has also been hugely successful. It has been delivered to more than 100 primary and secondary schools in the Bradford district, strengthening relationships with community clubs. As she and the hon. Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) have said, the Bradford Bulls women's team reached the women's grand final in October, inspiring future generations of women and girls to get involved.

I have no doubt that the sport's profile will continue to grow further in Bradford and beyond as we build up to the 2021 world cup, which was awarded to England in October, following the RFL's bid to host the tournament. I was delighted, as I am sure the hon. Lady and all rugby league fans were, that the Government were able to support the successful bid with up to £25 million to enhance the tournament and its legacy. In that context of apparent health in the community, it is all the more concerning that the Bulls have not only had to go into administration, but had to do so for the third time in recent years.

The hon. Lady alluded to the role of HMRC in Bradford's recent financial history. It would be inappropriate to pass verdict on the club's individual financial status and circumstances while the administration process is ongoing, and against the backdrop of the strict duty of confidentiality set out in legislation. In general terms,

HMRC will support businesses suffering short-term financial difficulties, but not those that are insolvent. HMRC does not enforce debts lightly, but, where the debtor cannot or will not pay, it will take such action where appropriate. It will instigate an insolvency only after all other avenues have been pursued to recover a debt and as a means to stop further debt accruing.

HMRC monitors actions to ensure that cases are worked on appropriately by insolvency professionals, and it will support actions that may increase returns to creditors, which in some cases may include HMRC. On the commencement of an insolvency, whether or not HMRC instigates the action, it will proceed no differently from any other creditor to finalise its claim. The administrator has a duty to investigate and administer the company within, as set out in insolvency legislation. HMRC will monitor these actions to make sure that the creditors' interests are being met. In all those respects, HMRC will treat a rugby club no differently from any other company entering administration.

The future of Bradford Bulls and of the wider sport fundamentally depends on the ability of all those involved to deliver a sustainable business model. The Rugby Football League has a clear responsibility in supporting the sport to do this, ensuring that one such long-established club repeatedly being unable to recover its financial position is not the first indicator of endemic financial instability in the sport.

I will pick up on the specific issues that the hon. Lady raised about the owners and directors test with the Rugby Football League in the new year. In the meantime,

[Tracey Crouch]

I am sure that she will be aware that work within the “round ball” football leagues has significantly reduced the frequency of insolvencies of their clubs, both with the strengthening of owners and directors tests and with the financial regulations to which clubs must comply to remain part of the domestic competitions. In that respect, much progress has been made within the sport of football, particularly in the lower leagues.

The financial instability that many football clubs have historically suffered is not an environment we should ever allow to creep back in to sport. Perhaps that is something from which the rugby league and other sports can learn lessons. The termination of the Bulls’ membership of the Rugby Football League, and the potential for points deductions in the new season, is obviously a key factor in re-securing the future ownership of the club. I urge the RFL to continue to work closely with the appointed administrator to ensure the future of the club in this respect.

The ongoing wellbeing of clubs such as the Bulls and healthy domestic leagues is of great importance to a thriving sports sector, and I am clear that financial stability is just one facet of how the sector must continue to develop. It is important that sports clubs have good governance in place to sustain and support their financial viability. That is why there will be a requirement for all bodies in receipt of public funding, including the RFL, to agree to a new code for sports governance. The new

sports governance code will come into force from the next funding cycle in April 2017. Organisations will be required to have strong leadership in place, with the right checks and balances to minimise the likelihood of financial and integrity issues arising.

The hon. Lady reflected on the importance of protecting facilities and their sporting contribution to the local area. I encourage communities to consider the provisions in the Localism Act 2011 that allow local groups to nominate stadiums in their area as valuable assets, and therefore to ask their local authority to place them on the register of assets of community value. By demonstrating the social value of an asset, communities can be given a right to buy it and preserve that value, should the site be put up for sale.

Bradford Bulls are a positive force in their local community, and I have no doubt that their prompt reinstatement to the Rugby Football League would be a wonderful boost to the area and the sport more widely. Such reinstatement remains at the discretion of the RFL, and remains dependent on new owners being in place, but I understand that there are interested parties engaging with the appointed administrator. I hope this can deliver an exciting new phase for Bradford Bulls, and I wish the club the very best in the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.18 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Written Statements

Monday 19 December 2016

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council took place in Brussels on 21 and 22 November 2016. Shan Morgan, the UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU, represented the UK at the Youth, Culture and the Sport sections of the Council. As is procedure, this statement sets out a record of that meeting.

#### Youth

The Council was asked to adopt draft conclusions on promoting new approaches in youth work to uncover and develop the potential of young people. The conclusions recommended the need to promote effective and innovative cross-sectoral policies that can help young people realise their full potential. The UK supported the conclusions and these were adopted by Council.

The presentation was immediately followed by a policy debate on young Europeans at the centre of a modern European Union, introduced by representatives from the Young Audience Unit of the European Broadcasting Union. This debate discussed how best to connect young people to policy-makers. The UK described its successful UK Youth Parliament initiative and welcomed the opportunity afforded to participate in cross-EU dialogue with young people through the presidency's successful Youth Conference.

#### Culture

The Council presented a progress report on the proposals for the revised Audio-visual Media Services Directive. The Audio-visual Media Services Directive seeks to ensure the effective operation of the internal market for television broadcasting services by ensuring the free movement of broadcasting services throughout the EU. The Commission (represented by Commissioner Oettinger) vowed to work constructively with member states in assisting the Maltese presidency reach a general approach by next Council.

This was followed by first reading on the proposal for a European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018). The objective of this initiative is to raise awareness of the opportunities that cultural heritage bring, mainly in terms of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and economic growth. At the same time, the European Year aims at drawing attention to the challenges that cultural heritage is facing, including environmental and physical pressure on heritage sites and illicit trafficking of cultural objects. The UK supported this and a general approach was agreed.

The Council was invited to adopt a proposal to amend the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 to extend the access to EFTA/EEA countries.

A general approach was agreed, with UK Government support of the proposal. The UK parliamentary scrutiny reserve was noted and maintained.

Finally there was a public debate, "towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations". This discussed how the EU and its member states can co-operate to bring about a more strategic approach to culture in external relations. The UK's intervention focused on the work of the British Council and the need to respect the principle of subsidiarity as member states must be free to pursue their own cultural agendas.

#### Sport

The Council adopted conclusions on sport diplomacy. The conclusions acknowledged that sport is a possible tool in supporting intercultural, economic and political cooperation, and that its potential can be part of extending and strengthening contacts between the EU and third countries. The UK supported the adoption of these conclusions.

This was followed by a public debate on the impact of sport on personal development. The UK intervention demonstrated the work the UK is already carrying out in this area through participation, Olympic legacy and the sport strategy.

#### Other business

The Maltese delegation presented information on the work programme of their incoming presidency.

The French delegation presented information on reform of the European copyright framework. This was followed by the Croatian and Irish delegations on the European Capitals of Culture 2020. The Italian delegation presented information on 'Facing crisis in Europe: Investing in Culture'.

The Council was presented with information on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) meeting in Glasgow (19-20 November) by the EU member states representatives in WADA, Belgium and Malta. This was followed by the French delegation on development and specific features of the organisation of European sport.

[HCWS379]

## EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

### General Affairs Council December 2016

**The Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Jones):** I attended the General Affairs Council on 13 December. The meeting was chaired by the Slovak Presidency and held in Brussels.

The General Affairs Council discussed: the mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework; inter-institutional agreement on better law-making; enlargement and stabilisation and association process; preparation of the European Council on 15 December 2016 and the European semester 2017.

A provisional report of the meeting and the conclusions adopted can be found at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2016/12/13/>

*Multiannual financial framework*

There was no agreement on the multiannual financial framework and discussions will continue into next year. With the exception of Italy, who maintained their reserve, all member states were supportive of the current mid-term review proposal.

*Inter-institutional agreement on better law-making*

The joint declaration on legislative programming was adopted. This was signed by the presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in Strasbourg. Vice-President Timmermans flagged this achievement saying it focused on real deliverable priorities.

*Preparation of the European Council on 15 December 2016*

There was a discussion of the agenda items for the European Council which took place on 15 December. The agenda would cover: migration, security (internal and external/defence) economic and social development (youth) and external relations, which will cover the EU/Ukraine association agreement.

I intervened to underline the importance of preparing business affecting all member states at meetings of the 28, and our intention to observe the rights and obligations of membership until we leave the EU.

On migration, I intervened to express our on-going commitment to a comprehensive approach, and sought proper evaluation of existing partnership frameworks before extending them to new countries.

On external security, I requested that the text of the draft Council conclusions be amended to clarify that the proposed planning and conduct capability should be for non-executive purposes only, to bring the text in line with conclusions at the FAC Defence in November, which had outlined a balanced approach that avoided duplication with NATO.

On economic and social development, I registered the UK's support of ambitious language on the single market, including maintaining momentum on services and deepening of the single market.

On external relations, I supported the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Syria and pressed for explicit reference to Iran as an ally of the Syrian regime and a reference to restrictive measures among the options the EU ought to consider within the European Council conclusions.

*European semester 2017*

This agenda item was not discussed at the meeting, but the inclusion of the item followed the Commission publishing the Autumn Package of the European Semester on 16 November 2016.

*Enlargement and stabilisation and association process*

The Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Alan Duncan MP, took part in a discussion on enlargement, which focused on Turkey's EU accession path. The Council could not reach agreement on the overall package of enlargement conclusions. Instead, the presidency issued a statement covering the conclusions which enjoyed broad support from the overwhelming majority of member states. We remain firmly committed to driving forward reform, embedding stability and addressing shared challenges in the Western Balkans and Turkey. EU and NATO accession processes are fundamental to delivering these objectives.

[HCWS381]

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT****Multilateral Development Bank Replenishments**

**The Secretary of State for International Development (Priti Patel):** In a world of global instability, effective international partnerships are more important than ever.

Britain has a proud track record as a global partner, contributor and problem solver. Our investment in institutions such as the World Bank helps us meet our responsibilities to the world's poorest and is firmly in Britain's national interest.

As a true leader on the world stage, Britain is successfully driving action to strengthen the multilateral system to ensure it is capable of meeting the unprecedented demands of the 21st century.

The world needs strong global institutions that are relevant not only for today but for the future—which is why ongoing reform at the World Bank is so important.

The UK is succeeding in securing these reforms. Following successful engagement from the UK and others, the International Development Association—which delivers the Bank's work in the poorest countries—has agreed to:

- double the investment that goes to fragile states;
- increase support for poor countries dealing with protracted crises and hosting large numbers of refugees;
- secure opportunities for job and wealth creation; and
- boost investment in the private sector.

These reforms build on good progress made over the past three years. The recent multilateral development review found that the World Bank is one of DFID's top performing partners, but there are still improvements to be made.

DFID is driving all agencies to be fully transparent about what, why, where and how they spend taxpayers' money. We are pressing all our multilateral partners, including the World Bank, to publish their spending in line with international transparency standards, open up their management overheads and other costs to greater scrutiny, and push for similar tough requirements all the way down the supply chain.

The UK will continue to press the Bank and its partners to make further progress and deliver even stronger results on the ground.

Last week, the IDA negotiations that took place in Yogyakarta reached agreement on the replenishment of IDA to cover the period July 2017 to June 2020. The negotiations secured a total of \$75 billion for IDA 18.

This funding will transform the lives of millions of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Thanks to this investment up to: 180 million children will receive life-saving vaccines, 20 million births will be attended by skilled health personnel, 45 million will get access to clean water, 35 million people will get access to reliable electricity, 10 million teachers will be recruited or trained, and 200 million children and women will get proper nutrition. These are big numbers—and behind each one are real lives that will be fundamentally improved because of this investment.

Given these impressive results, the reforms made since the last IDA replenishment, and wider reform commitments, the UK has agreed to contribute £2,516 million as a grant over the life of the replenishment, and a highly concessional loan of £820 million that will be repaid to the UK Government, to this total.

This month also saw the conclusion of the 14th replenishment of African development fund negotiations, which secured a total of \$7 billion for 2017-2019. This investment will give tens of millions of people in Africa better access to transport and electricity, and millions of people access to clean water. After securing commitments from the AfDF to greater focus on job creation, women's empowerment, private sector investment and investment in fragile countries, the UK has agreed to contribute £460 million to this total.

The world is changing fast. We all need to raise our game. The great power of the multilateral system is its potential to be more than the sum of its parts. This is why the UK will work relentlessly to drive up its performance and get the most out of every pound of taxpayers' money.

[HCWS380]

## WALES

### Welsh Government Fiscal Framework

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns):** The UK Government and Welsh Government are today announcing a new funding settlement for Wales based on need, empowering the Welsh Government to grow the Welsh economy.

This historic agreement lies at the heart of the Wales Bill's determination to provide secure, long-term funding for the Welsh Government. The deal sets out how the Welsh Government will be funded alongside the devolution of stamp duty land tax, landfill tax and Welsh rates of income tax in a manner that is fair for Wales and fair for the rest of the UK.

Through these new and principled arrangements, the Government have ensured that the Welsh Government will have a fair level of funding for the long term, taking into account Welsh tax capacity and treating population change consistently across tax and spending.

This deal underlines the mature relationship between Westminster and Cardiff as we move closer to agreeing a lasting settlement for the people of Wales.

This will be achieved through the creation of a new needs-based factor within the Barnett formula to determine changes in the Welsh Government's block grant in relation to devolved spending. The Governments have also agreed to use the Comparable model to determine changes in the Welsh Government's block grant in relation to tax devolution. Alongside the Barnett formula, this will ensure population change is treated consistently within the Welsh Government's block grant funding.

This agreement will also double the Welsh Government's overall capital borrowing limit to £1 billion and increase the annual limit to £150 million. We will also create a new Wales reserve to enable the Welsh Government to better manage its budget.

This agreement therefore paves the way for the National Assembly for Wales to consent to the Bill and enable the Welsh Government get on with the job of using their new tax powers to grow the Welsh economy.

[HCWS377]

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### International Labour Organisation Recommendation 204

**The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds):** The 104th session of the International Labour Conference 2015 adopted recommendation 204 concerning the transition from the informal to the formal economy. International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendations, adopted following negotiation amongst ILO member state Governments and business and union representatives, serve as non-binding guidelines. The Government welcome this recommendation and recognise its importance in its global context, as it acts as a guide for all countries in their work towards making full, decent, productive and freely chosen employment a central goal in their national development and growth strategy. The recommendation is primarily aimed at those countries with less developed social security systems. It is not envisaged that this recommendation will have any impact on the UK as it is consistent with UK Government policies.

[HCWS378]



# Ministerial Correction

Monday 19 December 2016

## TREASURY

### UK Sovereign Wealth Fund

*The following is an extract from the speech by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury on 14 December 2016.*

**Simon Kirby:** Housing does raise productivity. It is a much-needed part of our economy. People need affordable homes to rent or buy. The building process, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, creates jobs and increases prosperity and productivity.

The hon. Member for Strangford mentioned a shale fund—a suggestion that others have made, too. The UK does not currently meet the criteria of a country that would benefit from a shale wealth fund: we have a high debt and a large deficit, and we do not have extensive commodity or natural resource exports. The development of the shale industry would leave a positive legacy for local communities and regions where it is based. The Government's policy is for those communities to be able

to choose to invest the funds for the long term. I thank the hon. Gentleman, as ever, for making a very thoughtful contribution that added greatly to the debate. —[*Official Report, 14 December 2016, Vol. 618, c. 337WH.*]

*Letter of correction from Simon Kirby:*

An error has been identified in my speech during the debate on the UK Sovereign Wealth Fund.

The correct wording should have been:

**Simon Kirby:** Housing does raise productivity. It is a much-needed part of our economy. People need affordable homes to rent or buy. The building process, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, creates jobs and increases prosperity and productivity.

The hon. Member for Strangford mentioned a shale fund—a suggestion that others have made, too. The UK does not currently meet the criteria of a country that would benefit from a **sovereign** wealth fund: we have a high debt and a large deficit, and we do not have extensive commodity or natural resource exports. The development of the shale industry would leave a positive legacy for local communities and regions where it is based. The Government's policy is for those communities to be able to choose to invest the funds for the long term. I thank the hon. Gentleman, as ever, for making a very thoughtful contribution that added greatly to the debate.



# ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 19 December 2016

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>EDUCATION</b> .....	1155	<b>EDUCATION—continued</b>	
Apprenticeships .....	1165	Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy .....	1167
Careers Advice .....	1162	Physical Exercise in Schools .....	1170
Free Childcare.....	1155	Secondary School Closures .....	1168
Good and Outstanding Schools: Places .....	1156	Special Needs Schools Multi-academy Trusts .....	1158
Improving Educational Outcomes .....	1159	Teacher Shortages .....	1161
Increasing Educational Opportunity .....	1168	Times Tables .....	1169
Leaving the EU: Funding for Further Education ...	1164	Topical Questions .....	1171

# WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 19 December 2016

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b> .....	71WS	<b>WALES</b> .....	75WS
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council .....	71WS	Welsh Government Fiscal Framework .....	75WS
<b>EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION</b> .....	72WS		
General Affairs Council December 2016.....	72WS		
<b>INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	74WS	<b>WORK AND PENSIONS</b> .....	76WS
Multilateral Development Bank Replenishments ...	74WS	International Labour Organisation	
		Recommendation 204 .....	76WS

# MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Monday 19 December 2016

	<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>TREASURY</b> .....	9MC
UK Sovereign Wealth Fund .....	9MC

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  
Monday 26 December 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**

**Monday 19 December 2016**

**Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 1155] [see index inside back page]**  
*Secretary of State for Education*

**European Council 2016 [Col. 1177]**  
*Statement—(Prime Minister)*

**HMP Birmingham [Col. 1202]**  
*Statement—(Elizabeth Truss)*

**Yemen [Col. 1215]**  
*Statement—(Sir Michael Fallon)*

**Exiting the EU: Science and Research [Col. 1229]**  
*Motion—(Joseph Johnson)—agreed to*

**Bradford Bulls and Rugby League [Col. 1284]**  
*Debate on motion for Adjournment*

**Written Statements [Col. 71WS]**

**Ministerial Correction [Col. 9MC]**

**Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]**

---