

Thursday  
29 June 2017

Volume 626  
No. 9



**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

Thursday 29 June 2017

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# House of Commons

Thursday 29 June 2017

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Free TV Licences: Over-75s

1. **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): What plans she has to ensure the continuation of free TV licences for over-75s for the duration of this Parliament. [900074]

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** Before I start, may I remind the House that, as per today's Order Paper, I plan to make a statement on the proposed merger of 21st Century Fox and Sky after business questions. Therefore, I will not answer any questions on the subject during oral questions this morning, but I will be happy to do so at the Dispatch Box later.

The BBC has agreed to take on the full cost of the over-75s concession from April 2020. In return, the Government have agreed to transfer policy responsibility for the concession to the BBC, and that was taken forward in the Digital Economy Act 2017.

**Mr Speaker:** As it happens, I must say to the Secretary of State that the specific statement is not referenced on the Order Paper at all. There is a reference to "Ministerial Statements (if any)", and that is the extent of the information previously divulged, but we are always grateful for a bit of additional, which the right hon. Lady has just provided and we take note of the gravamen of her point.

**Mr Cunningham:** Given that the BBC was not responsible for welfare policy and that this was not part of the Conservative manifesto, will the Secretary of State tell us when the BBC did become responsible for social policy, particularly for welfare?

**Karen Bradley:** I apologise for my inadvertent error and oversight. I meant to say that the statement is referenced on the annunciator, rather than on the Order Paper.

As part of the negotiations for the BBC charter, the BBC agreed to take on the over-75s licence fee. That was agreed as part of an 11-year charter, with which I think all parties were happy.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): The Secretary of State will be aware that there are also black and white television concessions. I learned this morning that some 300 people in Wales have black and white television licences. Will she confirm whether she has any plans to change that concession?

**Karen Bradley:** I have no plans to do that at this stage.

**Tom Watson** (West Bromwich East) (Lab): Mr Speaker, it is very good to see you back in the Chair. I welcome back those on the Front Benches, and all new and returning Members.

Page 66 of the Conservative party's manifesto says that

"pensioner benefits, including free...TV licences" would be continued

"for the duration of this parliament."

That is until 2022. Is that still a commitment?

**Karen Bradley:** The manifesto ensured that we were clear that we would respect the decisions that had been taken, including in the Digital Economy Act. Policy responsibility for that concession will move to the BBC from 2020 and I would expect it to continue with the concession.

**Tom Watson:** The Government cannot guarantee free TV licences beyond 2020, as the Secretary of State has just said, without reopening their deal with the BBC. She appears to have no wish to do that. It raises the question of why on earth it was in the manifesto in the first place. Was it inserted against her wishes? Was it a cynical promise she knew she would break? Or was it just a typographical error?

**Karen Bradley:** The manifesto is ensuring that the concessions are available. I would expect that the BBC would continue with the concession post 2020.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Given the grossly inflated salaries the BBC pays some of its top managers and presenters, and the appalling fact that it is still a criminal offence, as opposed to a civil penalty, not to have a TV licence, is not ensuring that over-75s continue to get their TV licences free of charge the very least the BBC can do?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. He will know that, from this year, when the BBC accounts are published they will show the salary levels of all talent being paid more than £150,000. That is a welcome increase in transparency.

### Leaving the EU: Creative Industries

2. **Martin Whitfield** (East Lothian) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU on the creative industries. [900075]

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** We want the best deal for Britain on leaving the European Union. The creative industries are some of the UK's greatest strengths, and we want them to continue to thrive.

**Martin Whitfield:** Given the importance of the creative industries to East Lothian—a major film location for films such as “The Railway Man” and “The BFG”—and the money they bring to the local economy, what discussions have been held with the Scottish Government regarding the impact of Brexit on the creative industries? What assurances can he give that the investment in the creative industries will continue after Brexit?

**Matt Hancock:** I have every confidence that the creative industries, which are one of our great strengths right across the country, including in Scotland—I was in Edinburgh on Monday talking to Creative Scotland and others—will continue to go from strength to strength, and we are determined to get a Brexit deal that works for them.

**Damian Collins** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): As the Minister knows, global businesses invest in the creative industries here because of the talent pool and attractive production tax credits that exist for video games, TV and films. Will he ensure that, outside the EU, the UK remains the leader in Europe for talent and attracting investment?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Tracy Brabin) has an exactly identical question, and I would call her if she were standing—

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** And she is, so I will.

11. [900084] **Tracy Brabin:** Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I have question 11, but it is a similar question.

Figures from Screen Yorkshire show that Yorkshire’s fantastic film and TV industry has grown faster than that anywhere else in the UK. Much of this commendable growth has been generated by the European regional development fund-backed Yorkshire Content Fund, but the absence of a post-Brexit plan creates insecurity and could lead to job losses. What assurances can the Government give the industry that projects supported by European funding will not be left to wither on the vine?

**Matt Hancock:** European funding has been part of the success of the film industry. The Treasury has already made it clear that that European funding will continue up to 2020, but that is only one part of this. The tax credits mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins), the Chairman of the Select Committee in the last Parliament, have played an incredibly important part. However, I would agree with the hon. Lady that, just like Scotland, Yorkshire is benefiting enormously from our booming film industry.

**Kelly Tolhurst** (Rochester and Strood) (Con): The growth of Dovetail Games in my constituency is a prime example of the UK’s flourishing creative industries.

Could the Minister outline the support he plans to give to help creative hubs continue to develop over the exciting years ahead?

**Matt Hancock:** Video games are one of the most exciting areas of growth in the creative industries, doing an incredible thing for UK exports right across the country—in the south-east and all the way up to Scotland—and we will continue to back them.

**Paul Farrelly** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): Newspapers and the media are very much part of our creative industries, so, as we leave the EU, could the Minister explain what the Department’s policy is on the future of section 40 and Leveson 2, both of which are very relevant to the industry as it, too, prepares for Brexit?

**Matt Hancock:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, Conservative Members are strong supporters of the newspaper industry, especially local newspapers, which do not need extra costs from certain proposals. Given that we are such strong supporters of the newspaper industry, we have a consultation out on this issue, and I am sure he will look forward to the answer.

**Mr Speaker:** I leave others to judge whether the question was altogether apposite. I judged it orderly, but one thing is for sure: it was certainly creative.

**Brendan O’Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): In Scotland, as the Minister knows, we have a strong, innovative and vibrant creative sector, which is worth £4 billion to our economy and which employs 75,000 people, many of whom are EU nationals. With Brexit looming, what assurances can the Minister give the industry in Scotland, and indeed across the United Kingdom, that this country will still be able to attract and keep the creative talent that is so vital for the industry to work, perform and exhibit in this country free from unnecessary barriers?

**Matt Hancock:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have set out that we are seeking to do a deal to ensure the future of European Union nationals resident here. We are also open to the brightest and the best from around the world. But the single most important thing for keeping the creative industries thriving in Scotland is remaining part of the United Kingdom.

### Tennis Tournaments

3. **Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): Whether she has made a comparative assessment of the number of ATP Futures and Challenger-level tennis tournaments held in the UK and in other European countries. [900076]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch):** I have not made such an assessment, but the Lawn Tennis Association currently reviews the number of Challenger and Futures events held in this country, working with the Association of Tennis Professionals, the Women’s Tennis Association and the International Tennis Federation. Mr Speaker, I am sure you and the whole House will agree that British tennis is in its healthiest state for many years. I am sure the whole House will also join me in wishing all our

British players—our juniors, and our wheelchair, male and female stars—all the best ahead of Wimbledon next week.

**Toby Perkins:** Mr Speaker, I am sure you will also join me in wishing Alex Ward, Jay Clarke and Marcus Willis well as they attempt to qualify for Wimbledon today, but professional tennis does not begin and end at Wimbledon, and the number of professional Futures tournaments in Britain has gone down from 23 in 2013 to just six last year. Does the Minister agree that the number of Futures tournaments is crucial to supporting British players to make it in the professional game, and will she join me in urging the LTA to hold the number of tournaments that most of our European competitors do and to increase the number of tournaments for men and women next year?

**Tracey Crouch:** One of the frustrating things about being Sports Minister is that we do not get to make all the decisions that people want us to make. I agree that if we are going to encourage talent to play tennis at the highest level, we do need to have the right level of international events. That is an issue for the LTA. In the meantime, my job is to make sure that we get the right money going into the grassroots of that sport in order to ensure that we continue to grow that talent.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Ah, another tennis enthusiast—Rebecca Pow.

**Rebecca Pow:** Thank you Mr Speaker. We share, as you mention, an interest in tennis. I am a great believer that playing tennis can set one up well for life, with all its skills—including rapid reaction skills, which we see demonstrated from the Speaker's Chair every single day. In Taunton Deane, the Taunton tennis centre offers tennis to those of all ages and ability, with cardio classes and classes for wheelchair users, and holds up to grade 3 tournaments. Does the Minister agree that while it is important to grow the game at the top level, it is also really important to encourage people in at the grassroots level, not least for the health and wellbeing spin-offs for the whole nation?

**Tracey Crouch:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, of course, on every point that she made. She is absolutely right. She is a regular advocate for the benefits of tennis. We have invested £8 million into the Lawn Tennis Association to grow the game, and we will continue to do so. She regularly champions Taunton and all its sporting events. The women's world cup is being hosted in Taunton this weekend, and I wish them the very best of luck.

**Mr Speaker:** Excellent.

#### BBC Licence Fee

4. **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Whether she plans to bring forward proposals to change the BBC licence fee. [900077]

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** The Government will maintain the licence fee funding model for the BBC for the duration of the new 11-year charter period.

**Gavin Newlands:** We welcome the additional £30 million investment for the digital BBC Scotland channel, but even this funding does not come close to the £320 million raised in Scotland. The new channel aside, how can the Secretary of State, along with BBC, seriously say that Scotland gets its fair share? Is not now the time to ensure that Scotland can properly invest in our sector and talent to make more programmes such as “The Town That Thread Built”, further highlighting why Paisley should be UK City of Culture 2021?

**Karen Bradley:** I met the director-general and chair of the BBC on Monday and discussed this very matter with them—ensuring that the BBC does contribute to nations and regions appropriately. The hon. Gentleman will know that the new BBC board, which has a non-executive director from each of the home nations, is incorporated such that it can ensure that those voices are properly heard.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that broadcasters, particularly those in receipt of licence fee money, should confront rather than cosy up to politically motivated websites that purvey fake news?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point, and I am sure it will have been heard by those he refers to.

#### BBC Investment: Nations and Regions

5. **Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions she has had with the BBC on its plans for future investment in the nations and regions. [900078]

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** I regularly engage with the BBC on a range of issues, including its plans to serve audiences in the nations and regions. I am confident that the BBC is committed to supporting the creative economies in each nation.

**Stephen Doughty:** The Secretary of State will be well aware of how proud I am that Cardiff South and Penarth is home to the Tardis, Torchwood, Cwmderi, Holby City's A&E department, and so many others. We have had fantastic investment from the BBC in both the city centre and my constituency. Does she agree, however, that there needs to be more focus on ensuring that jobs and opportunities go to local people, particularly those living in deprived communities around those industries? We need to be getting everybody into the creative industries, which are a way of growing our economy.

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The creative industry is one of our great strengths in this country. It can bring high-quality, high-value jobs to the nations and regions. As I said in answer to the previous question, I met the director-general and the chair of the BBC on Monday to discuss exactly that point.

12. [900085] **Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): BBC Radio has begun a commissioning process to tender 60% of eligible network radio by 2022, and

there are concerns that programmes currently produced at MediaCity could be lost to our region. What assurances can the Secretary of State give that regional voices will be protected in the tendering process?

**Karen Bradley:** I agree with the hon. Lady. MediaCity is such a great success story. The fact that more people are employed in MediaCity at Salford quays than in its heyday as a major port is a great example of how creative and new industries can bring wealth to the nations and regions. As I said in answer to a previous question, I have discussed the matter with the chair and director-general and will continue to do so.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** Over the election campaign there was minimal coverage of Northern Ireland constituencies, which for many underlined the view that the BBC's regional coverage in Northern Ireland is sub-par. What can be done to increase the resources for the BBC's engagement with Northern Ireland representatives, to ensure that they match those of other regions across the United Kingdom of Northern Ireland and Great Britain?

**Karen Bradley:** I refer to my previous answers. If the hon. Gentleman has concerns about the coverage during the election period, I urge him to put them to Ofcom, which is now the BBC regulator, so that it can look into them.

#### Regional Funding: Arts and Culture

6. **Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab):** What steps her Department is taking to ensure equitable regional funding for arts and culture. [900079]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (John Glen):** The Government want everyone to have the best access to arts and culture, wherever they live. That is why I am delighted that 60% of the national portfolio organisation funding announced by the Arts Council this week and 75% of lottery funding from 2018 will be invested outside London.

**Lilian Greenwood:** May I begin by congratulating the hon. Gentleman on his first appearance on the Front Bench? He will know that austerity has forced midlands local authorities to cut spending on culture, so Arts Council England's announcement that it is investing extra money outside London is very welcome and I am delighted that it will support City Arts, Primary, Dance4, Nottingham Playhouse and other organisations in our city, which the Minister is welcome to visit.

European Union funding has also been transformational—I do not think that Nottingham Contemporary could have been built without it—so will the Government guarantee to replace that regional support for the arts when Britain leaves the EU?

**John Glen:** The Government see the value of collaboration in arts and culture funding. She is right to point out that this week's announcement is excellent news for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. I will do all I can, working with the chief executive and chairman of the Arts Council, to ensure that the sector's priorities are addressed across this country.

**Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con):** I warmly welcome the new Minister to his place. What advice does he have for smaller regional museums such as Congleton Museum, which has an exciting expansion opportunity for which it needs to secure grant funding?

**John Glen:** Congleton Museum has already done extremely well to be awarded £65,000 to buy the hoards of Cheshire. There are a number of grants available and I would be happy to work with my hon. Friend and any other Member and give advice on how to secure those funds.

**Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab):** Ashfield, like many former coalfield constituencies, receives way below the average in lottery funding. Is not it time that the lottery publish not just how much money it spends in each constituency, but how many tickets are purchased in each constituency, so that we can see whether the poorest areas are subsidising the richest?

**John Glen:** I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady for that interesting point. I will be happy to discuss it further with her and see if we can move that forward.

**Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con):** I welcome this week's announcement of more funding for the arts and museums largely in Nottingham city, but did the Minister hear me mention this week the potential for a mining museum in my constituency of Mansfield? Will he meet me to help us further celebrate that heritage and culture and see whether we can make progress on that?

**John Glen:** I welcome my hon. Friend to his place and congratulate him on his election to the House. I gently point out that seven of the new joiners in Nottinghamshire are outside the city itself, but I will be happy to meet him to discuss what can be done to assist him in his plans.

**Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab):** I very much welcome the Arts Council's decision to increase funding outside London, but the Minister must be aware that many brilliant institutions such as the People's History Museum are primarily dependent on local authorities for funding. Will he consider following the Arts Council's lead and give us back some of the money that has been slashed from local authority budgets, so that we can start to fund again some of this country's most innovative cultural institutions?

**John Glen:** I listened very carefully to the hon. Lady. Of course, some local authorities do see the value of investing in arts and culture and make a massive contribution, alongside the Arts Council grants, to extending their footprint, but I am happy to look into the case that she raises.

**Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con):** The Minister will be aware that Doorstep Arts is a home-grown theatre and arts company resident at the Palace theatre in Paignton and has just become the first organisation in Torbay to be part of the Arts Council's national portfolio. Will he join me in welcoming that and the £382,000 of funding that it will receive from the Arts Council over the next four years as a result?

**John Glen:** I shall be delighted to do so, and I would be happy to visit my hon. Friend's constituency to see some of the excellent work that he has been doing with the tourism sector.

### Digital Infrastructure

7. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to ensure that digital infrastructure meets the needs of the economy. [900080]

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** May I welcome the hon. Lady to the House? Some 93.2% of premises in the country now have access to superfast broadband, and we are on track to deliver access to 95% by the end of the year. Our universal service obligation will ensure that every premises can have access to high-speed broadband by 2020.

**Liz Twist:** Slow and poor-quality broadband is seriously hampering a number of businesses in my constituency, from rural Rowlands Gill to the industrialised Tees Valley trading estate, as I am sure it is in other Members' constituencies. What plans do the Government have to ensure that 100% of areas have access to high-speed, high-quality broadband?

**Matt Hancock:** I absolutely understand the frustration of people running businesses in the hon. Lady's constituency and others. Getting access to high-speed broadband up to over 93% has been a big and positive task, but we clearly want to make it available to all premises in the country. That is why we legislated for the universal service obligation, and I look forward to ensuring that it happens.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): Thanks to the Government's commitment to providing high-speed broadband to rural areas, 8,432 more homes and businesses in my constituency are on high-speed broadband since 2015, but 10% are still not. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the cap in the important universal broadband service commitment will be high enough to ensure that high-speed broadband reaches the most rural areas in my constituency?

**Matt Hancock:** It is clearly incredibly important to ensure that universal access to broadband reaches as far as possible. Of course, there are technologies that do not require a physical line, such as fixed wireless broadband, which we can use in really rural areas.

8. [900081] **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): On Monday we were all pleased to learn that the people of Northern Ireland are to benefit from another £150 million of investment in digital infrastructure, which is necessary for the development and growth of their economy and is welcome news. On Tuesday, we learned from Which?, the consumers association, that the poorest average connectivity speeds in the whole country are in Orkney and Shetland. When are we going to get our cash?

**Matt Hancock:** Of course, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have put enormous investment into the north of Scotland and the islands to expand both fixed broadband and mobile phone connectivity. It is a great pity that the contracts to get broadband to Scotland were signed more slowly than those for England and Wales, and I am afraid that was because we devolved responsibility to the Scottish Government.

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): Despite superfast broadband access being a requirement for new estates such as Willow Road in Norton Canes, the infrastructure has not been put in place there, meaning that residents have the speeds of a decade ago. What measures are being put in place to ensure that new estates have superfast broadband?

**Matt Hancock:** It is simply ridiculous for any new estate to be built without decent broadband connectivity. It ill behoves any developer to build a development without the very best connectivity. The big developers have said that they will put fibre broadband into any group of more than 30 houses, and it is now the law that big new developments must have superfast broadband. I am happy to work with my hon. Friend and others to make that happen, because it must happen.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): Given the increasing intensity of cyber-attacks and the threats to our national infrastructure, it was frankly shocking to see no mention of cyber-security in the Queen's Speech. Will the Minister confirm that the Government's cyber-security strategy relies on a scheme that claims to be a badge of assurance for thousands of businesses and institutions, but is in fact based on outdated technology, redundant hacking approaches and—astonishingly—was itself hacked last week?

**Matt Hancock:** No, I do not recognise what the hon. Lady says. Cyber-security is incredibly important, and that is why we brought in and put together the National Cyber Security Centre, which has been leading on those issues. The laws we have are largely the laws that we need on cyber, which is why there was no need for mention of it in the Queen's Speech. What we do in government is not only the legislative programme; it is also about getting on and protecting people with cyber-security.

**Louise Haigh:** I am very generous so I will give the Minister a chance to correct the record. Is it the case that the Cyber Essentials scheme and the "10 Steps to Cyber Security" make absolutely no reference to encryption or to the hashing and salting of passwords, that the take-up of both schemes has been exceptionally low, particularly from small businesses, that neither scheme makes reference to the Cloud, and that the Cyber Essentials scheme was hacked last week?

**Matt Hancock:** That ill becomes the hon. Lady, given her normally reasonable approach. The Cyber Essentials scheme is incredibly important for improving cyber-security. All businesses should look at it, and I would say they should implement it. For Labour Members to try to make party political noises out of something that is incredibly important for our country shows that they simply have not got what it takes.

### Sport: Young People

9. **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to encourage participation in sport by young people. [900082]

17. **Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to encourage participation in sport by young people. [900090]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch):** The Government are committed to ensuring that all children and young people have the best opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity. Between 2016 and 2021, we will invest more than £194 million in projects to increase children's capability in and enjoyment of physical activity.

**Tom Pursglove:** Sporting participation clearly has a number of benefits for health, but also for learning outcomes for our young people. What work is being done with the Department for Education to improve further access to sport in schools?

**Tracey Crouch:** Given my brazen attempts to steal school sport from the Department for Education on a number of occasions, I can only tell the House that we have a strong cross-governmental approach to the matter. The past 18 months have seen the publication of two landmark strategies, which include the sport strategy and the childhood obesity plan. We continue to work closely with the Department for Education, and a range of other Departments, on those strategies.

**Justin Tomlinson:** If the £400 million sugar tax is spent wisely, we can open our school sports facilities after school and during holidays, transforming sporting opportunities for young people. Will the Minister visit Draycott Sports Camp in my constituency, to see how every day more than 250 young children enjoy being active, fit and healthy, and so that we can share best practice?

**Tracey Crouch:** It would always be a pleasure to visit my hon. Friend in Swindon, as I did before the general election. If he has the opportunity over the next week, I encourage him and other hon. Members to find out where their local school games are and to go along and visit them, because they are providing a real way of changing attitudes towards sport and physical activity.

15. [900088] **Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): Disabled young people in Wrexham benefit hugely from the trailblazing Wrexham disabled viewing platforms at the football ground, and the premiership really needs to learn from Wrexham. What progress has been made in providing excellent facilities for disabled young people to view football matches?

**Tracey Crouch:** In the sports strategy we believe that giving people with disabilities access to sport is a way to get them engaged with sport. I expect the final report from the Premier League on how those clubs have met their pledge to meet accessible stadia guidelines to be published towards the end of August or early September.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): Like me, the Minister is passionate about helping young women to participate in sport. As part of her work, will she do something entirely cost free and tell headteachers to stop making young women wear ridiculous school uniforms for school sports? Let them wear something comfortable, and they will want to do sports.

**Tracey Crouch:** Alas, I do not have the power to tell headteachers anything, but I am sure the Secretary of State for Education will have heard the hon. Lady's comments. What I know from all the analysis on women and girls in sport is that we see a drop-off among girls at about the age of 14, which is the point at which they become far more body conscious. Having some flexibility in what they wear while they participate in sport may well be an answer to that.

14. [900087] **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Harlow gymnastics club is an outstanding sports club that helps many young disadvantaged people. As a limited company, it suffers punitive VAT rates. Will my hon. Friend lobby the Treasury and visit the excellent Harlow gymnastics club to ensure it can carry on giving young people a great service?

**Tracey Crouch:** My right hon. Friend is far better at lobbying the Treasury than anybody else in this House. I congratulate Harlow gymnastics club on its 10th anniversary. I see that it runs a number of exciting initiatives, including the wonderful Head over Heels programme for the under-fours. Given that Harlow has slightly lower than average activity statistics, anything that the gymnastics club and other sports clubs can do to improve them is very welcome.

### Topical Questions

T1. [900066] **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** Since the last oral questions, the Department has lost an excellent Minister in Rob Wilson and I would like publicly to express my thanks for all his work. He is very sadly missed. We have, however, gained another excellent Minister, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Salisbury (John Glen). I welcome him to the team and congratulate him on his stellar first performance at the Dispatch Box, which we have all just witnessed.

We are mid-way through a huge year for sporting events in the UK and I wish all British contestants well. I am sure all hon. Members will join me in wishing a very happy birthday to Britain's biggest arts festival, the Edinburgh Festival, which turns 70 this summer. I will just check that my hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Sir Paul Beresford) is not in his place before saying that I am sure all hon. Members will join me in wishing the British and Irish Lions well in their test at the weekend.

**Mr Carmichael:** Research published by the campaign to cut VAT for tourism has shown how that could be transformative for this most crucial sector. Is this something the Secretary of State is discussing with her colleague,



the Chancellor of the Exchequer? If it is not, may I suggest that she start soon? This was not just in our manifesto; it was also in the Democratic Unionist party's.

**Karen Bradley:** I have been lobbied on this matter on a number of occasions. As the Member of Parliament who represents Alton Towers, I have, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman can imagine, been lobbied on it on a number of occasions. It is, of course, a matter for the Treasury, but we continue to have conversations.

**Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con):** Will my right hon. Friend welcome the appointment of Alex Mahon as the new chief executive of Channel 4, who I hope will bring a fresh approach? Will she confirm that it remains the Government's view that the distinctiveness of Channel 4 will be enhanced by its being relocated outside London?

**Karen Bradley:** Yes I do and yes I can.

T2. [900067] **Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab):** Victims of phone hacking were given a cast-iron promise by this Government to have a full inquiry into the offences, but the Government are now trying to jettison Leveson 2. Why should the public have confidence in other public inquiries when the Government cannot keep their promises on previous inquiries?

**Karen Bradley:** The first part of the Leveson inquiry took place six years ago. Many things have happened since that time and many changes have taken place. The manifesto was clear, but there is a consultation process which I, as Secretary of State, have to go through.

**Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con):** This House never intended vulnerable people in less-well-off areas to lose £100 several times a minute on fixed odds betting terminals. When will we have the opportunity to bring the stake down to £2?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch):** Mr Speaker, I know that you always encourage brevity in topical questions, so I apologise for giving a tediously processy response. Although we launched the review in October 2016, purdah interrupted the final stages of our consideration of the evidence received and the subsequent internal cross-Government process of approval and sign-off, so I am afraid we are back at the start of the process. As a consequence of that taking at least 12 weeks, I would not expect any further announcement until October at the earliest.

T3. [900068] **Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab):** Croydon, with its vibrant Tech City, the redevelopment of Fairfield Halls and its unique street art scene, is fast becoming the new cultural hub of the south-east. Has the Minister lobbied for continued access to, or equivalent funding for, the £1.1 billion Creative Europe programme post-Brexit, which is such an important source of funding for the creative arts?

**The Minister for Digital (Matt Hancock):** I have visited the tech scene and some of the creative hubs in Croydon, so I agree with the analysis that it is an extremely exciting place, and we are working on the question that the hon. Lady has raised.

**Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con):** A number of parents in my constituency are worried about the safety of their children online. Will my right hon. Friend update the House on what steps are being taken to make the internet a safer place?

**Matt Hancock:** As my hon. Friend will know, this is an incredibly important matter. Any parent knows the perils of young people growing up in the internet age, as well as the massive opportunities that it brings. The digital charter that Her Majesty announced as part of the Queen's Speech will bring together those concerns and issues and ensure that we can lead the world in providing the right balance between freedom and security online.

T4. [900069] **Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):** This month is the 10th anniversary of the floods in Hull, when the local BBC radio and television played such an important part in communicating with the local public. I understand that there are further discussions about cuts of up to £15 million to BBC services in England. Is the Secretary of State as worried as I am about the effect that that could have on the local community and democratic resource in all our constituencies?

**Karen Bradley:** I recently visited Hull as the city of culture. It is an absolutely fantastic place to be and I would encourage all hon. and right hon. Members to visit this year. Perhaps I could speak to the hon. Lady outside the Chamber about the issue she raises.

**Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con):** Further to the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale), does the Secretary of State agree that moving Channel 4 from London to Bradford or Leeds would give it a much better perspective on life? Instead of being stuffed full of London Labour luvvies, it might benefit from being moved to gritty West Yorkshire.

**Tracey Crouch:** My hon. Friend has made his pitch for a location for Channel 4; perhaps he would like to make the same pitch to the board and management of Channel 4.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sure the hon. Gentleman will require no encouragement whatever.

T5. [900070] **Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab):** Further to my earlier question to the Secretary of State, there are concerns that the tendering process for BBC Radio could lead to a weakening of pay and terms and conditions. Will the Minister join me in asking the BBC to reconsider that figure and the impact it could have on people's employment?

**Karen Bradley:** We are determined that it will have exactly the opposite effect, but I will of course meet the hon. Lady to discuss that.

**Andrew C. Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con):** Will the Minister join me in sending good luck not only to the British and Irish Lions this summer but to Scotland's women's football team? They have done what the men's team have painfully failed to do for 19 years and qualified for an international football tournament, in which we will meet England on 19 July.

**Tracey Crouch:** The one thing I will say is that I hope the women's football match between Scotland and England will be far more thrilling than the men's match was.

T6. [900071] **David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Further to the point raised by the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), will the Minister get a move on and get a grip on the crack cocaine of gambling—the fixed odds betting terminals? Shettleston Road, Tollcross Road and Baillieston Main Street in my constituency are awash with bookmakers, and we need action on this sooner rather than later.

**Tracey Crouch:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the House. I share the frustration of many people across the House; I have been dealing with this issue as a Minister since I walked into the Department in 2015. We must ensure that we have a proper evidence-based response to the issue of stakes and prizes. We are in the process of analysing that, but I should also point out that powers on the issue of FOBTs have been devolved to Scotland.

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): On Sunday I will be in the lovely village of Doddington, where Olympic gold medallist Georgie Twigg will be opening a new cycle path from her home village to Lincoln, enabling people young and old to get out, enjoy the countryside and improve their fitness. Georgie Twigg and the rest of our women's hockey team have achieved great success. What is the Secretary of State doing to ensure that more young women can get involved in sport, so that we can see more of the same in future?

**Karen Bradley:** I share my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the women's hockey team, having been honoured to be at the semi-final in Rio, where we had that glorious victory, and to meet the team afterwards. The initiative that she talks about sounds very exciting.

T7. [900072] **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): The Stockton international riverside festival, which will be held from 3 until 6 August, attracts thousands of visitors, and has grown into one of the country's greatest street arts events. This year it celebrates its 30th anniversary. Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating Stockton Borough Council on its vision in setting up the festival, and congratulating the Arts Council on recognising it for the tremendous success that it has become?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (John Glen):** It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Stockton Borough Council on the wisdom of its investment. It provides a good example for many other local authorities, demonstrating that when they invest in the arts, they will get a very good return.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): The announcement this week that £15 million of lottery funding is going to Hull to support its fishing heritage is very welcome, although I have to say that across the river in the Grimsby-Cleethorpes area there is disappointment that repeated attempts to secure similar funding have been

rejected. Will the Minister look again at the balance of the share-out of lottery funding between different towns and cities?

**John Glen:** I should be happy to do so. There are some challenges with lottery funding. I have already met the chief executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, with whom I shall have further conversations, and I should be happy to meet my hon. Friend as well.

T8. [900073] **Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): May I join the Secretary of State in wishing the Edinburgh international festival a happy 70th anniversary? There is no doubt that it shows that the United Kingdom has some of the best sporting and entertainment events in the world. What plans have the Government to control ticket prices, and to ensure that the re-sellers market does not rip off ordinary fans?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman is right to celebrate the Edinburgh festival. It is Britain's biggest festival, and I am looking forward to visiting it later this year, as is the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (John Glen). As the hon. Gentleman will know, in the Digital Economy Act 2017 the Government legislated to outlaw the use of bots for the purpose of secondary ticketing, and we work closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure that consumers are treated fairly.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): The Winsford Colts Under-21s, based in my constituency, are the first Cheshire team ever to be invited to play in the Costa Blanca cup, which they will do this year. They have fundraised £8,000 to get there. Will the Minister wish them luck, and thank all those who have supported their attempt to achieve and to represent Cheshire out in Spain?

**Tracey Crouch:** I am very happy to congratulate the Colts on their endeavours, and I wish them all the very best of luck in the competition in Costa Blanca.

**Mr Speaker:** I wish them very well, and I hope that we will have an update from the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach) in due course. In fact, I feel sure that we will.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

*The Attorney General was asked—*

### European Convention on Human Rights

1. **Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the future status of the UK as a signatory to the European convention on human rights. [900092]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** The Government have committed the United Kingdom to remaining a signatory to the European convention on human rights for the duration of the Parliament.

**Paul Blomfield:** I thank the Attorney General for his answer, and I am reassured by it, but, as he will know, earlier this week the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights described the Prime Minister's comments after the appalling attack on London Bridge as "a gift" to every despot

"who...violates human rights under the pretext of fighting terrorism."

Will the Attorney General recognise the danger of playing politics with human rights, and accept that the Government need to desist from doing it?

**The Attorney General:** The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to hear that I do not accept that that is what is happening. What I think the Prime Minister was saying is something with which I would expect every Member of the House to agree, namely that human rights involve a balance: there is a balance between the human rights of all the different people in our society. Everyone has the most important human right of all, which is to live their life unabated by those who wish to do them harm through terrorism. What the Prime Minister was saying—rightly in my view, and, I hope, in the hon. Gentleman's—was that we must ensure that that balance continues to be struck correctly, and that is what we will do.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** The Court behind the convention has tens of thousands of cases outstanding, and many of the so-called judges have no legal qualifications at all. Do not those two stark facts undermine the credibility of that organisation in upholding human rights at all?

**The Attorney General:** I think my hon. Friend and I would agree that the Court in Strasbourg could sensibly reform and improve, but he will also recognise that we in this country do not rely solely on that Court to protect our human rights. Our Government and our courts do that too, and do it very effectively.

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** Does the Attorney General not agree that, although the Strasbourg Court may need reform, it has done excellent work over the years in putting forward the case for human rights in central and eastern Europe? The uncertainty of Britain's position will give succour to regimes such as those of President Putin in Moscow and the President of Belarus, which is not a signal that the British Government should be giving.

**The Attorney General:** I applaud all those who work to promote human rights, whether in a court or elsewhere, but it is important to understand that the European convention on human rights itself permits derogation in certain circumstances. The hon. Gentleman was, I think, a member of a Government who sought to do that in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. It is certainly within the hierarchy and system of the European Court of Human Rights that that should be allowed, and we need to ensure that the balance I described earlier is maintained.

**Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con):** I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. The right to the peaceful enjoyment of property is a valuable safeguard in the convention.

Does the Attorney General agree that the Serious Fraud Office has a strong and growing reputation for upholding that right, and will he clarify his plans for the future?

**The Attorney General:** I certainly think that the Serious Fraud Office has an important role to play in doing what it can to deal with economic crime, as of course do other agencies. As for the future, we are looking carefully at how we can improve performance in tackling economic crime across the whole range of organisations that do that work.

**Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP):** During the election campaign, the Prime Minister said that she was going to rip up human rights in order to fight terrorism. Can the Attorney General confirm that he has advised his Cabinet colleagues that there is nothing in the Human Rights Act 1998 or in the convention on human rights that would prevent the Government from taking a robust approach to terrorism, and that this plan to rip up human rights will be shelved?

**The Attorney General:** No, the Prime Minister said nothing of the kind. Let me read out exactly what she did say, which was that

"we should do even more to restrict the freedom and the movements of terrorist suspects when we have enough evidence to know they present a threat, but not enough evidence to prosecute them in full in court. If our human rights laws stop us from doing it, we will change the laws so we can do it."

That seems eminently sensible, and something we should all agree with.

#### **British Nationals: Foreign Armies and Militias**

2. **Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con):** What the Government's policy is on the prosecution of British nationals who enlist to fight in foreign armies and militias. [900093]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** All cases in which offences may have been committed under terrorism legislation are considered on their own merits by experienced specialist prosecutors in the Crown Prosecution Service counter-terrorism division. Prosecutions will go ahead when there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and a prosecution is required in the public interest.

**Robert Jenrick:** At least 100 British citizens, including my constituent Aiden Aslin, have been to Syria and Iraq to fight with Kurdish peshmerga forces against Daesh. Those individuals who have returned to the UK have found themselves in a state of legal limbo, as neither the CPS nor local police forces seem to be able to reach a judgment on whether the Terrorism Acts should apply to them. Will the Attorney General's office give greater guidance and support to those police forces? No individual deserves to be left in legal limbo.

**The Attorney General:** I commend my hon. Friend for the persistence with which he has raised the case of his constituent. I know that he understands how difficult this is. Each case is different, and each case must be considered on its own merits by the police and then, in due course, by the CPS. On the question of guidance, he will understand that it is difficult for politicians to set

out guidance to apply to each individual case. He will also know, however, that cases in which the effect of terrorism is felt abroad rather than in this country often require my consent, and I will think about whether I could give any specific guidance on what criteria I would take into account when considering the public interest element of such cases.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Many of my constituents would be surprised to learn that anyone who goes to Syria to fight is not tracked or tagged when they get back. Also, is the Attorney General aware of the real concern about how many people slip in and out of this country on borrowed or forged passports?

**The Attorney General:** Yes, I do understand that. The message we must all try to give is that anyone who is attracted to the idea of going to fight in Syria or Iraq must be dissuaded from doing so, partly because of the personal risk that the hon. Gentleman describes but also because the picture is exceptionally complicated, and organisations that appear to be on the side of the angels may not in fact be so. It is important that everyone understands the legal and physical risks that they are running by doing that sort of thing.

#### Leaving the EU: Human Rights

3. **Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU on the protection of human rights in the UK. [900095]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** The United Kingdom has a long-standing tradition of ensuring that our rights and liberties are protected domestically and of fulfilling our international human rights obligations. The decision to leave the European Union does not change that.

**Alison Thewliss:** The repeal Bill White Paper is vague in the details of the human rights protections currently afforded to us all by EU laws and regulations. Will the Attorney General instruct a full independent audit of human rights protections originating from the EU and publish the results?

**The Attorney General:** The hon. Lady will have to wait until the Bill is published, but she will then be able to study it in detail, and the House will be able to discuss it in detail. However, she will appreciate that the principle behind the Bill is that we will transfer European rules and regulations into domestic law wherever it is feasible and sensible to do so. They will become domestic law at that point, and they will be enforced and upheld by our own courts. That is a sensible way of doing it.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Human rights and the scaremongering around them came up time and again on the doorsteps of Eastleigh during the election campaign. Does the Minister agree that it is simply scaremongering and that leaving the EU will not change our human rights?

**The Attorney General:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Leaving will not make a difference to how human rights are defended in this country. It is worth remembering—I am sure she made this point on the doorsteps—that this

Government have a good record in the defence of human rights, both domestically and abroad. It was this Government that put forward a modern slavery Bill, which was not just the first in this country, but the first in Europe, and Conservatives in Government promoted the idea of sexual violence in conflict being something that the world must take seriously. We are proud of that record, and we will continue with it.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): The Government's proposals, published this week, on non-UK EU citizens after Brexit suggest that they, and not British citizens, will need documentation to access public services. In other words, that means an identity card for some, but not for everyone. How can that possibly be consistent with the European convention on human rights?

**The Attorney General:** We have to work through the practicalities. It will be important to understand how people demonstrate that they are who they say they are, but I do not accept that that will lead to a system of identity cards. The hon. Gentleman will recall that Conservatives in government got rid of the Labour idea of having identity cards in the first place.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): Human rights are defended by the European Union, but they were not invented by the European Union. As my right hon. and learned Friend has already said, this country has a good record in upholding them. Would he be interested to know that still only nine EU countries, including of course the UK, permit gay marriage?

**The Attorney General:** My hon. Friend is always interesting—no less so on this point. He is right. Both sides of the House should accept that human rights are important and must be upheld, but our courts, our judges and our Government are perfectly capable of doing that job, which they have done very well for a long time.

#### Crown Prosecution Service: Action against Terrorism

4. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What steps the Crown Prosecution Service is taking to support action against terrorism. [900096]

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** Terrorism prosecutions are dealt with by a specialist unit within the CPS, and there is close working between the CPS, the police and the intelligence services from the launch of an investigation until the conclusion of a trial.

**Sir Henry Bellingham:** While the 400 or so radicalised British Muslims who are still fighting for ISIS in Syria are naive, many of them pose a great danger to the UK. We know their names, so what steps are being taken to prepare for prosecutions?

**The Attorney General:** My hon. Friend is right. We have to pay close attention to each of those individuals. He will understand that prosecutions will not always follow in all those cases, but the number of prosecutions in terrorism cases has increased significantly. There were 79 trials last year, compared with 51 trials the year

before, and we are remarkably good at convicting in those trials, which have a conviction rate of something like 86%.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Since 2010, the CPS has lost 2,400 staff—a third of its workforce—and 400 prosecutors. Is the Attorney General confident that he can meet the ever-growing complexity of the terrorism cases that are coming through now?

**The Attorney General:** Yes, I am, and so is the CPS. The resources that it has available to deal with counter-terrorism are increasing and, as I have indicated, the conviction rate in terrorism cases is high. Indeed, the conviction rate across all offences has remained remarkably stable over the period that the right hon. Gentleman describes.

### Public Disasters: Independent Advocate

5. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the role of an independent advocate to act for families after a public disaster. [900097]

8. **Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of appointing an independent advocate to act for families after a public disaster. [900100]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** It is of paramount importance that bereaved families and injured people are properly involved and supported following a disaster, which is why we announced in the Queen's Speech that we will establish an independent public advocate to ensure that involvement and provide that support.

**Diana Johnson:** Will the independent advocate be able to act for those affected by the contaminated blood scandal? What exactly does the idea of "assistance" and "support" mean? Does it mean a publicly funded lawyer for each family affected?

**The Solicitor General:** I thank the hon. Lady for that point. This of course depends very much on how quickly we as a Parliament can pass the necessary legislation. It is certainly the Government's intention that the independent advocate gets on with their work as quickly as possible. On the specific point, each case will depend upon its merits. Of course, legal aid is already available for families with regard to certain procedures, but I think the benefit of having a consolidated advocate will be to address the very questions she asks. I look forward to these issues being debated carefully when the necessary legislation is introduced.

**Jo Stevens:** Will the Solicitor General confirm that if families who live in high rises, but who, thankfully, have not suffered the same disaster that Grenfell Tower has, wish to bring any legal action on health and safety grounds, they will be entitled to legal aid?

**The Solicitor General:** Again, the hon. Lady asks a general question about the merits of particular cases. If indeed there are grounds—for example, a judicial review procedure might be appropriate in particular cases—that

application can be made. The important point in the context of this question is whether we can do more for families and bereaved relatives. I think we can, and the precedent set by the horrific events at Grenfell will allow us all to learn important lessons: that families have to be put first.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): Can the Solicitor General help us on the practicalities? What discussions has he had with the Bar Council and the Law Society as to how an independent advocate or advocates might be identified; what levels of remuneration will be available, so as to ensure that there is proper equality of arms in representation; and by what means families will be able to give proper and fully discreet instructions?

**The Solicitor General:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question. It is vital that we get these details right as we develop the policy. It is clear, certainly to the Government, that having quality advocacy so that the right documents are obtained and a proper challenge is made at all stages of the process is important, and it is what we seek to achieve. Therefore, fulfilling article 6 has to be at the heart of this.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): What assessment has the Solicitor General made of the efficacy of having an independent advocate after a tragedy such as Grenfell in trying to get to justice and truth for the victims, when this is coupled with the rather unhelpful remarks of the shadow Chancellor, which seem to be clouding the whole issue?

**The Solicitor General:** It is vital at solemn and serious times like this that we all exercise our right to free speech responsibly, and that we are mindful that criminal investigations are ongoing, as well as concurrent inquests and, of course, the public inquiry. All of us have to make sure that we pass that very high test, and I am afraid that the shadow Chancellor failed that in his remarks this week.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I am sure the Solicitor General would agree that it is vital that the independent public advocate has the powers needed to carry out the role. I pay great tribute to the work of the Hillsborough families over many years, but he will be aware that key to that were the findings of an independent panel in overturning the first inquest verdict. Will the independent public advocate have the powers to appoint an independent panel if they see fit to do so?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very germane point, and we all need to bear the Hillsborough precedent very much in mind. I am keen, and the Government are keen, to ensure that the independent advocate has as powerful and as meaningful a role as possible. Each case will depend on its merits, but I am certainly prepared to look at all details, including the one he raises.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** Does the Solicitor General also agree that it is crucial that there is full public confidence in the role of the independent public advocate? As such, the role should be subject to appropriate scrutiny. Will he also promise that the independent

public advocate will place reports before this House on an annual basis, so that Members can look carefully at the work in detail?

**The Solicitor General:** Like many other appointments of this kind, I can envisage the sort of accountability that the hon. Gentleman mentions. The publication of annual reports is a regular and common occurrence. Again, it is a particular point that we will consider very carefully indeed.

#### **Hate Crime: Aggravated Offences Regime**

6. **Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the aggravated offences regime on the level of successful prosecutions for hate crime. [900098]

7. **Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the aggravated offences regime on the level of successful prosecutions for hate crime. [900099]

9. **Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the aggravated offences regime on the level of successful prosecutions for hate crime. [900102]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** The Crown Prosecution Service has taken a number of steps to improve its prosecution of all strands of this type of crime, including the aggravated offences, and that includes the delivery of vital face-to-face training. Its hard work in this area has resulted in significant increases in the use of sentencing uplifts in all strands of hate crime.

**Kate Green:** In 2014, the Law Commission proposed that disability hate crime should be given parity with other hate crimes in relation to aggravated offences and to so-called stirring-up offences. In November 2016 in a debate in Westminster Hall, the Solicitor General said that the Government were reviewing that report. Will he update the House on when the Government will make a decision, as it is of great importance to disabled people?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Lady knows that I have had a long-standing interest in disability hate crime. The Government are particularly interested in the strand of work conducted by the previous Home Affairs Committee. We are looking to its successor Committee to carry on that work. We want this House to play its part in the response to the Law Commission recommendations, and we very much hope that, as soon as possible, we can craft a suitable response to get the law right.

**Imran Hussain:** As has been stated, the Law Commission has previously called on the Government to review hate crime legislation. Will the Government bring forward proposals for the review to ensure that the legislation is effective and sufficiently broad in scope?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Gentleman is right to press the Government on those issues. My concerns are twofold: first, we need to get the existing law properly used and enforced by way of training and the actual use

of it by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service; and, secondly, we need to get the response to the Law Commission recommendations right. I want to ensure that this House passes laws that are properly enforced. Too often in the past, we have been too quick to pass laws that have then failed the expectations of those who deserve protection. He is right that we will be looking at that as soon as possible.

**Melanie Onn:** Reports of hate crime rose by 57% following Brexit. CPS staffing budgets have more than halved since 2010. Is the Attorney General therefore confident that the CPS is adequately resourced to deal effectively with these reports and ensure that victims of hate crime do indeed get justice?

**The Solicitor General:** I can reassure the hon. Lady that the trends in relation to the prosecution of hate crime continue to increase, particularly with regard to racially and religiously aggravated hate crimes. The increase in the past year was 1.9%, which means that more than 13,000 cases are now being prosecuted. That is reflected across the piece when it comes to homophobic crime and disability hate crime. There is no bar at all to the CPS's pursuing these cases and marking society's condemnation of this sort of criminal activity.

**Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): Will my hon. and learned Friend tell the House what action the Government are taking to prevent the spread of hate crime via social media?

**The Solicitor General:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. May I reiterate that the law shows no distinction whatsoever between hate crimes that are committed offline and those that are committed online? Just because somebody hides behind a pseudonym and pursues hate online does not mean that the police and the CPS will not track them down and prosecute them, as we have seen notably in cases involving several Members of this House, who have been the victims of appalling hate crime.

**Michael Fabricant:** Twitter is against my hair.

**Mr Speaker:** Unless I misheard him, the hon. Gentleman chuntered from a sedentary position that Twitter was against his hair—[*Interruption.*] And that that constitutes some sort of hate crime. I make that point for those who are interested and listening to our proceedings. Anyway, we are always interested in all matters appertaining to the hon. Member for Lichfield (Michael Fabricant).

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): I am not quite sure how to follow that. Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in recognising the great work that is done by Tell MAMA and Hope not Hate, who build the confidence in those who suffer hate crime to report it?

**The Solicitor General:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Tell MAMA and other organisations play an important part by working closely with the CPS and police to inform the process and help people to report crime. Often people will go to a third party before

coming to the police, but that is an acceptable way to report crime because it means that more crimes can be prosecuted.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. We have run late. I want to accommodate the Member with the last question on the Order Paper, but no other.

#### **Burglary: Sentencing**

10. **Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the extent to which sentencing of people convicted of burglary has been unduly lenient. [900103]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** Last year the Attorney General and I referred 11 cases for burglary as unduly lenient and achieved an increase in sentence in seven of those. Only the most serious types of burglary offence currently fall within the unduly lenient scheme, but we have recommitted in our manifesto to extend its scope and we will work with my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor to implement that commitment.

**Mr Robertson:** I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that answer and for the welcome news. Only 10% of first-time burglars receive immediate custodial sentences. Does that not encourage them to carry on their crimes? Burglary is quite a serious crime; will he have a look at that statistic?

**The Solicitor General:** My hon. Friend is right to say that burglary is a serious crime. It is a crime against the person, not just against property, because it affects people's wellbeing. I am glad to tell him that since the introduction of the revised Sentencing Council guidelines on burglary in 2012, the overall level of sentencing for burglary, in terms of prison and length of sentence, has increased. That should give his constituents some encouragement that the courts are handing out the appropriate punishment for this serious crime.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Before we come to business questions, it might be helpful to the House if I announce my selection of amendments to be potentially voted on much later today. I have selected the amendment tabled by the official Opposition—amendment (l), if memory serves, in the name of the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell).

As colleagues will be intimately conscious, being fully familiar with all these matters, I have a right to select up to two further amendments under the terms of our Standing Orders. I can advise the House that I have selected amendment (d) in the name of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and others, and amendment (g) in the name of the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) and others. I hope that that is helpful to the House.

## Business of the House

10.42 am

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House please give us the forthcoming business?

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):** The business for next week will be:

MONDAY 3 JULY—Second Reading of the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill.

TUESDAY 4 JULY—Second Reading of the European Union (Approvals) Bill, followed by motion relating to the allocation of Select Committees, followed by general debate on the Chris Gibb report: Improvements to Southern Railway. At 7 pm the House will be asked to agree all outstanding estimates.

WEDNESDAY 5 JULY—Proceedings on the Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Bill, followed by a motion to approve the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 (Extension of Duration of Non-jury Trial Provisions) Order 2017, followed by a general debate on Israel and Palestinian talks.

THURSDAY 6 JULY—General debate on exiting the European Union and global trade.

FRIDAY 7 JULY—The House will not be sitting.

I should also like to inform the House that the business in Westminster Hall for 6 July will be:

THURSDAY 6 JULY—Debate on global education before the G20 summit, followed by a debate on the seasonal agricultural workers scheme.

**Valerie Vaz:** I thank the Leader of the House for the business. I am not sure that she is aware that although she has allocated a debate on the Gibb report on Tuesday, there is a Westminster Hall debate on Wednesday at 9.30 am on the same report. I do not know whether that is a typo or whether she just wants to punish Back Benchers.

I send the condolences of Her Majesty's Opposition to all Scottish National party Members on the death of Gordon Wilson, who was their leader from 1979 to 1990 and was the Member of Parliament for Dundee, East from 1974 to 1987. We send our condolences to his family and friends.

It was a great get-together in the Chamber on Saturday, as Jo's family and friends gathered together to unveil that beautiful plaque. I thank you, Mr Speaker, and your office for making it such a memorable day and all Members from both sides who turned up. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern), who organised the plaque. You were at Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday, Mr Speaker, and Brendan was right when he said that it was noisier during PMQs than when there are children in the Chamber.

I am grateful to the Parliamentary Digital Service, who worked over the weekend to stave off the cyber-attack. Will the Leader of the House allow time for a debate on restoration and renewal and will the Gibb report be debated on two separate days? Will she allocate the Tuesday to the Opposition?

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union said that he hoped that we would not be a cynical Opposition and that we would support him, but it is not the Opposition's job to put sellotape on a minority Government. As "Erskine May" helpfully points out, the Opposition's task is

"to direct criticism of the government's policy and administration and to outline alternative policies."

It is this Government who are unpatriotic and have caused uncertainty.

Let us remember that the previous Prime Minister resigned and walked away, that the current Prime Minister wanted a bigger majority and now has a minority Government, and that that minority Government are pulling in separate directions. First, a Minister says that the cap on public sector pay may be lifted, then No.10 refutes that. The Chancellor has to leave the country to set out his position because it is opposite to the positions of the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union and the Foreign Secretary. We on this side have an alternative: we will take the country's result and turn it into a new relationship with the EU, in a new model that puts the economy, jobs, peace, security and opportunity for our citizens at its core.

That is Europe, but what about here? Local government finance faces uncertainty. The revenue support grant will be phased out in 2020, but the consultation on business rates ended on 3 May 2017. Given that the next Queen's Speech will be in 2019, will the Leader of the House say how we will find out what the policy is and when we will scrutinise local government finance? Local government needs stability.

Two High Court judgments have overturned Government policy. The High Court has ruled that the benefit cap was unlawful; Mr Justice Collins said that it was causing "extreme hardship". Some 20,000 children and many single parents have been hardest hit by this heartless policy. Irrespective of whether the Government will appeal, may we have an urgent debate on the judgment? When will the Government report back on the Cridland review of the state pension age?

The Government's plans do not meet the court order to cut air pollution in the shortest possible time. Some 40,000 people die prematurely from air pollution. Do we not deserve time for debate on that failure of Government policy?

There has been nothing about fair funding for schools or how much will be available. During the election, a school governor told me that their school managed to stave off making a teacher redundant this year, but what will happen next year? A head told me that she needed extra funds because sometimes she cannot make room even for young people living on the same street as her school. When will the Government bring forward new proposals on the discredited funding formula? The Government have become a minority Government because they are so far removed from the reality of people's lives.

You may not know, Mr Speaker—you will be busy next week as it is Wimbledon fortnight; you must be pleased that your deputies have been elected—but it is the 20th anniversary of the first Harry Potter book, "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone". I suggest a new book—Harry Potter and the Magic Money Tree. The Opposition say to the minority Government, "Expelliarmus!"

**Andrea Leadsom:** That was a tour de force, covering a range of areas, and I thank the hon. Lady for it. To deal specifically with her first question about the order of business, only this morning I received a note from my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) pointing out that in last week's business



questions he had asked for time to discuss the Gibb report, which the Government were pleased to give as many colleagues have raised the issue with us, and so, as I understand it, he will withdraw his request for time in Westminster Hall. I hope that that is a happy outcome for all colleagues who want to discuss the severe problems that many rail commuters have had with Southern and on other railways too.

I join the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) and send commiserations from this side of the House to the Scottish National party and all the friends and family of Gordon Wilson, a man who really did serve his country well. On the subject of the unveiling of the plaque for Jo Cox, I also thank Mr Speaker for the wonderful opportunity of being in the state apartments yesterday with the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, which is a subject dear to my heart. I have a project in my own constituency to bring communities together through coffee mornings to try to stem the tide of loneliness, and all hon. Members should be delighted that in Jo Cox's memory we will renew our efforts to tackle it.

I also add my congratulations to those of the hon. Lady to the staff of the Parliamentary Digital Service. They really did work 24/7 over the weekend to protect us, and the great news is that they achieved that. As I understand it, they did about six months' IT development work in three days, so they have put us in a stronger position than we were in before. I know that all colleagues will want to send their thanks for how they dealt with that and prevented serious harm from being done.

On restoration and renewal, the Commissions of both Houses are looking at the proposals and at what is to be done, and we hope to make some announcements in due course.

The hon. Lady then moved on to her opposition to the Government and her sense that it is not a legitimate Government, but I would point out that the Conservatives won the general election. It is not only our right but our constitutional duty, in the interests of the country, to bring forward a strong Government with support from colleagues in the Democratic Unionist party.

The Government have a very strong programme to achieve a successful Brexit that will create jobs and opportunity and will be a global force for free trade, but we also intend to introduce measures to improve and restore good mental health in this country, to make real the issue of parity of esteem, and to protect people from domestic violence and from stalkers. That is very important social legislation. Our economic programme, too, will build some of the industries of tomorrow, to make this country a world leader in electric vehicle technology, in autonomous vehicles and, of course, in space flight—building spaceports and being at the heart of new satellite technology, which is absolutely vital for the devolved Administrations. Finally, on the subject of security and keeping people safe—the first duty of Government—we will introduce more measures to stamp out extremism and enhance global working on counter-terrorism. Those are many good and worthwhile pieces of legislation that I hope all colleagues will be able to support.

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): May we have time for a debate on accident and emergency services, specifically those in Southend, to assure constituents that any decision on A&E will be clinically led?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right to mention local A&Es, as they are very dear to all our hearts. He will know that decisions about A&Es are clinician-led and he might wish to request an Adjournment debate on the specifics of his local situation.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing what there is in the way of business for next week. May I say how grateful we are on the SNP Benches for the kind words that have been expressed about Gordon Wilson? He loved this place and I know that the words expressed here today will be a great comfort to Gordon's family and friends.

What a meagre business statement this is. From a quick scan, it looks as though there will be no votes at all next week and, given that the Government secured a majority of only 14 last night, we can see why they will not regularly want to test the will of the House. They are already a zombie Government inhabiting a minority wasteland, unable to impose themselves or even to give the nation the relief of their just being gone. There is much to debate, primarily and particularly the grubby deal that has been stitched up with the Democratic Unionist party, which demonstrates the worst excesses of pork barrel politics. In fact, this deal would give pig-based receptacles a bad name.

You decided that I could not secure an emergency debate under Standing Order No. 24, Mr Speaker, but I would have thought that the Government wanted to rush to the House to debate the deal. Members must be able to scrutinise, ask questions and debate what is going on. The deal turns the normal funding arrangements of the nations of the United Kingdom on their head. It is unbelievable that a deal of such significance and importance could be passed without any debate and scrutiny in this House.

We urgently need a debate on the role of the Scotland Office in all this. The Department is now run by a Secretary of State without a shred of credibility who has failed to stand up for vital Scottish interests. He says one thing about our funding arrangements under the Barnett formula one day and is contradicted the next. He is about as much use as Emu without Rod Hull. The Scottish National party will continue to fight for vital Scottish interests. After this week, we know that all the new Scottish Tories will be nothing more than apologists and Lobby fodder for this chaotic Conservative Government.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Where to start? First, the Secretary of State for Scotland is a diligent advocate for Scotland. He speaks up for Scotland in every Cabinet meeting, and he is the strongest advocate for the Barnett formula. He called for transparency on the deal with the DUP, as have the Scottish nationalists, and they have had that; it is absolutely clear.

Let us be clear that the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), in his desire to see Scotland walk away from the United Kingdom, wishes to walk away from the Barnett formula, so it is extraordinary that he is now calling for the arrangements with the DUP to be Barnettised. The Scottish nationalists want to walk away from the formula, but that would not be in the interests of Scotland at all. Unfortunately, the Scottish Government appear to spend all their time talking

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about that breakaway, rather than getting on with the job that they have been asked to do by the Scottish people.

On the issue of money for Scotland, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Barnett formula supports funding for the devolved Administrations, but it is by no means everything. The UK Government have invested in city deals including £500 million in Glasgow, £125 million in Aberdeen, £53 million in Inverness, £5 million for the V&A in Dundee and £5 million for the Glasgow School of Art—the list goes on. The SNP really needs to be clear. Is it interested only in independence or is it interested in governing Scotland properly and contributing to the United Kingdom? There is no evidence of the latter.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): May we have a statement from the Secretary of State for Education on school funding in Cheshire? There is a great deal of concern among parents, governors and teachers about funding for their schools. I hope that a statement will provide me and them with the reassurance we seek.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I welcome my right hon. Friend to her place. It is fantastic to see her back and I look forward to talking with her in the House. She raises an important point. I am sure the Education Secretary has heard her and will be keen to come to the House. Nevertheless, fairer funding for education carries the support of many across the education sector and it is vital that all pupils get the same level of funding. That equality is key.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for the letter she sent to me in my role as Chair of the Backbench Business Committee in the last Parliament, but I do have some concern about a particular line. We were looking to see how Back-Bench time would be allocated, given that this is a two-year Parliament. The Standing Orders guarantee us 35 days within a Session—27 of which should be in this Chamber—but this is a two-year Session, so that simply would not work. I am afraid there is a line in her letter that says:

“In the first instance, discussions about how this time will be allocated will take place through discussions in the usual channels.”

That concerns me. The Backbench Business Committee was established to circumvent the usual channels, so I would ask that discussions take place with the Committee once it is established. However, I thank the Leader of the House for allocating time for a residual Backbench Business Committee debate from the last Parliament on Israel and Palestine, and time has been allocated for that on Wednesday.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. What I tried to make clear in my letter is that we are very sympathetic, particularly to his request that we bring forward debates that were held over in the last Session into this Session. He will be aware that Standing Orders set out the time allocated to different types of debates, including Back-Bench debates, but we are very sympathetic to his point. The usual channels means the Whips of all parties, and we will be discussing this. I am very sympathetic to his request.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): When will the Government make a statement on access to abortion in Northern Ireland? It is wrong that women in Northern Ireland do not have the same access to abortion as women in England, Wales and Scotland, and the High Court has ruled that this law contravenes human rights law, which is the responsibility of the UK Government, not a devolved matter. When will the Government make a statement to say how this wrong will be put right?

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is an incredibly sensitive and important issue. To be very clear, it is my personal view that every woman should have the right to decide what happens to her own body—that is very clear. The question of women from Northern Ireland accessing abortions in England is not one of whether they should have that access; it is a question of devolution and the fact that health is devolved to Northern Ireland. Therefore, it is a question of who should pay for it. What I can tell hon. Members is that the Department for equalities and the Department of Health are discussing and looking very closely at this issue today.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): This week it was announced that surgery for my constituents who smoke or who are overweight will be restricted—in some cases, for up to a year. May we have a debate in Government time about the potential impact of this decision on my constituents' health and mental health, and about the legacy of NHS rationing such as this?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a very important point, and she may well want to apply for an Adjournment debate on it. She will appreciate that this issue is very much clinician led, but I nevertheless urge her to take it forward in an Adjournment debate.

**Mr Shailesh Vara** (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): In recent days, there has been absolute misery for thousands of motorists in my constituency, which has been caused by work that is being carried out by Highways England. I wrote to Mr Jim O'Sullivan, the chief executive of Highways England, for an explanation, and it has taken a week for me to receive a standard acknowledgment letter saying that I will get a substantive response within the next 15 days, by which time the works will be over. Given that the decisions taken by Highways England impact on millions of people throughout the country, may we have a statement from the Transport Secretary as to whether this “couldn't care less” attitude from Mr O'Sullivan and his organisation is an acceptable way to go forward?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I can well imagine what an irritation this is for my hon. Friend's constituents. I would certainly not be happy with an acknowledgment and then the pledge of a proper reply within two weeks. Many public sector organisations respond very quickly to requests from Members of Parliament, and I hope that Highways England will have heard his remarks and will give him a very quick answer.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): Last week, rumours circulated in Wallasey that Kingsway Academy, which is in Leasowe in my constituency, was going to close. We have now managed to establish that there are plans to close it, perhaps by the end of July. This will throw our

whole education system in Wallasey into disarray, and there are 400 pupils whose future is currently completely obscure. We do not know where they are going to be, and parents of new pupils do not know whether they should buy uniforms for the school. The school is part of a multi-academy trust that has not communicated any of this at all. May we have a debate on public accountability among multi-academy trusts? If this had been a local authority school, there would have been a two-year consultation period instead of this chaos.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am quite sure that the hon. Lady will have raised this very loudly in her own area, and it is absolutely right that she should. In order to bring forward the question very quickly, I suggest that she seeks an Adjournment debate.

**Mr Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley) (Con): May we have an early debate about the importance of police stations in local communities? Police stations are a place of security, safety and sanctuary for many people, and being able to just drop into them is vitally important. In Lancashire, there are proposals to close 10 police stations, including my own in Clitheroe. May we have an early debate so that we can say how important it is to keep these police stations open?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises another important point about expectations in local areas. I have seen in my own area closures of police stations. The police have made a very strong case that people do not tend to drop into police stations very much, and that they can therefore use their time better by not having manned police stations. However, I completely sympathise with the reaction of local people that such closures are never good. I encourage him to seek an early Westminster Hall or Adjournment debate on this. In particular, if he wants to write to me, I will pass on his concerns to the right Department.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** To the apparent envy of some of his hon. Friends, I call Mr Alan Brown.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Speaker. In my short time in this place, so far I have seen the Secretary of State for Scotland fail to get any money from the Exchequer for open-cast coal restoration, while he has done nothing to get any money for the Ayrshire growth deal, and now we have seen Scotland completely bypassed in the deal with the DUP. We think the Secretary of State for Scotland should resign. Can the Leader of the House make a statement outlining his personal achievements for Scotland and why she thinks he should continue to represent Scotland?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I reiterate what I said earlier: that the Secretary of State for Scotland is a huge advocate for Scotland. Having been an Energy Minister and Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I can absolutely assure hon. Members that he has spoken up for energy in Scotland. He was very diligent in looking at measures for the oil and gas sector in Scotland, which is absolutely vital. He was very supportive of the city deals for Glasgow and for Aberdeen. He has been an enormous advocate for the Scottish

agriculture and fisheries sectors. That is just speaking from my own personal experience. He is a superb advocate for that nation and Members should be delighted to have him.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): May we have a debate on the issue of toxic cabin air syndrome, which has reportedly killed and caused serious illness to many crew on aircraft—my constituents and others around the country?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises a point that I think we have all read about in the newspapers and that would certainly be worthy of debate. I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate. A Back-Bench debate in the first instance would be very important.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): This week my postbag has been swollen by a large number of very well-written letters from the pupils of Whiteness Primary School in Shetland, who have been studying the topic of slavery, especially child slavery, across the world. Given that general debates seem now to be finding fashion with the business managers, will the Leader of the House make time available to discuss how we, as a country that meets the 0.7% overseas target, might do more to tackle this across the globe?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Of course, it was this Government who introduced an Act that seeks to stamp out human slavery. We take a world-leading role in stamping out modern slavery. The right hon. Gentleman is right to point out that we do commit to overseas development aid, which goes in great part to supporting efforts to stamp out human slavery. He raises an incredibly important point. I am certainly sympathetic to it and will raise it with the Chief Whip.

**Richard Benyon** (Newbury) (Con): Many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House await with great eagerness the Government's 25-year plan for the environment. I know that this is a matter of great interest to my right hon. Friend and I very much hope that she will tell us that it is going to be published and that there will be a statement to the House when that happens.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I absolutely praise my right hon. Friend for his contribution to protecting and enhancing our environment. Our manifesto made a commitment to the 25-year plan and we remain fully committed to it. The great repeal Bill will bring all EU environmental legislation into UK law, and our ambition is to be the first generation that leaves the environment in a better state than we found it. I am very proud that the Conservative party remains committed to that outcome.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Today's *Times* says:

"Thousands of people die each year as a result of breathing air that is officially considered safe".

The British Medical Association thinks that we should have air pollution monitors at the roadside. May we have a debate on improving air quality standards?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is right to raise a very serious public health issue. A consultation is under way on measures to improve air quality, but that relates to reaching a certain level of air pollution. This Government's longer-term aim is for almost all vehicles

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to be zero-carbon by 2050. That is a real solution, and in the short and medium term we will set out measures to tackle the problem of air quality.

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): Following on from the comments of the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), I look forward to welcoming my right hon. Friend to the best constituency in England at any stage in the next fortnight.

Will my right hon. Friend ask the Transport Secretary to come to this House and make a statement on Crossrail 2? The Department has been considering the business case for a substantial time and the constituents of Wimbledon and London are keen to understand the Government's commitment to the project.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I will certainly be happy to write on my hon. Friend's behalf to my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary. I am interested to know whether it is true that the strawberries for Wimbledon are being grown underground in Clapham; I wonder whether my hon. Friend can enlighten the House on that. He is exactly right to say that Crossrail 2 will be a very important measure to get people in London moving, and I am personally supportive of it.

**Ellie Reeves** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): I was shocked by the complete lack of clarity on school funding shown by the Secretary of State for Education on Tuesday. The claim by the Leader of the House that the funding formula for schools is fair simply will not ring true in my constituency, where school budgets have been squeezed year on year and our fantastic boys' secondary school, Forest Hill School, has a deficit of £1.3 million. May we please have a proper statement and a debate on school funding before the summer recess?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her place and wish her every success in her new role. We are proud of the top-line achievement that there are now 1.8 million more children in good and outstanding schools than in 2010, but she is exactly right to point out that there are pressures on school budgets. That is being looked at very closely by my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary, and I will happily take up the issue with her.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Given the Prime Minister's commitment to more capital spending in the NHS, may we have a statement on capital spending? Although Harlow's Princess Alexandra hospital has excellent staff and provides an excellent service, we are in desperate need of a new hospital because of failing infrastructure and sewage coming into the operating theatres.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My right hon. Friend raises a very important point for his constituency and I think it would be worth raising it in an Adjournment or Westminster Hall debate. If he wants to write to me, I would be happy to take it up with the Department of Health.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): When can we debate early-day motion 85?

[*That this House congratulates the Scottish Government for announcing new legislation to introduce presumed consent for organ donation in Scotland; notes the model successes of presumed consent in Wales where 39 lives have been saved in the last year, which has inspired the change in Scotland; further notes that the UK still has the lowest rates of organ donation consent in Europe; and calls on the Government to save more lives by introducing presumed consent for organ donation in England.*]

The early-day motion congratulates the Scottish Government on introducing legislation so that Scotland can share the benefits that Wales has enjoyed in having presumed consent for organ donations. The United Kingdom has the worst record in Europe for the number of consents. It has been a brilliant, life-saving success in Wales. Is it not time that England and Scotland enjoyed those life-saving benefits?

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is a sensitive subject, and there are strong views on all sides of the argument. I share the hon. Gentleman's view that presumed consent would be life-changing for many people waiting for organ donations. I will certainly raise the issue, but of course he could secure a Westminster Hall debate to highlight it. I am sure that will be in his mind.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): May we have a debate on the need to restrict postal voting? Not only has it helped people vote more than once in elections, but in certain parts of Bradford it has been known to be abused for a considerable time, and I might add that it has effectively deprived many women of the vote in those communities. [*Interruption.*] These people who speak up for women's rights are very happy to be silent about them when they clash with another politically correct shibboleth. These are serious issues that many people are concerned about, so may we have a debate on the abuse of postal voting?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is exactly right to speak up for democracy in this country. I hear Opposition Members poo-h-pooing his comments, but it behoves us all to stand up for democracy. Nobody should want double voting to be available to people, or for one person to vote on behalf of their entire family or people who are no longer with us. I absolutely agree that we should have a debate on the subject and ensure that democracy continues to prevail in this country.

**Graham Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): The M62 upgrade would be the great northern powerhouse project, connecting Lancashire with Leeds in Yorkshire, with two lanes going into Yorkshire and four lanes coming into Lancashire. When will Ministers recognise the importance of that project and start talking about it? When will they start talking up the northern powerhouse, and funding it as they seem to be doing for the Northern Ireland powerhouse?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman has raised his point loud and clear. He will know that it was this Government who created the term "northern powerhouse" and who, more importantly, have funded it with hundreds of millions of pounds and continue to support it. His words are now on the record, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be interested to hear them.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): Yesterday at Prime Minister's questions my hon. Friend the Member for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray) bravely raised both the personal impact of online abuse and the direct effect that it had during her campaign and those of many other female candidates across the UK. As the previous chair of the all-party women in Parliament group, may I ask the Leader of the House to make time for a debate on the issue so that the House can express its disgust at such direct abuse? We must not let it put off the women leaders of the future coming to this House.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend. The number of colleagues who were genuinely scared for their personal safety during the recent general election campaign was a total disgrace. There was the appalling, disgusting behaviour of the defacement of offices and posters, and the constant tearing down on social media of colleagues' efforts to get elected. It is an appalling indictment of our society that such things have been allowed to happen, and I certainly think that the House will want to take the matter further.

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Môn) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House provide some Government time for a statement on the development of the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon? The project was omitted from the Queen's Speech. She knows about it, and it is no use her blaming previous Energy Ministers or Environment Ministers, for that was she.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I accept my involvement in the Hendry review, which was designed to ensure that the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon gets a fair hearing. That report has made its findings clear, and the Government are looking at it carefully. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the project would be a significant expense, but it also has enormous potential, so it is right that we look carefully at its value for taxpayers' money. A review is ongoing, and there will be a statement about it in due course.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I have given notice of a question to the Leader of the House—I hope that she has done her homework on it—but I am not going to ask it, because something more important has come up. It has been brought to my attention—I expect that other colleagues know about this—that people can be registered to vote in a general election in two places. I am registered in London and in my constituency. However, a number of students are bragging on social media that they voted not only where they live, but where they go to university. That is an abuse, so could we have a statement from the Cabinet Office on that matter next week?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am always delighted that my hon. Friend likes to throw in a googly, so I thank him for that. He raises an incredibly important point for our democracy. We must get to the bottom of people deliberately voting twice, which I understand is illegal. We need to investigate that and ensure that parliamentary democracy, for which this country has been famous—this is indeed the mother of all Parliaments—upholds the rights of one person and one vote.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): Given that there will be no Welsh questions before the recess, may we have an opportunity to question the Secretary of State for Wales on the Floor of the House about what he has been doing since the Government's announcement of the deal with the DUP to ensure that Wales is not short-changed?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady will be aware that Wales has also benefited from a number of projects outside the Barnett formula. I will certainly pass on her comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and seek an opportunity for the hon. Lady.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): In recent years, my constituency has benefited from Government support but, as my right hon. Friend will be aware, coastal communities continue to face particular challenges. May we have a debate on those challenges, and on how the Government will continue to support coastal areas?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right to say that coastal areas suffer from unique problems, and we have had fruitful Westminster Hall debates about the particular issues that face such communities. I am delighted that those communities also have the advantage of fabulous fish and chips, which I was pleased to enjoy with him in Grimsby during the recent general election campaign. He raises a good point, and he should apply for a Westminster Hall debate so that he can raise those issues properly.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): For the third time in a fortnight, my constituents are having to put up with the noise, nuisance, litter and mess caused by illegal Traveller camps on parks and public open spaces in Dudley. That is completely unacceptable, but when I talk to the council and the police about the situation, they tell me that they need more powers to deal with it. May we have an urgent debate in Government time so that we can get to the bottom of the issue? We need to provide local authorities with the powers that they need to deal with this problem once and for all so that my constituents and their children can start to use parks and play areas once again.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think the hon. Gentleman might have raised that point last week—[*Interruption.*] No, but it was raised very recently. We all share the same concern about the impact of this problem on our local areas. If he would like to write to me, I would be happy to take the matter forward. I would be sympathetic to a debate in Government time, but I am sure that he will also be looking at the option of a Westminster Hall debate.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Following a meeting with a constituent, I learned that the number of children who are home schooled in Warwickshire has more than doubled since 2012. There is consensus that home schooling is on the rise across the country, which leads to concerns that checks on quality may not be as rigorous as they might be and that some children might not be getting the education they deserve. May we have a debate on the future of home schooling?

**Andrea Leadsom:** To raise standards, the Government have sought to provide a wide range of schooling options. I pay tribute to the many families who provide excellent

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home schooling for their children when there are issues such as bullying, particular needs and so on. My hon. Friend is right that checks must be carried out to ensure that children do not drop out of sight. Local authorities have a statutory duty to check that all children are receiving a proper education, and they have recourse to the law if that is not found to be the case. My hon. Friend could raise the matter to good effect in an Adjournment or a Westminster Hall debate.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): On 23 June, two bombs were detonated in Toori market in Parachinar in Pakistan; 84 people were killed and many were injured. That was the third bomb this year and 115 people are now dead. The deceased remain in the streets, with their families unable to bury them, and another attack is a very real risk. Protections must be put in place to prevent further loss of life. Pakistan is clearly trying to restrict news of what is happening and is not letting the world outside know. May we have an urgent statement on how we can give the people of Parachinar in Pakistan the help that they need right now?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises the very important issue of those three recent attacks. The UK and Pakistan have a shared interest in addressing and reducing the threat of terrorism. We are committed to working together to combat, in a human rights-compliant manner, the terrorist threat and the extremism that sustains it. This will help to reduce the threat to the UK and UK interests. If he would like to write to me on this point, I will certainly take it up with the relevant Department.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to talk about the importance of keeping people safe. May we therefore have a statement and some action from the Secretary of State for Transport regarding the threat to commercial and military aviation from the use of drones by private individuals and commercial organisations?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We will all have seen recent press reports of close shaves, and this certainly seems to be an increasing challenge. If my hon. Friend would like to write to me on this point, I will certainly take it up with the Department for Transport.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): The National Audit Office says it will cost nearly £7 billion to get existing school buildings up to scratch, yet the Government are spending money hand over fist on developing free school sites, including four in London that have cost more than £30 million each. Should we not have a debate in Government time about how we manage the capital budget for schools so that all our pupils can be in schools with decent sports facilities and playgrounds, rather than in old office blocks that are not fit for purpose?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I remind the hon. Lady that 1.8 million more children are in good and outstanding schools than in 2010—[*Interruption.*] Opposition Members tut but, for parents, a decent education is absolutely essential in a globally competitive world. She makes a

good point about the fabric of buildings. It is not as important a point as the quality of education that our children are getting, but I would be very happy to take it up for her if she would like to write to me.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): I welcome the debate next week on the Chris Gibb report. Will my right hon. Friend secure a statement from the Secretary of State for Transport on ensuring that the line that runs through my constituency and supports east Sussex and Kent will be electrified so that all our network will be modern and up to date?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I will happily take that point up with my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary. Next week's debate will enable colleagues to make key points about the quality of rail transport and I encourage my hon. Friend to attend it.

**Gloria De Piero** (Ashfield) (Lab): May we have a debate in Government time on the injustice of the mineworkers' pension scheme, which has seen Government coffers swell by billions of pounds due to the unfair 50:50 surplus split? More cash needs to go to ex-miners and their widows.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady will know that this has been debated a number of times in Parliament. There was a long-standing agreement on sharing the surplus, but if she would like to write to me, I will happily take up the issue again with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): I and my constituents are passionate about reversing the 2013 downgrade of night-time accident and emergency at Cheltenham general hospital, but the trust has made it clear that recruiting middle-grade A&E doctors is difficult. May we have a debate on improving incentives and conditions for such staff so that my constituents can have the hospital they deserve?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises the important matter for his constituency of his A&E. I encourage him to apply for an Adjournment debate to discuss the specifics.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Yesterday I asked the current Prime Minister to confirm that all services at both Dewsbury and District hospital and Huddersfield royal infirmary would remain open, including full A&E services. She replied that A&E at Dewsbury would stay open, but omitted to mention the significant downgrade, and strangely she ignored Huddersfield royal infirmary. Will the Leader of the House provide Government time for the Prime Minister to come to the House and either reassure local people that services are safe, or apologise for her comments about scaremongering when we were just highlighting that services were under threat?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am not sure that I fully understand what the hon. Lady is saying. She says that the Prime Minister gave reassurance to—[*Interruption.*] What I heard the Prime Minister say was that Dewsbury A&E was not under threat, but if the hon. Lady would like to write to me on that point, I can try to understand exactly what she would like to happen.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): May we have a debate in Government time on the disposal of local authority assets? Shortly after the election was called, it emerged that Harrow Council had sold the freehold on the Hive to Barnet Football Club. Barnet Football Club rides roughshod over local people, and no one was consulted about the sale whatsoever. Barnet Football Club illegally plays its first team matches at the Hive. It has ignored planning rules, breaching them on several occasions, and imposes misery on all the residents around the stadium on match days, so may we have a debate in Government time on this issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** It sounds like my hon. Friend has had a pretty tough time with a local issue, which would of course be an ideal subject for an Adjournment debate.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald** (Glasgow South) (SNP): On 2 December 2015, the House passed a motion concerning air strikes on Syria that specifically targeted Daesh assets. It did not involve targeting any other actor in that region, so it was with some surprise that I heard this week the Defence Secretary claim his unwavering support for US air strikes to target the Syrian regime. The Foreign Secretary went one further in April, stating that the assumption of parliamentary approval needed to be tested. Can the Leader of the House do two things: provide us with an urgent statement on Government thinking about changing the nature of the conflict; and ensure that there is a debate and a vote in this House before mission creep sets in?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises very important questions for the Ministry of Defence, and I can draw his attention to the fact that we have Defence questions on Monday 10 July.

**Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): Following the Government's welcome announcement that farm payments will continue until 2022, may we have a debate on exactly how they will be allocated? Many farmers in Brecon and Radnorshire are concerned about the mechanism that will be put in place and whether the administration of the payment will ensure that they are paid on time.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Farm payments are a subject very dear to my heart, as an ex-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and I have worked closely with my hon. Friend, who is a great spokesman for farmers in his constituency. The important point about the continuation of the single farm payment is to ensure a smooth transition for farmers right across the UK to a new agricultural policy when we leave the EU. The arrangements for that transition will be consulted on and discussed, but I cannot give him the specific outcome as yet.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): Notwithstanding our view of the Government's relationship with the Democratic Unionist party, will the Leader of the House assure us that either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will come to the House at the earliest opportunity next week and make a statement about the outcome of the talks that are taking place today in Northern Ireland? Those talks are of crucial

importance to the whole United Kingdom. If they fail, we will see a restoration of direct rule, and if there is a restoration of the Executive, which we all hope for, there will still be serious questions to be asked. Parliament needs to discuss this as a matter of urgency.

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is an absolutely key issue. As the hon. Gentleman points out, today is the deadline for new Ministers to be appointed, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is working flat out to try to encourage that, along with Irish politicians and, of course, members of the Northern Ireland potential Executive. All parties in Northern Ireland are working very hard to try to ensure that we get an arrangement signed today.

**Dan Carden** (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): The real impact of police cuts can be measured by the rising tide of gun crime across Merseyside, where there have been 100 shooting incidents in the last 18 months and 10 in this month alone. Merseyside's chief constable has said that he has "never known a situation" in which a police force has been so stretched "to the limits" as Merseyside's is today. The people of Merseyside need urgent action from the Government and proper funding for the police. Can we expect a statement from the Home Secretary, or a debate, so that we can rid our streets of gun crime?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises an incredibly important point about policing. As the Prime Minister said yesterday, police budgets have been protected. There has been a big increase in investment in intelligence, counter-terrorism and attacking cybercrime, for instance, to try to ensure that the police have all the tools that they need to do the job, but of course the Home Office will be listening carefully to what is said about particular issues. It sounds as though there is a very specific issue in Merseyside, and the hon. Gentleman may wish to raise it during Home Office questions.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Given that the former Member of Parliament for Leigh presented the House with evidence of criminal behaviour in the contaminated blood scandal, may we please have a statement from the Secretary of State for Health about what action he will take now that that evidence has come to light and when a full inquiry will be set up?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sorry to have to ask for further details, but I shall be happy to take the matter up with the Department for Health if the hon. Lady would like to write to me about it.

**Stewart Hosie** (Dundee East) (SNP): Like many Members, I have had occasion to sign off referrals to ombudsman services. In most instances, the determinations—matters can only be accepted or rejected—are sufficient for my constituents, but they cannot be appealed against. May we have a debate in Government time on the working of ombudsman services, and, in particular, on what recourse constituents may have if they believe that full or essential details concerning their case were not fully taken into consideration when the determinations were reached?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I have a lot of sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says, having myself come across cases that seemed to have extraordinary outcomes. I think that this would be an ideal subject for a Select

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Committee inquiry—it is the sort of issue on which evidence really does need to be provided. I am also conscious that different ombudsmen deal with different types of activity. While the matter seems ideal for a Select Committee inquiry, I am happy to talk to the hon. Gentleman separately if he thinks that another route would be better.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Residents of Coventry and Warwickshire are concerned about building on the green belt. May we have a debate in Government time, or a statement, to clarify the Government's policy on the green belt, and, more important, to clarify the position in respect of the planning authority and the regulations? A blame game is going on at present: one group blames the local authority, and the other—the local authority—blames central Government. By the way, I have applied for an Adjournment debate on the subject.

**Andrea Leadsom:** That is excellent. I am so glad that the hon. Gentleman has done that; it saves me from the laughter that we would hear in the House if I were to suggest it.

This is a very thorny issue. Of course we all want more people to be able to live in and own their homes. There is a balance to be struck between protecting the green belt and building to ensure that people can aspire to have homes that are fit for purpose. However, the Government are committed to protecting the green belt. I am very glad that the hon. Gentleman has applied for an Adjournment debate, because I think that that is the ideal way in which to raise such issues.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): Research carried out by the Trussell Trust indicates that mental health problems affect nearly a third of households that use food banks, and 50% of such households are classed as having a disability. May we have a debate on cuts in disability benefits and the terrible impact that they are having by plunging our most vulnerable people into extreme food poverty?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We all applaud the work of food banks. There are a couple of them in my constituency, and they and their volunteers do a fantastic job.

The important topic that the hon. Lady raises would lend itself to a Westminster Hall debate. The issues of food bank use and the reasons why people go to food banks are very complex, and it would be valuable if we were to get to the bottom of all the factors involved.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The Government shook their magic money tree this week to find a £1 billion bung for Northern Ireland. May we have an urgent statement from the Chancellor on when that magic money tree will blossom again to enable my constituents to benefit from the full funding of the Edinburgh city regional deal?

**Andrea Leadsom:** From my recollection, it is the Government who said that there is “no magic money tree”, but it was Opposition Members who were expecting a crock of gold at the end of the rainbow.—[*Interruption.*]

I said gold. This Government are seeking to create an economy that is booming and that takes us away from the problems we were left with by the profligate spending of the last Labour Government, followed by a global financial crisis that left this Government with the worst economic situation since the second world war. The reality is that we are making progress, but the job is far from done. We can choose either to sort out the deficit and live within our means or to leave the enormous debt that results from that deficit to our children and grandchildren. This Government are making the sensible choice to provide fairness between the generations by dealing with our deficit and tackling that mountain of debt in a fair way.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): This week is breastfeeding week, and last week was breastfeeding in Scotland week. May we have a debate in Government time on the societal barriers to breastfeeding and on how the Government could better support and invest in support services for women and families so that they can make informed feeding choices?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am extremely sympathetic to that topic. Breastfeeding is unquestionably best for the baby, but it is equally important that all mothers have the opportunity to make an informed choice based on the information that is given to them. I completely support the hon. Lady's ambition to remove barriers to breastfeeding, and I will certainly take up the matter with the Chief Whip, but this is also an ideal subject for a Westminster Hall debate.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): I am somewhat concerned that friends of the Leader of the House appear to have told the *Business Insider* news site today that dozens of Conservative MPs are appealing to her to run for the Conservative leadership again. I hope that this will not distract her from her duties as Leader of the House, including looking at how we can improve the procedures for private Members' Bills and Friday sittings. I was unsuccessful in today's ballot, but it is important that the 20 MPs who were successful should get a fair chance to air their issues without being subjected to the juvenile filibustering tactics of a few Tory Back Benchers.

**Andrea Leadsom:** In answer to the hon. Lady's first point, it is absolutely right for this country and for this party that we get behind Theresa May, who is doing a great job as Prime Minister, and I am absolutely committed to her remaining as leader of our country for as long as she wishes to do so. I want to be very clear about that.

On the hon. Lady's second point, as I mentioned to the previous leader of the Backbench Business Committee, the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns), the Standing Orders set out the number of private Members' Bills in any Session; it is then a matter for the usual channels to discuss whether there is a possibility to flex that. I am very sympathetic to her view that we should enable Members to have a fair hearing, and she will be pleased to see that a number of her colleagues came in towards the top of the private Members' Bills ballot. We look forward to hearing from them. I congratulate all those Members who will be introducing private Members' Bills and I look forward to working with them.



**Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): Dundee has the busiest food bank in Scotland, and we have seen an almost 10% increase in the use of food banks in Scotland in the past year. Even the Tory MSP Brian Whittle admitted in the Scottish Parliament last week that this Government's benefit rules are forcing families to turn to food banks. May we please now have an urgent debate on the UK Government's cruel and callous social security system, which is pushing more families into ever more desperate situations?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Again, I thank all those who work in food banks for what they do. It is important that we recognise the amount of volunteering and the generosity of people who donate to food banks. As I said in answer to a previous question, the reasons that push people to food banks are complicated. A debate in Westminster Hall to try to get some of the evidence would be valuable, and I would support him seeking to hold such a debate.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): NHS Improvement seems to be struggling to provide the required timely and effective support to the Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust to bring about the sustained improvements at Scunthorpe general hospital that everybody wants. May we have a statement about the performance of NHSI in bringing about improvements in the health service?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises another important local point about a local hospital service, and I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate on that topic. As for the broader point about the performance of NHSI, if he writes to me, I can raise it with the Department of Health.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): The Leader of the House has heard pleas from both sides of the House for the Secretary of State for Education to come here to explain what she is doing to tackle the funding crisis in schools, but we still do not seem to have had a firm assurance about when that will happen. When it does, can we get the Secretary of State to talk about the opaque accountability procedures in education as well? The regional schools commissioners are a particular anomaly in a country where the Government have abolished the regional structures.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right. Several colleagues have raised concerns about education, which the Secretary of State will have heard. I will certainly discuss that with her. She is of course looking closely at some of the issues, and the Government are determined to ensure that more children have the opportunity of a good school and a decent education. She is looking closely at the funding formula not only to make it fairer, but to try to ease the burdens on schools. I am sure that she will be making statements on all those issues in due course.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The Vale of York clinical commissioning group has been continually underfunded. As a result, it has fallen into deficit and is now being punished further by being put into the capped expenditure process, meaning that it will have to make further service cuts. May we have an urgent statement from the Secretary of State for Health on the capped expenditure process?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Again, the hon. Lady raises an important local matter for her constituency. If she applies for an Adjournment debate, a Health Minister will of course respond to it, which should give her the answers she seeks.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): Government Members have quite rightly been quick to praise the efforts of our emergency services as they responded to the Grenfell Tower disaster and the terror attacks across the country over the past few months. Yesterday, however, we saw a public sector pay hokey cokey in Downing Street and the Scottish Tory MPs giving the Prime Minister a majority to stop efforts to end the pay cap, which is ending in Scotland. May we have an urgent debate in Government time on fairer public sector pay?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The Government have been consistent on the subject of public sector pay that the decisions will be taken in the light of recommendations from the independent pay bodies.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): It is nice to see you back in your position, Mr Speaker. Congratulations on your re-election. Dark times are usually funded by dark money. Does the Leader of the House agree that it is time to shine a light on political funding by supporting the publication in full of all political donations made in Northern Ireland? If this is a Union of equals, it is time to publish or be damned.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think the hon. Gentleman is making some accusations, so if he would like to write to me, I will be happy to take them up. I am not specifically aware of exactly to what he is referring.

**Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House ensure that we have an urgent debate in Government time on ensuring that councils, such as Lewisham Council, receive adequate funding to cover the costs of appropriate fire safety checks, removal of cladding, installation of sprinkler systems, and any other associated costs to guarantee that our residents remain safe?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises the absolutely key priority for this Government, which is of course at the moment to deal with the horrors that have ensued at Grenfell Tower, and to ensure that all residents who live in similar towers or other buildings that could suffer from the same problems with cladding are properly looked after. We therefore need to allow the fire inspections officers to do their work and to make recommendations on what is required for each building; it will not be a one-size-fits-all, but she can rest assured that the Government remain absolutely committed to keeping all residents in high-rise towers safe.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab): May we have a debate on antisocial behaviour associated with off-road bikes, quads and mopeds? Some of the parks and estates in Sheffield are like scenes out of "Mad Max", with masked riders riding around and blighting the lives of local residents. May we therefore have a debate, in Home Office time, on whether the police have the powers and resources to tackle this issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am very sympathetic about the local nuisance, as I have experienced it in my area, too; I have every sympathy for what the hon. Lady says. This matter of course lends itself to a Westminster Hall or Adjournment debate, but she has raised it in this House and people will have heard her support for that.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Having been unsuccessful in securing a Westminster Hall debate, may I ask the Leader of the House for a statement or debate on the future of Glasgow's jobcentres and the Department for Work and Pensions estate across the UK? Given that the public consultation is closed, does she agree that we should end the seven months of uncertainty for users of social security services?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that in order to give a more efficient and cost-effective service the question of where jobcentres are located is being carefully considered, taking into account the travel needs of users; we are trying to review jobcentres. He will also know that he can apply for Westminster Hall and Adjournment debates every week, so he will get lots more opportunities to keep trying for such a debate.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Next month sees the first parliamentary by-election of this Parliament, when the 10th Baron Walpole will be replaced as a Cross-Bench peer in another place. The electorate for that by-election is 31 people. May we have an early debate on how to stop this nonsense? Will the Government support Lord Grocott's Bill to do just that?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The House of Lords is looking at its own procedures and has its own review into its own practices. We should allow it to continue with that.

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): Although my constituents have endured years of disruption as a result of the London Bridge station rebuild, draft timetables published by Southeastern recently suggest that they will not see the improved service they were promised following the completion of the works. May we have a debate about what is needed to give rail passengers in south-east London the service and the franchise they deserve?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises yet another good point about the service to rail passengers, who seem to have a tough time. I am sure he will doubtless use the opportunity of a debate on the Gibb report next week to raise that matter then.

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): May we have an urgent statement from the Government on the National Audit Office report on the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station development? The NAO's damning report says that it is "risky and expensive", "not value for money", and a cost to the consumer, the taxpayer and other energy developments. Does the Leader of the House not agree that it is time the public saw an end to this overcharging white elephant?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I absolutely do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is absolutely right that we have transparent discussion in this place, but he will be aware, as he knows quite a lot about energy matters, that about 20% of our electricity is always provided by

old nuclear power stations, many of which are to reach the end of their useful life in the next 10 or so years. It will be very important for electricity security that we have in place a new nuclear power station to replace that. Nevertheless, he may well wish to raise that issue in a Westminster Hall debate.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): What the Leader of the House said earlier about private Members' Bills is great and, as one who has a minor interest in this matter, it would be good to know when we will start debating them. Surely to God, as the Government have nothing in their programme and are allowing themselves two years to do it, should we not have double the number of days allowed for private Members' Bills in a single session? So, we would like 26, please.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman knows far better than I do about the Standing Orders of this House, so he will be aware that they set out the number of private Members' Bills. I congratulate him on drawing the No. 1 slot and look forward to working with him on that. As I said in my opening reply to the shadow Leader of the House, this Government have a very full programme not just on Brexit, but on social reform, economic progress and prevention of extremism. There is a lot of work to do. This Government will remain focused on that, but we are absolutely sympathetic to the requests of colleagues for further time to be given for private Members' Bills.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Saturday marks Paisley's annual Sma' Shot Day, which is a celebration of the town's radical past, particularly of the political battles between its weavers and their employers. The first ever Weave festival has been organised around Sma' Shot Day, celebrating Paisley's distinct cultural and political identity. May we have a debate on the UK City of Culture 2021 competition, so we can learn more about why Paisley's bid should and will win?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman has just helped his own bid, so I congratulate him on that. The matter certainly lends itself to an Adjournment debate or a Westminster Hall debate.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): My constituent, Bashir Naderi, came to the UK more than 10 years ago as a child refugee from Afghanistan after seeing his father murdered by the Taliban. The Home Office tried forcibly to move him back there last year and is attempting to do so again this year. May we have a debate on the inhumane Government policy of child refugees being removed when they reach the age of 18?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sure that the hon. Lady will have raised that matter with the Home Office, and I encourage her to continue to do so. I completely understand that support for child refugees is absolutely vital. This Government have provided a home for many child refugees and will continue to do so. On the specific case she raises, I encourage her to continue to liaise directly with the Home Office.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): In recent weeks, I have been very proud to become the president of my home town football club, Blaenavon Blues, and

have seen at first hand the work that volunteers do, particularly with young people. May we have a debate on the contribution that grassroots football makes to our communities?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his elevation. I am sure that that is great news. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is in her place and will have heard exactly what he has said. If he would like to progress the issue of grassroots sport, which is very important for all of us, I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate or a Westminster Hall debate on the subject.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): On Friday, I visited a very vulnerable constituent whose child benefit had been removed by the Child Benefit Agency at the advice of the Home Office. The only way that she can get her child benefit back is to get her passports, which are being held by the Home Office. May we have a debate in Government time about bureaucracy and the lack of internal communication in Her Majesty's Government?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is raising a specific case. He needs to raise it with the Home Office, and possibly with the UK Border Agency if there is an issue about where the passports are. We all deal with similar issues in our constituencies and I know that, right across Government, officials and Ministers are very sympathetic to these cases and do try to expedite them.

## 21st Century Fox/Sky Merger

11.58 am

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Karen Bradley):** I came to this House on 16 March to confirm that I had issued a European intervention notice in relation to the proposed merger between 21st Century Fox and Sky plc on the grounds of media plurality and commitment to broadcasting standards. The EIR triggered a requirement for Ofcom to report—initially by 16 May but extended to 20 June—on the media public interest considerations and for the Competition and Markets Authority to report on jurisdiction. I issued a statement last week to confirm that I had received those reports and undertook both to publish them today and to come to the House to set out my minded-to decision on the next step in this process, which is whether to refer the merger to a fuller phase 2 investigation.

In line with my commitments, I am today publishing both documents, copies of which will also be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. I will also be publishing later today the letter to both parties with my decision, which I sent them this morning. Separately, Ofcom is today publishing its fit and proper assessment of the merged company. This reflects its ongoing responsibility as the independent regulator under the Broadcasting Acts to monitor who is fit and proper to hold a broadcast licence.

Decisions made by the Secretary of State on media mergers under the Enterprise Act 2002 are made on a quasi-judicial basis. I want to be very clear about what that means. When taking a quasi-judicial decision, I am tightly bound. I must take my decision only on the basis of the evidence that is relevant to the specified public interests. My decision cannot be based on opinion, speculation or conjecture. Any decision I take must be objectively justified by the facts before me. I must set aside wider political considerations going beyond the scope of the legislation. I must act independently and follow a process that is scrupulously fair and impartial. This is what I am doing.

On the question of whether the merger gives rise to public interest concerns in relation to media plurality, Ofcom's report is unambiguous. It concludes:

“The transaction raises public interest concerns as a result of the risk of increased influence by members of the Murdoch Family Trust over the UK news agenda and the political process, with its unique presence on radio, television, in print and online. We consider that these concerns may justify a reference by the Secretary of State to the Competition and Markets Authority”.

On the basis of Ofcom's assessment, I confirm that I am minded to refer to a phase 2 investigation on the grounds of media plurality. The reasoning and evidence on which Ofcom's recommendation is based are persuasive. The proposed entity would have the third largest total reach of any news provider—lower only than the BBC and ITN—and would, uniquely, span news coverage on television, radio, in newspapers and online.

Ofcom's report states that the proposed transaction would give the Murdoch Family Trust material influence over news providers with a significant presence across all key platforms. This potentially raises public interest concerns because, in Ofcom's view, the transaction may increase the ability of members of the Murdoch Family

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Trust to influence the overall news agenda and their ability to influence the political process, and it may also result in the perception of increased influence. These are clear grounds to warrant a referral to a phase 2 investigation, so that is what I am minded to do.

There, is, however, a statutory process that I must follow. I am required by legislation to allow the parties the opportunity to make representations to me on this position before I reach a final decision. I will now do that and have given them until Friday 14 July to respond.

The second question concerns whether, after the merger, the relevant media enterprises would have a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards. Ofcom is unequivocal. It concludes:

“In light of Fox’s and Sky’s broadcast compliance records and taking account of our separate assessment of whether Sky remains fit and proper to hold broadcasting licences following the transaction, we do not consider that the merged entity would lack a genuine commitment to the attainment of broadcasting standards. Therefore, we consider that there are no broadcasting standards concerns that may justify a reference by the Secretary of State to the Competition and Markets Authority”.

Ofcom’s approach sought to measure commitment to broadcasting standards by reference to breaches of regulatory codes. It found that Fox’s compliance with the UK’s Broadcasting Code is in line with comparable broadcasters. Nor did Fox’s compliance record in relation to overseas broadcast jurisdictions—where Ofcom’s analysis focused largely on the EU—give cause for concern.

I also asked Ofcom to consider the effect of any failure of corporate governance on this public interest consideration. Ofcom did this in the context of its separate assessment of whether Fox and Sky would remain fit and proper to hold broadcast licences following the transaction. It concluded that behaviours alleged at Fox News in the US amount to significant corporate failures. However, these did not, in its view, demonstrate that the merged company would lack a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards. In reaching a view, I have to be guided only by the evidence before me. As such—based on the Ofcom report—I am currently minded not to refer to a phase 2 investigation in relation to a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards.

As required by legislation, I am giving the parties an opportunity to make representations in relation to media plurality grounds, where I am minded to refer for a phase 2 investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority. In the interests of transparency and of ensuring that all the evidence has been considered, I will also invite wider representations on the question of commitment to broadcasting standards, where I am currently minded not to refer for a phase 2 investigation.

Parties responding to the consultation should not simply duplicate any representations previously made to Ofcom. Instead, responses should be limited to setting out any new and substantial evidence and any comment on Ofcom’s overall approach. While there are strong feelings among both supporters and opponents of this merger, in this quasi-judicial process my decisions can be influenced only by facts, not opinions, and by the quality of evidence, not who shouts the loudest. The invitation to make representations will open today and close on Friday 14 July, and it can be found on the DCMS website.

Under the process set out in the Enterprise Act 2016, it is open to the parties to propose undertakings in lieu of a reference to the CMA for a more detailed investigation—in other words, the parties may seek to avoid a phase 2 reference by proposing remedies to address the public interest concerns that have provisionally been identified. The decision as to whether or not to accept undertakings in lieu is for the Secretary of State alone.

However, somewhat unusually, the parties proposed a set of undertakings to Ofcom, and Ofcom commented on them in its report. The proposed undertakings centred around Fox maintaining the editorial independence of Sky News by establishing a separate editorial board, with a majority of independent members, to oversee the appointment of the head of Sky News and any changes to Sky News editorial guidelines. They also include a commitment to maintain Sky branded news for five years with spending at least at similar levels to now. Ofcom’s view was that these remedies would mitigate the serious media plurality public interest concerns. It also suggested that the remedies could be further strengthened.

Last week, the parties—without prejudice to my decision today, which they learned about only this morning—formally submitted undertakings in largely the same terms to me. In accordance with the legislation, if I still intend to refer the merger after having considered representations from the parties, I am required to consider whether or not these remedies are appropriate. Given that the parties have offered these undertakings and that Ofcom have commented on them, I have taken an initial view. I can confirm that I have, today, written to the parties indicating that I am minded not to accept the undertakings that have been offered. While Ofcom suggests that they may mitigate its concerns, it is for the Secretary of State to decide whether they sufficiently mitigate—or, ideally, fully remedy—what are serious public interest considerations.

I note that Ofcom’s report says:

“we recognise that behavioural undertakings can be difficult to monitor and enforce and that there are areas in which the proposed undertakings could be strengthened.”

It cites questions regarding

“the ongoing arrangements for the appointment of the independent members of the Sky News Editorial Board and the period of Fox’s commitment to maintaining its investment in Sky News”.

I also note the guidance of the Competition and Markets Authority, which, in the context of competition cases, says that undertakings in lieu are appropriate where the remedies are

“clear cut...effective and capable of ready implementation”,

and that, in ordinary cases, it is

“highly unlikely to accept behavioural remedies at phase 1”.

I have given the parties 10 working days—until Friday 14 July—to make representations on the minded-to decisions that I have reached. If I receive further offers of undertakings as part of those representations, I will keep the House informed about how I intend to structure the statutory process that I must follow when considering them.

As I have set out, I will now take representations on my minded-to positions. The call will remain open for 10 working days and I will then consider the evidence received before coming to a final decision on both grounds. To be clear, the minded-to decisions that I have outlined today are not my final decisions.

Before I close, I want to say a word about Ofcom's "fit and proper" assessment. This is a matter for Ofcom, as the independent regulator, and my understanding is that it will publish its report today. I have seen the report and know that many Members in the House will want to comment on it. However, given my current quasi-judicial role in the merger, I will not be commenting on the findings. It is rightly not for Government to determine who should, and should not, hold TV broadcasting licences. Ofcom has an ongoing duty to ensure that all UK broadcasters are fit and proper to hold TV broadcasting licences. I am clear that if any evidence comes to light, it is for Ofcom to take account of that evidence.

I trust, as before, that this update is helpful to right hon. and hon. Members and that this statement gives an opportunity to debate this important issue while respecting the limits of what I can say, given my ongoing quasi-judicial role in relation to this merger. I commend this statement to the House.

12.9 pm

**Tom Watson** (West Bromwich East) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of her statement, albeit in redacted form, which, quite honestly, Mr Speaker, is utterly ridiculous.

This decision was delayed as a result of the unexpected general election campaign. I hope that the Conservative party found those weeks as productive as we on the Opposition Benches did, but nothing about this decision is a surprise. It is the old playbook. The Secretary of State has known all along what she wants to end up doing, but she has to follow the established dance steps, so let me make a prediction now. The parties have proposed some pretty minor undertakings in lieu. They always knew that they were not going to be enough to satisfy Ofcom, so the Secretary of State will demand extra conditions, as a result of which she will get written up as a tough operator. The parties will offer something new, which they always had in their back pocket, the Secretary of State will accept them, as she always planned, and this merger will go ahead.

Let me tell the Secretary of State the problem with Murdoch's undertakings in lieu—not just these undertakings in lieu, but any undertakings in lieu that have ever been offered by the Murdochs. They are not worth the newsprint they are written in. Ask Harold Evans or James Harding about the guarantees of editorial independence at *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. Can the Secretary of State name any undertakings in lieu that the Murdochs have ever made that have been respected?

If the current rules mean that James Murdoch can pass a fit and proper person test, given everything we know about his and his companies' behaviour over phone hacking, and given everything we know about Fox's behaviour over the ongoing sexual harassment scandal in the United States, that says more about the rules than it does about Mr Murdoch. It is clear that the rules need to be reviewed, and if the current Conservative government will not do that, the next Labour Government will.

This company has been found guilty of significant corporate failure, yet this bid process can still go ahead. In fact, over the next 12 months, the Labour party will

be reviewing media ownership rules in the UK, and let me put the media barons on notice: the days when citizens of other countries can dominate our media markets while paying their taxes overseas have to end.

The truth is, the world is changing and it is time the Conservative party realised it. We have seen what looks like an implicit bargain between the Conservative party and the Murdoch empire over recent years. The Conservatives would give Murdoch what he wanted—the Sky deal, stopping section 40, blocking Leveson part 2—and Murdoch would deliver Theresa May the landslide victory she craved. Well, it has not quite worked out that way, has it? Rupert Murdoch has not delivered his side of the bargain, has he? His papers may have done their best to urge a Tory landslide, but he just could not follow through. He is not what he was. It was not *The Sun* that won it. The country saw through him. *The Sun* told Britain: "Don't chuck Britain in the Cor-bin". Britain chucked the Tory manifesto in the bin instead.

Please let me give the Secretary of State some friendly advice: Murdoch was not any use to them. They do not need to be any use to him anymore. If I was speaking to the Minister outside the Chamber, I would say to her: "At long last, you're free. You can do the right thing." One way of signalling that freedom would be to go ahead and order part 2 of the Leveson inquiry. Notwithstanding Ofcom's fit and proper assessment, the only way to get to the bottom of the corporate governance issues that are at the heart of the decision is for the Secretary of State to hold part 2 of the Leveson inquiry. She should get on and order it now. She does not have a mandate to drop Leveson 2.

Meanwhile, let me ask the Secretary of State this. Given that this autumn James Murdoch is facing a civil trial in the High Court over new allegations of hacking and blagging at *The Sun*, and destruction of evidence, does she think that she could come out of this process with egg all over her face? How can the process possibly proceed with these cases hanging over them? Before she makes her final decision, will she guarantee to let the House know what the Prime Minister discussed with Rupert Murdoch at their private meeting in New York last year?

**Karen Bradley:** I am disappointed by the hon. Gentleman. I have come here to be fair and proper in a quasi-judicial process, and he has chosen to make it party political. That is a shame, and I think it is very cynical of him.

The hon. Gentleman should judge me on my record. Throughout this process I have been scrupulously fair and I have looked at the evidence and analysis available to me. He should not prejudge any decisions that I will take; I will take them on the basis of the evidence and analysis that is given to me and that I see, and I will make an appropriate judgment based on that evidence. I hope that he will give me credit for the fact that so far I have done that, and I will continue to do that.

**Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): May I commend my right hon. Friend for the scrupulous way in which she is following the advice she has been given while giving the maximum opportunity for interested parties to comment at each stage? Would she also agree that the only thing on which the Opposition spokesman was correct was that when it comes to plurality, it is becoming increasingly obvious—and the general election bears

[Mr John Whittingdale]

this out—that the printed press are a waning influence and the real media giants today are companies such as Google and the social media giants?

**Karen Bradley:** My right hon. Friend, who has significant experience in this area and a great track record, is absolutely right. During the general election in particular, we saw the power and influence of social media companies, which simply do not have to abide by the same rules of impartiality, fairness and checking sources that the mainstream media do. I thank him for his comments about the approach I have taken to this merger. Whatever final decision I take, I will take it on the basis of the evidence, but I want to make sure we are as transparent as possible, because there is great public interest in this issue. I want to make sure that whatever final decision I take, it is understood by the public and respected.

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of her statement. As the Ofcom report rightly reflects, the public have serious concerns about the concentration of media ownership in fewer and fewer hands. We welcome the fact that the Secretary of State is minded to refer this to the Competition and Markets Authority on the grounds of diminishing plurality in the UK media. In doing so, she will have bolstered public confidence that recognising plurality and diversity are vital components of an independent media.

In her statement, the Secretary of State said that the guarantees received from Fox about editorial independence do not go far enough. Will she outline what she is looking for from Fox to guarantee that independence of editorial standards? Although she said that it is not for the Government to decide who holds a broadcast licence, is she satisfied that the current arrangement, whereby it is left solely to Ofcom to decide who holds a broadcast licence and who does not, is sufficiently robust to ensure public confidence in the process?

**Karen Bradley:** If I can take the hon. Gentleman's latter comment about the fit and proper person test first, I think it would be extraordinary to be in a situation in which Ministers had any form of say over who held a broadcasting licence. It is right that that lies with Ofcom and if he has questions about the Ofcom process and its report, when he sees it, he should address those questions to Ofcom so that it can give him the comfort he needs.

The hon. Gentleman asks what undertakings I am looking for and, again, it is not for me to prejudge that. I have set out today that I am giving all parties 10 working days to come forward—that is, interested bodies that wish to make further representations on the matter of commitment to broadcasting standards and media plurality, as well as the parties themselves—on the matter of further undertakings they wish to make or other matters concerning my minded-to decisions. At that point, I will make a further decision.

**Damian Collins** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): My right hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale) mentioned media plurality. What consideration has been given to the world in which we live today, where most

people increasingly get their news on services such as Facebook? And what about the future of the television market—we are talking about the merger of two television companies—becoming dominated by the increasing power and financial influence of companies such as Netflix and Amazon?

**Karen Bradley:** If my hon. Friend looks at the Ofcom report, which should now have been published, he will see the consideration that was given. One point of concern about the Fox-Sky merger is that the media company is unique among media organisations in having positions in broadcasting, radio, newsprint and online. He is right that we are in an ever-changing media landscape. We need to be cognisant of that when we are looking at how best to ensure that the public receive a wide and diverse range of accurate and fair news.

**Edward Miliband** (Doncaster North) (Lab): I welcome the Ofcom report recommending a referral to the CMA on grounds of plurality, and I urge the Secretary of State not to do a grubby deal with the Murdochs. We know their history. As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson) who spoke from the Front Bench said, they break every undertaking they make, from *The Times* to *The Wall Street Journal*.

May I also ask about fitness, propriety and broadcasting standards? I do wonder what it takes to be declared unfit and improper to hold a broadcasting licence. Ofcom has apparently found a second significant corporate failure on the part of the Murdochs. Given the Secretary of State's responsibilities for broadcasting standards, is she not worried that this entity has been found responsible for a second huge corporate failure at Fox News, after News International?

**Karen Bradley:** I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman puts his comments about fitness and propriety to Ofcom, which is rightly the independent regulator. He will see its report later today. It ill behoves him to use the word "grubby" about the work that we will do. If undertakings are given and if, as a result, I am minded to consider them, there will be a full statutory public consultation on those undertakings so that we can be as transparent as possible and there can be no allegations of anything being grubby at all.

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con): I am glad that the Secretary of State has pointed to the need to make her decisions on the basis of evidence. She will be aware that there was a long email campaign of rather emotional emails on the matter. What role have they played in her thinking, and how will that help her to retain public confidence?

**Karen Bradley:** The petitions and campaigns to which my hon. Friend refers have been considered as part of Ofcom's work. He will see in the report that Ofcom has considered more than 51,000 responses as part of its work. He is right that, in my quasi-judicial role, I am obliged to look at the evidence and analysis before me. I said in my statement that shouting the loudest is not necessarily the way to get the result one wants. We are looking for new and substantive evidence that may make a change to the decision.

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): Is it not the case that the internet companies that have been referred to are essentially aggregators of news, rather than independent providers, and that a company that is the leading supplier of newspaper content, the second leading supplier of radio content and the third largest supplier of television content is, indeed, a major threat to plurality, precisely as the Secretary of State's regulator has advised her?

**Karen Bradley**: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman back to the House. He is right in his assessment that much internet news content has been previously written and owned by other providers. In response to his comments on media plurality, that is why I am minded to refer for a phase 2 inquiry.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): I remind the House that it was not just the *News of the World* that was guilty of phone hacking; *The Mirror* was found guilty too. Back to the subject of evidence, and following on from the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell), the Secretary of State will know that a number of identical emails have come, quite properly, from organisations such as 38 Degrees. In her statement, she drew a difference between evidence and perception. Is it not evidence that is now required?

**Karen Bradley**: My hon. Friend is right that evidence is what is required. I am sure that there will be more email campaigns. I assure him that my inbox is full of bursting with identical responses from around the world, but emotional perception is not evidence. Evidence is needed to enable me to make a decision in a quasi-judicial way.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): The Secretary of State asks us to judge her on her record, which I will happily do. So when will she keep the promises that were made to the victims after the Leveson inquiry, announce Leveson 2 and implement section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, which was passed almost unanimously by both Houses and, disgracefully, has still not been implemented by the Government?

**Karen Bradley**: We have had a consultation on the next steps regarding the second part of the Leveson inquiry and section 40, and I will publish the responses to that consultation. As Secretary of State, there is a process I need to go through in order to take anything further. We need to remember that the Leveson inquiry was in 2011. Many things have changed in that time. We have to think about how best to support local press and have a free, fair and vibrant local press. I will look at all those points when I consider the consultation responses.

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I fully recognise the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role. On the doorstep during the election campaign, constituents raised with me their concerns about and perceptions of bias across various media and online platforms. They were also concerned about value for money and plurality. Does the Secretary of State agree that this referral will give the public confidence in what they can actually take as media rather than pure conjecture?

**Karen Bradley**: I had similar conversations on the doorstep in my constituency and in other parts of the country. It is important that we have a transparent process that the public can have full confidence in.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): If the Secretary of State had sat in the High Court day after day, as I had to do as one of the victims of phone hacking, she would have heard endless examples and evidence—yes, real evidence heard in court before a judge—of the corruption that the Murdochs deliberately perpetuated in the British political system. The truth of the matter is that she cannot possibly now make a proper final judgment on whether the Murdochs are proper people to have any broadcasting licence in this country unless she hears more evidence in court in Leveson 2.

**Karen Bradley**: The point is that that evidence was heard in court and Ofcom has looked at it as part of all the work it has been doing. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman takes up his points on fit and proper people with Ofcom.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I thank the excellent Secretary of State for making such a clear statement to the House. However, 14 July cropped up as the date by which responses could be given, and it occurred to me that we are going into recess shortly after that date. Will she assure us that we will not get a final decision while the House is not sitting? As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mims Davies) said, the subject of media bias came up a lot on the doorstep, but I am afraid that, for me, it was media bias by the BBC, which my constituents suggested should be called the "Brussels Broadcasting Corporation".

**Karen Bradley**: I am acutely aware of the parliamentary timetable. I hope that the date of 14 July will enable me to have enough time before the House rises to come back to the House with any further updates. I will endeavour, as I have throughout the process, to ensure that the House is updated before anybody else.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): Sky TV is the largest employer in my constituency. Will the Secretary of State ensure, in any considerations and discussions she has, that the jobs of workers in both organisations are given full and proper consideration? Further to that, she seems to know what is not good enough for the process, but my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Brendan O'Hara) tried to elicit from her what will be good enough. She must know that. Surely that information should be written down and published. Then, when the evidence is presented, it should be put forward so that we can have confidence in the process.

**Karen Bradley**: I do, of course, recognise the issue with regard to people working for these organisations, and we need to be mindful of that. In many ways, that is why it is important that decisions are taken as promptly as possible, in order that uncertainty does not persist and pervade. But it would not be right for me in any way to try to set out today what I think would be appropriate or not; it is for the parties to come forward with their representations, and for me to make a decision as to whether they are appropriate to stop a phase 2 referral.

**Mr Geoffrey Robinson** (Coventry North West) (Lab): Is the Minister aware that what troubles us about her statement is her total failure to see the most obvious link between, on the one hand, the fit and proper test and, on the other hand, regular arrangements with

[*Mr Geoffrey Robinson*]

those involved that might lead to some diminution in the influence of market share and make these things acceptable? The second can only depend on the first, and unless these people are fit and proper, they will never maintain the regulations. We know the first is not there, so why would the second be?

**Karen Bradley:** I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman does not understand the process. In the process for the media merger, I have a quasi-judicial role to ensure that the public interest test in the Enterprise Act 2002, introduced under a Labour Government, is fully met and that media plurality—the issue that he raised—is dealt with. The fit and proper persons test is an ongoing test for the independent regulator, Ofcom, and I suggest that he refers his comments to it. On the commitment to broadcasting standards, many of the same issues are considered as for the fit and proper persons test, and he will see in the report exactly what Ofcom says. If he has further evidence and further substantive comments to make, I suggest that he makes them as part of that process.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for her statement. I am sure that she, like other right hon. and hon. Members, will be reflecting on the contrast between broadcasting regulations and what exists online, where we have a burgeoning source of news that now has a huge impact. However, does she agree that our regulatory structure means that even a hypothetical Fox News UK would have to be very different from its US sibling?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. Any broadcaster in the United Kingdom has to comply with the broadcasting codes and to meet our tests of impartiality, credibility and fair reporting, which may be very different from the tests applied in other countries.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): While we welcome the fact that the Secretary of State is minded to refer the proposed acquisition for fuller investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority, and we are pleased that the statement recognises the danger of too much media power being in the hands of too few individuals, we ask the Secretary of State whether, in the light of her previous references to failures of corporate governance in relation to the phone hacking scandal, she now believes that a Competition and Markets Authority inquiry will go far enough to tackle wholesale the problems at Sky?

**Karen Bradley:** I am not sure whether this is the hon. Lady's first contribution, but she is very welcome. I am obliged under this process to comply with the terms of the Enterprise Act 2002, and I am following those scrupulously.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): On broadcasting standards, does the Secretary of State recall the anger over the Fox News broadcast that claimed that Birmingham is a city where non-Muslims simply cannot go? If she approves this merger, what assurance can she give us that she can prevent that kind of offensive nonsense from being allowed on a Sky News programme in this country?

**Karen Bradley:** As I just said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster), any broadcaster in the United Kingdom has to comply with broadcasting codes and our standards, and those codes are very different from those that exist in other countries.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I welcome the Minister's statement. The test is that the merger must be fit and proper, but there are many concerns that it falls into neither category. There are doubts that the new service will be impartial. Is it right that one body controls so much of the media output? Too much control in the hands of too few is truly a danger.

**Karen Bradley:** That is why I am minded to refer to a phase 2 inquiry, to ensure that we have full confidence in whatever decision I finally take.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): In coming to its view on the commitment of those involved to broadcasting standards, did Ofcom take account of the new civil case on phone hacking, in which the judge has required James Murdoch to surrender his personal laptop?

**Karen Bradley:** I would have to ask the hon. Lady to wait for the Ofcom report and to look at that. However, I remind her that the duty on Ofcom in terms of fit and proper persons is an ongoing duty; it needs to be constantly reviewed and reflected on, and that is for Ofcom to do.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Are we not indebted to our predecessors who sat in this Chamber in 1927, who determined that the broadcasters should have a duty of balance in their news? As a result of that, we trust the broadcasters to a greater extent than we trust the prostituted popular press, which tried a campaign of character assassination against the leader of my party in the election. Rightly, viewers and readers trusted what they saw on the BBC—the reality—rather than the propaganda. But are we not now in a new position, where fake news is a real threat to us, and what determines opinion is botnets, algorithms and artificial intelligence—activities that are entirely invisible and outside all the controls we have? Do we not need a new charter for all news?

**Karen Bradley:** We announced in the manifesto—and it was in the Queen's Speech—that we are looking to construct a digital charter, which will look at the way people access information on the internet. The hon. Gentleman is right: we were all—certainly on the Government side of the House—victims of what appeared to be an echo chamber. People would put something completely vile, inappropriate and false on social media, and it was reinforced and repeated time and time again. That is simply not acceptable; it is a matter I have raised with the social media companies, and I will continue to do so.

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): The Conservative party has blocked Leveson 2. How can we respect the quasi-judicial role of the Secretary of State when she is closing off the hearing of additional evidence that was promised by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, to the victims of phone hacking?



**Karen Bradley:** These are two very different matters, and I am bound by the evidence and the analysis before me.

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): I am sure the Secretary of State sees through some of the “Bah, humbug!” of those on the Labour Benches, considering that their former leader warmed the bed of this media mogul and ultimately became a godparent to James Murdoch’s stepsister. Given that some of us have been hacked by the *Daily Mirror* and by journalists from the BBC and Belfast newspapers, we take all of that with a great pinch of salt. However, may I congratulate the Minister on the way she has conducted herself today and on the handling of this report? I look forward to being able to make representations to her. Will MPs be able to meet her personally, or will we have to write to her to make our case?

**Karen Bradley:** I am always happy to meet hon. and right hon. Members from across the House, but I would also suggest that, in this process, the hon. Gentleman makes his representations through the official lines so that we can ensure that they are all properly accounted for.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Just before we come to points of order—this is intended to be helpful to the House—I just mention that, a matter of only minutes before the intended resumption of the debate on the Queen’s Speech, I observed that many, many hon. Members who have applied to speak in the debate are not currently present in the Chamber. I know the Whips are doing their best to ensure that that situation is addressed at once. *[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Lady is gesticulating from a sedentary position to indicate that she is present; there is nothing particularly unusual or unexpected about that, and we are most grateful to her for her presence. It is not necessary for everybody who is present to signal that he or she is present; I am referring to those who are not present. But it might be helpful to new Members, in particular, if I make the point that, although all sorts of things can change over a period, and very beneficially for Parliament—I am very keen on beneficial and progressive change where the case can be made for it—it is a very, very, very long-established convention and courtesy in this place that Members who wish to speak in a debate should be present for the opening speeches and hear them, and should also be present for the winding-up speeches. People should not just wander in when it is convenient to them; that is, frankly, disrespectful to other colleagues and to the House as an institution. I hope that if there are now points of order of which I have, in response, to treat—this is not the purpose of the points of order—that will provide a welcome opportunity for people who have not yet arrived to scuttle their way towards the Chamber, and having scuttled their way towards the Chamber, they should stay in the Chamber.

## Points of Order

12.40 pm

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your guidance on how we might compel the Government to respond to the Cridland review on the increase in the state pension age. You will be aware that the Government are already in breach of their own Pensions Act 2014. They should have reported on 7 May and failed to do so. Given the real mess that they made of the increase in the state pension age of women—the so-called WASPI women—this needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Can you inform me of any information that you have about when the Government might be reporting on this, or offer some guidance on how we might encourage them to do so?

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for her point of order, but I am sorry that I am not able to provide her with satisfaction at this juncture. I have not been advised of any intention on the part of a Minister to make a statement on that matter. If it were imminent, I should rather expect, in the ordinary course of events and on the basis of past evidence, to have been so notified. However, the hon. Lady has drawn attention to her very real concern about this matter, of which I hope that Members on the Treasury Bench will have taken account.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am not really one to talk about dress sense, Sir, but I noticed yesterday that a Member was allowed to ask a question in the Chamber without wearing a tie. I have no particular view on that, but have the rules on it changed?

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): Women don’t have to wear a tie.

**Mr Speaker:** The short answer to the hon. Gentleman is that this is something provided for, if memory serves, in the conventions and courtesies of the House. The traditional approach was that a Member—effectively, as was implied by the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), a male Member—would be wearing a tie—*[Interruption.]* There is absolutely no obligation on female Members not to wear ties if they so choose. I think the general expectation is that Members should dress in business-like attire. So far as the Chair is concerned, I must say to the hon. Gentleman, although I fear this will gravely disquiet him, that it seems to me that as long as a Member arrives in the House in what might be thought to be business-like attire, the question of whether that Member is wearing a tie is not absolutely front and centre stage. So am I minded not to call a Member simply because that Member is not wearing a tie? No. I think there has always been some discretion for the Chair to decide what is seemly and proper. Members should not behave in a way that is disrespectful of their colleagues or of the institution, but do I think it is essential that a Member wears a tie? No. Opinions on the hon. Gentleman’s choice of ties do tend to vary, and it has to be said that the same could be said of my own.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Can we ensure that Standing Order 122A is implemented strictly in the House? The rule refers to chairmanships of Select Committees and states that the

[Paul Flynn]

maximum term is eight years or two Parliaments. There is a good reason for this Standing Order, because the Committees are greatly benefited, and the House benefits, I believe, from refreshing those who take on these powerful positions. If there are to be any exceptions made, or any claims made for exceptional circumstances, will you ensure that the full Standing Order is respected, and that no changes will take place unless they are approved of through a debate in this House?

**Mr Speaker:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. The Standing Orders are of course our rules, and by those rules we must all abide. I am familiar with the Standing Order to which the hon. Gentleman refers. My recollection of it is that there is a limit of two Parliaments or eight years, whichever is the longer, on the period for which the Chair of the same Select Committee can serve as its Chair. I certainly intend to interpret that rule in the proper way. If a decision comes to me to make in respect of a particular case, I will make it. Subject to any advice I might receive from the Clerk of the House, I have absolutely no objection whatever to making any such statement or clarification in the Chamber. That might be helpful to the hon. Gentleman and to other Members who are interested in this matter.

## Debate on the Address

[6TH DAY]

*Debate resumed (Order, 28 June).*

*Question again proposed.*

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

## Economy and Jobs

**Mr Speaker:** I advised the House earlier of the selection of amendments that I have made, but I appreciate that some Members were not present. I am very happy now, because I think it would be helpful to the House, to repeat that selection. I can inform the House that I have selected amendment (l) in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, which will be moved at the start of the debate, as well as amendment (d) in the name of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and amendment (g) in the name of the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna), which will be moved formally at the end of the debate.

12.46 pm

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I beg to move an amendment, at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech fails to end austerity in public services, to reverse falling living standards and to make society more equal; further regret that it contains no reference to an energy price cap and call on the Government to legislate for such a cap at the earliest opportunity; call on the Government to commit to a properly resourced industrial strategy to increase infrastructure investment in every nation and region of the UK; recognise that no deal on Brexit is the very worst outcome and therefore call on the Government to negotiate an outcome that prioritises jobs and the economy, delivers the exact same benefits the UK has as a member of the Single Market and the Customs Union, ensures that there is no weakening of cooperation in security and policing, and maintains the existing rights of EU nationals living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU; believe that those who are richest and large corporations, those with the broadest shoulders, should pay more tax, while more is done to clamp down on tax avoidance and evasion; call for increased funding in public services to expand childcare, scrap tuition fees at universities and colleges and restore Education Maintenance Allowance, maintenance grants and nurses' bursaries; regret that with inflation rising, living standards are again falling; and call on the Government to end the public sector pay cap and increase the minimum wage to a real living wage of £10 per hour by 2020.”

As of this year, Mr Speaker, I have been in the House for 20 years, just as you have. Never in all that time have we seen such a threadbare scrap of a document as this Queen's Speech. But let us be grateful for small mercies: it is a pleasure to note what has not been mentioned in this vacuous notelet. Despite their being promised in the Conservative manifesto, we have had no plans for legislation to end the triple lock, we have heard nothing about legislation to end winter fuel payments, and we have heard no legislative plans for the so-called dementia tax. There is nothing of the policy to take food from the

mouths of infants and young primary school children, and even the flagship grammar schools policy seems to have been ditched from the Queen's Speech. I would therefore like to thank the millions of voters who rejected the Conservatives because they have prevented the Tories from implementing the full cuts that they promised. I thank all those people who called a halt to the barrage of cuts that the Tories were intending to introduce. Regrettably, the Government have instead been reduced to a grubby back-room deal in an attempt to cling on to office.

The result is that we have a Queen's Speech devoid of content which offers no solutions to the pressing issues facing our country. The Queen's Speech says:

"My Ministers will strengthen the economy so that it supports the creation of jobs".

The reality is that we are witnessing, to quote the Governor of the Bank of England, the weakest UK business investment in half a century, and the growth of insecure, low-paid, low-skilled jobs, with nearly 1 million people now on zero-hours contracts.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I am very surprised that the shadow Chancellor talks about jobs, because every single Labour Government in history has left government with higher unemployment than when they came to power. We have lowered unemployment and got more people into work. How can he possibly suggest that it would be better to have Labour?

**John McDonnell:** I would check the hon. Gentleman's facts, but let me say—[*Interruption.*] I suggest he goes back to other Labour Governments who increased employment in this country as a result of direct state investment: the Attlee Government in particular, and the Wilson Government.

The issue for many of us is the quality of those jobs. The fact is that we now have people in employment who literally cannot fend off poverty. Two thirds of our children who are living in poverty are in families where people are in work. That is the quality of some of the jobs brought about by this Government.

The Queen's Speech promises

"to invest in the National Health Service, schools, and other public services",

but that could not be further from the truth. The reality is that spending per pupil remains set to fall, the jobs of police officers, firefighters, border guards will be cut, and the NHS is "already at breaking point" and has been promised no new money. Those are not our words, but those of the British Medical Association.

In various interviews over the past fortnight, the Chancellor has bemoaned the fact that he was hidden away during the election campaign and that his record on the economy was not the central plank of the Conservative campaign. I agree with him. I wish he had been more to the fore in the campaign, with his record more widely exposed, because if that had been the case, Labour would be in government now.

I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman has been afforded his proper place in history. For those hon. Members who were not in this place 10 years ago, let me explain that prior to 2010 the Chancellor was the shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury. In that role, as an ardent neoliberal, he was the architect of austerity.

It was he who designed the detailed economic programme rolled out by his mentor, George Osborne, after 2010, and he has been at the heart of every austerity Cabinet throughout this period.

In the Chancellor's recent Mansion House speech, he referred to his Government's austerity record as one "of which we are proud."

The foundation of the Chancellor's record is its adherence to neoliberalism and trickle-down economics—a theory that argues that if we cut the taxes for the rich and the corporations, and if we turn a blind eye to tax avoidance and tax evasion, somehow the wealth will trickle down to the rest of society. This Chancellor has certainly cut taxes for the rich and the corporations. Corporation tax, capital gains tax, inheritance tax and the bank levy have all been slashed by this Chancellor. Independent analysis of Office for Budget Responsibility costings demonstrates that the tax cuts introduced by the Conservatives on those four measures alone since 2010 will have cost taxpayers more than £70 billion between last year and the end of this Parliament.

**Helen Whately** (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, history tells us that increasing corporation tax actually leads to reduced tax revenues. Were he in government, his plans would mean that corporation tax revenue would fall. If he were in a position to do so, how would he make up that shortfall in Government revenue?

**John McDonnell:** The argument we heard was that corporation tax cuts would lead to a large-scale increase in business investment in our economy, but business investment fell last year for the first time since 2009. It remains lower than that in the rest of the G7 countries, with the exception of Italy. Corporations are now sitting on more than £580 billion of earned income that they are not investing. Some have been exposed as using that earned income in share buy-outs to boost performance statistics and therefore boost bonuses. That is the product of the corporation tax cuts.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**John McDonnell:** In due course.

Let us look at how seven years of austerity has contributed to the grotesque and widening levels of growth inequality in the UK. A report last year by Credit Suisse found that the richest 1% of people in the UK now own almost one quarter of the country's wealth. *The Sunday Times* rich list told us that the richest 1,000 families in the UK had more than doubled their wealth since the financial crash.

**Anna Soubry:** Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, because of Conservative policies, some 4 million people in this country who are at the lower end of the wage scale no longer pay any tax at all? This is the party that reduces taxes for the less well-off.

**John McDonnell:** It is a party that has used the taxation system to cut corporation tax, capital gains tax, inheritance tax and the bank levy, which has meant a redistribution from the poor to the wealthy.

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):** Will the right hon. Gentleman just clarify for the House what the standard rate of capital gains tax was under the last Labour Government and what it is now?

**John McDonnell:** This is a Government who want to cut corporation tax from 28p—[*Interruption.*] I thought the right hon. Gentleman was referring to corporation tax. Remember who the capital gains tax cut is going to: the 60,000 wealthiest families in this country. That is what this cut is all about.

**Mr Hammond:** Will the right hon. Gentleman just tell the House what the rate was under the last Labour Government and what the basic rate is now?

**John McDonnell:** When it comes to—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. I am finding it very hard to hear what the shadow Chancellor has to say. If I cannot hear, you cannot hear. What is the point of posing a question if you cannot wait for the answer?

**John McDonnell:** I am sure that the Chancellor will fill us in on the details when he makes his speech. The reality is that when it comes to cutting taxes, what we have seen over the past seven years is the rich being treated to tax cuts while the poorest in society have seen their services demolished in front of our eyes. The increasing levels of poverty in our society are a direct result of the redistribution of wealth from the poorest to the richest under this Government.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**John McDonnell:** I will give way in due course.

Let us measure the impact of that record of tax cuts on the rest of society. It is important that we do so, because the Queen's Speech promises more of the same. This could have been the Queen's Speech that ended austerity once and for all, but it certainly does not do that.

This is the record that the Chancellor says he is proud of. Is it a matter of pride for the Chancellor that nearly one and a quarter million food parcels were handed out in food banks over the past year? Are we proud of a Government who cannot feed their population? How can anyone be proud of the fact that more than 77,000 households—an almost 8% increase on last year—were in temporary accommodation this year? How can anyone be proud of the 134% increase in the number of people sleeping rough in this country? There are now 1.2 million households on waiting lists and 70,000 of our children are being brought up in temporary accommodation, while house building has fallen to its lowest level since the 1920s.

**Chris Williamson** (Derby North) (Lab): Is my right hon. Friend aware of research by Professor Danny Dorling stating that Britain is the second most unequal country of the richest 25 nations on earth? [*Interruption.*] It is not rubbish; it is a fact based on research by an eminent professor. Is my right hon. Friend aware that if

we continue on the same trajectory, Britain is on course to be the most unequal nation on the planet within the next decade?

**John McDonnell:** One of the warnings from the Institute for Fiscal Studies is that inequality will increase on such a scale if the Government's austerity programme continues. Are Government Members really proud that we have a Government who cannot adequately house their population?

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way to a new Member?

**John McDonnell:** Certainly. Let me just finish this paragraph and then I will come straight to the hon. Lady.

Can the Chancellor be proud that 4 million children in this country are trapped in poverty? It is not just children; the latest figures show that 14 million people in the UK are living in poverty, including 2 million pensioners, the very people the Conservatives were going to hit with the end of the triple lock, means-testing for winter fuel payments and the introduction of a dementia tax.

**Vicky Ford:** The right hon. Gentleman talks about things that we should be proud of. According to the Office for National Statistics just this week, the UK has the fifth lowest level of persistent poverty of anywhere in Europe. Unlike when the last Labour Government were in power, when more than 1 million people had no job or education, we now have one of the lowest youth unemployment levels anywhere in Europe. Are those not statistics that we should be proud of?

**John McDonnell:** I find it astounding that there can be that sort of complacency when we have such levels of poverty, homelessness and, yes, people going without food. People have to choose between heating and eating every winter.

More than 80% of the Government's austerity measures have fallen on women, but some of the hardest-hit people in the Chancellor's record of pride have been disabled people. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, almost half of those in poverty are disabled or live in a household with a disabled person. The brutality of the work capability assessment has now been associated with 590 suicides.

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend share my dismay at the growing rate of child poverty in the UK? Has he seen the prediction by the Institute for Fiscal Studies that by the end of this Parliament, on the current trend, the rate will be well over one third—even higher than the catastrophic level that the Labour Government inherited in 1997?

**John McDonnell:** We are returning to a society of grotesque inequalities and poverty among some of the most vulnerable. How can anyone claim that as a proud record?

Is it a record to be proud of that the Chancellor's cap on public sector pay has contributed to wages falling by 10% since 2008? We have witnessed the longest fall in wages on record. Nearly 6 million people earn less than the living wage. People were shocked when the Royal

College of Nursing revealed that nurses' pay had fallen by 14%, which has forced some nurses—yes, nurses—to rely on food banks.

**Gloria De Piero** (Ashfield) (Lab): In Ashfield, average weekly earnings are below the national and regional average. The Government have made attempts to help to create and protect jobs, such as through the regional growth fund, but not a penny of that money has gone to my constituency. Is it any wonder that so many of my constituents feel that the Government have forgotten them?

**John McDonnell:** We talk about people being left behind, but it is whole communities across the country that have been left behind.

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman is making the case for spending more money. His party's manifesto included pledges to spend billions more, and that money would be borrowed. What does he have to say to homeowners who would face higher interest rates as a result of his policies?

**John McDonnell:** By wanting to invest for the long term to turn our economy around and grow it, I was following the advice of a whole range of economists. I also took into account advice that was provided to us from quite a surprising source:

“Now is a good time to invest in genuinely productivity-enhancing infrastructure, and to take advantage of low borrowing costs and our ability to borrow”—

that was the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Is it something to be proud of that the UK is the only major developed country that has seen economic growth but falling wages? Yesterday we had the absolute chaos of W-turns, S-bends or whatever they have been described as from No. 10 and the Treasury over hints that the pay cap was to be scrapped. It was a disgrace that the coalition of the Tories and the Democratic Unionist party last night voted down our amendment to support public sector workers simply securing a fair pay rise. I will be happy to give way to the Chancellor if he will confirm whether the pay cap is to be lifted and if public sector workers will now get a fair pay rise. Would he like to respond? No. We need that assurance as soon as possible. Ministers are quick to praise the devotion and bravery of our emergency services in the aftermath of tragedies, as we have seen in recent weeks, but last night they could have extended their generosity to giving those brave, conscientious men and women the decent pay rise that many of them need if they are to be lifted out of poverty.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): My right hon. Friend will be aware that both the International Monetary Fund and the OECD have said that there is a relationship between inequality and growth—namely, the more inequality, the less growth. Does he not agree that it is not just unfair but unwise to pursue a policy that has led to Britain having the greatest inequality in Europe, rising at the fastest rate? If we were fairer, there would be a bigger cake with fairer shares for all.

**John McDonnell:** Virtually every mainstream economist now, and most mainstream economic institutions, argue that a fairer society is more economically efficient and more sustainable in the long term. That is not what the Chancellor's supposed record of pride has delivered.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Is the shadow Chancellor aware that 25% of posts in the national minimum wage compliance unit are lying vacant? Is that not one reason why minimum wage compliance is so weak?

**John McDonnell:** The hon. Gentleman currently chairs the Public and Commercial Services Union parliamentary group, which I previously chaired, and we have campaigned on that point for seven years. If we cannot staff up the unit that is meant to carry out inspections and ensure compliance with the minimum wage, how can we expect the minimum wage to be paid fairly?

Let us look at the desperate state of our public services. How can anyone in government take pride in the fact that spending per pupil is set to fall by 8% by 2019-20? More than 46,000 children's operations have been cancelled over the past four years. Police numbers have been cut by 20,000 since 2010, firefighter posts have been cut by 10,000, and 20,000 soldiers have been cut from the Army. A record of pride? I don't think so.

So we have a Government who cannot feed their people, house their people adequately or protect their children and older people from poverty. They cannot ensure that when people go to work they earn enough to live on, and they cannot maintain our basic public services. They are a Government who do not deserve to remain in office.

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): Does the shadow Chancellor agree that it is a scandal that local authorities that have retained their council stock—the Government and the Opposition agree, post-Grenfell, that we need more council housing—are faced with having to pay back money because of the bizarre and byzantine housing finance rules, even though they have built houses? Does he agree that we need to get rid of that scandal as soon as we possibly can?

**John McDonnell:** The housing situation in our country is in dire straits because of the lack of building. That is why in the popular Labour party manifesto, we promised to build 1 million new homes—half of those to be council houses—and to free up local governments to perform their traditional role of putting roofs over the heads of local people.

All this suffering by ordinary people under austerity, so as to protect the rich and the corporations, has been for what? By the Government's own metrics it has significantly failed. The Government promised that the deficit would be eradicated in five years, but now it will be 15 years at best. They have added £700 billion to the national debt, leaving £1.7 trillion of debt for future generations. In the first quarter of this year growth fell to 0.2%, and inflation has now increased to 2.9%. Last year saw the slowest rate of business investment since 2009. Unsecured debt per household will reach a record high this year.

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): During the election, Labour made more than £105 billion worth of promises. If the right hon. Gentleman were to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, when would he expect the deficit to be repaid?

**John McDonnell:** Interestingly, Labour was the only political party that published a costed programme. I repeat: the only numbers in the Tory manifesto were the page numbers—nothing more. We will send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the costing booklet—I thought he had already received it but clearly he has not. We increased our expenditure by £48.6 billion, and that is covered by a range of revenue sources, all of which are identified and advised on, and ensure that day-to-day expenditure is covered. The IFS told us that we would comply with Labour’s fiscal credibility rule, reducing the overall deficit over a rolling five-year programme, and reducing the debt within that period.

**James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con):** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**John McDonnell:** I will come back to the hon. Gentleman.

It is not only the Labour party that highlighted the consequence of the Tories’ failed economic approach. Last week the Governor of the Bank of England warned of “weaker real income growth”. He spoke about “markedly weak investment” and “rapid consumer credit growth”. Worryingly, he warned that the extent to which the UK’s current account deficit has moved closer to sustainability “remains open to question”, as we continue to rely on what he describes as the “kindness of strangers” to fund us.

**Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab):** The shadow Chancellor mentions comments by the Governor of the Bank of England. Like the shadow Chancellor, the Bank is concerned about the rise in household debt, which is now 142% of GDP, with unsecured borrowing rising 10% just last year. Does the shadow Chancellor share my concerns that household debt reflects the falling real wages that we have seen under this Government, and that it spells problems for the future and households being able to sustain current levels of spending?

**John McDonnell:** I will come on to that. Household debt is at a record level. Why? Because wages are so low, yet housing costs, and other costs with inflation rising, are biting hard for working families. It is no wonder that they have to resort to increased levels of debt just to get by. Those are the JAMs—the “just about managing”, who were supposed to be protected in the last Budget.

**Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con):** Does the shadow Chancellor understand the very basic economic point that the ability to borrow relies on confidence? If the individual institution that is lending someone money has no confidence that they will be able to repay it, the interest rate will go up. If we do not have the correct economic policy in place for the correct borrowing, we will end up with higher interest rates.

**John McDonnell:** I am not sure that that adds to the sum of human knowledge.

**Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab):** In response to the intervention from the hon. Member for Solihull (Julian Knight), does the shadow Chancellor think that the Tory Brexit mess has been good for confidence in the UK economy, or less good for confidence in the UK economy?

**John McDonnell:** Sometimes we can be bemused by interventions from Government Members, and I find it bemusing that they have got us into a Brexit mess, they have called an unnecessary general election, they have an unstable Government, yet they talk to us about confidence!

Let me quote a few other comments and I will try to move on quickly—I see you are getting worried about time, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Bank of England’s chief economist said last week that 7% of our entire workforce could be on zero-hours contracts within a decade. The director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies called the low wage growth in this country “completely unprecedented.” The IFS also referred to

“unacknowledged risks to the quality of public services”

under the Conservatives, and judged that their austerity plans would be so harsh as to be potentially undeliverable.

What is the Government’s response? It is a Queen’s Speech devoid of any serious measures to address the economic challenges facing this country and the pressures that ordinary people and our public services are under. Austerity will continue to impact on our schools, our health service, emergency services, and people’s living standards. In the autumn Budget it will be interesting to see how the Chancellor covers the black hole derived from his last disaster of a Budget. We are aware of at least £2 billion, and according to some commentators it could grow to anything up to £7 billion. It would be particularly helpful if the Chancellor explained today how he covers the cost of the £1 billion grubby bribe to the DUP to keep his party clinging on to office. That is £100 million a vote. If I were a Tory Back Bencher, I would want to start negotiating a slice of that action.

**Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP):** Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that his party has a lot to tell us about grubby bribes in the form of letters to terrorists to get them off their murder charges and so on? What is grubby about money put into the infrastructure of Northern Ireland to promote jobs, or money going into the health service in Northern Ireland or the education system? What is grubby about that?

**John McDonnell:** I will tell the hon. Gentleman what I think is grubby—[*Interruption.*] Sorry—I thought he was sitting on the Government Benches; I didn’t realise. What is grubby is that if we were to abide by the rules of our system, and the Barnett formula in particular, England would get an additional £59 billion, Scotland £6 billion, and Wales £3 billion. After the miraculous discovery of funds for the DUP deal, in future I do not expect to hear much more about magic money trees from the Government Benches. One billion pounds was found for the DUP, but there is nothing to address the fundamentals of our weak and precarious economy, which as my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern) said, is now faced with the challenges of Brexit.

Increasingly, people are waking up to the fact that a Government lacking—what can I call it?—a strong and stable leadership, are incapable of securing a deal that protects our jobs and economy. There are divisions at the top of Government, a Cabinet divided, and rows between members of the Government and their own negotiating team are breaking out on a daily basis as they position themselves for their own leadership challenges.

As a result, we witness weekly changes of direction in the Government's negotiating stance, including even by the Chancellor. Only weeks ago the Chancellor was threatening no deal, walking away to set up the UK as a tax haven off the coast of continental Europe. Now it is reported that he is potentially looking to the customs union, and a long and uncertain transitional period. Only months ago, he went along with the Government prioritisation of immigration control over the protection of jobs. Now he claims to want a jobs-first Brexit.

**Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con):** It has taken the right hon. Gentleman 33 minutes to get to this country leaving the European Union, which is the defining issue affecting our economy. He talks about divisions. He might want to think about the 100 Members of his own party who have been through the shadow Cabinet during the course of the previous Parliament. He might also want to ask questions about the lamentable performance of his leader, and his Back Benchers might want to ask him questions about his lamentable performance in the EU referendum last year. If they felt that strongly about Brexit, they would have defended our membership of the EU.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** I hope to call the right hon. Lady very early on and save her speech until then rather than now. That will help everyone.

**John McDonnell:** It was a great speech, though. I am quite used to throwing red books about in this place. I will send the right hon. Lady a copy of the manifesto my party is united behind.

**James Cleverly:** United!

**John McDonnell:** Yes, united behind. I am proud to say it.

The failed and deeply unpopular austerity programme, the deeply divided rudderless Cabinet, the directionless Brexit negotiation strategy and a contentless Queen's Speech surely confirms it is time for this Government to now go. It is time for change. Our amendment addresses the change that is needed. As the Labour party demonstrated during the general election campaign, there is an alternative. We can address the deep-rooted problems our economy faces. The Labour party has forged ahead with a serious credible alternative to the Government's failed approach. Our society can afford decent public services. We are the fifth-richest economy in the world. If we have a fair taxation system, we can end the cuts to schools' budgets. We can end the horrific sight of children sleeping on chairs in hospital corridors. We can end the bedroom tax and the punitive benefits sanctions regime. We can do that, as the IFS confirmed, while remaining on target to eliminate the budget deficit in accordance with our fiscal credibility rule.

It is not just about a fairer taxation system. We need a Government to invest what is needed to secure our future: not the derisory numbers floated by the Chancellor in the autumn statement with so little to back them up, but a serious, long-term vision of the economy that tackles the regional disparities and the changes taking place in the labour market. We need a Government committed to driving up productivity by increasing investment, as demanded by the CBI and many others,

and to delivering a serious industrial strategy. It is a transformative programme that we look forward to implementing in government shortly.

This Queen's Speech does nothing to solve these problems. It confirms a Government isolated from the real world in which our people live. Labour's amendment today sets out the alternative our country so desperately needs. I urge all hon. Members to support the amendment.

1.23 pm

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):** I welcome the opportunity to respond to this debate, to set out our economic record since 2010 and our plans for Britain's future, and to comment on Labour's plans for our economy.

This Government have a job to do, and a large part of that job over the next 18 months or so will be focused on securing a Brexit deal that is good for Britain and helps to deliver the strong economy that will underpin our public services, create jobs and support our living standards. Of course our country and our economy face some significant challenges. I shall set out today how we intend to address them. However, we also have within our grasp some significant prizes and we need to ensure that we are able to seize them.

I have listened for the past half hour, as have my right hon. and hon. Friends, to the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) talking Britain's economy down. It is clear that he has, and Labour has, no credible plan for addressing the real challenges this country faces. His solutions, such as they are, would put most of those prizes beyond our reach.

**Alison McGovern:** With all due respect to my right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor, does the Chancellor think it is more likely that the trouble we have in the British economy is due to the shadow Chancellor's words or to the mess the Conservative party has made so far of the Brexit negotiations?

**Mr Hammond:** If the hon. Lady bears with me, she will hear how what we have done since 2010 has strengthened the fundamentals of the British economy. If she is asking me whether the decision the British people made last summer to leave the European Union—and the uncertainty that that has inevitably created as we negotiate our way out of the European Union—adds uncertainty to the economic equation, self-evidently it does. That is why we are seeking to progress the negotiations as rapidly as possible to restore certainty for business, investors and citizens as quickly as we possibly can.

Listening to the shadow Chancellor and the Leader of the Opposition reading their election manifesto, it is clear that the Labour party has given up any pretence of a claim to fiscal credibility. Just two years ago, in the 2015 general election, Labour at least pretended that its figures added up. It would pay for its giveaways, so that its plans would not bankrupt the country. Not any more. The current lot are clear that not only would they hike taxes, but they would embark on a massive expansion of borrowing and subject the country to a catastrophic programme of ideologically driven, productivity-sapping, investment-destroying nationalisation on a scale that the country has not seen since the 1970s.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): If the Chancellor is so proud of his economic record, why did the Conservatives not discuss it during the course of the election campaign? Is it possibly because, after seven years of this Government, the Prime Minister stood before the electorate resembling that great baddie from “The Chronicles of Narnia” promising always winter but never Christmas?

**Mr Hammond:** I have not got to it yet, but the hon. Gentleman will hear an elaboration of our record since 2010 in just a moment.

I was talking about the 1970s, a decade when the lights literally went out, when inflation was in double digits, the country was crippled by strikes and bully-boy union power, and the Labour Government were forced to go cap-in-hand to the IMF for a bailout. The pretence of fiscal credibility is gone from Labour’s offer. The new pretence is that the cost of its spending spree would fall on someone else—the rich, corporates and foreign investors—but it would not. The cost would fall, as it always does when Labour gets its hands on the British economy, on ordinary people trying to get on with their lives.

If the Shadow Chancellor would put down “Das Kapital” for a few minutes and read an elementary economics textbook, he would understand why. Take Labour’s proposed corporation tax hike. The IFS analysis is pretty straightforward. The right hon. Gentleman quoted the IFS, but it said that

“much of the cost is likely to be passed to workers through lower wages or consumers through higher prices”.

The IFS is not alone. The shadow Chancellor’s predecessor, Mr Ed Balls, agrees. He says:

“The argument from this Labour manifesto that only the rich will pay, I don’t think it stacks up. From opposition, you can say, ‘Don’t worry, someone else will pay’—but you can’t do that in government.”

He might have added, “not if you seriously aspire to be in government”.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): Will the Chancellor give way?

**Mr Hammond:** I will in just a moment.

Here is the inconvenient truth for the Labour party about corporation tax. We cut corporation tax to the lowest rate of any large developed economy and two things happened. The private sector created 3.4 million new jobs—something, by the way, that the Labour party used to care about in the old days—and in the process we raised an additional £18 billion in corporation tax to fund our vital public services. That did not happen by magic. Lower corporate taxes attract more investment, more investment creates more jobs and more profits, and more profits deliver higher taxes. It is not very complicated.

**Helen Whately:** Is it not the case that if we are to have the public services that we want for our constituents, we have to have a strong and growing economy? It is very simple.

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is exactly right. There is no short cut and there is no free lunch. There is only the hard grind of improving the productivity and growth potential of our economy to build the sustainable public services that we want for the future.

**John Mann:** As the Office for Budget Responsibility confirmed to the Treasury Committee following the Chancellor’s recent Budget, all his tax projections are predicated on an extra 1 million new immigrants entering the country and working over the next five years. Can he confirm that that is still his plan?

**Mr Hammond:** It is the OBR that makes the projections and it has been quite transparent about what its assumptions are about both trade and immigration.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): If I can bring the Chancellor back to pay and public services, yesterday his Department and Downing Street were briefing the press about the public sector pay cap. To what extent was he aware of that, did he sanction his officials to carry out those briefings, and does he now support an end to public sector pay constraint?

**Mr Hammond:** Just to be clear, there is no change in the Government’s position. Our pay policy has always been designed to strike the right balance between being fair to our public servants and being fair to those who pay for them. That approach has not changed and we continually assess that balance.

**Jack Dromey** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Consider Wayne Marques, the hero police officer who fought off three terrorists, the firefighters who ran up burning stairwells to save frightened families, and the nurses and doctors who then battled to save lives: how can the Chancellor begin to justify holding their pay down, squeezing the living standards of Britain’s best?

**Mr Hammond:** As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, after the financial crisis, public sector pay ran substantially ahead of private sector pay, and we are only just moving back to the point where public and private sector pay have moved back into balance. *[Interruption.]* It is not rubbish, it is a fact, so the suggestion that there is a backlog problem for public sector workers is simply not true. As I have said, the Government’s policy remains unchanged.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** I will make a little progress and then I will give way to some more colleagues on both sides of the House.

On this side of the House at least, we continue to believe that the most effective way to protect and support ordinary families is to ensure that they have jobs, and that is what we have done, in spades. The flaw in Labour’s tax plan is not just that it will hit those whom Labour claims to support; it is that it will not raise anything like the revenue that it is claiming. Labour says it will raise taxes by £48.6 billion without anyone earning under £80,000 paying a penny more. The Institute for Fiscal Studies—which the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington quoted rather selectively—has examined the credibility of that plan. It found that Labour

“certainly shouldn’t plan on their stated tax increases raising more than £40 billion in the short run, and more likely than not they would raise less than that. They would certainly raise considerably less in the longer term.”



So before we even turn to Labour's spending plans, there is already a black hole of £8.6 billion a year and rising on the taxation side alone.

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): Is it not even worse than that, in that the IFS said that there were £58 billion of uncosted promises in Labour's supposedly costed manifesto?

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is exactly right, and if he bears with me, I shall continue.

That black hole of £8.6 billion a year and rising in taxation will have to be filled by raising tax on ordinary people, and that was just the manifesto. Since the Leader of the Opposition got his new suit, he has been out and about, flinging spending commitments with gusto at anyone he comes into contact with—another £9.5 billion of unfunded commitments for each year of this Parliament. Added to the hole in Labour's tax plans, that is an additional £90 billion over the course of the Parliament that has to be raised in taxation on ordinary working families.

Let me say that again for the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington: £8.6 billion a year of under-recovered tax, according to the IFS, and another £9 billion-plus a year that his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition added in additional unfunded commitments after the manifesto was published. In short, that is the Opposition's approach to the type of tough decisions that have to be made every day in government about prioritising limited resources—"Should we do x or should we do y?" His answer is just yes: more everything for everyone, and all of it for free—a catastrophic recipe for economic and fiscal disaster.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): In the 10 minutes or so that my right hon. Friend has been speaking, our national debt has increased by nearly £900,000. Will the Chancellor continue to speak up for hard-pressed taxpayers and make the point that, for all this talk of austerity, the debt is still rising? We have to look after the pennies, otherwise we will be up Queer Street.

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The debt is still rising, but next year, for the first time in 20 years, we expect to see it beginning to fall as a percentage of GDP—a remarkable achievement after the trashing of our economy by the Labour party in government.

**Chris Stephens:** On tax revenues, was it appropriate—during a general election in which four political parties represented in this House were campaigning against HMRC office closures—for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to negotiate a contract during *purdah* for new regional centres?

**Mr Hammond:** If HMRC has negotiated a contract during *purdah*, it will have taken advice on whether that was compatible with *purdah* and will have received guidance from the Cabinet Secretary. It perhaps says something about the way that the *purdah* rules work that I was not aware of that until the hon. Gentleman just mentioned it, but I can assure him that HMRC will have taken proper advice.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I could seek your guidance. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens) has just exposed, the Government and the Chancellor did not know about a decision on HMRC offices and jobs. Would it therefore be in order for him to come to the House as soon as possible and make a statement on the HMRC closures and the jobs in our constituencies?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** The hon. Lady has cleverly used her point of order to make the political point that she wished to make. I think she knows, as the House knows, that it is not a point that I can answer from the Chair. If, however, she is endeavouring to bring the Chancellor to be held account to the House, then I can tell her that that is exactly the process that we are currently undertaking. The Chancellor of Exchequer is here, and I am sure that the hon. Lady will be able to make her point in debate later in the day.

**Mr Hammond:** I give way to the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman).

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): I want to ask the Chancellor a question that I think he does know the answer to. Does he agree with the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), who said yesterday that some tax rises will be needed in this Parliament to maintain the quality of public services, or will he stand at the Dispatch Box and rule out any tax rises?

**Mr Hammond:** I read the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), and I am sure that what he said will prove to be a very important contribution to a debate that we will have, and should have, in the House. I welcome that.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** Let me make a little more progress.

All that is before we even get to the £500 billion borrowing splurge that Labour has promised us over the next 10 years—£250 billion over the course of a Parliament.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hammond:** I will in just a moment.

Then there is the nationalisation programme. Let me explain these plans, Madam Deputy Speaker, because they are important. The Labour party wants to nationalise gas and electricity, water and Royal Mail. They would borrow a fortune to do it, and it would deliver no economic benefit whatsoever.

First, a Labour Government would have to buy up the shares of publicly listed companies on the stock exchange. Taking over just the single largest company in each sector would cost close to £44 billion, and the Government would have to pay a market premium on top, because a programme to buy the shares would drive up the price. Moreover, the taxpayer would take on those companies' debts; that is another £26 billion. So that is £70 billion of public debt. When the Labour Government were done with the publicly listed companies,

[Mr Philip Hammond]

they would have to strike deals with scores of private investors and funds to buy the rest. All told, we are looking at more than £120 billion. [Interruption.]

The right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington says from a sedentary position, “You do not understand. It is a financial transaction, so it does not need any money, and it does not require us to go out and borrow any.” He is simply wrong. Financial transactions add to public debt—[Interruption]—and that is before we even get to the railways, which he has been chuntering about. I have deliberately left the railways out of my equation, because his proposals for those are more complex.

**John McDonnell:** The right hon. Gentleman fails to understand that we will gain an asset when we take over the railways. It will give us an income that will cover any borrowing costs, and as the franchises drop out, it will be cost-free.

**Mr Hammond:** So the proposition is this: would I entrust an asset to the right hon. Gentleman? Would I lend him the money to buy that asset, on the assumption that he would be able to produce an economic return by operating it? Let me ponder on that one, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**John McDonnell:** It will be managed by the people of this country, in whom I have confidence, not by the profiteers whom the right hon. Gentleman represents.

**Mr Hammond:** Let us test that proposition. When these industries were last in public ownership, who were they managed by? They were managed by intervening, interfering politicians and their buddies in the trade unions.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): My right hon. Friend has dealt with amendment (l). Let me now turn to a non-party-political initiative, led by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and me, and by most other Members on both sides of the House, and the discussions that we have been having with the Government about the question of the women in Northern Ireland and whether only the poor should be denied lawful abortions. Is there anything that the Government can say about that?

**Mr Hammond:** That takes me slightly away from my line of attack, but I know that the issue is of great importance to Members on both sides of the House, and that my colleagues on the Treasury Bench have been seeking a solution. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Women and Equalities either has made or is about to make an announcement in the form of a letter to Members explaining that she intends to intervene to fund abortions in England for women arriving here from Northern Ireland. I hope that the House will consider that to be a sensible way of dealing with the challenge.

**Stephen Timms** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** That was a very neat move by the right hon. Gentleman. I cannot resist giving way to him.

**Stephen Timms:** I am very grateful. This time, I want to raise the subject of amendment (g). I commend the Chancellor for his efforts to explain to Cabinet colleagues that having your cake and eating it is not an option available on the Brexit negotiating table. Very hard choices will have to be made. Does the Chancellor agree that, given the scale of what is at stake in Brexit, the option of remaining in the single market must at least stay on the table?

**Mr Hammond:** I think that there is a genuine misunderstanding in some of the debate. When we leave the European Union, we will leave the single market and the customs union. That is not a matter of choice, but a matter of legal necessity. The question is not whether we would be in the single market or in the customs union; the question is what kind of arrangements we could negotiate as part of a close partnership with the European Union that would allow our businesses to continue to trade with the EU and the EU’s businesses to continue to trade with us, so that the prosperity benefits of close trade with our European Union neighbours could continue. I am committed to trying to find a deal that will allow that to happen.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** The hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) was first, so I will give way to her.

**Hannah Bardell:** I thank the Chancellor for giving way. I hope that he will be able to follow up my point of order and the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens) about HMRC contracts, because the issue is very important to our constituents.

Is it not the case that we have a Prime Minister who disagrees with herself about Brexit, and that—as we now know from the “six jobs” former Chancellor—the whole Cabinet disagrees with the Prime Minister about the status of EU nationals? How on earth can we trust the Tories to run the country, let alone negotiate Brexit? This madness must end.

**Mr Hammond:** I will come back to the hon. Lady on the subject of her point of order, and to the hon. Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens). My understanding is that an issue arose during purdah which involved the risk of immediate financial loss to HMRC, and that under the purdah rules it was able to engage in a negotiation to try to prevent that loss to the public purse. I will, however, write to the hon. Lady, and to the hon. Gentleman, setting out exactly what happened, and I will put a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** Let me just finish answering the hon. Lady’s question.

I wake up every morning and read the newspapers—[Interruption.] Don’t count your chickens. Let me say to the hon. Lady that I do not always recognise the debate that is raging in the media as an accurate

characterisation of what is really going on. The media are desperate to create conflict where there is not necessarily any at all.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** I will give way to the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting), and then I must make some progress.

**Wes Streeting:** I am grateful to the Chancellor for giving way to me a second time. I think he has presented a range of procedural barriers that could be overcome in a negotiation to ensure that Britain remains in the single market and the customs union, as other non-EU members do. Does he accept that anything less than membership of the single market and the customs union will not give Britain as good a deal as the one that we currently have? He knows that that poses a risk to our economy, and one that none of us in the House should entertain.

**Mr Hammond:** No, I do not agree with that. I think it is perfectly clear that it should be possible to negotiate an agreement with the European Union that provides for mutual, reciprocal access to each other's marketplaces, and for frictionless arrangements for goods crossing the borders. That would not be membership of the single market or membership of the customs union, for all sorts of legal reasons, but it could have, to a very large extent, the same effect over a transitional period. I think that that is possible to achieve.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP) *rose*—

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con) *rose*—

**Charlie Elphicke** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** I will give way one more time, to the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil)—and then I will give way to a couple of my hon. Friends.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** I am grateful to the Prime—to the Chancellor. In fact, he is indeed a probable future Prime Minister, given that his is one of the serious voices in the current Cabinet. If his wish does not come true in relation to the single market, when does he think the UK Government will U-turn on the issue? Economic gravity is going to take the UK Government in that direction, whether they like it or not at the moment.

**Mr Hammond:** I have just explained to the House—and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman heard—that it would not be legally possible for us to leave the EU and stay in the single market. It is simply not an option.

**Jeremy Quin** *rose*—

**Charlie Elphicke** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** I am happy to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin).

**Jeremy Quin** *rose*—

**Helen Goodman:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt, but the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) wishes to raise a point of order.

**Helen Goodman:** I wonder whether I could give the Chancellor of the Exchequer an opportunity to correct a false statement that he just made. Turkey is not in the European Union, and it is in the customs union. The legal barriers that the Chancellor is creating simply do not exist.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I should say to the House, for the benefit of new Members, that there is a difference between an intervention in a debate and a point of order. The hon. Lady is being clever in using her wisdom about how the House works, but she knows that that was not a point of order, and that it is not something that I can answer. What she really wants to do is intervene on the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

For the benefit of new Members of the House, let me make it clear that a point of order should not be used to make an intervention that the Chancellor has not taken. The Chancellor is perfectly capable of choosing the interventions that he wishes to take. He has taken many, and I am sure that he will take many more.

**Mr Hammond:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham.

**Jeremy Quin:** I am most grateful that the Chancellor is now taking my intervention. May I take him back to the discussion on amendment (1)? About six interventions ago, he was patiently explaining to the shadow Chancellor the risks to cashflows of nationalising all these wonderful businesses and the huge cost to the taxpayer that would result. I hope that the shadow Chancellor has been suitably educated. Will my right hon. Friend also educate the shadow Chancellor on the point that the total amount of our debt will have an impact on our borrowing costs? They are high enough already, but they could get a lot worse. The shadow Chancellor's friends who run the Greek and Portuguese economies know about high borrowing costs.

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. The shadow Chancellor often talks about borrowing costs being low and about this being an ideal time to borrow more, but if he ever got his hands anywhere near the levers of power, with his programme of massively increased borrowing, we would soon see our debt interest costs soaring. That would mean yet more of our hard-earned taxpayers' money being paid to the lenders.

Let me summarise where I have got to on Labour's programme. The shadow Chancellor has a small problem with arithmetic. The Institute for Fiscal Studies found a £2.2 billion arithmetical error in his manifesto costings. We have identified a £90 billion black hole in Labour's spending plans that would have to be funded by higher taxation on ordinary families, £250 billion of planned borrowing, and £120 billion—and some—for the nationalisation, which would all be added to our debt. So, just as our national debt is about to start falling as a share of GDP, the Labour party wants to add at least £370 billion to the pile.

**Rachel Reeves:** The Chancellor seems to be more interested in talking about what is in the Labour manifesto than about what is in his own Government's Queen's Speech. Is that because there is so little about the economy in the Queen's Speech, or is it because he does not believe in it?

**Mr Hammond:** No; it is because I am about to come to it. The shadow Chancellor talked about his programme, and I wanted to make the simple point that, for all the rhetoric about somebody else paying, it is always the same with a Labour Government: it is always ordinary working people who pay, through higher taxes, higher prices and fewer jobs.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Hammond:** I am going to make a little progress.

The truth is that the shadow Chancellor sees failure everywhere, while I see a fundamentally robust economy rebuilt from the ruins of Labour's great recession. It is an economy that now needs to navigate successful transition out of the EU and into a deep and special partnership with our EU neighbours, and to realise the great potential of a technological revolution ahead, in which British universities and British companies will play a leading role.

I see a country that has achieved great things together since the last time Labour had its hands on the levers of power. In Labour's last year in office, our economy shrank by 4.3%. In 2016, it grew faster than any major advanced economy bar Germany. Back in 2009, millions feared for their jobs and their futures. At that time, the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington predicted that under our plan—*[Interruption.]* He should listen to this. He predicted that under our plan unemployment would rise by 1.2 million as we suffered a double-dip recession and a decade-long depression. Since then, 2.9 million net new jobs have been created, our employment rate is the highest on record and our unemployment rate is at a 40-year low. In 2009, our deficit was at a post-war high. Since then, we have got it down by three quarters, while also taking 4 million people out of income tax in the last Parliament and cutting income tax for 30 million taxpayers, with the typical basic rate taxpayer paying £1,000 a year less income tax as a result.

**James Duddridge:** May I echo my right hon. Friend's comments and relate them to Southend? Business in Southend is booming. Businesses are being created, particularly alongside Southend airport in the new business park that the Government have part-funded. We have a success in Southend—this is working there. Would he like to come back to Southend, as he did a number of years ago, to see how business is booming and the impact of his positive policies?

**Mr Hammond:** I am always happy to go to Southend, but the story that my hon. Friend tells is being repeated up and down the country in constituencies represented by Members on both sides of the House.

The shadow Chancellor complains that growth has not benefited the less well-off. That was at the core of his argument today, but he is wrong. The basic state pension is up by £1,250 a year. Under a Conservative

Government, income inequality is at a 30-year low. The poorest households in the UK have seen their wages rise more since 2010 than in any other country in the G7 and, thanks to the Conservative national living wage, those in full-time work on the minimum wage have seen their pay boosted by £1,400 a year. He presents our economic success as a bubble that benefits only London and the south-east, but he is wrong again. Today the economy is growing fastest in the north-west, wages are rising fastest in the west midlands, productivity is growing fastest in Northern Ireland, and unemployment is falling fastest in Scotland. That is a good news story across the length and breadth of our United Kingdom, benefiting all the regions and all the nations.

**Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op):** The figure of £1,400 is what Northern Irish women were having to spend to get an abortion here in England, so it is welcome that the Government are now saying that they will correct this injustice. However, the Chancellor will know, as everyone knows, that the devil will be in the detail. Will he therefore make a commitment on behalf of the Government to meet me and representatives of organisations such as Marie Stopes, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and the London Irish Abortion Campaign to look at how we can turn this into a reality, so that those women in Northern Ireland who have finally had their voices heard today can use these services as soon as possible?

**Mr Hammond:** I say to the hon. Lady: please read the letter that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Women and Equalities has sent out. We will be giving additional funding to her Department so that she can make a grant to the external organisations that will provide those services. I think that the hon. Lady will be satisfied when she has read the letter and understood the details. If she is not, I will be happy to meet her.

**Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con):** Will the Chancellor make one further clarification, because there seemed to be some misinformation during the general election campaign? On tax avoidance, which Government have passed more than 50 measures, taken the base erosion and profit shifting process forward, published one of the world's first public registers of beneficial ownership and reduced the tax gap to the lowest level in living memory? And which previous Government did precisely nothing?

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. The shadow Chancellor likes to talk about tax avoidance, but the Labour Government did nothing to deal with it—*[Interruption.]* Well, let me phrase it differently for the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms), who takes offence at that. He was a member of that Government, and they left £150 billion on the table. That is how much we have taken through clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion—*[Interruption.]* And before the shadow Chancellor stands up, I will tell him—he did not know the answer—that under the last Labour Government, the main rate of capital gains tax was 18%. Under this Conservative Government, it is 20%, with a 28% rate on residential property and hedge fund managers.

**John McDonnell:** It was increased under George Osborne and then cut back again. Let me remind the Chancellor of the *Financial Times* survey that found that the measures on tax evasion and avoidance introduced by Gordon Brown were 10 times more effective than anything that this Government have done.

**Mr Hammond:** Let me do the maths. Hmm, it would be £1.5 trillion that they raise. Perhaps one of my hon. Friends will check down the back of the Treasury Bench in case the previous Chancellor hid that away down there. As usual, the right hon. Gentleman is talking absolute nonsense.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Will the Chancellor give way?

**Mr Hammond:** I want to make a little progress, but I will give way in a moment.

I have set out our record, but the British people did not get where they are today by admiring their achievements. We have work to do: we have to negotiate our future relationship with the EU; we have to enhance our global competitiveness through raising our productivity; we have to rise to the challenge of sustaining our public services in the face of demographic pressure; we have to address the needs of our population for affordable routes into home ownership; and we have to show the courage and vision to grasp the opportunities ahead. We will meet those challenges head on, as we have always done, with a plan that builds on the strengths of our economy, not one that denigrates them.

Let me say something about our public services and their funding. We all value our public services and the people who provide them to us. Health and social care, education, roads, local authority services, police, fire and rescue, defence and the many, many other services we enjoy all form part of the vital fabric of our society and contribute to the vibrancy of our communities. The challenge of funding those public services is accentuated by the changing age profile of the population, which necessitates a proper debate about how to make the funding of public services sustainable not just next year, but over the decades of demographic change to come. We have to be clear about the choices and what they mean because there are no free lunches or money trees in the real world, and all decisions have consequences.

There are three ways for the Government to increase spending on public services: higher taxes, higher borrowing or higher growth. Higher taxes have a cost in terms of business investment, economic growth and take-home pay. Conservatives are instinctively in favour of keeping taxes as low as possible so that business can continue to create high-quality jobs and hard-working people can keep more of the money that they earn. That is why we reject Labour's manifesto plan, which would, according to the IFS, take taxation to its highest ever peacetime level. The right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington is not listening, but—[*Interruption.*] Pay attention. If he wants to make the case for higher taxation to fund public services, will he at least make this a grown-up debate? Will he at least ask voters whether they want to pay higher taxes to fund public services, not whether they would like someone else to pay higher taxes? As Ed Balls reminds us, in the real world, it is ordinary people who pay.

When we already have an eye-watering amount of debt, higher borrowing makes our economy vulnerable to future shocks. With £1.7 trillion of national debt outstanding and an annual interest bill of £50 billion, even at the current low rates, we should be reducing debt, not increasing it. However, borrowing means something else, too. It means that we are asking the next generations—our children and our grandchildren—to consume less in their lifetimes to pay for our consumption today. That is simply not fair; it is the opposite of sustainable.

**Mark Pawsey:** The Chancellor rightly mentions the interest bill. Will he tell us what would happen to interest rates if the Opposition's policies were introduced? What would be the impact on the average family's income?

**Mr Hammond:** As I have already said, if it were ever to look like the shadow Chancellor was anywhere near having his hand on the lever of power, I suspect that his programme, given what we know about his values and principles around the management of the economy, would lead to a pretty sharp rise in interest rates.

We must continue the job of getting our public finances back in order, over a sensible period of time, so that we are living within our means. The shadow Chancellor referred to the decision in my first autumn statement to push back the date on which we will reach fiscal balance. I made that decision to protect our economy during a period of uncertainty due to our exit negotiations from the European Union, therefore giving ourselves a little more headroom to respond should the economy need support. I would have thought that the right hon. Gentleman welcomed that measure.

The only fair and sustainable way to fund better public services, higher real wages, and increased living standards—[*Interruption.*] I say to the Opposition Front-Bench team that that is absolutely not the way to do it. The only fair and sustainable approach is to increase economic growth through higher productivity. Our plan will support our public services and living standards.

**Jonathan Edwards:** Based on the rosy picture that the Chancellor has been endeavouring to portray this afternoon, will he explain why Britain has the worst-performing economy in the G7 under his watch?

**Mr Hammond:** The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Last year, the British economy was the second-fastest growing in the G7 after Germany. In the year before that, our economy was the second-fastest growing after the United States.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): And this year it is at the bottom.

**Mr Hammond:** Well, we are only one quarter into this year. I do not want to get techy, but the first quarter data are always subject to the largest revision, so let us wait and see. The OBR maintains its forecast for economic growth of 2% this year.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con) *rose*—

**Charlie Elphicke** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart) and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke). I will then make a bit of progress.

**Alex Burghart:** The Chancellor went to school in my constituency and will be aware that my constituents are concerned that we maintain our excellent record on job creation. What would be the impact on job creation of a sizeable hike in corporation tax—say to 26%?

**Mr Hammond:** As I have already said, it is clear that reducing the corporation tax rate has led to a flow of investment and the creation of millions of new jobs, which I welcome. That is the way forward for this country, not the obsolete 1970s policies of the Labour party.

**Charlie Elphicke:** The Chancellor is being incredibly generous in taking interventions. Obviously we will be leaving the European Union in two years' time. He hopes for a transitional deal, and we all hope that it goes smoothly and well, most of all on the Dover frontline. Does he agree that it is important that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Government are ready on day one for the challenge and for every eventuality?

**Mr Hammond:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We do not know what the outcome of our negotiations with the European Union will be, but we have to be prepared for every possible eventuality, particularly at the port of Dover. I hope that when hon. Members across the House look at the great repeal Bill, which will prepare us to deal with whatever situation we find ourselves in in March 2019, they will think carefully about that situation.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Hammond:** I have given way a great deal and I need to make some progress.

Our plan will build an economy that shares prosperity and opportunity across all parts of the United Kingdom. It will do that through a Brexit deal for jobs and prosperity that creates a platform for growth, and by tackling our long-standing weaknesses of underinvestment, inadequate skills and regional disparities. Our national productivity investment fund is part of a commitment of nearly half a trillion pounds of public investment over the next five years. T-levels and extended tuition hours will overhaul our provision of technical education. Our modern industrial strategy will tackle deep-rooted regional disparities in productivity, which is key to our economy's future success. Higher productivity raises incomes and living standards. Higher productivity will allow us to go out and compete in the world. Higher productivity assures the sustainability of our public services. It was what I promised to focus on when I became Chancellor. It was at the heart of my autumn statement and my spring Budget, and it will be there again when I deliver my autumn Budget.

Our plan for Britain's economy is a measured and practical plan to restore our public finances to balance over a timescale in which we have the flexibility to support the economy and invest in our future, to negotiate

a Brexit deal that supports British business to go on creating jobs and prosperity as we leave the European Union, and to drive productivity to fuel economic growth that supports quality public services and rising living standards. We will do that through investment in infrastructure and skills, by ensuring the flow of capital to growth sectors, by promoting R and D in our businesses and our universities, and through an industrial strategy that will at last begin to tackle the blight of regional disparity. We are a Government committed to delivering that plan, doing the hard miles, negotiating the right deal, taking the tough choices, eschewing the easy answers favoured by the Opposition, and taking the hard decisions that will set Britain on course to seize the prizes and achieve a brighter, global future. I commend the Queen's Speech to the House.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. Before I call the spokesman for the Scottish National party, I ought to draw the House's attention to the fact that 64 hon. Members have indicated to me that they would like to speak within the next three hours. The Chancellor and shadow Chancellor are vying for arithmetical progress, but anyone who can work this out will know that we need to have a time limit. The initial limit will be six minutes, but later in the day it will be considerably less than that. There is no time limit on the SNP spokesman, Kirsty Blackman.

2.10 pm

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and welcome to your seat—it is good to see you back there. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the SNP, but I am disappointed that none of our amendments was selected today. We set out in them our demand for the Scottish police and fire services to be excluded from VAT payments. We would also like the Government to halt the austerity agenda—[*Interruption.*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. If Members are leaving the House, they must do so with courtesy to the hon. Lady.

**Kirsty Blackman:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. We demand that this Government stop pursuing austerity—the electorate gave them that message and we again reiterate it. We also asked in our amendments that proper transitional arrangements be put in place for WASPI women and that the UK take the action it should take to contribute to reducing the refugee crisis across Europe. The SNP will support the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) and we will also vote in favour of the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, but I wish to stress that we believe the only way we can get the exact same benefits of being in the single market and the customs union is by being in them.

This is my first opportunity to speak as the SNP's economic spokesperson, and it is a huge honour to hold this position. This is the third Queen's Speech debate that I have seen in my time as an MP, and I want to take

Members back two years, to my first Queen's Speech debate, when the then Chancellor, George Osborne, said that

"the latest forecast is that the UK will be the fastest growing of any of the G7 economies".—[*Official Report*, 4 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 797.]

He also took the opportunity to reflect that everyone had predicted a hung Parliament, yet the Conservatives had won a comfortable majority—how things have changed. After seven years of ideological and callous cuts, in the first three months of 2017 the UK's growth was lowest of the G7 economies, joint with Italy—so much for this "long-term economic plan".

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Today, the Chancellor made great play of productivity in the UK, but a London School of Economics growth commission report pointed out that the lack of a comprehensive, coherent, long-term industrial strategy from the UK Government had contributed to "poor productivity performance", harming the nations of the UK. Is it not time that the UK Government and this Chancellor got to work on actually doing something to correct the problems they have caused for the economies of the nations of the UK?

**Kirsty Blackman:** I agree with my colleague that this is too little, too late. In the time that a British worker makes £1, a German worker makes £1.35, and not enough has been done. I understand that the industrial strategy is being consulted on, but it has not received very favourable responses compared with previous things that have been done in relation to industrial strategy. I hope to see major changes in the industrial strategy as it goes forward, so that it becomes more fit for purpose.

At this election, the Conservatives failed to bolster their majority and have had to sign a grubby deal with the DUP in order to get a majority. It was so grubby that it did not meet the tests that the Secretary of State for Scotland set out for it. It is back-door funding for Northern Ireland, and it was so grubby that the Prime Minister refused to even sign it.

The Conservatives like to portray themselves as being good with the economy and trusted with it. It is therefore distinctly irony that, after they have had seven years in government, if we ask people in the street, they will tell us that they are feeling the pain of a decade of wage stagnation; they are feeling the effects of rising inflation—rising faster than the Chancellor predicted in his spring Budget; and they are looking at how they can make ends meet in their household budgets. That is the reality for people, but the Conservatives fail repeatedly to understand this. They stand there and talk about the just about managings, the long-term economic plan and how great the economy is, but people are not feeling those things—that is not the real-life, lived experience of people in the UK.

**Jonathan Edwards:** The Tories also like to portray themselves as the party of the Union, but does the Barnett-bypass deal for the DUP not fundamentally undermine United Kingdom pooling and sharing resources?

**Kirsty Blackman:** I absolutely agree; if Northern Ireland is getting £1 billion or £1.5 billion or however much it will be tomorrow, the other nations of the UK should get similar. Our manifesto contained a commitment

for extra money for the NHS in England, because we believe that the English NHS should have more money, and that would generate Barnett consequential for the NHS—or for spend—in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. That is the way we think this should have been done.

On the Conservatives' economic record, Members should not just take my word for it. They should take the word of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which described this situation as "dreadful", projected that child poverty would rise to 30% by 2021-22, and laid the blame squarely on the impact of tax and benefit reforms; they should take the word of the Resolution Foundation, which reported that the Tory Government's tax and social security policies will drive the

"biggest increase in inequality since Thatcher";

they should take the word of the Bank of England, which reported that consumer credit has risen at annual rates above 10%; they should take the word of StepChange Debt Charity, which reported that 22 million people in the UK are not confident that they are saving enough to cope with unexpected bills or a drop in income; and they should take the word of Money Advice Scotland, which, in a damning statement, reported:

"More and more people within the money advice sector already attest to the growing prevalence of debts that are directly related to living costs. People who are borrowing not out of recklessness, but because their level of income cannot sustain a socially acceptable standard of living".

That is what the Tories are presiding over.

**Hannah Bardell:** I welcome my hon. Friend to her position; she is making a very powerful and convincing speech. Does she share my concern that much of this country's growth is based on consumer debt, and that the UK has one of the highest rates of consumer debt in the EU? Is that not an economic train crash waiting to happen?

**Kirsty Blackman:** Absolutely. I think we will see increasing problems with that, and I shall come on to that later.

During the election campaign, the UK Government seemed unclear about the causes of poverty, so let me enlighten them: poverty is caused by people not having enough money.

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): If the hon. Lady is against consumer debt, which we all agree we are worried about, why is she so comfortable with public sector debt?

**Kirsty Blackman:** They are totally different things, and I am surprised that I have even been asked that question. The level of consumer debt is a massive problem for the economy, because people are going to be hit when this bubble bursts—that is what we saw happen in 2008.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Kirsty Blackman:** I am going to make some progress.

Nothing in the Queen's Speech or in the fiscal or monetary policy direction will alleviate the problems people are facing. We demand that in order to stimulate growth the UK Government invest in infrastructure

[Kirsty Blackman]

and public services—not just in Northern Ireland, but across the nations of the UK. This morning, the Institute of Government released a report that said that

“weak processes are leading to the wrong projects and contested decisions, wasting both government time and taxpayer money.”

The UK Government need to improve the systems in place to make infrastructure decisions so that the right ones are prioritised.

We demand that the UK Government properly secure the rights of EU nationals. Given that those who choose to live here unarguably contribute to reducing the deficit, reducing immigration will hit the public purse. The lack of access to workers will also cause issues for many industries—I know that the Chancellor is pretty onside with that argument.

**Charlie Elphicke:** My concern, and I think that of many of us on the Government Benches, is that a massive increase in public sector debt will cause interest rates to rise, which will then put pressure on families who have too much household debt. That is why it is really important that we act with fiscal prudence—to keep interest rates down.

**Kirsty Blackman:** What we are proposing is not a massive increase in public sector debt, but targeted public sector spend in order to increase economic growth.

We demand that the UK Government put in place a proper living wage—a living wage that people can actually live on, not a pretend living wage. We also demand that the living wage is in place for those aged 18 and above, not just for those who are over 25.

**James Cartledge** (South Suffolk) (Con): Is the hon. Lady aware that the only international measure of the generosity of living wages is the Big Mac index? Under that index, our minimum wage is the second most generous in Europe, after Luxembourg.

**Kirsty Blackman:** The national living wage that has been put in place by the Conservatives does not provide enough to live on. It does not matter how generous it is compared with other places; what matters is whether people can live on it.

**Mr Philip Hammond:** The hon. Lady says that she wants to see a targeted increase in spending. Can she confirm that the Scottish Government will use their powers under the Scotland Act 1998 to raise taxes in Scotland to increase spending in Scotland?

**Kirsty Blackman:** We have already done so.

In this time of mass instability, we need the UK Government to support a monetary policy that encourages investment in places that will create direct growth, and quantitative easing has not achieved that since the first wave was put in place. That matter needs to be considered as a matter of urgency.

We need a UK Government who will fight for single market membership to ensure that all companies in the UK have the potential to grow, export and create skilled jobs.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): I am glad that, in this debate on the economy, we are mentioning the single market at last, but what about the digital single market in which we are building a future? The innovation required for small and medium-sized businesses will be thwarted if this Government withdraw us not only from the single market, but from the digital single market.

**Kirsty Blackman:** I understand that the digital single market has the potential to create massive revenues for the nations of the UK. It would be a travesty if we were not to remain a part of that.

We need a UK Government who will tackle gender inequality properly. We eagerly await the proposed legislation on this, and we will press the Government to ensure that it is incredibly robust. The Scottish National party has led the way on this: in Scotland, we have a gender-balanced Cabinet; and in Westminster, we have a gender-balanced leadership team. To overcome gender inequality, this Government must tackle the structural causes of discrimination that are so embedded in our culture.

**Hannah Bardell:** On the matter of gender equality, does my hon. Friend share my concern that when the First Minister of Scotland brought forward legislation for a 50:50 gender balance on public boards by 2020, the Conservatives in Scotland opposed it?

**Kirsty Blackman:** That does not make me feel confident about the gender equality legislation that is coming forward, but we can only hope that this Government do things differently to their colleagues in Scotland.

We have never had a female Chancellor of the Exchequer or a female shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer. Today, I proudly stand here as the first ever House of Commons female spokesperson on the economy. That demonstrates just how far we still have to travel to achieve true gender equality.

**Mr Robert Syms** (Poole) (Con): I just point out that Margaret Thatcher was shadow Chancellor under Ted Heath.

**Kirsty Blackman:** I apologise for that oversight. I did check the facts, but obviously not well enough.

To best protect our workers, we need a UK Government who recognise the importance of trade unions and want to secure their rights, rather than systematically dismantle them. As we leave the EU, the protections for workers will be reduced, because we will lose the oversight of the European Union. We need to ensure that workers have the protection that they need and deserve.

Successive Tory-led Governments have caused untold harm to the nations of the UK: they have increased inequality; created spiralling household debt; presided over drastic reductions in people’s savings; reduced access to in-work benefits; closed jobcentres, which has reduced the opportunity for people to get back to work; and attacked the vulnerable, the sick and the disabled. Those people who are most in need in the nations of the UK have been worst served by this Government.

This Government have consistently failed to support policies that recognise the problems that millennials face. Generation Y are set to be poorer than their



parents. Everybody who was born after 1955, which I understand is when the Chancellor was born, is set to be poorer than their parents' generation. We are seeing wealth accumulation by the age of 30 decrease, and that is storing up problems for the future. There are major issues for millennials, and the Government have not moved fast enough to recognise the difference in the level of home ownership, in the age that people have children, in the social structure, and in the way that millennials are coping economically. Our economic policies have not moved towards making things better. They also have not taken into account the massive levels of student debt. As an aside, it is a pretty terrible fiscal policy to have people paying off their student debt until, eventually, it gets written off, with most of them never managing to pay it all back.

The people who live in the nations of the UK cannot cope with another unfettered Tory Government. A message was sent to the Tories at this election that said that we cannot be dragged out of the single market. An end to single market membership means the loss of 80,000 jobs in Scotland and £2,000 per person. That would be an economic travesty. Given that the Tories have already presided over a decade of wage stagnation, spiralling household debt, decreasing household debt, decreasing household savings and the drastic dismantling of the social security safety net, I do not see how the nations of the UK can cope with the drastic economic hit that will come as a result of Brexit.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. On account of the very large number of would-be contributors to this debate, the largest proportion of whom I am keen to accommodate, there has to be a six-minute limit on each Back-Bench speech, with immediate effect.

2.28 pm

**Dame Caroline Spelman** (Meriden) (Con): I shall oblige you, Mr Speaker, by falling within the limit. I want to speak briefly about the way the measures in the Queen's Speech will contribute to the economic success of the west midlands, a region with a growth rate of more than 5% in the past two years. In fact, the growth rate of the borough of Solihull, containing my constituency, outstripped that of China at more than 7%—it is certainly an example of what the Chancellor called a fundamentally robust regional economy.

Without question, the stellar performance of the car industry has contributed to that success, but other branches of manufacturing have benefited as well. In turn, that has resulted in record low unemployment among the young people in my constituency. Some 6,000 of them have obtained apprenticeships, which has allowed them to benefit from some of the 100,000 new jobs created in the borough of Solihull alone since 2010.

The focus in the Gracious Speech is on an industrial strategy that will spread good practice, help to improve living standards and productivity, and ensure that the benefits of growth are shared. The manufacturing renaissance in the west midlands was boosted by regional growth funding, but the promise of the extra £23 billion for national productivity investment will boost it further.

The shortage of skilled labour in our region is holding back many young people from taking advantage of the jobs that are being created across the area. So I am delighted that the second pillar of the industrial strategy puts the emphasis on skills. The inclusion of a new system of technical education will benefit some of the 50% of youngsters who do not go to university, helping them to get well-paid jobs by learning STEM subjects, which employers value so highly.

On the council estate in my constituency a new engineering academy has opened and there is a new campus for my college of further education, which has two new streams of apprentice engineers for automotive and aerospace. I had my preconceptions challenged when I visited it because I found that the engineering apprenticeship students were 50:50 men and women. And I do mean women. Many of them had missed out on their education while they had their kids, and had come back to secure a qualification that would obtain them a well-paid job. They explained to me that the night shift in the car factory was a good solution to fitting work round their family responsibilities. They get back home to take their kids to school, get a bit of kip, get up again, pick their kids up from school, give them tea, oversee their homework, then their mum comes in and sleeps overnight.

It might surprise the House to hear, and I set the challenge to a visiting Secretary of State, just how much someone can earn as an experienced car production worker. The salary can be £60,000 a year, which allows someone to get a mortgage for the average house price in the west midlands of £183,000. One of the women said to me, "I can earn much more like this than stacking the shelves in a supermarket." That for me is a clear example of aspiration. In time we will definitely reduce income inequality and change lives for the better through education-led regeneration. It is small wonder that Solihull College has been awarded a gold rating by the teaching excellence framework.

In my role as Second Church Estates Commissioner it is my job to link up what happens in both Houses of Parliament. I would like to share with the House what the Archbishop of Canterbury said in his contribution to the Queen's Speech. He saw the importance of sharing growth across the whole economy. The Church of England is well placed to help; it is the largest provider of primary education. He sees it as particularly important that we raise the standards of education in schools, to give children all over the country the opportunity to take up the kind of jobs that I have just described.

As a member of the all-party parliamentary group for inclusive growth, I believe that the current rise in populism internationally reflects the challenge that Governments in all advanced industrial nations face in tackling the impact of globalisation. So I welcome the Government's commitment to raise the living wage and the impact of raising the tax threshold, which has lifted so many people out of paying tax altogether.

There are new challenges on the way, with the digitisation of the economy, and we will need to demonstrate that technological progress can support rising living standards for all. My concern in listening to the shadow Chancellor is that the success of regions such as the west midlands would be put at risk by his plans if they ever became a reality, and that is why I am a supporter of this Queen's Speech and the architects of our economic success.

2.33 pm

**Edward Miliband** (Doncaster North) (Lab): It is a privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman).

The Queen's Speech debate after a general election is a chance to reflect on what we heard during the election. That is particularly important given the result we have just seen. Let us be honest across the House—we were all a bit gobsmacked by the result. Jon Snow went on television the day after the election and said, "I know nothing", and I think that probably applies to many of us.

Having heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has departed, I am bound to ask, "If it is all going so well, why did it go so badly?" In other words, the result did not exactly meet Conservative expectations. I believe that there is a deeper explanation. It has been said that many people have

"a sense—deep, profound and let's face it often justified—that...the world works well for a privileged few, but not for them."

Those are not my words but the words of the Prime Minister in her party conference speech.

If we look at the remarkable turnaround that took place during the election campaign, we can blame the social care policy, we can blame the Prime Minister, but I think it is deeper than that. The tide is going out on a certain way of running the country—large inequality, the next generation seeing their chances diminish, and permanent austerity. The crucial point about the campaign—I think Conservative Members know this—is that the Prime Minister who stood on the steps of Downing Street as the agent of change became the agent of the status quo. The reality is that my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party became the agent of change. That is why we saw the change that we did in this election.

The question about this Gracious Speech is whether it shows that the Government understand the lessons of the election campaign. Listening to the Chancellor, one would think that it had all gone brilliantly and the Conservatives had got a landslide majority, as they had planned. They did not. I look at the Gracious Speech and I ask this question. Does it include an attack on the burning injustices that the Prime Minister promised in her words in Downing Street? Is there the transformation in life chances that she promised? Is there a determination to stand up to the most powerful as she promised? The answer, to coin a phrase, is no, no, no. We do not see any of that in this speech.

I want to make some positive suggestions about how Members across the House, working together, can rectify the gaps in the Queen's Speech, and I will make three in the time I have. The first—it will not surprise hon. Members to hear me talk about this—is on energy prices. I do not normally read *The Sun*—people might recognise that, but on 9 May I read something that caught my eye. It said:

"I am making this promise: if I am re-elected on June 8, I will take action...by introducing a cap on unfair energy price rises...It will protect around 17 million families."

That is brilliant, I thought. That is my policy, more or less. It was from the Prime Minister. Then I look at the Queen's Speech—where has it gone? Where is the price

cap legislation? All we have is a consultation and a letter to Ofcom—a U-turn on the U-turn, which happened yesterday as well.

Let me put it this way: 84% of people supported parties with a price cap in their manifesto. Not a soft cap but a hard cap. It was proposed by the Labour party and the Conservative party. So let us do it. I welcome the intervention by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose) in the Queen's Speech debate when the Prime Minister spoke.

Secondly, the Prime Minister says that she cares about insecurity. Zero-hours contracts may have started under the last Labour Government, but let us be honest about the situation. The number has gone from 168,000 in December 2010 to 900,000 by the end of last year. If we care about insecurity, it is unfathomable that we are not acting on this. We heard it from our constituents on the doorsteps. We heard that sense of insecurity; it is part of the explanation for the result of the general election.

Thirdly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer talked about corporation tax. We have cuts in corporation tax still to come that will cost £5 billion over the next few years. If there is no magic money tree, is it really the priority that Apple, Starbucks and other companies should pay 17% tax when ordinary families in Britain pay 20%? Why? Where is the fairness in that? Where is the sense of tackling the burning injustice that the Prime Minister talked about?

I want to end on this thought. Ever since 2015 I have stopped believing opinion polls—people will not be surprised to learn that. I make an exception in the following case, which is not about voting intention. I was reading the newspapers on 9 May, and people were asked by Ipsos MORI whether they thought that the country was rigged to the advantage of the rich and powerful—76% of people in Britain agreed and just 16% disagreed. The question for all of us, whether we like it or not, left and right, is what is our answer to that. For my money, the next election will be decided by who has the compelling vision to meet that desire for change. On the evidence of this Queen's Speech, the Government have no answers and it will be up to Labour to provide them.

2.39 pm

**Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me to speak in this important debate on this very important topic. It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband); he will not be surprised to hear that I do not agree with everything he said, but I agree with his main point at the end—that it is up to politicians in the House to set out a compelling vision for how they are going to solve the big problems of the age.

Clearly, the economy—the continuing need to clear the deficit and pay down the debt—is one issue, but there are many others, some of which were tackled in last week's Queen's Speech. After my intervention on the shadow Chancellor, he kindly offered to send me a copy of his manifesto. I do not need that, but I was sad not to see any reappearance at the Dispatch Box of the "Little Red Book". I do not know whether he still reads it regularly, but it may have been a guiding influence in the preparation of that manifesto.

**John McDonnell:** George never gave it back to me.

**Nicky Morgan:** I am sorry that his copy has not been returned; somebody watching this might do him that favour.

It is worth remembering that the economy underpins everything that any Government or Ministers want to do. Job security is fundamental to overall security for individuals. The Chancellor mentioned in his remarks the part of the Queen's Speech that talks about the Government strengthening the economy so that it supports the creation of jobs and generates the tax revenues needed to invest in the NHS, schools and other public services. The "so that" is important. I describe myself as a one nation Conservative—that is how most on the Government Benches would describe themselves, I think. That means policies that work for the whole nation, for people of all ages, all backgrounds and all educational experiences, including those working very much in the public sector. The Chancellor also rightly talked about the importance of making tough choices for the future, thinking about intergenerational unfairness but also about sustainable funding for our essential public services.

The challenge on the Government Benches is to explain—not just here, but to our constituents and the country—why we are intent on balancing our budget as a country, why it is not right to pile debt on the next generation and why we need to clear the deficit. Sometimes we are too ready to talk about numbers and throw millions and billions of pounds around, without remembering that there are people working hard to pay their taxes to allow Ministers to have money to spend on various things.

The Chancellor rightly talked about the progress made in the past seven years: 4 million people taken out of paying tax completely and 31 million paying less tax. The key distinction between the Conservative and Labour parties is that we believe that people should keep more of the money that they earn; the Government do not always spend money wisely, and people should be left to make their own decisions about how they spend and what they spend on. The Chancellor also rightly highlighted the jobs created in the past seven years—2.9 million jobs secured since 2010. He also mentioned that income inequality was at a 30-year low.

I turn to my second point. It took the shadow Chancellor 33 minutes to get on to the important topic of Brexit, which will be the defining issue for this House over the next few years. If we do not deliver a successful exit from the European Union, our constituents will have something pretty negative to say when we next knock on their doors. I agree with the Chancellor that people did not vote last year to become poorer. I am tempted by amendment (g), although I will not support it because I do not think the drafting is right. However, it is important that the Government know that Members on both sides of the House want to hear more, sooner rather than later, about proposed transitional arrangements. If we are not to be a member of the single market or the customs union, how do we get the same access or benefits? How do we avoid a negative impact on our GDP as a result of our departure?

I welcome Government moves to address issues raised in amendment (d) this afternoon, about the access of women from Northern Ireland to abortions. That reflects what the right hon. Member for Doncaster North was

talking about: building a broad consensus in this House on issues that we all care about and that our constituents tell us they care about. Frankly, there needs to be a lot more of that in this Parliament.

The next thing I welcome in the Queen's Speech is the emphasis that the Prime Minister has rightly put, from the first days of her premiership, on tackling the mental health challenges in this country. Poor mental health is estimated to cost our economy £100 billion per year. We have to do better than that.

This is going to be an unusual Parliament. My party is in an unusual and unexpected position. We can provide the stability and certainty for the country, but we will need to build a consensus on the issues affecting this country. The challenges are continuing to grow a successful economy; leaving the European Union; tackling extremism; and addressing the issue of housing—and that is only a brief selection.

2.45 pm

**Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan).

Our economy is still too imbalanced and London-centric—too reliant on the services sector and still not adequately skilling up the next generation for not only the economic challenges ahead but the technological advances that will affect a huge number of jobs. It is also hampered by failing markets such as the energy market, which hurts consumers and businesses.

In no policy area is that imbalance more acute than infrastructure investment. Last year, the Institute for Public Policy Research reported that while London receives £1,870 per head on infrastructure spending, Yorkshire and the Humber receives £250 per head. For a 10th of the cost of Crossrail—about £150 million—a new east coast mainline spur and railway station at Doncaster Sheffield airport could be built. That would bring an extra 6 million people to within one hour's travel time of the airport. That is how the Government can help to rebalance our economy.

The Finningley and Rossington regeneration route scheme, now known as the Great Yorkshire Way, already demonstrates what good local infrastructure can achieve. Phase 1 of the Great Yorkshire Way link road has heralded the iPort development, a £400 million inland port project and one of the UK's largest logistics developments. It includes manufacturers and companies such as Fellowes and Amazon. By the end of 2017, the iPort will support 1,200 jobs as Doncaster becomes a logistic gateway for the north, connecting the Humber ports to road, rail and airports. Despite all that, there was no mention in the Queen's Speech of developing local infrastructure projects—no acknowledgment about the lack of balance not just between the north and south, but often between the east and west. That is a great disappointment.

The Gracious Speech includes Bills on automated cars, electric vehicles and satellite technology. I am sure that that is right, but today a third of my constituents—and therefore potential businesses—do not have access to superfast broadband. Forget about satellite technology: they just want decent broadband. Talk about the superhighway—we just want to be on the highway. The Government's delivery has clearly faltered on this. We have

[*Caroline Flint*]

had many statements to this House, and the problem needs to be addressed with urgency. As the right hon. Member for Loughborough said, this is what gets under the skin of our voters: all they hear is about yet another initiative, when current initiatives are not being delivered on the ground.

It is important to mention Brexit. I want a clear commitment for Doncaster's businesses. The Government could say now that their aim is a period of no change for business: no shocks, no cliff edges and no sudden rewriting of the terms of trade—a smooth exit from the European Union. I do not accept that anything less than full membership of the single market is a hard Brexit, which is why I cannot vote for amendment (g). What we need is certainty and tariff-free trade, and a very clear acknowledgment that we will maintain many of the existing regulations and frameworks as well as longer transitional plans beyond the cut-off date as we leave. To assist, for cross-party support, I would suggest putting my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) on the negotiating committee.

I hope that the Government will use their trade Bill to ensure that robust measures are in place to tackle unacceptable trading practices, such as the dumping of steel, and to ensure that there are robust remedies that the Government will back, acting as the champion and guardian of British business once we leave the EU. But the essential component of this strategy should be skilling up our talent while upskilling those already in work. Why, in 2017, has the UK not got the workforce we need? Why do we continue to rely so much on imported workers when we could be training more of our own? If we are ending free movement as we know it, it will prove to be a hollow promise to voters if the Government have to fall back on migration because they fail year after year to deliver enough skilled or unskilled workers for key jobs in the public or private sector. The new rail college in Doncaster will help, but it is not enough.

This week, the Prime Minister replied to my question about vacancies caused by skills shortages by reaffirming a commitment to technical education. The Prime Minister must deliver on that promise, and she could start by giving the green light to the bid for a university technical college for Doncaster, which would transform the lives of the next generation of engineers, designers and manufacturers, providing them with the skills they need to do the jobs they want and, more than that, providing local employers with the workforce they need. I urge the Prime Minister once again to back the bid and get a new technical college built in Doncaster.

Finally, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) said, the Prime Minister speaks fine words about energy price caps, but what the policy is has become less clear. In fact, after 2015, in the light of the Competition and Markets Authority report, I recommended a cap on the prices that those on standard variable rates pay. We need to know where we are going, because the Prime Minister is dithering once again. We need to ensure that the overcharging that has persisted over the past eight years is stopped.

This could have been a better Queen's Speech, but it will be remembered for the many issues the Government have ducked or sidelined. Just when we needed a detailed plan for jobs and the economy, we got an unnecessary general election and a paper-thin legislative programme. Governments should do so much better. That is what our country deserves.

2.51 pm

**Iain Stewart** (Milton Keynes South) (Con): I want to highlight four aspects of the Queen's Speech that are particularly welcome. It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint); with my first point, I want to strike a consensual note and agree with her. We need to continue investment in the nation's infrastructure. I was particularly pleased that the Queen's Speech included a recommitment to legislate for the full network of HS2. To stop the project after part 1 would be a false economy. If we cannot move our people and goods around quickly, efficiently and safely, both within these isles and in order to connect with our key markets overseas, we will lose out to our competitors, who are investing heavily in infrastructure.

I agree that it is about not just investment in London and north-south investment, but east-west investment. My passion for east-west communications lies a little further south than the right hon. Lady's. I want to see the early completion of the east-west rail line that will connect my constituency to Oxford and Cambridge and will form an important part of the nation's rail infrastructure. That infrastructure will rebalance the economic growth around the country that we all want to see, and I welcome the Government's commitment to that in the Queen's Speech.

Related to that is my second point, which is about the welcome commitment to a modern industrial strategy. We had the White Paper before the general election and we must ensure that the UK is a world leader in fast-emerging new technologies. Of particular interest to me is the intelligent mobility market. The Transport Systems Catapult in my constituency forecasts that that market will be worth £90 billion by 2025, and we must ensure that we get a large slice of it if we are to maintain our competitive edge in the world.

That policy and many others like it link to a lot of other areas. We need to invest heavily in our skills agenda because we are not producing enough young people with the necessary skills. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman) said, that is the welcome second pillar of the industrial strategy.

The world of work is going to change. Many jobs that are currently done by people will be carried out by machines in the not-too-distant future. We urgently need to reskill our workforce to ensure that we can take advantage of new technologies and give people the jobs of the future. If we do not, we will face serious social challenges.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes:** If we retrofit new technology on old systems, we create a double problem for the future. How will the Government deal with that? Will they retrofit to the past, or will they look to places such as Estonia or Japan, which were building new and efficient systems nearly 50 years ago while we were living in the dark ages?

**Iain Stewart:** I invite the hon. Gentleman to look at the innovation in my constituency, including the development of smart city technology, in which we are world leaders. I invite him to stop off in Milton Keynes when he next travels north so that we can show him what we are doing.

Developing the intelligent mobility network touches on other areas of Government policy, so I urge Ministers to take a holistic view. It links with cyber-security, data protection and an effective trade policy. Our need to develop and export intelligent mobility technology is just one example of why we require a global independent trade policy, and that is the third part of the Queen's Speech that I applaud.

Brexit is only one aspect of the work of the Department for International Trade, and I praise what my right hon. Friend Secretary of State for International Trade is doing to ensure that we seek out and develop our trade markets right around the world. Our country has underperformed in this sphere for decades. The world does not owe us a living. If we do not get out there and sell our goods and services, we will lose out—we will not generate the wealth the country needs. That will not just come to us; we have to be out there. The measures in the Queen's Speech to improve our trade performance are incredibly welcome.

For my final point, I return to the fact that the world does not owe us a living. We must create wealth to generate the resources to fund the public services that we all want. I thank the Opposition for their general election manifesto because it reminded me why I am a Conservative. They believe in taxing entrepreneurship, innovation and success; we believe in letting people create the wealth that the country needs. It is not austerity; it is living within our means. It sounds so seductive to make generous spending pledges right around the country and to suggest that only a tiny number at the top will pay, but that does not work. Lady Thatcher has been mentioned once or twice in this debate, and she never said truer words than, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money to spend."

Our goal must be to maximise entrepreneurship and wealth creation. We tax it at lower levels and at fair levels. I do not want to see tax avoidance—I want big corporations such as Google, Apple and Starbucks to pay their fair share—but do not choke the entrepreneurial spirit. The Opposition's policy would result in higher taxes for everyone as the wealth creators go elsewhere. It would create a vicious downwards spiral. The only alternative would be to tax ordinary people more and to borrow more. Do not forget that we spend £46 billion a year on debt interest payments—more than on housing, transport and public safety. What right do we have to live beyond our means and pass on that burden to the next generation? When the Leader of the Opposition and Jon Snow were at Glastonbury, did they tell the young people there that the result of Labour's policy would be that they would pay?

2.59 pm

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): One of the more depressing features of the election just passed was the complete neglect of any serious discussion of economic policy, and I mean not just taxing and spending, but the

basic issue of how we raise productivity, living standards and investment. Indeed, *The Economist* acknowledged that it was only we on these Benches who addressed the issue at all.

There is an underlying malaise, not just in this country, but in other western economies. The long-term legacy of the 2008 financial crisis destroyed Government budgets and killed business investment, and it has depressed living standards. In this country, we were only just beginning, two years ago, to emerge from that tunnel, but now we have, superimposed on that problem, the self-inflicted pain of Brexit. There will be different views in the House as to where Brexit is going to lead economically, but it is already clear, a year after the vote, that there are some tangible economic consequences.

The first is that we have already seen the biggest devaluation since the second world war in trade-weighted terms, and that has fed through into a cut in real earnings for workers over the last year. We have seen a drying-up of business investment such that what is sustaining the economy now is personal credit. I remember speaking in the House 10 years ago about the rise in personal debt and the instability that it created. It then got up to 150% of GDP; it is now 140%, and it is rising again. It is different now—it is not mortgage debt, but short-term credit—but that illustrates the extent to which whatever growth we have is now sustained not by investment but by unsustainable forms of consumption. The other impact we are already beginning to see—I see it as somebody who represents a university and big national research institutions such as the National Physical Laboratory—is that all the research collaborations we had with Europe are now falling apart because of lack of confidence.

Rather than just dwell on the negatives, however, I want to speak a little about a bit of the Queen's Speech I do agree with. Following on from the hon. Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart), I want to ask where we are going on industrial strategy. I applaud the fact that the Prime Minister endorsed industrial strategy—I do not know whether that was her personally or her now-disgraced special advisers, but it was good news that she adopted the issue—but what puzzles me is what is actually happening beyond the endless consultation.

Two years ago, there was a functioning industrial strategy—things happened. That was not just because of the Liberal Democrats' role in the coalition; before that, Peter Mandelson and Michael Heseltine had created some of the building blocks of industrial strategy. Two years ago, we had a whole series of sector operations building up supply chain mapping, doing joint long-term investment planning and thinking about long-term manpower requirements. We had 11 sectors, and then the creative industries and the railway supply chains. It was a very active and positive process.

I would like to know from Ministers what is actually happening now. Do these things still function? Do Ministers still go to them? Will they report to the House on what they are actually doing? There are some genuinely good things going on. The hon. Member for Milton Keynes South talked about the catapult network. I am delighted it survived the last round of cuts, unlike things such as the accelerator, which business wanted but was cut. It is good that things such as that have survived, but I hope the Government will set out exactly where this is going.

[*Sir Vince Cable*]

May I pose some specific questions about industrial strategy? One of our success stories was around aerospace. The leakage of the supply chain to France was stopped. We had a big £2 billion co-investment programme with the private sector to keep the Airbus wing sector in Britain. However, Airbus has indicated that, because of the loss of the single market and customs union processes, it may well decamp to France. Have the Government had any assurances at all from that company that it will stay here and build its supply chains in the UK?

Linked to that, in relation to the automobile industry, what agreements have the Government reached with companies other than Nissan? It is encouraging, obviously, that the biggest producer has indicated an intention to stay and that it will be given full offsets for any loss of customs union and single market privileges, but what has been said to Jaguar Land Rover, BMW, Volkswagen and Toyota? How many of those companies have been given concrete assurances about their ability to trade? When I was in government, I negotiated with General Motors, keeping its production in Ellesmere Port and Luton. Quite explicitly there was an assurance that Britain was part of European supply chains. Are those going to continue?

Another area in which the Prime Minister made a very helpful intervention was in suggesting that we need to look again at the takeover rules for companies, because we had a near miss with the Pfizer takeover which fell through, and which we discouraged. We need to strengthen the rules to protect our science base, but nothing in the Queen's Speech indicates that the Government want to proceed with that. If we are going to succeed as a country, we need long-term collaboration with business, and a proper framework of long-term stability and security, but that is badly missing from Government policy at present.

3.5 pm

**Mr Robert Syms (Poole) (Con):** I have followed the right hon. Member for Twickenham (*Sir Vince Cable*) in past debates, and I must admit that I did not expect to follow him again so soon. I welcome him back, and welcome what looks like his coronation as leader of his party. He has made some very sensible points about industrial policy that we ought to take on board.

I want to correct an intervention I made earlier on the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (*Kirsty Blackman*). Margaret Thatcher was not shadow Chancellor but a member of the shadow Treasury team. I remember, when I was a schoolboy, some of her savaging of the then Labour Front Benchers, which of course led to her challenge of Ted Heath, and then, let us say, the rest was history.

The Conservative party came into government in 2010, and Eddie George, the then Governor of the Bank of England, said just before that election that whoever took on the challenges of the British economy would probably be destroyed politically for a generation. Yet we took on the challenges of the British economy, at that point in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, and we took tough decisions, but on the whole we took the British people with us. Here we are, after two general elections, still standing on the right side—the Government side—of the House, so evidently we have managed to

win the argument with the British people. I do understand, though, that several years of difficult economic decisions leave their legacy on people and families, and the Government have to pay heed to that. Clearly, we are going to need to have a think about pay policy and a number of other things in future.

Since 2010, we have not only managed to reduce the deficit very substantially—we know the important reasons for that—but created well over 3 million jobs and taken many of the lowest-paid out of the tax system. The Government have done a very good job, and this is the worst time to turn round and say, “Let's change policy.” We have to stick to the policy that we have because it has proved that we can grow and we can create jobs, and ultimately that will lead to higher living standards—perhaps not as fast as people want, but we are on the right track and we have to stick the course. Particularly with the uncertainties of Brexit, which a number of hon. Members have raised, the Government's economic policy is perfectly sensible. We have a little more flexibility in our plans than we did prior to Brexit, but that is perfectly sensible since there are a number of uncertainties that the Government are going to have to deal with. The economic policies of this Government are good and should be stuck to, but perhaps we ought to do a lot more to persuade the British public that what we are doing is right. I think that people have forgotten the deficit that we had in 2010, forgotten that we are still borrowing a lot of money, and forgotten the task that we still have ahead of us.

I rather approve of the Queen's Speech. It was a short Queen's Speech. I wish I had seen shorter Queen's Speeches in my time in this House, because if the British Parliament and British Governments have a mania, it is for legislating. If legislating made us richer and more prosperous, we would be the richest country on earth. Time and again I have seen British Governments introduce legislation similar to that of the previous Government so that they can rebrand what they were doing. What I want to see from this Government is good government, not masses of legislation. If they want to make changes, they have to look at legislation passed not only by the Conservatives but by the coalition and, indeed, by Tony Blair during his years in office. There is an awful lot of legislation already on the statute book that can be used as levers of power. We do not have to keep on reinventing the wheel and jamming up this place with lots of legislation.

As somebody who once or twice, or three times, has been in the Whips Office, I do not think that legislation is the answer to all our prayers. If we are going to be a successful economy in the future, sometimes we need not to legislate but to change people's attitudes—to change the way they do things and the way they think. That is an element of leadership. If we keep a stable economic policy and limit the amount of legislation, and stay the course and continue as we are doing, we will deliver for the British people the outcome that they want.

This modest Queen's Speech is the first of probably another three or four Queen's Speeches, because the arithmetic of this Parliament means that we could last five years in government. Although there has been lots of speculation that there might be an election in one, two, three or six months, there is a job to do. We have to get on with the negotiations with the European Union and with nursing the economy back to health. The Conservative party is certainly up for that.

There is a job of work to be done. The Queen's Speech will deliver for two years and some very important legislation has to go through—a lot of it, I suspect, on Brexit, on the Floor of the House. There is certainly a lot of work we can do to hold the Government to account, and I am sure that many of us on the Back Benches will do that. I say stay the course with the economy; do not legislate too much; bat for Britain in Europe and get the best deal that our constituents want; and let us keep this country on course for success in the future. I think we will do so under our Prime Minister.

3.10 pm

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech in this important debate. I pay tribute to all Members who have made their maiden speech this week. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Poole (Mr Syms).

It is indeed outstanding to take this seat back for Labour—it was the most marginal seat in the 2015 election—and to be the first woman to hold it. Now I am the person to continue the long and proud tradition of Labour representation in Gower. I am privileged to follow in the footsteps of D. R. Grenfell, Ifor Davies, Gareth Wardell and, more recently, my good friend Martin Caton. I would also like to pay tribute to my predecessor who served the constituency to the best of his ability.

My Italian family name is embedded in the Gower constituency. The introduction of café culture to the people of south Wales comes predominantly from the families of Bardi. And yes, you have me to thank for ice cream. Moreover, it was in cafés such as Albert's in Gorseinon and Station café in Pontarddulais that the community spirit grew. The freedom of movement and opportunities afforded to my forefathers is close to my heart. I will fight for those rights to continue, not only for my child but for the children of Gower and Wales.

Gower is unlike any other constituency in the United Kingdom, with its peninsula in the south being the first in the UK to be designated an area of outstanding natural beauty, in 1956. The fact that Conservative Members wish to allow fracking under that fragile landscape goes against all sense and the wishes of my constituents. Fracking does not just affect the countryside or the surface site of the frack; it would occur underneath towns and villages, including old industrial areas of Gower and estuary areas.

While the peninsula is internationally recognised and renowned for its farming, scientific importance and beauty, it is a diverse constituency, reaching far into former industrial heartlands, such as Clydach, and further into the proud Welsh-speaking areas of Garnswllt, Felindre and Craig Cefn Parc.

It is a constituency wrought by the devastating impact of post-industrialisation, and unemployment remains stubbornly high. It is a constituency that has borne the brunt of the Conservative party's policies. And it is a constituency that on 8 June said, "Enough is enough."

I am honoured to be part of a large team of Labour women MPs, with whom I share many similar life experiences. The role of women in society today should never be underestimated. We are here and we represent all women, including grandmothers, carers and single mothers. We are the women with supportive, strong

mothers standing by our side, and I thank my mum for doing for that for me, which has put me here today. I say to all 4,000 1950s WASPI women in Gower who have dedicated their lives to working and supporting their families and who have been hit by pension inequality: I will fight for you.

Looking to the future, I urge the Government, following the Hendry review, to invest in Gower, to invest in Wales and to invest in renewable energy by getting on with it and signing off on the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon.

I also urge the Government to strengthen the May 2015 access to banking protocol and provide my constituents with the banking facilities that they deserve in Pontarddulais and Clydach.

I would like to end with a story that warmed my heart recently. A very close friend of mine saw that the terms "Gower" and "Tonia" had been searched for more than 20 times on her daughter's iPad. When questioned, her daughter said to her, "Isn't it amazing that we live somewhere where anyone can become an MP? You don't have to be rich, you don't have to go to a posh school, you just have to work hard." With more than 20 years as a teacher, I know that Amelie's words ring so true for the schoolchildren of Gower, Wales and the United Kingdom, because ambition is critical.

3.15 pm

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): May I extend personal thanks to you, Mr Speaker, for your kindness these last few days? I am particularly grateful that you have found time to accommodate me today.

May I pay huge tribute to the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), who has taken her place and made her maiden speech? Her passion will certainly do huge credit to her community, and I am sure that she will be a powerful voice in this House. Her predecessor, Byron Davies, was also a fantastic advocate for the beautiful area of Gower.

We took a huge strategic decision a year ago when we voted to leave the European Union. I know that not everybody in this place voted the same way—in fact, we know that the vote was extremely close. I argued that our sovereignty and influence would not be diminished by remaining, but the electorate chose a different way. I argued that the complexity of leaving would be great, but the people, in their wisdom, chose a different route. I also argued that the impact on our economy would likely be severe in the coming years, and I am delighted that the speedy actions of the Bank of England and the Chancellor have made sure that this year has gone significantly better than anybody hoped or predicted. The Government deserve credit for that.

In a bold move we have now, let us face it, jumped out of the aeroplane. I am not saying it is always a bad idea to jump out of aeroplanes—I can assure Members that there are sometimes some very good reasons to do so—but the essence of courage is not to take one bold decision but to reinforce it. When one has taken the first, one needs to make sure that the others follow. That is why I welcome this Queen's Speech. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr Syms) in saying that the Government are looking not to legislate too much but to legislate importantly. That is essential, because if we clog this place up with legislation, we will not have time to do the most important thing, which is governing—

[Tom Tugendhat]

and, of course, talking, because as we start the incredibly complex negotiations with the European Union, we need to make sure that we are ready.

That is why I argue strongly that, having taken this first step, we need to do three things. The first is to be bold. We must be bold in ensuring that we create alliances across the continent of Europe and across the world, not just with friends and with central Governments but with individuals—mayors, MPs and people representing communities that will be affected by Brexit, in many ways as much as we will. We need to hit at the micro level, because at the macro level we represent 8% of European trade, but at the micro level we represent a hell of a lot more in towns in Sweden, in villages in France and in communities in Spain and Italy. We need to make sure that the representatives of those places are on our side, because Brexit is not just about Britain; it is about Europe, so they must be part of the conversation too.

The second thing we must do is be open. Some people will rightly chide the elements of the campaigns that were negative, harsh and at some points, let us face it, bordering on racism. I am delighted to say that most people on the campaigns, including those I opposed, argued for an open, welcoming Britain—a Britain that welcomes people like the parents of the hon. Member for Gower, who came here and made a contribution to our community, and not just ice cream. The past seven years of Conservative Government have seen businesses succeed from that openness, with 1,000 jobs a day and an amazing improvement in the economy. However, that improvement is not without effort or challenge, which is why we must be honest when we mention things such as the seasonal agricultural workers scheme as a solution. Yes, it is a bit of a solution, but in reality we need such a scheme for the NHS, for tourism, and for any number of different engineering and educational places, to ensure that we do not pay for Brexit with a failing economy. I know that many people who voted to leave will agree that such openness is necessary.

The third point is that we must be honest with our people that the complexity and uncertainty we are facing today are likely to continue for a little longer. We must be honest that in reality we cannot guarantee that at the end of 18 months we will get a deal, or that our negotiating partners will agree to the terms for which we are asking. We must be honest about that, because if we are not we cannot expect those who create jobs and make wealth in our society, and those who invest, employ and grow companies, to take decisions. I ask very much for those three things.

If I may, I will also ask for one more thing, which is that we look at Brexit as a reality, not an ideology. Too often, I have felt myself back in a theology lecture hall hearing about the way to heaven, to Jannah, or to the Elysian fields, but Brexit is not paradise. Brexit is made for the people and it is an opportunity for which they voted; it is not the people who are made for Brexit.

3.21 pm

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), and I agree with him that Brexit is not paradise. I am also pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), and

I congratulate her on a powerful and passionate maiden speech that was appreciated across the House. As she reminded us, we have just had an extraordinary election campaign. Several Members who used to sit on the Government Benches and were looking forward to benefiting from the anticipated Conservative landslide are no longer here, and the voters passed judgment on seven years of Conservative economic policy. Partly, no doubt, that involved the Conservative failure on the deficit, which was supposed to have been eradicated by 2015 although it was nowhere near that. More than that, however, it was about the impact of Conservative policies on the lives of ordinary people, and in my short contribution I want to highlight two areas: first, the troubling increase in child poverty that we are seeing, and secondly, the explosion in food bank use.

In 2009, with all-party support, George Cameron—[*Laughter.*] George Osborne—I think some of us still remember him—and David Cameron supported legislation that I took through the House which obliged the Government to work towards eradicating child poverty by 2020. Once the 2010 election was out of the way, that commitment was discarded, and subsequently the Government simply repealed the legislation and took it off the statute book. Child poverty was falling until 2010, and relative child poverty after housing costs came to about 27%. After 2010 it plateaued, and then it started to go up. It is now more than 30%, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies projects that by the end of this Parliament it will be more than 35%, and rising steeply. If that projection is correct, the level of child poverty will be higher even than the disastrous level that the Labour Government inherited in 1997, and I wish to underline for the House just how troubling an outcome that would be.

Secondly, among the most visible consequences of the policies of the past seven years has been the extraordinary growth in the use of food banks. People received emergency food parcels from Trussell Trust food banks on 40,898 occasions in 2009-10. Last year, it had gone up to 1.18 million—an almost thirtyfold increase in seven years. Every single one of the 400-plus Trussell Trust food banks is based in a church. They have done an extraordinary job and I praise them unreservedly, but the Government should not be off-loading their responsibilities in this way. The hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen) hosted an event this morning at which the Trussell Trust published research by Oxford University and King's College London, which shows that

“households using food banks are...three times more likely to contain someone with a disability than other low income households” and that

“The people using food banks are groups who have been most affected by recent welfare reforms: people with disabilities, lone parents and large family households.”

It reminds us that entitlements for those groups were cut again in April—after the research was carried out. In the case of new claimants of employment and support allowance in the work-related activity group, they have lost another £30 a week. We were promised “full compensation” for that cut. In fact, there has been no compensation at all.

Economic policies since 2010 have made life very hard for many people—that is what the election result tells us—but Brexit threatens to make matters a good



deal worse. That is why I welcome the distinctive tenor of the Chancellor's contributions to the discussions, and his telling observation about having one's cake and eating it, which I think we can see as a retort to the Foreign Secretary's comments. I must say that the position the Chancellor is setting out is certainly in marked contrast to that of the Brexit Secretary and the Prime Minister. I urge him to continue to point out the economic consequences of the hard Brexit his Cabinet colleagues favour. It is also why I am supporting amendment (g)—I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) for tabling it—to highlight the crucial importance for jobs and prosperity in Britain of not ruling out membership of the customs union and the single market. We will not get barrier-free access to the single market if we are not members of the single market, despite the promises Ministers are making. It is vital for jobs, growth and prosperity in the UK.

3.27 pm

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate and to follow the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms). We do not always agree on politics, but we do agree on football, with the club given away, to some extent, by the name of his constituency. As a fellow London MP, I recognise some of the issues he always raises in a measured fashion. It is also a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), who made a most powerful and compelling speech. I am tempted to say that I will adopt all of it and then sit down, but I will say just one or two more things.

I woke up on my birthday on 24 June last year to the most miserable birthday I have ever had, because my judgment was that my country had taken an erroneous step. It was, however, a democratic step and as a democrat I respected it—although I campaigned, as my hon. Friend and many others here did, for a different result. I support the Queen's Speech because it seeks to give effect to that decision in a practical and measured fashion. That is our obligation now as Members of this House. That was well-encapsulated by the Chancellor's speech which opened this debate. I share his analysis—both in his remarks here and in his Mansion House speech a short time ago—of the approach we should adopt.

I am tempted by the wording of amendment (g), as was my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan), but like her I do not think it works in practical terms, and we must deliver within the framework of the Queen's Speech. However, it is important that the Government recognise the need to be practical, business-like and above all pragmatic in the way we deliver our exit from the European Union. That is why the Chancellor is right to stress that Brexit must be based first and foremost on protecting Britain's economic interests and jobs.

In my constituency, 36% of the voters are employed in the financial services sector and related industries, and the same is true for many London Members of Parliament. The financial services sector is sometimes maligned, but it is actually a source of great wealth for this country. It is a jewel in our national crown, and in my judgment it should be protected as our highest priority. Whatever sensible arrangements are needed to protect it, they must come first. We must take a practical approach, rather than, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling said, a theological approach.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): If we are talking about protecting jobs in our constituencies, the major employer in my constituency is Ford. I am absolutely determined to protect the jobs at Ford, but the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has made it clear that retaining the benefits of the single market—and tariff-free and customs-free trade—is essential for those jobs. How will we have that if we carry on down the Brexit route laid before us so far?

**Robert Neill:** It happens that before I came into this House I contested the Dagenham constituency on two occasions. I rather fought back, but that experience gave me some knowledge of the motor industry. The hon. Lady is absolutely right, and perhaps I can link her point to mine.

In relation to both financial services and manufacturing, particularly when there are complicated and cross-national supply chains involved, it is critical that we have sensible transitional arrangements that are, wherever necessary, as lengthy as they need to be. Many financial services contracts, be they derivatives, insurance or legal contracts, of various kinds or with an international dimension, are written over a period of years. Those who enter into them must have the certainty that the legal obligations that they are undertaking can be enforced right the way through the life of those contracts, otherwise they will not invest in or enter into them.

This is not just about avoiding a cliff edge at the time; it is about not having a disincentive to invest in those areas, be it financial services or cross-border manufacturing, that are important to us. Indeed, manufacturing is still a great asset to this country, but our financial services sector is one in which we run a significant surplus with the European Union. Although we will undoubtedly develop opportunities in other markets, it remains a key sector for our activity and we must therefore keep the closest possible access.

I do not think that we can leave the European Union and remain in the single market, simply as a matter of law, but the Chancellor is right to say that we should seek to remain as close as we can. That is what we need to achieve. That has to be the primary task of Brexit, in a pragmatic, business-focused, non-ideological way. I hope that we can try to find a way forward across the House to achieve that, because although the fact of leaving the European Union was on the ballot paper, the nature of our leaving was not and neither was the nature of our future relationship. That is where this House can constructively and legitimately play a role in assisting Government to deliver on the basic requirement to respect the will of the British people. That is what we must do.

There are other things in the Queen's Speech that I want to touch on briefly. I welcome the fact that work is still being done on courts reform and mental health. In my 25 years as a barrister and more recently, when I had the honour for the last two years to chair the Select Committee on Justice, it has struck me forcefully that mental health is overlooked. That has appalling consequences for individuals and their families and creates real pressures on our social services, our local authorities, our police forces and our criminal justice and prison systems. The Prime Minister has emphasised that, which I welcome.

[Robert Neill]

I am sorry that there is no legislation to introduce a statutory purpose for prisons, or to place the role of the prisons ombudsman on a statutory basis, but there may be time for that in due course. I am glad to learn that the Lord Chancellor, whose appointment I welcome, is committed to proceeding with much of the rest of the prison reform agenda. We must take our opportunities. Let me also say, as an unashamed one nation Conservative, that we must do so with a sense of optimism that means believing in aspiration and helping to pull people up and improve their lot. That is what the Tory party is about—that is what the party that I joined is about—and that is why I want to see this Queen's Speech deliver.

3.35 pm

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate, as I pick up the baton carried so ably by my friend Eilidh Whiteford to speak for my party here on social justice. I know that Eilidh will be desperately missed, not just by SNP Members but throughout the House. Her stellar work on a private Member's Bill to ratify the Istanbul convention brought her much praise on both sides of the House, and we all wish her well for her future endeavours.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) on her excellent maiden speech. I do not think that she is still in the Chamber, but she made a fantastic speech.

Social justice issues will once again be at the heart of this Parliament as the UK Government continue to justify their failing austerity policy and, when we leave the European Union, matters such as the working time directive, maternity rights and other workers' rights are sadly no longer secured at EU level. Our challenge will be to ensure that those hard-won rights are not watered down in any way, and that our workers enjoy at least the same rights as those on the continent. I hope that the two main parties of opposition can work together more closely to put the maximum pressure on this fragile Government and on the Prime Minister, whose coat appears to be held on the shoogly peg by Brexit. I am disappointed to learn that Labour Members are, apparently, to be whipped to abstain on the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) on the single market. That is a sad reflection of where the party is at present.

Austerity is a political choice which has failed, and it has failed in terms of the Government's own economic targets. That failure comes at the price of the people, in Airdrie and Shotts and elsewhere, who have suffered as a result of cuts: disabled people whose employment support has been reduced, the WASPI women who, at the end of a working life of employment injustice, now face pension injustice; and working families who are seeing their tax credits cut. All the social security and public sector cuts that have stretched families and services for the last seven years have failed to deliver what was intended. Perhaps we may now see the UK Government come to realise that fact, and change course.

During the election campaign, the SNP pledged to review the 1% public sector pay freeze in Scotland, which was a hugely welcome step. That appears to have prompted some movement in the UK Government: the to-ing and fro-ing and the hokey-cokey that was going

on in Downing Street yesterday. At first Downing Street was briefing that the cap would end, and we could see the relief felt by Tory MPs. Then the sources U-turned on the U-turn, and now we are back as we were—and last night the Scottish Tory MPs shamefully gave the Prime Minister the majority that she needed to maintain the pay cap, without question. The whole sorry episode lasted barely three hours, and it highlights the chaos that lies at the heart of a Government who are leaderless, rudderless and clueless. They clearly want to review the public sector pay cap, so what is going on? Get on with it!

It is time for a proper assessment of the impact of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 to ascertain the damage that has been done to families across these isles. It is time that the Government finally ditched the need for the disgusting rape clause by ditching the two-child rule for tax credits, and it is time that justice was finally delivered for the WASPI women.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): There is currently a great deal of talk about the position of women in Northern Ireland in relation to abortion. Is my hon. Friend aware that when women in Northern Ireland want to avail themselves of the exemption under the rape clause, the third party to whom they refer themselves must hand the case over to the police? That puts those women at risk.

**Neil Gray**: I was not aware of that, and nor, I imagine, were most other Members. It is another sting in the Tory Government's shameful rape clause, which puts women in such a horrendous position.

Austerity is a political choice, as is evidenced by the Prime Minister's not only very conveniently stumbling across her long-lost magic money tree, but finding its branches sagging under the weighty £1 billion-worth of DUP fruit. It is just a shame that the new Scottish Tory MPs—and, indeed, the Scottish Secretary—have not been quite so diligent in picking the low-hanging fruit for Scotland's benefit, as the Democratic Unionist party has done for Northern Ireland. They have failed their first test by blindly following the Prime Minister without question, and that will be hard to erase from the memories of the electorate in Scotland.

On the Bills that we might see during this two-year Session, we know that this will be a Brexit-dominated Parliament, but it appears that the Prime Minister is not only hanging by a thread over Brexit but allowing her Government to be consumed by it, with little else getting done. It is time we heard more and saw greater action from this Government on inclusive growth and on ensuring that the economy works for everyone. Indeed, just this week, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation held a conference on inclusive growth in Scotland, which led to some interesting information becoming available. Dr Andrew Fraser, the director of public health science at NHS Health Scotland, said:

"We know that rising income inequality in the UK cost us 9 percentage points in the growth rate of GDP per capita between 1990 and 2010—that's approximately £100bn. Taking action on inequalities is not just the right thing to do—it's the economically sensible thing to do."

I could not agree more, and I hope that we shall see greater preventive spending allocated in future UK budgets to help to tackle some of the deep-rooted inequalities being faced across this isle.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Neil Gray:** I will give way one last time.

**Mr Speaker:** There is a considerable shortage of time, so the intervention must be brief.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** Perhaps my hon. Friend will remember the years past when people here used to deride Iceland and Ireland, post-crash. They are very quiet now, when those countries have three to four times the growth of this country. Of course, Iceland and Ireland did not choose the mega-austerity cult that the Tories here at Westminster have chosen.

**Neil Gray:** My hon. Friend makes a fair point.

Far greater priority needs to be given to committing public funds to good quality social housing, just as the Scottish Government have done. I want us to be able to go even further than their commitments for this Parliament, and that requires political will here too. This decade has been the worst for wage growth, according to the Resolution Foundation, and we need to stop the rot. We also need to move away from the idea that the social security system is a burden to society: it is a safety net for all of us. When we move the political narrative in these areas, we will finally be in a position to tackle the social exclusion and inequalities that cost us all, socially and economically. That is my aim in this Parliament.

3.42 pm

**Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con):** It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Airdrie and Shotts (Neil Gray). It is a great privilege to address this House as the newly elected Member of Parliament for Chichester. The name Keegan is usually associated with footballing greatness where I grew up in Liverpool. However, the House may be interested to learn that the last person with the same surname in this place was in fact my late father-in-law, Denis Michael Keegan. He was a Conservative MP in the '50s, and he made his maiden speech in support of the abolition of the death penalty—a noble cause, as I am sure you will all agree.

My predecessor, Andrew Tyrie, served this House and the people of Chichester with great distinction for 20 years. Andrew is best remembered for his strong chairmanship of the Treasury Select Committee, asking probing questions to bankers in the wake of the 2008 banking crisis without fear or favour. In Chichester, he is remembered for defending our A&E facility at St Richard's hospital—a cause that I will continue to champion.

I am very lucky to represent Chichester. It is set in the beautiful South Downs national park, and we have something for everyone: a historic, vibrant cathedral city with a world-famous theatre; the thriving town of Midhurst, the home of Cowdray Park; car and horse-racing at Goodwood; sailing at Bosham, Itchenor, Birdham and Dell Quay; and our vibrant fishing community in Selsey, which we look forward to growing, alongside our farming and agricultural businesses, as we leave the European Union.

Chichester also faces challenges, with demands for more housing and the pressure this places on our local infrastructure. One of the greatest challenges is the seriously congested A27, and I will work with the

councils and community groups to get the best solution to this long-standing local issue. Ninety-one per cent. of pupils in my constituency attend a good or outstanding school, but we need to ensure proper funding to build on that record.

Today, we are debating the economy, and it is vital that we preserve the strong economic foundations that this Government have put in place. One success has been our approach to apprenticeships, and I strongly believe that that route into the workplace has many benefits for young people today. I grew up in Huyton in Knowsley and went to the local comprehensive school. I left school at 16 and started work as an apprentice in a car factory in Kirby. General Motors invested in me, sponsored my degree, and gave me the life chance that enabled me to have a successful international business career in the tech sector for the next 27 years. Today, there is a false narrative about multinational companies and the contribution that they make to our society. Our country needs the inward investment and the jobs that such companies bring, and young people in particular benefit from the high-quality apprenticeships and graduate programmes that they offer. We need their investment if we are to fund the public services we want.

The digital revolution we are seeing in the world today is reshaping industry. The biggest taxi company in the world does not own any taxis, and the biggest hotel provider does not own any hotels. Our young people need digital skills, so I welcome the Government's focus on technical education, as we must prioritise such skills in academic and vocational qualifications. The digital revolution is fundamental to our country's competitiveness as we leave the EU and can also help us to solve the productivity puzzle. We must embrace the change. The digital revolution that we are living through represents a profound change in our economy, but we may only recognise that in hindsight. The employment prospects of future generations depend on us stepping up to these 21st-century opportunities. I am here today because of the life chance I had at 16. Everybody deserves that chance.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Speaker:** Order. In congratulating the hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) on her maiden speech, I want to say two things in the name of transparency. First, I inform the House that the hon. Lady is the godmother of two of my children. Secondly, although it has been declared in all the appropriate places, I nevertheless take this opportunity to declare to the House that her husband Michael—my very good friend of 32 years—generously contributed to each of my last three election campaign funds in the Buckingham constituency.

3.48 pm

**Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab):** It is an honour to follow such a brilliant maiden speech. The hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) represents one of the most beautiful constituencies in the country and was a great credit to it this afternoon. She betrayed her grasp that all politics is local; she quite clearly has her eyes set on making a significant contribution to the national debate, with all the benefit of her life experience.

I want to speak in support of the amendment tabled by Opposition Front Benchers, but given that we all find ourselves in a new hung Parliament, I first want to

[Liam Byrne]

set out four or five areas in which it should be possible for us to work across the House on some shared challenges in the years ahead. I want to pick up where my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) left off by discussing the surging levels of inequality and injustice in this country, which are contributing to such instability in politics not only in our country, but across the western world.

The Opposition have talked for some time about the challenges faced by what we used to call the squeezed middle, and the Prime Minister has talked about the challenges confronted by just managing families. It pleases no one in this House that working families are about £1,400 a year worse off than they were before the crisis. The Chancellor and the shadow Chancellor were absolutely right when they pointed their fingers at the core of the problem: the challenge of productivity bedevilling our economy. The fact that the rest of the G7 can finish making on a Thursday night what it takes us until the end of Friday to get done will hold us back from having rising living standards, unless we get things sorted. The level of productivity growth in our economy is worse than it was in the late 1970s, when we used to call the problem the “British disease”.

While there are four or five areas in which we can make significant progress, there was very little reference to them in the Queen’s Speech. If we are to become a richer country, we patently need to become a smarter country. Unless we spend more on science and on research and development, it will be impossible for our economy to become more productive. We spend just 1.3% of GDP on research and development, which is well behind the 2.3% spent across the rest of the OECD and the 3% spent by economies such as Germany, South Korea and Israel, which all have significant manufacturing sectors that are bigger than ours. The Government set out a long-term target for 2.3%, but they should be more ambitious and we should be debating now how we lever in more private sector investment through good public sector investment, safe in the knowledge that public investment crowds in private investment.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I just want to let the right hon. Gentleman know that our manifesto commits to raising research investment to 3%, which I am sure he would welcome.

**Liam Byrne:** But without a timeframe, unfortunately. The manifesto sets a timeframe for achieving 2.3%, but not that longer-term ambition.

Secondly, moving from the supply side to the demand side, we need a faster rate of growth. The previous Chancellor, George Osborne, sought to try to close the deficit, but with 90% of that achieved through spending cuts, our economy was put in a place where wage growth began to slow. If we want fiscal policy to do more and if we are now going to celebrate across the House austerity being over, we will need a grown-up debate about tax. I think we have overdone things on corporation tax, and for this simple reason: the investment that has gone into our economy since the crash has been dwarfed fivefold by the amount that companies have put in the bank to sit there and do nothing. As the shadow Chancellor said, companies are now sitting on

nearly £600 billion in cash. As we cut taxes and hand money back to big multinationals, they are putting much more of it in the bank, where it is doing nothing, than they are spending on creating new jobs. That is why we must have a much more grown-up debate about who needs tax incentives and who does not.

Thirdly, we have to look at not just public investment but private sector investment. Our capital markets are not patient enough and do not invest in long-term growth, but sadly the debate about patient capital stalled at about the time the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) left office. We need a new debate about how we encourage more long-termism in the City and elsewhere, including in our banking sector, because at the moment we do not have it. Back in the 1950s, shareholders held on to their shares for an average of six years, whereas now the figure is six months. We need to encourage longer-term horizons in the boardroom.

Fourthly—there was something in the Queen’s Speech about this—labour markets have to become more skilled. There is good ambition for T-levels and I welcome the apprenticeship levy, but the truth is that in Birmingham, one of our great cities, there are still only 120 young people on apprenticeship paths that take them up to a degree level of skill. That is inadequate, and it holds back places such as my city. We should be devolving the apprenticeship levy as far as is possible. Crucially, we should also be reversing the swingeing cuts we have seen over the past few years to our further education sector, because our colleges are the bridge between lower and higher-level skills, and they need more support.

Fifthly, we need a new debate about enterprise in this House. I heard the speech made by the hon. Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart), but the reality is that, according to the House of Commons Library, all the tax cuts over the past few years have not stopped 1 million people leaving entrepreneurial activity. Why are we not expanding the start-up loan scheme? Why are we not making sure that every person who leaves school knows how to start a business? Such practical things could make a difference.

The final area in which we need change is about not just corporate governance rules, but the powers that we give to local authorities. I do not criticise the deal that the DUP struck. All I would note is that we are talking about an average of £244 per person in Northern Ireland, which is 15 times more than under the devolution deals that have been granted to other local authorities. If we in the west midlands had a Northern Ireland-sized deal, we would have £657 million coming into our area each and every year. I therefore urge the Secretary of State to be an awful lot more ambitious.

The great George Orwell once wrote:

“The world is a raft sailing through space with, potentially, plenty of provisions for everybody”.

Some people have done well since 2010—the stock market is up 40% and the property market is up 25%—so let us use this new wealth to make sure that there is wealth for all in the years ahead.

3.55 pm

**Heidi Allen** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I rise to speak on this final day of the Queen’s Speech debate and will start by showing my appreciation for the news that we will now pay for abortions for women from

Northern Ireland who come to England to have them. I thank the Minister for Women and Equalities, my right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening), and the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) for helping to make that happen.

Although our Prime Minister called the general election with honourable intentions—I believe that she felt it would allow her to enter Brexit negotiations with the strongest hand possible—our campaign displayed what I have feared for a while: the gap between people's lives and the lives of decision makers in here has grown too wide. We failed to convey the message of empathy and compassion that the Prime Minister so emotively displayed in her first speech outside No. 10. We failed to demonstrate the determination and optimism for this country that are inbuilt in Conservative DNA.

Knocking on doors, I asked my constituents to put their trust in me—and they did, for which I am very grateful. I also promised them that I would make sure that my party did not veer too far to the right and that their concerns would not be disregarded. They—and I—want affordable housing, decent school funding, an NHS and social care system equipped to deal with our ageing population, a secure post-Brexit economy, an outward-looking, globally collaborative country and a welfare state that supports the vulnerable. The heartbreaking thing is that I know that we can and will deliver all of that; we want all of that, but we did not demonstrate a positive vision of how we would deliver it.

This party must change. We must put people at the heart of everything that we do. We must listen and build our policies from the ground up, be flexible, dynamic, modern, collaborative and, above all, compassionate. Financial and economic competence is not enough. I want a Conservative party that people want to vote for rather than a party that they feel they have to vote for. That is also the Conservative party that this country wants, too. Right now, we are a long way away from that, but we have said that we have listened and that we will learn.

One of my unswerving goals since becoming an MP has been to change how people feel about politicians. I want an honest, transparent, collaborative, respectful and positive kind of politics. I can barely put into words my anger at the deal that my party has done with the DUP. We did not need to do it. I cannot fault the DUP for wanting to achieve the very best deal for their residents of Northern Ireland, nor for their tough negotiating skills, but I must put on record my distaste at the use of public funds to garner political control. We should have run with a minority Government and showed the country what mature, progressive politics looks like. The only comfort that I can take is knowing that people in Northern Ireland will benefit. This must never again be how this Government prioritises spending. This is not the way to begin that journey of change.

I have thought long and hard about how to vote on this Queen's Speech, for a Back Bencher's vote must be earned, just as those of our constituents are earned. A vote is not given unconditionally. The voice in my head shouting louder than this anger is the knowledge that, although there is so much we need to do to change, the Conservatives remain the only party capable of leading and delivering what this country needs to prosper. Labour's policies would lead to economic ruin. Its Christmas list of free-for-alls would see business running for the hills

as fast as its overtaxed legs could carry it, taking jobs with it. Uncontrolled spending and penalising business is never the answer, but it is not enough to expect voters to believe us—we must show them that this is the case.

We must keep creating well-paid and secure jobs, because that is the heart of everything. We must build even more affordable and council homes. We must properly fund our welfare state to support the vulnerable. We must carefully release those public purse strings to lift the pay cap where we can for nurses and those on the frontline of our public services. We must respond to the financial challenges in our schools and the NHS and fund them. We must also be unafraid to look at how we tax higher earners and, yes, the triple lock on pensions.

We must all put party politics aside and work cross-party to find a solution for social care, to find the right path to Brexit and security for EU nationals living here. We must do all this and more to regain the trust of the electorate, and that is what I hope Conservatives will do.

4 pm

**Faisal Rashid** (Warrington South) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech. I congratulate all the newly elected Members who have made their maiden speeches. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen).

I am delighted and honoured to be the new Member of Parliament for Warrington South—my home town. On this very proud occasion, I give thanks to my parents, my wife Aleeza and all our family for their prayers and support. I thank all the electors of Warrington South, regardless of who they voted for, and I thank all my supporters and campaign team for their unstinting work in our victory on 8 June.

Recent events in England have caused a serious loss of lives, tearing families and communities apart. Those responsible stand to be utterly condemned. I represent a town that suffered two terrorist attacks in 1993 and I say that our nation remains united—we stand together in our determination to ensure that humanitarian and democratic principles prevail.

My predecessor, David Mowat, served in Parliament for seven years and for a year as a junior Health Minister. As a councillor and as Warrington mayor, I met David frequently. He was steadfast in his support for Warrington and courteous to his constituents and he supported many Warrington charities. I thank David for his public service and wish him all the very best for the future.

The name Warrington South does not accurately describe my constituency. Warrington South covers both south Warrington and west and north-west Warrington. It has excellent communication routes with ready access to the motorways, west coast mainline, regional railways and Manchester and Liverpool airports.

My Warrington South constituency is home to the Warrington Wolves, nicknamed The Wire because the town was once one of the leading producers of steel wire. The former RAF Burtonwood site in the north-west part of my constituency was a United States air force base during world war two, and in 1948 was the launching point of the famous Berlin airlift. The site, now known as Omega, is in the process of major redevelopment.

[Faisal Rashid]

Chapelford village, built on part of the site, has provided new homes. I am extremely proud to serve as a councillor for this area.

Today's theme for the Gracious Speech debate is the economy and jobs. The Government's programme is bereft of measures that will address the harm caused by austerity, growing poverty, educational inequality, homelessness, public services at breaking point, the crisis in social care and more. Since 2010 Warrington council has suffered over £100 million cuts.

The Government must stop further cuts to local authorities. I pledge to work with my council colleagues in their drive to provide high-quality services for the people of our town. I am also looking forward to working closely with my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Helen Jones) to improve services in our town and tackle the issues that matter to our residents. Schools in my constituency are already seriously underfunded. A top priority for me will be to oppose any attempts by the Tory Government to downgrade or close any NHS services in Warrington.

Mr Speaker, 1950s-born women have had their state retirement age put back three times. This injustice needs addressing in this Session of Parliament. We have an overstretched police force doing a demanding job often in very dangerous circumstances. Having more frontline police is what will make communities safer. I add my tribute to the bravery of PC Keith Palmer, who gave his life in protecting Parliament. I send my sincere condolences to his wife and family.

In my mayoral year of 2016-17, I launched many community and business initiatives. My "Breaking the Barriers" initiative brought mainstream religious and non-faith groups together to work for the common good of Warrington; I commend the initiative to the House as a model for promoting community cohesion. I used my business and banking experience to create "Circle—The Future", which aims to make Warrington an entrepreneurs' hub. I started the mayor's achievement awards, recognising the work of unsung heroes. I shall change the name to "Warrington South achievement awards" and continue to give recognition to people who make a difference in my constituency.

On a different note, just before the 2015 general election Chancellor Osborne promised Warringtonians free travel over the Mersey Gateway bridge in Halton and the existing Runcorn bridge. This January, a junior Transport Minister broke that promise. If it is right to remove tolls on the Severn bridge, it is only right that Halton bridges should be toll free.

I have stood for public office five times, and each time I promised to serve in the interests of every elector. I repeat that promise and add that I will make Warrington South constituents proud.

**Mr Speaker:** The time limit for speeches must be reduced to four minutes, with immediate effect.

4.6 pm

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) on his maiden speech and his gracious tribute to his predecessor.

When I read the Queen's Speech, I see the essence of the Government's economic policy—to continue to improve the public finances. Government is about taking the right and the hard decisions for this country. Improving the public finances, often disingenuously called "austerity", is not a political decision, but the key to prosperity. There is nothing intrinsically economically sound about a nation with a budget deficit of 11% spending £1 of every £4 it borrows on interest payments—money that should be spent on investing in public services and the future of this country. I therefore support the continuation of the commitment to apprenticeships and T-levels.

As we have seen the deficit fall over the past seven years, we have been able to use the money to make sure that we take the lowest paid out of tax and to create the national living wage and an environment in which 2.9 million more jobs have been created. Investment and extra taxation are coming in and being reinvested in the public sector.

The opportunity to govern is nothing unless it is used as an instrument for good. In closing the deficit—and not only through the measures in the Queen's Speech—the Government will have the opportunity to do good. We have all stood on the doorsteps in the past few weeks during the general election, which exposed intergenerational tendencies that we have not seen in decades. The normal pact that a new generation will be wealthier than the one preceding it has broken down.

Given the Government's sound economic policy, we now have chances to create Conservative solutions to some of the problems. We do not need to follow the snake-oil politics of the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), but we do need to consider why it is acceptable for interest payments on student loans to be 6.1% when the market rate is something less than 1%. A Conservative solution is to say, "That's a market distortion—let's attack it." Let us do that in several ways. One way is surely to allow new entrants into the student loan market, to ensure that the level of loan payment is brought down.

It is the instinct of everybody in the country to own a home or rent one in the area they choose. In the 1950s, Supermac built homes for all; in 2020, the challenge for the Prime Minister is to become "Supermay", to ensure that this Government build a million homes in the next five years. We can do that with Conservative policies. I see the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the Front Bench; I hope he will continue to espouse changes to planning laws, to free things up. I hope that the public sector and private sector become involved. Let us have tenure-free building from housing associations and let them free up some of the rent provision so that they can build more.

Anyone who has read anything about the first industrial revolution will understand that it was local capital that built homes, that built industries. Let us use local institutions, the local enterprise partnerships, to fund infrastructure bonds and project bonds to build those houses and build the infrastructure this country needs so that at the next general election, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) said, it will be the Conservative party that offers that vision of hope and aspiration and that yet again offers the ladder of opportunity for all.

4.9 pm

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): We will support the Government on the Queen's Speech this evening—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]—not because of what the shadow Chancellor described as some grubby backroom deal: it was not a backroom deal, for a start. It was published in this House. Everyone knows what the deal was; it was a deal we struck with the Government because the Government wished to have the influence of our votes. I suspect that the Scottish nationalists, had the party that lost the last election tried to approach them to form a coalition, would have done exactly the same. Let us make that clear.

We support many of the things in the Queen's Speech. We support the fact that the Government are committed to the Union, while the alternative is committed to breaking up the Union and, indeed, has supported parties in the past that have tried to break up the Union by violence.

Secondly, we support the Queen's Speech and the Government because we share the same values when it comes to leaving the European Union. We support the stance that the Government have taken in their White Paper on leaving the single market, leaving the customs union and ensuring that we are free from the diktats of Europe and free to make deals with those parts of the world in which economies are expanding. It makes sense to do so, and the Queen's Speech is committed to that.

Thirdly, we support the Queen's Speech because we share the same economic values as the Government. We do not wish to see the kind of fiscal irresponsibility proposed today by the shadow Chancellor, in which hundreds of billions of pounds will be borrowed. He then has the cheek to say that he does not want to create a burden, and that one of the reasons young people are voting for his party is that they do not want to be burdened with debt in the future. Who does he think will pay back the billions that will be borrowed for the madcap schemes that his party proposes? Of course we support fiscal responsibility.

Indeed, this Queen's Speech is not vacuous, as it has been described. There are good supply measures in it. To enable our country to compete, we need an education system that produces people who have skills. We need people with technical skills. We need infrastructure that enables the economy to work smoothly. We need an industrial strategy and we need sound finance.

For all those reasons, we believe that this Queen's Speech is worth supporting. It plots a way forward, and it has a responsible attitude to the future of the economy. Of course, there will be times in the future when we will disagree with the Government, but then a lot of their Back Benchers disagree with them anyway. Indeed, we have already seen that the hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen) disagrees with them over the deal being struck with the Democratic Unionist party.

We are committed to supporting a Government who are committed to the Union, committed to the defence of this realm and committed to growing the economy. For that reason, we will give them our support tonight.

4.14 pm

**Jo Churchill** (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): It is an immense pleasure to talk about the economy in today's Queen's Speech debate, because before I entered the House,

only two short years ago, my day job was creating jobs. We need to remember that our local economies are driven by people's confidence in creating jobs, particularly in small businesses, which have not been spoken about much today.

Bury St Edmunds is a great place to do business with a thriving small business sector that is outpacing the national average. The Conservative party's job is to drive quality jobs. I welcome this Queen's Speech to inspire entrepreneurs—I have been employing people—but the shadow Chancellor's picture was one of gloom, high tax, borrow and spend. That is not the right way to deliver jobs in any economy. Bury St Edmunds is in the top 20% of economically active constituencies and it reflects a sound economy.

The UK employment rate is nearly 75%. Unemployment is 4.6%—the lowest since 1975—but 690 people in my constituency do not have a job. We need to get them one. We are here to create the right environment and opportunities, and to break down barriers so that everybody can show their talents and abilities. The number of women in work is at an all-time high, which is to be celebrated, but the number of women-led firms is not high enough. We need to work hard to ensure that more women lead firms and become the entrepreneurs of the future.

The Government's commitment to further progress on narrowing the gender pay gap is welcome, as is our lead on the national living wage. We must be attuned to something that the Labour party often is not—that wage costs are often the highest costs for a business. It is often the case that the more a business raises wages, the lower its profit margin and, therefore, the lower its corporation tax return. All the talk saying that everything can be solved by corporation tax rises is nonsense. We must have an eye to what we force businesses to do. A constituent of mine in her early 60s said, "Please do all you can to stay in power for the next year to give lots of people job security." She is paid only just about the national living wage but she says that she would rather earn that in a steady job than be on jobseeker's allowance. She said that she is not poor and she is not the rich elite, but she looks to us to provide security.

We need to ensure that the climate is right and that people have the right skills so that employers and employees thrive. I am pleased that the industrial strategy is bold and follows growth. It is good that we should invest 2.4% of GDP in research and development. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) said in her excellent maiden speech, we need to look to the future, not back to the past. We need to ensure that we actually inspire when we see opportunities, such as in our further education colleges. I want West Suffolk College in my constituency to be one of the leading institutes of technology, driving opportunity and connecting business. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond) said, strong entrepreneurial leadership from our local enterprise partnerships, councils and colleges will drive prosperity.

We have a positive economic message. We want a thriving economy. I do not want our children paying off our debts. I want them to own houses, have great jobs, raise families and have careers.

4.18 pm

**Gerard Killen** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful for the opportunity to give my maiden speech in this lively debate. It is an honour to be standing here, representing the good people of Rutherglen and Hamilton West as their Labour and Co-operative MP. It is a pleasure to follow excellent maiden speeches across the House, particularly those of my hon. Friends the Members for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) and for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid), and the hon. Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan).

I begin by paying tribute to all those affected by recent events in London and Manchester, painful and shocking tragedies that were truly felt right across the country. One of my constituents, Piotr Chylewska, was seriously injured in the Manchester bombing, and is one the last survivors to be discharged from hospital. I am pleased to say that Piotr is making good progress and I am sure that Members across the House would like to join me in wishing him well. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I thank Father Paul Morton, the St Bride's parish in Cambuslang and the wider community for the support they have shown Piotr. It is that coming together in times of adversity that is a testament to our shared values—values that I see examples of every day in my wonderful constituency of Rutherglen and Hamilton West.

In my home town of Rutherglen, coffee shops such as the Black Poppy collect and distribute toiletries for the homeless. In Blantyre, we have public houses like the West End Bar supporting generations of families affected by Chernobyl. We have community councils; proud Lanarkshire institutions that give generously to charity, like Equi's Ice Cream in Hamilton; social enterprises like R:evolve Clothing; residents' associations, churches and community development trusts like Healthy n Happy; and too many more organisations to name in the time I have. We have a diverse mix of decent people, all coming together and helping to make our communities better places to live, one small act of kindness at a time. They are the everyday heroes, and I thank each and every one of them for the job that they do.

My predecessor, Margaret Ferrier, was a strong advocate in this House for human rights across the world. I have no doubt that she cared as deeply for my constituency as I do. In her maiden speech, she spoke of working together in a spirit of collaboration, and although it will not be surprising that I have few fond memories of previous Conservative Governments, let me say, as the first gay married man to represent my constituency, and in that spirit of collaboration, that I welcomed the equal marriage legislation passed under the 2010 coalition Government. I look forward to the continued advancement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex equality in this place and across the whole United Kingdom.

In reading the speeches of my predecessors, I was struck that the occasion of a maiden speech is an opportunity to leave a message for the future. I hope my successors and I will be able to look back and have at least one fond memory between us of the current Government. Unfortunately, initial impressions suggest I may be disappointed. Having served as a local councillor, I have seen at first hand the effects of Government austerity on the communities in my constituency—real consequences for jobs, services and the local economy. When I hear stories of people using candles to heat and

light rooms in their home, of disabled people unable to put on their own socks and shoes losing Government support and being found fit to work, and of siblings in their 20s sharing a bedroom because they have nowhere else to go—stories not from the pages of history, but from real life in my constituency in 2017—I wonder, where is the deal for them? If Conservative Members are truly to be a Government of all the nations and regions of the United Kingdom, it is time to start acting like it. It is those individual lives—the everyday heroes—that I want to focus on in this place.

It has been an exciting and somewhat unexpected journey for me, from Gorbals boy to Member of Parliament via Rutherglen and Blantyre. In this era of fixed-term Parliaments, the great irony is that I have no idea how long I will have a seat in this place, but my pledge to the people of Rutherglen and Hamilton West is that I will make every day count.

4.22 pm

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): I congratulate everyone who has made their maiden speech today—we have heard some excellent speeches.

If you will indulge me for a moment, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a brief dedication to my predecessor, John Taylor, who sadly passed away during the campaign. I am sure many Members of the House will have happy memories of John, who was a thoroughly decent man and a very good friend to me.

John and I would often talk about the economy, and about Solihull and the growth we have seen there. That growth is not to be taken for granted. Often, people suggest that Solihull is prosperous so it can afford to pay more in tax, and that sort of thing, but the reality is that Solihull is built on entrepreneurship. Since 2010, we have seen a 60% fall in unemployment, and in 2015 we had a GDP growth rate faster than China's.

However, about 10 days out from the date of the general election, I started to get calls from local businesses that had become deeply concerned as they saw the polls narrow. The reason for their concern was the uncosted spending plans of the Labour party. Their real concern was that everything in the economy is based on the public finances and that without proper public finances and confidence, interest rates rise, and we end up with credit crunches and repossessions, which really feeds through to the real economy.

We should remember that controlling the public finances is not a left versus right cliché about a generous welfare state against a low-tax economy. Putting our public services on a sustainable financial footing is about making sure they are still here in 20 years' time and addressing the intergenerational injustices built into our current funding model.

It is well known in policy-making circles that there is a time bomb under the welfare state. Our ageing population means that we will be supporting more and more claimants on the system on the back of a proportionally shrinking working-age population. This is not sustainable. Moreover, we not only continue to finance social spending through debt, heaping fresh burdens on the next generation, but hurt living standards today as interest rates rise and squeeze real incomes. On top of that, the Government have to employ cost-controlling measures such as the public sector pay cap, putting even more pressure on



incomes. This is long on pain but short on gain, and no substitute, in the long term, for the substantial reform that has to take place.

This election has been widely touted as one where the young began to make their voice heard. That is a really welcome development, and I am sure that as democrats, Members in all parts of the House welcome this new engagement from the young. However, we as Conservatives must convince them that their best bet is not reckless, regressive giveaways such as scrapping tuition fees, but a party that will deliver jobs, a strong economy, sustainable public services that they can rely on, and a fairer balance of taxation between the generations. Tackling the deficit is absolutely essential to building a country that works for everyone. It makes a real difference to lives out there. If we lose sight of that now, I am afraid that we are lost economically. We have to think now that the decisions we make will not just impact on the next five years but will set a pattern for the decades ahead.

4.26 pm

**Chuka Umunna** (Streatham) (Lab): I congratulate those who have given maiden speeches. I rise to speak to amendment (g), which stands in my name and the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) and many other Members, on the biggest economic issue of our time—Brexit.

I am proud to represent the borough that scored the highest remain vote in the country. In my seven years in this place, I cannot recall any issue provoking such a strong and emotional reaction from my constituents, particularly the young, who feel that last year's referendum robbed them of opportunities in the future that others have enjoyed and will now be denied to them. I accept the result of the referendum, but whether people voted leave or remain, it is clear from the election that the idea that there is one way of withdrawing from the European Union is dead in the water. The Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right to say that we do not need to withdraw in a way that destroys people's jobs. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) has already powerfully made the case against leaving without a deal and highlighted the disgraceful treatment of EU citizens.

I therefore want to focus my comments on why I believe that membership of the single market is important. In my view, access to it is both different from and inferior to membership. If we leave the single market, whatever the level of access negotiated, working people across Britain will be worse off and revenue to the Exchequer will plummet. There is a clear economic argument for this. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has forecast that leaving the single market could cause a £31 billion hit to the public finances, making it all the more difficult to end years of austerity.

But above all, for me, there is a clear social justice argument. The single market is more than a free trade zone. It provides a framework of rules that protects people from the worst excesses of capitalism and unfettered globalisation. If we have mere access to the single market, we are talking about leaving this framework of rules. These are EU laws that outlaw discrimination in the workplace, give us a multitude of rights at work, produce regulations to protect our environment, and

give protections to consumers. Let's get real about this. Some say that we could have all these things on our own—that we do not need to be part of a single market. However, large multinational companies work across borders to maximise their profits and reduce these protections, and one national Government cannot take on the power of these people alone. We need only look at the example given this week by the European Commission in slapping a record £2.1 billion fine on Google because it has been seeking to rig the marketplace in its favour. In the end, the social justice arguments are clear.

There are three main arguments advanced against this. The first argument is that we cannot restrict immigration while being in the single market. That is rubbish. We can restrict immigration now, but we choose not to. The second is that the state aid rules will stop us having proper industrial strategies. Tell that to Germany, which has an investment bank, or France and the Netherlands, which use procurement to protect their industries.

The final issue is that of sovereignty and of us being a rule receiver and not making the rules. If we want to access the single market, we will have to comply with its rules. If we are a member, at least we have influence. I say to the Government: yes, they can look at other countries—Norway and the rest—as a guide, but we are the United Kingdom. We are the fifth biggest economy in the world, the second biggest military power, the home of Shakespeare and we created the world wide web. Let us be ambitious and get the best deal for future generations in this country.

4.30 pm

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): It is a pleasure, as ever, to follow the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna). He and I were both on the remain side of the EU referendum campaign. I accept the determination of my constituents, who voted to leave the European Union, and that it is incumbent on me, this Parliament and this House of Commons to do our very best to make a success of leaving the EU, rather than simply hoping that it will all go away. Whether we like it or not, we have to implement the democratic mandate.

Streatham, of course, is a long way from the frontline of Brexit, but Dover, which I represent, is on that frontline. For centuries we have been the gateway and guardian of this kingdom. It is at Dover that our border security matters most. Dover is the gateway to Europe and, indeed, to England. That is why it is so important that we make sure that Brexit is a success and that we plan now, so that on day one of leaving the EU we are prepared for every single eventuality.

As we have heard, the Chancellor hopes that there will be a transitional agreement, and so do I. I hope that we will have a smooth and easy move out of the European Union—I hope it will all go really well—but we need to be prepared for every single eventuality. Let us not hope that it will all go wrong, but hope that it will all go right. Let us do our bit to make sure that it goes right, because it is our countrymen and women, and our children and their children, who will suffer if we do not.

That is why it is so important that we are ready on day one, and why I have gone to great lengths and efforts with industry groups, including the port of Dover,

[*Charlie Elphicke*]

the Road Haulage Association, the Freight Transport Association and many others, to consider how we can make sure that customs arrangements work as we leave the EU, so that we are prepared for every single eventuality.

We need to make sure that, whatever happens, our economy remains strong and that it works not just for big business and establishment institutions, but for everyone in this country, because too often it has not. We need to consider restructuring things. How do we get our kids the finance to get on the housing ladder? How do we ensure that all that money tied up in buy-to-let goes into the real economy and gets invested in business and enterprise so that we have a more efficient and productive economy and give the nation a pay rise as well as more jobs?

How do we ensure that the economy is fair? It is an affront, is it not, when a cleaner pays more in tax than the big business whose offices she cleans? That is why I have spent so much time since I was elected to the House making the case that the tax system should be fair and that everyone should pay their fair share. That is important and it is an affront when it does not happen.

We need to make sure that the least well-off have fair access to finance, that they are not preyed on by payday lenders or by banks charging egregious fees, and that they have access to branches in their own communities.

Finally, we need a resilient economy, by which I mean not just that it needs to be a success on the Dover frontline from the point of view of Brexit; we need an economy that works for the whole country, and economic policy that leads to a renaissance in the regions and success for the whole country.

4.33 pm

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to make my maiden speech as the new Member for Bath.

Let me first of all pay tribute to my predecessor, Ben Howlett. He served his constituency with great diligence and I thank him for the contribution he made to our wonderful city. In particular, Ben Howlett understood the progressive and liberal spirit—with a small l—that makes up the fabric of Bath, and he campaigned with conviction to remain in the EU and on voting reform. As a keen supporter of electoral reform, I want to continue his work and I hope we can make some progress during this Parliament.

Of course, many Bath citizens remember Don Foster, the MP for Bath from 1992 to 2015, with special fondness. For 23 years he was Bath's No. 1 supporter, representing the city with infectious energy, and bringing people and communities together.

Today, 29 June, would have been my mother's 97th birthday. She was born in Hamburg into a half-Jewish family and experienced directly the persecution under the Nazi terror. I was lucky enough to be born into a different Germany—one heavily scarred and with an immense feeling of guilt, but determined never again to go down into the abyss of fanaticism, racial intolerance and exaggerated national pride. It is testimony to the open-mindedness of the people of Bath that they have elected as their new MP a woman who was not British-born. I feel deeply humbled and very honoured.

Whenever I mention that I live in Bath, the immediate response is, "Bath—what a beautiful place." Yes, Bath is a beautiful place, but like many other cities it is suffering from a housing crisis and overstretched public services. In 2016, average house prices in Bath rose by more than £100 a day, making it almost impossible for people on an average income to rent a decent family home, let alone buy their own home. Making sure that we share prosperity among all people in Bath will be my particular focus.

Under current Government proposals, two out of three schools in Bath will have to lay off staff in September. As a former secondary school teacher, I know all too well how challenging it is to teach and learn effectively in very large classes. I will stand up for all young people in Bath to make sure that they receive the education they deserve.

Whether we like it or not, this Parliament will be absorbed by Brexit. Last year nearly 70% of my constituents voted to remain in the EU, and I am here to make sure that their voices are heard on Brexit. The Brexit debates have only just started, and I look forward to taking a full part in those debates, and indeed in all the business of the House.

4.37 pm

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): I commend the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) for a powerful and emotional speech, especially about the early days of her life. Congratulations to her.

Before I begin the main part of my speech, it would be remiss of me not to mention the general election briefly. I am truly honoured to have been returned to the House, and I am pleased to report that I now boast the largest share of the vote that any Member of Parliament for Erewash has held since the seat was created in 1983. That is a tremendous vote of confidence not just in me, but in the Government and the policies with which we are moving forward. I thank my constituents for their continued support, and I pledge to work for everybody.

I want to focus my contribution to this debate about the economy on High Speed 2. At the beginning of the Queen's Speech debate, the Prime Minister talked about recognising and grasping the opportunities that lie ahead for the United Kingdom. HS2 is one of those opportunities that we really need to grasp. The Bill that has been laid before Parliament focuses on phase 2a, but phase 2b will go right through Long Eaton in my constituency and skirt around Sandiacre. I know that some people still think that they can stop HS2, but I believe it is too late. It is now important that we all work together to get the best deal for the constituencies affected. It is my responsibility as the local Member of Parliament to work with the Government, HS2 Ltd and my constituents—they are the most important people in this—to ensure that we grasp every opportunity, including on inward investment, regeneration and jobs.

I want to make two requests today. The first is that we get a speedy answer on which route HS2 will take through Long Eaton. The second is for better compensation than has been offered. Homes in which people have lived for 40-something years, in many cases, are to be destroyed. In one row of cottages, the people at No. 5 have lived there for 43 years and the people at Nos. 1, 7 and 9 have lived there for more than 40 years. If the

whole country is going to benefit from HS2, my local residents should not have to make the sacrifices that they are being asked to make. We need to work together to ensure that the benefits that the whole country will get do not mean that my constituents are affected so dramatically. We need to have those benefits, but not at the expense of my constituents.

4.39 pm

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): I will be brief, but before I make my very short points, I want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy). She was appropriately named by her parents—she is a star.

I want to make two points about how the Queen's Speech relates to the economy. First, we have significant challenges ahead, particularly in relation to productivity, so on that I agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The productivity crisis we face is a red flag that demonstrates what Tory economic policy has done to our country. At its heart, it is the cause of our wage crisis. The fact that productivity has flat-lined has meant that people have been unable to earn more. There is a simple route out of the productivity crisis: pay attention to the needs of the economy and do more on skills. The Tories have deeply damaged colleges and further education. The T-levels mentioned in the Queen's Speech are just a pointless rebrand of an existing system that has already failed further and adult education.

Secondly, we have to take the issue of immigration head on. It was a factor in the general election, but the Queen's Speech contains nothing to deal with people's concerns about security. If Conservative Members want to deal with the deficit, they cannot afford their current immigration policy. I say to my own party that the only way to deal with austerity is to accept that immigration is good for this country, not bad. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) said, we cannot deny our country's history. Immigration has made my family and this country strong; I will not be ashamed of it.

4.42 pm

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): I will speak briefly and apply some austerity to my speech. We keep hearing the word "austerity" and the idea that somehow austerity is a choice—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is!"] Austerity is not a choice; it is a mathematical reality defined by the level of our debts and, more importantly, the level of our liabilities. If anybody doubts that, they should look at the table from the OBR that shows predicted public spending 50 years hence. It forecasts an increase on current prices of £156 billion, which is the size of the entire NHS budget plus £10 billion. If anyone thinks that that money is going to fall from the sky, they are deluded.

We are making a choice on austerity. Our choice is to save our children and grandchildren from an age of terrible austerity, which is what will happen if we do not take the right and difficult decisions. I will vote for the Queen's Speech to support the only party that has in its DNA and in its heart—yes, its heart—a passionate belief in generational fairness and sustainable economics for the future.

4.43 pm

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I want to dwell for a moment on how we treat those people who are on the lowest pay. When I was a Minister, I became aware that the underpayment of the minimum wage was endemic in the care sector. I got HMRC to do an in-depth investigation into the sector, and I now have the results: £2.5 million of underpaid wages in the care sector. That is a disgrace. In the case of one provider, more than £1 million was underpaid to the lowest-paid people in our country. We cannot continue to operate our public services on the backs of poverty wages for our lowest paid workers. That is a disgraceful way to proceed. It is all very well for the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) to talk about the benefits of austerity, but its impact on some people's lives is unacceptable.

That leads me on to the fact that we are continuing to cap the pay of our public sector workers, including in the NHS, which in reality means a pay cut for nurses and very many other people. The impact of that is unacceptable. We need a long-term settlement for the NHS and the care system. The hon. Member for South Cambridgeshire (Heidi Allen) made the point that in this Parliament, instead of making grubby deals, we should be working across the House to settle those issues once and for all and to ensure that there is a long-term settlement for the NHS and care that does not involve exploiting the lowest-paid people in our country.

4.45 pm

**Rebecca Long Bailey** (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): I know that I am against the clock, so I will be as quick as possible, but I want first to thank all Members who have taken part today. In particular, I thank those who have given their maiden speeches: my hon. Friends the Members for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi), for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) and for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Gerard Killen), and the hon. Members for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) and for Bath (Wera Hobhouse). I know that they will make their mark on this place over the years to come.

The Queen's Speech was sadly threadbare, evading all substantial questions of policy and doing nothing to undo the failed economic policies of the past. Lest we forget, this was the Government who told us seven years ago that we were all in this together—that unleashing excruciating financial pain upon people, public services and businesses, and allowing our once proud industrial communities to be sent into managed decline, while slashing taxes for the wealthiest, was a necessary evil and that we would all be better off in the end. However, we now live in a Britain where the top fifth receive 40% of total income, while the poorest fifth earn only 8%—a Britain reliant on foodbanks and, as the Bank of England cites, with "worrying levels of rapid consumer credit growth" among those borrowing simply to make ends meet, and it is set to get worse. As we have heard from the IFS,

"earnings will be no higher in 2022 than they were in 2007", based on current forecasts.

The UK has one of the highest levels of regional inequality in Europe. Fifty-four per cent of future transport spending is due to take place in London, by comparison with the north-east, which will receive only 1.8%, and

[Rebecca Long Bailey]

the picture is no better when we look at income inequality. For example, people in London earn £134 more a week than those in Yorkshire. So what have the Government set out to rebuild our fractured economy? Their industrial strategy Green Paper was criticised by the Select Committee on Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy this year, which stated that it lacked clarity and political will. Sadly, the Government compounded such criticism by simply inserting the abstract words “industrial strategy” in the Queen’s Speech, like some sort of game of rhetoric bingo.

The Queen’s Speech went on to state that the Government “will work to attract investment in infrastructure”.

Again, there were no details. I am afraid that the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy might be in for a shock, as the Governor of the Bank of England stated yesterday that Britain has experienced the

“weakest...business investment in half a century”.

Frankly, it is not surprising, when the Government have done little to foster a fertile business environment. Simply slashing the headline rate of corporation tax alone does not constitute creating a good business environment. Businesses need high-quality infrastructure, both physical and digital, but public investment has been woeful.

Businesses also need a highly skilled workforce, but the Government have cut real-terms school funding, scrapped the education maintenance allowance and imposed huge cuts to further education funding over the past seven years. Businesses also need long-term stability, not huge hikes in business rates—relief for which has still not materialised, months after the event—or what is, quite frankly, a reckless and dangerous approach to leaving the EU. It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that the letter of support for the Conservative party from business that usually materialises a few days before polling day did not materialise this year.

Vaguer still was the notion that ministers will “seek to enhance rights...in the...workplace.”

This Government have eroded workers’ rights over the last seven years, with the TUC stating that the number of those in insecure work has risen by 27% in the last five years. If the Government were really serious about improving workers’ rights, they would ban zero-hours contracts, repeal the Trade Union Act 2016 and abolish employment tribunal fees.

Even more vague is the position on energy prices, as illustrated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband). Staggeringly, in one of the richest nations in the world, we have over 4 million people living in fuel poverty, so I was pleasantly surprised when the Prime Minister called for Labour’s energy price cap to be implemented. This was from a party that scoffed in 2015 that the policy was from a “Marxist universe”, so even I was flabbergasted by this apparent damascene conversion. The Queen’s Speech, however, was completely silent on that commitment, amid reports that senior Cabinet members and the big six energy companies were lobbying for the price cap to be dropped.

Britain stands at a crossroads, and Members of this House have a grave choice to make. Do they choose the Government’s path, which leads to more economic

stagnation, falling wages, deindustrialisation and people being held back by economic insecurity at work and at home, or do they choose Labour’s amendment, which sets out the change that Britain needs? That is a path that would rebuild and transform the British economy with an industrial strategy that would invest in regions and nations, and would provide the support that businesses desperately crave. It is a path that recognises that redistribution is not enough, and that job quality and work satisfaction also matter. However, it is a path that the Government refuse to take, and, as they hang on to office precariously by the tips of their fingernails, they are quite simply standing in the way of a fairer, richer Britain.

4.50 pm

**The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark):** It is a pleasure to respond to this excellent debate on the Queen’s Speech. Two years ago, I had the same honour in the very same debate, and it fell to me to respond to the first words spoken in the House by the new Member for Batley and Spennings, in her maiden speech. She said then that

“we...have far more in common...than things that divide us.”—*[Official Report, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]*

That heartfelt observation, and injunction, will live forever in the Chamber, through the shield above her place. It is a reminder that should guide us, particularly in this new Parliament, in which the electorate have required a certain humility from every party. The message from the electorate is that they want Conservative leadership—which is why we won more votes and more seats than any other party—but a leadership that seeks to establish common ground in the country and in Parliament. That is what the Queen’s Speech, and we, in the manner in which we govern, seek to do.

In the limited time that I have, I shall respond to what has been said in the debate, and in particular to the maiden speeches—for this is an historic and important day for those Members and their constituencies—before saying something about the theme of jobs and growth.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan), who made a brilliant first contribution. The fact that an ex-apprentice from Merseyside has made a speech of that calibre will be a great inspiration to apprentices throughout the country, and it is a pleasure to have her here. She fills big shoes in following Andrew Tyrie, our former colleague, but she is clearly a woman of good judgment, because she has made a very wise choice as a godparent, if I may say so.

The hon. Member for Warrington South (Faisal Rashid) was appropriately generous in his tribute to my very good friend David Mowat, the previous Member, who did fantastic work in the House for his local community. Warrington has suffered terrorist attacks in the past, and the knowledge of that community that he gained as its mayor will make a big contribution to the House. He will find that the best progress in Cheshire is made when colleagues work together. That is certainly my experience.

The hon. Member for Gower (Tonia Antoniazzi) also made a notable contribution. She said that she had helped to bring the café culture to Gower by promoting the ice-cream parlours that her family had brought to the area. I was a customer of those ice-cream parlours when I was campaigning for her predecessor of happy

memory. As the son of a milkman from Middlesbrough, I share her enthusiasm for dairy products, and her view that people from all parts of the country should see no limits to entering this place.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Gerard Killen) was self-effacing in his remarks. He said that he would make every day count, and I hope that he will. He has made history by being the first—as he put it—gay married man to represent his constituency. I hope that he will find other ways to achieve great note and a long-lasting legacy in the House.

Finally, I welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse). Many people all over the country will admire her family history, and the fact that the daughter of a refugee should find sanctuary in this country and come to represent the city of Bath. The city has a history of representation by independent-minded people, and I hope that the hon. Lady will continue that tradition.

Let me say something about the two Back-Bench amendments that you have selected today, Mr Speaker. First, I should like to thank the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and her colleagues. She has brought an injustice to the House and we will put that injustice right. For reasons that she understands, we are unable to pass the amendment as it is drafted, but she and my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and other Members have been persuasive, and I hope that she will not press it so that we can be united in protecting the rights that she correctly defends.

The hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) made a truncated speech, and we understand the reasons for that. He wants a good deal from Brexit that involves a parliamentary vote and transitional arrangements, and that respects the devolved Administrations and protects rights. So do I. But he adds to that list membership of the single market. Does he not recall that, only three weeks ago, he was running on a programme promising to leave it? That is quite a big thing to forget. It is a bit like forgetting that he does not have confidence in the Leader of the Opposition.

I welcome all Members to what is going to be an exciting new Parliament. There will, as I have said, be a need for co-operation and compromise, but there will also be a battle of ideas and values in this House, perhaps on a scale that we have not seen for years. Underpinning our programme is a belief that Britain is best served by a thriving market economy that produces prosperity for all and helps to fund world-class public services. Underpinning the approach of those on the Opposition Front Bench is a determination to create a socialist state in Britain, despite all the evidence of the damage this would do. That is not a caricature; it is a description. The Labour party once more setting off down the path of common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. They have not even determined the cost of all this, but it could be paid for only in one of three ways: you tax, you borrow or you expropriate. Each of those would be a disaster. The Labour party is now dedicated not to a marginal increase in taxation but to increasing taxes to their “highest ever peacetime level”, as the Institute for Fiscal Studies put it.

I am not sure that Labour Members realise what their party has become. And do not let us pretend that those taxes would be paid by some distant multinational

rather than by ordinary working people. As any economist will tell you, all taxes on companies have to be paid by workers, by consumers and by pensioners, through lower wages, higher prices and less valuable investments meaning lower pensions. This is not a choice of prosperity for the many or the few; it is a choice of prosperity for no one. During this Parliament, Opposition Members, who hid behind the supposed unelectability of their leader, can hide no longer. Are they going to stay silent while the leadership of their party advocates an approach that they all know perfectly well would be ruinous?

In this battle of political ideas, it is we on this side of the House who will make the case for the policies and the values of the common ground that the British people—and many on that side of this House—know are essential for prosperity. We believe in an enterprise economy in which businesses can compete, succeed and provide for the people of this country. We believe in well-paid jobs and decent public services, and in a welfare state paid for by what we earn rather than by what we can borrow. We are proud of the fact that, in Britain today, more people have jobs than ever before in the history of our country. This is what we propose to do in this Queen’s Speech and how we intend to govern: living within our means; creating good jobs that pay people well; investing in the future by working with businesses to keep Britain competitive; boosting the power of our great cities, towns and counties in all parts of the United Kingdom; implementing the will of the British people to leave the EU in a way that is orderly and sensible; and being a beacon of free trade and internationalism. That is the programme that we have set out in this Queen’s Speech and not one part of it can be done if Britain adopts the high-cost, high-tax, socialist ideology that is now the programme of the Opposition.

We vote tonight not just on a programme of legislation, but on a fundamental approach to the future of this country, and I commend this Queen’s Speech to the House.

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 297, Noes 323.*

## Division No. 2]

[4.59 pm

### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Brennan, Kevin
Abrahams, Debbie	Brock, Deidre
Alexander, Heidi	Brown, Alan
Ali, Rushanara	Brown, Lyn
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Amesbury, Mike	Bryant, Chris
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Buck, Ms Karen
Ashworth, Jonathan	Burden, Richard
Austin, Ian	Burton, Richard
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Butler, Dawn
Bardell, Hannah	Byrne, rh Liam
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Cadbury, Ruth
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Benn, rh Hilary	Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Berger, Luciana	Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Betts, Mr Clive	Carden, Dan
Black, Mhairi	Champion, Sarah
Blackford, Ian	Chapman, Douglas
Blackman, Kirsty	Chapman, Jenny
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Charalambous, Bambos
Blomfield, Paul	Cherry, Joanna
Brabin, Tracy	Clwyd, rh Ann
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Coaker, Vernon

Coffey, Ann  
 Cooper, Julie  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Crausby, Sir David  
 Crawley, Angela  
 Creagh, Mary  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Cunningham, Mr Jim  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 De Piero, Gloria  
 Debbonaire, Thangam  
 Dent Coad, Emma  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Drew, Dr David  
 Dromey, Jack  
 Duffield, Rosie  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Ellman, Mrs Louise  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farrelly, Paul  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Field, rh Frank  
 Fitzpatrick, Jim  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flint, rh Caroline  
 Flynn, Paul  
 Fovargue, Yvonne  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Frith, James  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gaffney, Hugh  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 George, Ruth  
 Gethins, Stephen  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Gill, Preet  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Godsiff, Mr Roger  
 Goodman, Helen  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Grogan, John  
 Gwynne, Andrew  
 Haight, Louise  
 Hamilton, Fabian

Hanson, rh David  
 Hardy, Emma  
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Hayman, Sue  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Mr Mark  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen  
 Hill, Mike  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hoey, Kate  
 Hollern, Kate  
 Hopkins, Kelvin  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, Diana  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, Graham  
 Jones, Helen  
 Jones, Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Killen, Gerard  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Laird, Lesley  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Lee, Ms Karen  
 Leslie, Mr Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lewis, Mr Ivan  
 Linden, David  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lucas, Ian C.  
 Lynch, Holly  
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Mann, John  
 Marsden, Gordon  
 Martin, Sandy  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 Mc Nally, John  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor

McGovern, Alison  
 McInnes, Liz  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, Ian  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 O'Mara, Jared  
 Onasanya, Fiona  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Owen, Albert  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pearce, Teresa  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pidcock, Laura  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rashid, Faisal  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rowley, Danielle  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Ryan, rh Joan  
 Saville Roberts, Liz  
 Shah, Naz  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin

Siddiq, Tulip  
 Skinner, Mr Dennis  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smeeth, Ruth  
 Smith, Angela  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Eleanor  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Laura  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Owen  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Snell, Gareth  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turley, Anna  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Umunna, Chuka  
 Vaz, rh Keith  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 Watson, Tom  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitfield, Martin  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Williams, Dr Paul  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Wilson, Phil  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Woodcock, John  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

#### **Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Nic Dakin and  
 Jessica Morden**

#### **NOES**

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Allen, Heidi  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, Stephen  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Bebb, Guto  
 Bellingham, Sir Henry  
 Benyon, rh Richard  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, Jake  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Boles, Nick  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew

Bradley, Ben	Freer, Mike	Kerr, Stephen	Prentis, Victoria
Bradley, rh Karen	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Prisk, Mr Mark
Brady, Mr Graham	Gale, Sir Roger	Knight, Julian	Pritchard, Mark
Brereton, Jack	Garnier, Mark	Kwarteng, Kwasi	Pursglove, Tom
Bridgen, Andrew	Gauke, rh Mr David	Lamont, John	Quin, Jeremy
Brine, Steve	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Lancaster, Mark	Quince, Will
Brokenshire, rh James	Gibb, rh Nick	Latham, Mrs Pauline	Raab, Dominic
Bruce, Fiona	Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Redwood, rh John
Buckland, Robert	Girvan, Paul	Lee, Dr Phillip	Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Burghart, Alex	Glen, John	Lefroy, Jeremy	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Burns, Conor	Goldsmith, Zac	Leigh, Sir Edward	Robinson, Gavin
Burt, rh Alistair	Goodwill, Mr Robert	Letwin, rh Sir Oliver	Robinson, Mary
Cairns, rh Alun	Gove, rh Michael	Lewer, Andrew	Rosindell, Andrew
Cartlidge, James	Graham, Luke	Lewis, rh Brandon	Ross, Douglas
Cash, Sir William	Graham, Richard	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Rowley, Lee
Caulfield, Maria	Grant, Bill	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Rudd, rh Amber
Chalk, Alex	Grant, Mrs Helen	Lidington, rh Mr David	Rutley, David
Chishti, Rehman	Gray, James	Little Pengelly, Emma	Sandbach, Antoinette
Chope, Mr Christopher	Grayling, rh Chris	Lopresti, Jack	Scully, Paul
Churchill, Jo	Green, Chris	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Seely, Mr Bob
Clark, Colin	Green, rh Damian	Loughton, Tim	Selous, Andrew
Clark, rh Greg	Greening, rh Justine	Mackinlay, Craig	Shannon, Jim
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic	Macleane, Rachel	Shapps, rh Grant
Clarke, Mr Simon	Gyimah, Mr Sam	Main, Mrs Anne	Sharma, Alok
Cleverly, James	Hair, Kirstene	Mak, Alan	Shelbrooke, Alec
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Halfon, rh Robert	Malthouse, Kit	Simpson, David
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Hall, Luke	Mann, Scott	Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Collins, Damian	Hammond, rh Mr Philip	Masterton, Paul	Skidmore, Chris
Costa, Alberto	Hammond, Stephen	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Smith, Chloe
Courts, Robert	Hancock, rh Matt	Maynard, Paul	Smith, Henry
Cox, Mr Geoffrey	Hands, rh Greg	McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick	Smith, Julian
Crabb, rh Stephen	Harper, rh Mr Mark	McPartland, Stephen	Smith, Royston
Crouch, Tracey	Harrington, Richard	McVey, rh Ms Esther	Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Davies, Chris	Harris, Rebecca	Menzies, Mark	Soubry, rh Anna
Davies, David T. C.	Harrison, Trudy	Mercer, Johnny	Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Davies, Glyn	Hart, Simon	Merriman, Huw	Spencer, Mark
Davies, Mims	Hayes, rh Mr John	Metcalfe, Stephen	Stephenson, Andrew
Davies, Philip	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Stevenson, John
Davis, rh Mr David	Heapey, James	Milling, Amanda	Stewart, Bob
Dinenage, Caroline	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mills, Nigel	Stewart, Iain
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Heaton-Jones, Peter	Milton, rh Anne	Stewart, Rory
Docherty, Leo	Henderson, Gordon	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Streeter, Mr Gary
Dockerill, Julia	Herbert, rh Nick	Moore, Damien	Stride, rh Mel
Dodds, rh Nigel	Hermon, Lady	Mordaunt, Penny	Stuart, Graham
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Hinds, Damian	Morgan, rh Nicky	Sturdy, Julian
Donelan, Michelle	Hoare, Simon	Morris, Anne Marie	Sunak, Rishi
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hollingbery, George	Morris, David	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Double, Steve	Hollinrake, Kevin	Morris, James	Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Dowden, Oliver	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Morton, Wendy	Syms, Mr Robert
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Holloway, Adam	Mundell, rh David	Thomas, Derek
Drax, Richard	Howell, John	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Thomson, Ross
Duddridge, James	Huddleston, Nigel	Murrison, Dr Andrew	Throup, Maggie
Duguid, David	Hughes, Eddie	Neill, Robert	Tolhurst, Kelly
Duncan, rh Sir Alan	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	Newton, Sarah	Tomlinson, Justin
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain	Hurd, Mr Nick	Nokes, Caroline	Tomlinson, Michael
Dunne, Mr Philip	Jack, Mr Alister	Norman, Jesse	Tracey, Craig
Ellis, Michael	James, Margot	O'Brien, Neil	Tredinnick, David
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Javid, rh Sajid	Offord, Dr Matthew	Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
Elphicke, Charlie	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Opperman, Guy	Truss, rh Elizabeth
Eustice, George	Jenkin, Mr Bernard	Paisley, Ian	Tugendhat, Tom
Evans, Mr Nigel	Jenkyns, Andrea	Parish, Neil	Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Evennett, rh David	Jenrick, Robert	Patel, rh Priti	Vara, Mr Shailesh
Fabricant, Michael	Johnson, rh Boris	Paterson, rh Mr Owen	Vickers, Martin
Fallon, rh Sir Michael	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Pawsey, Mark	Villiers, rh Theresa
Fernandes, Suella	Johnson, Gareth	Penning, rh Mike	Walker, Mr Charles
Field, rh Mark	Johnson, Joseph	Penrose, John	Walker, Mr Robin
Ford, Vicky	Jones, Andrew	Percy, Andrew	Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Foster, Kevin	Jones, rh Mr David	Perry, Claire	Warburton, David
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Jones, Mr Marcus	Philp, Chris	Warman, Matt
Francois, rh Mr Mark	Kawczynski, Daniel	Pincher, Christopher	Watling, Giles
Frazer, Lucy	Keegan, Gillian	Poulter, Dr Dan	Whately, Helen
Freeman, George	Kennedy, Seema	Pow, Rebecca	Whittaker, Craig

Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
Wiggin, Bill  
Williamson, rh Gavin  
Wilson, Sammy  
Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
Wood, Mike

Wragg, Mr William  
Wright, rh Jeremy  
Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
Mrs Heather Wheeler and  
Andrew Griffiths

*Question accordingly negated.*

**Mr Speaker:** I call Stella Creasy to move amendment (d).

**Stella Creasy:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am grateful to all the Members who have supported the rights of Northern Irish women to have equal access to abortion. I am delighted by today's announcement from the Government and satisfied by the commitments that I have had from the Minister responsible to work with the sector. On that basis, I am happy not to move the amendment today. Let us send a message to women everywhere that in this Parliament their voices will be heard and their rights upheld.

**Mr Speaker:** We come next to amendment (g).

*Amendment proposed:* at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech does not rule out withdrawal from the EU without a deal, guarantee a Parliamentary vote on any final outcome to negotiations, set out transitional arrangements to maintain jobs, trade and certainty for business, set out proposals to remain within the Customs Union and Single Market, set out clear measures to respect the competencies of the devolved administrations, and include clear protections for EU nationals living in the UK now, including retaining their right to remain in the UK, and reciprocal rights for UK citizens.”—  
(*Mr Umunna.*)

*Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 101, Noes 322.*

**Division No. 3]**

**[5.15 pm**

**AYES**

Ali, Rushanara	Eagle, Maria
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Edwards, Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah	Ellman, Mrs Louise
Berger, Luciana	Farrelly, Paul
Black, Mhairi	Farron, Tim
Blackford, Ian	Gapes, Mike
Blackman, Kirsty	Gethins, Stephen
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Gibson, Patricia
Brake, rh Tom	Grady, Patrick
Brock, Deidre	Grant, Peter
Brown, Alan	Gray, Neil
Bryant, Chris	Green, Kate
Buck, Ms Karen	Grogan, John
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Hayes, Helen
Cadbury, Ruth	Hendry, Drew
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Hermon, Lady
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Hillier, Meg
Chapman, Douglas	Hobhouse, Wera
Cherry, Joanna	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Clwyd, rh Ann	Hosie, Stewart
Coffey, Ann	Huq, Dr Rupa
Cowan, Ronnie	Jardine, Christine
Coyle, Neil	Jones, Darren
Crawley, Angela	Jones, Susan Elan
Creasy, Stella	Kyle, Peter
Davey, rh Sir Edward	Lake, Ben
Day, Martyn	Lamb, rh Norman
Dent Coad, Emma	Lammy, rh Mr David
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Law, Chris
Doughty, Stephen	Leslie, Mr Chris

Linden, David  
Lloyd, Stephen  
Lucas, Caroline  
MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
Mc Nally, John  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McGovern, Alison  
McKinnell, Catherine  
Monaghan, Carol  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Moran, Layla  
Murray, Ian  
Newlands, Gavin  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Owen, Albert  
Phillips, Jess  
Saville Roberts, Liz  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy

Shuker, Mr Gavin  
Siddiq, Tulip  
Slaughter, Andy  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeting, Wes  
Swinson, Jo  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas, Gareth  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Umunna, Chuka  
Vaz, rh Keith  
West, Catherine  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Williams, Hywel  
Wishart, Pete  
Woodcock, John  
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
Heidi Alexander and  
Marion Fellows

**NOES**

Clark, rh Greg  
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth  
Clarke, Mr Simon  
Cleverly, James  
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey  
Coffey, Dr Thérèse  
Collins, Damian  
Costa, Alberto  
Courts, Robert  
Cox, Mr Geoffrey  
Crabb, rh Stephen  
Crouch, Tracey  
Davies, Chris  
Davies, David T. C.  
Davies, Glyn  
Davies, Mims  
Davies, Philip  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Dinenage, Caroline  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
Docherty, Leo  
Dockerill, Julia  
Dodds, rh Nigel  
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
Donelan, Michelle  
Dorries, Ms Nadine  
Double, Steve  
Dowden, Oliver  
Doyle-Price, Jackie  
Drax, Richard  
Duddridge, James  
Duguid, David  
Duncan, rh Sir Alan  
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
Dunne, Mr Philip  
Ellis, Michael  
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
Elphicke, Charlie  
Eustice, George  
Evans, Mr Nigel  
Evennett, rh David  
Fabricant, Michael  
Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
Fernandes, Suella  
Field, rh Mark  
Ford, Vicky  
Foster, Kevin



Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, Lucy  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gauke, rh Mr David  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibb, rh Nick  
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Glen, John  
 Goldsmith, Zac  
 Goodwill, Mr Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Luke  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Bill  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Greening, rh Justine  
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic  
 Gyimah, Mr Sam  
 Hair, Kirstene  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harrington, Richard  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Simon  
 Hayes, rh Mr John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heappey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Heaton-Jones, Peter  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Herbert, rh Nick  
 Hinds, Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Hollingbery, George  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Howell, John  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy  
 Hurd, Mr Nick  
 Jack, Mr Alister  
 James, Margot  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Jenrick, Robert  
 Johnson, rh Boris  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnson, Joseph  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus

Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Kennedy, Seema  
 Kerr, Stephen  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kwarteng, Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Lancaster, Mark  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Lee, Dr Phillip  
 Lefroy, Jeremy  
 Leigh, Sir Edward  
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lidington, rh Mr David  
 Little Pengelly, Emma  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Main, Mrs Anne  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mann, Scott  
 Masterton, Paul  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Ms Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Milton, rh Anne  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Moore, Damien  
 Mordaunt, Penny  
 Morgan, rh Nicky  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Robert  
 Newton, Sarah  
 Nokes, Caroline  
 Norman, Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Perry, Claire  
 Philp, Chris

Pincher, Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Prisk, Mr Mark  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, Dominic  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Rudd, rh Amber  
 Rutley, David  
 Sandbach, Antoinette  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Mr Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, Alok  
 Shelbrooke, Alec  
 Simpson, David  
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith  
 Skidmore, Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas  
 Soubry, rh Anna  
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline  
 Spencer, Mark  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stewart, Rory

Streeter, Mr Gary  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, Rishi  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo  
 Syms, Mr Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Thomson, Ross  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Tredinnick, David  
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Mr Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Whately, Helen  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggan, Bill  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, Sammy  
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 Mrs Heather Wheeler and  
 Andrew Griffiths

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Main Question put.*

*The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 309.*

#### **Division No. 4]**

**[5.32 pm**

#### **AYES**

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Allen, Heidi  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, Stephen  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Bebb, Guto  
 Bellingham, Sir Henry  
 Benyon, rh Richard  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, Jake  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Boles, Nick  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, Ben  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Mr Graham  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brine, Steve  
 Brokenshire, rh James  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buckland, Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Burns, Conor  
 Burt, rh Alistair

Cairns, rh Alun  
 Cartlidge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Mr Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, Colin  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth  
 Clarke, Mr Simon  
 Cleverly, James  
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey  
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse  
 Collins, Damian  
 Costa, Alberto  
 Courts, Robert  
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey  
 Crabb, rh Stephen  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Davies, Chris  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Glyn  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davies, Philip  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Dinenage, Caroline  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Dockerill, Julia  
 Dodds, rh Nigel  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Donelan, Michelle  
 Dorries, Ms Nadine  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Duddridge, James  
 Duguid, David  
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan  
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
 Dunne, Mr Philip  
 Ellis, Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Charlie  
 Eustice, George  
 Evans, Mr Nigel  
 Evennett, rh David  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael  
 Fernandes, Suella  
 Field, rh Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, Lucy  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gauke, rh Mr David  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibb, rh Nick  
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Glen, John  
 Goldsmith, Zac  
 Goodwill, Mr Robert

Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Luke  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Bill  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Greening, rh Justine  
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic  
 Gyimah, Mr Sam  
 Hair, Kirstene  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harrington, Richard  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Simon  
 Hayes, rh Mr John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heapey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Heaton-Jones, Peter  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Herbert, rh Nick  
 Hermon, Lady  
 Hinds, Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Hollingbery, George  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Howell, John  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy  
 Hurd, Mr Nick  
 Jack, Mr Alister  
 James, Margot  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Jenrick, Robert  
 Johnson, rh Boris  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnson, Joseph  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Kennedy, Seema  
 Kerr, Stephen  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kwarteng, Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Lancaster, Mark  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Lee, Dr Phillip  
 Lefroy, Jeremy  
 Leigh, Sir Edward  
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver

Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lidington, rh Mr David  
 Little Pengelly, Emma  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Main, Mrs Anne  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mann, Scott  
 Masterton, Paul  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Ms Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Milton, rh Anne  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Moore, Damien  
 Mordaunt, Penny  
 Morgan, rh Nicky  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Robert  
 Newton, Sarah  
 Nokes, Caroline  
 Norman, Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Perry, Claire  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Prisk, Mr Mark  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Purslove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, Dominic  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary

Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Rudd, rh Amber  
 Rutley, David  
 Sandbach, Antoinette  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Mr Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, Alok  
 Shelbrooke, Alec  
 Simpson, David  
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith  
 Skidmore, Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas  
 Soubry, rh Anna  
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline  
 Spencer, Mark  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stewart, Rory  
 Streeter, Mr Gary  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, Rishi  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo  
 Syms, Mr Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Thomson, Ross  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Tredinnick, David  
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Mr Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Whately, Helen  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, Sammy  
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
 Mrs Heather Wheeler and  
 Andrew Griffiths

## NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Debonnaire, Thangam	Huq, Dr Rupa	Norris, Alex
Abrahams, Debbie	Dent Coad, Emma	Hussain, Imran	O'Hara, Brendan
Alexander, Heidi	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet	Jardine, Christine	O'Mara, Jared
Ali, Rushanara	Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Jarvis, Dan	Onasanya, Fiona
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Dodds, Anneliese	Johnson, Diana	Onn, Melanie
Amesbury, Mike	Doughty, Stephen	Jones, Darren	Onwurah, Chi
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Dowd, Peter	Jones, Gerald	Osamor, Kate
Ashworth, Jonathan	Drew, Dr David	Jones, Graham	Owen, Albert
Austin, Ian	Dromey, Jack	Jones, Helen	Peacock, Stephanie
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Duffield, Rosie	Jones, Mr Kevan	Pearce, Teresa
Bardell, Hannah	Eagle, Ms Angela	Jones, Sarah	Pennycook, Matthew
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Eagle, Maria	Jones, Susan Elan	Perkins, Toby
Beckett, rh Margaret	Edwards, Jonathan	Kane, Mike	Phillips, Jess
Benn, rh Hilary	Efford, Clive	Keeley, Barbara	Phillipson, Bridget
Berger, Luciana	Elliott, Julie	Kendall, Liz	Pidcock, Laura
Betts, Mr Clive	Ellman, Mrs Louise	Khan, Afzal	Platt, Jo
Black, Mhairi	Elmore, Chris	Killen, Gerard	Pollard, Luke
Blackford, Ian	Esterson, Bill	Kinnock, Stephen	Pound, Stephen
Blackman, Kirsty	Evans, Chris	Kyle, Peter	Powell, Lucy
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Farrelly, Paul	Laird, Lesley	Qureshi, Yasmin
Blomfield, Paul	Farron, Tim	Lake, Ben	Rashid, Faisal
Brabin, Tracy	Fellows, Marion	Lamb, rh Norman	Rayner, Angela
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Field, rh Frank	Lammy, rh Mr David	Reed, Mr Steve
Brake, rh Tom	Fitzpatrick, Jim	Lavery, Ian	Rees, Christina
Brennan, Kevin	Fletcher, Colleen	Law, Chris	Reeves, Ellie
Brock, Deidre	Flint, rh Caroline	Lee, Ms Karen	Reeves, Rachel
Brown, Alan	Flynn, Paul	Leslie, Mr Chris	Reynolds, Emma
Brown, Lyn	Fovargue, Yvonne	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma	Reynolds, Jonathan
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Foxcroft, Vicky	Lewis, Clive	Rimmer, Ms Marie
Bryant, Chris	Frith, James	Lewis, Mr Ivan	Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Buck, Ms Karen	Furniss, Gill	Linden, David	Rodda, Matt
Burden, Richard	Gaffney, Hugh	Lloyd, Stephen	Rowley, Danielle
Burgon, Richard	Gapes, Mike	Lloyd, Tony	Ruane, Chris
Butler, Dawn	Gardiner, Barry	Long Bailey, Rebecca	Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Byrne, rh Liam	George, Ruth	Lucas, Caroline	Ryan, rh Joan
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Gethins, Stephen	Lucas, Ian C.	Saville Roberts, Liz
Cadbury, Ruth	Gibson, Patricia	Lynch, Holly	Shah, Naz
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Gill, Preet	MacNeil, Angus Brendan	Sharma, Mr Virendra
Campbell, rh Mr Alan	Glindon, Mary	Madders, Justin	Sheerman, Mr Barry
Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Godsiff, Mr Roger	Mahmood, Mr Khalid	Sheppard, Tommy
Carden, Dan	Goodman, Helen	Mahmood, Shabana	Sherriff, Paula
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Grady, Patrick	Malhotra, Seema	Shuker, Mr Gavin
Champion, Sarah	Grant, Peter	Mann, John	Siddiq, Tulip
Chapman, Douglas	Gray, Neil	Marsden, Gordon	Skinner, Mr Dennis
Chapman, Jenny	Green, Kate	Martin, Sandy	Slaughter, Andy
Charalambous, Bambos	Greenwood, Lilian	Maskell, Rachael	Smeeth, Ruth
Cherry, Joanna	Greenwood, Margaret	Matheson, Christian	Smith, Angela
Clwyd, rh Ann	Griffith, Nia	Mc Nally, John	Smith, Cat
Coaker, Vernon	Grogan, John	McCabe, Steve	Smith, Eleanor
Coffey, Ann	Gwynne, Andrew	McCarthy, Kerry	Smith, Jeff
Cooper, Julie	Haigh, Louise	McDonagh, Siobhain	Smith, Laura
Cooper, Rosie	Hamilton, Fabian	McDonald, Andy	Smith, Nick
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hanson, rh David	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm	Smith, Owen
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Hardy, Emma	McDonald, Stuart C.	Smyth, Karin
Cowan, Ronnie	Harman, rh Ms Harriet	McDonnell, rh John	Snell, Gareth
Coyle, Neil	Harris, Carolyn	McFadden, rh Mr Pat	Sobel, Alex
Crausby, Sir David	Hayes, Helen	McGinn, Conor	Spellar, rh John
Crawley, Angela	Hayman, Sue	McGovern, Alison	Starmer, rh Keir
Creagh, Mary	Healey, rh John	McInnes, Liz	Stephens, Chris
Creasy, Stella	Hendrick, Mr Mark	McKinnell, Catherine	Stevens, Jo
Cruddas, Jon	Hendry, Drew	McMahon, Jim	Stone, Jamie
Cryer, John	Hepburn, Mr Stephen	McMorrin, Anna	Streeting, Wes
Cummins, Judith	Hill, Mike	Mearns, Ian	Stringer, Graham
Cunningham, Alex	Hillier, Meg	Miliband, rh Edward	Sweeney, Mr Paul J.
Cunningham, Mr Jim	Hobhouse, Wera	Monaghan, Carol	Swinson, Jo
Davey, rh Sir Edward	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret	Moon, Mrs Madeleine	Tami, Mark
David, Wayne	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Moran, Layla	Thewliss, Alison
Davies, Geraint	Hoey, Kate	Morgan, Stephen	Thomas, Gareth
Day, Martyn	Hollern, Kate	Morris, Grahame	Thomas-Symonds, Nick
De Cordova, Marsha	Hopkins, Kelvin	Murray, Ian	Thornberry, rh Emily
De Piero, Gloria	Hosie, Stewart	Nandy, Lisa	Timms, rh Stephen
		Newlands, Gavin	Trickett, Jon

Turley, Anna  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Umunna, Chuka  
 Vaz, rh Keith  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 Watson, Tom  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan

Whitfield, Martin  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Williams, Dr Paul  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Wilson, Phil  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Woodcock, John  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Noes:**

**Nic Dakin and  
 Jessica Morden**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

*Address to be presented to Her Majesty by Members of the House who are Privy Counsellors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.*

**Mr Speaker:** As I am often moved to remark, I do so again. If, inexplicably, there are Members now leaving the Chamber because they do not wish to hear the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) expatiate on the merits of his local hospital—I know that it is a considerable feat of imagination to suppose that anybody would wish to absent him or herself from the Chamber—please do so quickly and quietly so that the rest of us can enjoy, at least for a period, the Einsteinian intellect and Demosthenian eloquence of the hon. Gentleman.

## Kettering General Hospital

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

5.48 pm

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I am very grateful to you, Mr Speaker, for giving me permission to hold this important debate on the Floor of the House, because Kettering general hospital is perhaps the No. 1 issue for local people in Kettering.

This year, Kettering general hospital celebrates its 120th anniversary. It is one of the few hospitals that has been on the same site for 120 years. It is a much-loved local hospital. Thousands of local people have been born there, repaired there and, sadly, died there. Everyone has a special place in their heart for the hospital.

Some serious issues, however, need to be addressed. I welcome the Minister of State to his place to hear those concerns and respond. I am very grateful to him for making a personal visit to the hospital in April to meet the staff, including doctors and nurses, and also to my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) and for Corby (Tom Pursglove), whom I also welcome to their places in the Chamber. The Minister's personal attention to Kettering general hospital is noted and much appreciated.

I thank all the staff at the hospital—the nurses, the doctors, the ancillary staff, the managers and the directors—for the wonderful work that they do. It is a massive team effort, with almost 4,000 people working on the site. There are just short of 600 beds in the hospital, and tens of thousands of patients go through the doors every year. Indeed, that is one of the issues that I want to remind the Minister about. Kettering general hospital is located in one of the fastest-growing parts of the country. In the last census, Kettering was sixth out of 348 districts for growth in the number of households and 31st for population increase. Just down the road, I believe Corby has the highest birth rate in the whole country. Thousands of houses are being built each year in Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough, in east Northamptonshire and over the border in Market Harborough, which means that there is growing pressure on the hospital.

The local population is not only growing in size but ageing rapidly. It is wonderful that we are all living longer, but the number of people over 75 in Northamptonshire is likely to go up by 33% in the next five years from 54,000 to 72,000. People over 75 bring with them a wealth of experience, but I think most of them would admit that they are not as young and fit as they used to be, and they require increasingly detailed medical interventions, often for multiple issues rather than just one. That is a real challenge for the hospital to get to grips with.

In the past 10 years, the number of in-patient consultant episodes in the hospital has gone up by 27%. Attendances at the accident and emergency department have gone up by 23% in the past five years, and some 83,000 people a year are now coming through the A&E, which was built 20 years ago to cope with an influx of 40,000 people a year—less than half the number who currently visit. Out-patient attendances at the hospital have risen by almost two thirds in the past 10 years.

Local people increasingly say to all three hon. Members from the area, “We love our local hospital, but what new investment and new facilities are being provided so that it can cope with the growth in the local population?” I ask the Minister that question directly this evening on behalf of those residents.

Our clinical commissioning group is still one of the most underfunded in the country. This year it crept up to 5% below the target funding. It has been worse in the past, but it is still pretty bad. Will the Minister urge those responsible to ensure that health funding is prioritised in areas of rapid population growth such as north Northamptonshire? Without that, we simply will not be able to cope.

The car parking situation at Kettering general hospital is critical, as the Minister experienced at first hand when he was caught in the traffic jam outside the hospital on his visit. It is good news that there will be 240 new spaces in the car park by the end of this November, and although that problem is difficult to fix, it is relatively straightforward compared with meeting the medical needs of the growing local population.

I must stress that, as the Minister will know, the hospital is now in special measures, which is not a happy situation. It is the result of a Care Quality Commission inspection in October, after which the CQC gave the hospital an “inadequate” rating in November, triggering the special measures. There have been a series of unannounced and focused inspections since—I think the last one was yesterday—and we await further news on when the CQC anticipates the hospital might come out of special measures. I welcome the special measures provisions provided by the Department. It is absolutely right to make sure that a hospital in some difficulty receives special attention. If that requires it being labelled “special measures” then so be it, but we must provide the help and assistance that such hospitals need.

It is not all bad news at Kettering general hospital. We must remember that it is treating a record number of local people with increasingly world-class treatments. It is hitting all its cancer targets. Its infection control, having some years ago been the very worst in the country, is now extremely good. The A&E target, which has been among the bottom 10 in the country, is now rapidly improving. I hope that figures to be announced soon will show that it is in the top third of type A A&Es.

My hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough and for Corby would agree with me that one of the key priorities at the hospital is the provision of an urgent care hub. This is a fairly simple concept that requires funding of £20 million to £30 million. The idea is this: to have on one site, at Kettering general hospital, a one-stop shop for GP services and out-of-hours care, an on-site pharmacy, a minor injuries unit, facilities for social services and mental health care, access to community care services for the frail elderly, and a replacement for the A&E department, which, as I have said, is now more than 20 years old. Those services in a one-stop shop urgent care hub on site would enable the rapid assessment, diagnosis and treatment by appropriate health and social care professionals. Patients would be streamed into appropriate treatment areas to minimise delays and reduce the need for admissions. This is an example of best practice across the NHS and it is what we would like to see introduced at Kettering to relieve pressure on clinicians in the A&E department.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hollobone**: Well, it is very difficult for me to choose, but since our younger and fitter colleague was faster on his feet I am going to give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove).

**Tom Pursglove**: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I entirely share his sentiment about the importance of developing a new urgent care hub at Kettering. Would he be keen to visit the Corby urgent care centre with me and, I hope, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone)? Given that this is a first-class facility, clear lessons could be learned and taken forward when we move towards trying to develop the new urgent care hub. It is a class-leading facility that is hugely popular with local people. I would love him to come and visit it with me.

**Mr Hollobone**: I am very grateful for that most kind invitation. I have visited the urgent care centre and I would be happy to do so again. I offer my hon. Friend my 100% support as he advances the importance of the urgent care centre with local funding bodies. He knows that he can always rely on me to support him in his endeavours. I am happy to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone).

**Mr Bone**: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way to the older and more experienced Member from Northamptonshire. I congratulate him enormously on securing the debate and on how he is speaking so powerfully for Kettering hospital. The one bit of the triangle that is not there is an urgent care centre or minor injuries unit at the Isebrook hospital in Wellingborough. That is part of the plan approved by several Ministers from the Department of Health. I have great trouble getting commissioners to engage with that, but we need it to relieve pressure on the A&E at Kettering.

**Mr Hollobone**: As so often in this place, my hon. Friend speaks words of great wisdom and insight. He represents his constituents extremely well in repeating that point. The current draft sustainability and transformation plan for Northamptonshire is simply not good enough, because it does not place enough emphasis on developing the facilities my hon. Friend is speaking about. Effectively treating people nearer to where they live so they do not have to come into Kettering general hospital makes sense. It would be better for the patients, it would mean that they received more appropriate treatment closer to home, it would be more cost-effective and it would relieve pressure on Kettering general hospital. I therefore urge the Minister, with the contacts he has with NHS England, to pay close attention to the development of the STP in Northamptonshire, which is not good enough yet. It needs to place more emphasis on primary care, urgent care centres and local facilities, as my hon. Friends the Members for Corby and for Wellingborough have both mentioned.

The A&E department at Kettering general hospital is under huge pressure, the bulk of which comes from the lack of bed space. Ninety-eight per cent. of people who

[Mr Hollobone]

present at Kettering A&E with minor injuries are seen within the target, while 96% of those who are not admitted to the hospital are seen within the four-hour target. However, somewhere between only 60% and 90% of those who require admission to the hospital are hitting the target. The problem is the number of beds occupied by people whose treatment has been completed but who have not yet been moved to rehabilitative or local social care.

There have been problems with that in Northamptonshire, which I have raised before on the Floor of the House. However, I am pleased to say that I understand that closer co-operation between the hospital and the local county council is likely to mean that the better care funds allocated by the Government will be used more effectively, so that people can be moved more quickly out of the hospital and into more appropriate care in their local communities. This is an urgent priority, but I understand that we are about to see some rapid improvement.

Having said that, even if Kettering general hospital does everything right, I have to tell the Minister that I am being told that it has a structural deficit of £10 million a year. That means that even if it does everything right and meets all the targets that the Government set, the way in which the health service is structured in Northamptonshire means that it can do no better every year than to have a deficit of £10 million. In 2015-16 the deficit was £11 million and in 2016-17 it was £25 million. This year it is likely to be £20 million, so things have clearly not worked as they should have, but I have to tell the Minister directly that even if everything worked right, there would be a structural deficit of £10 million, which is clearly not sustainable. That needs to be looked at.

There has recently been a problem with referral to treatment targets. In the past, waiting list data have not been recorded correctly at the hospital. Everyone is agreed about that, and I am pleased that the Care Quality Commission is investigating and has referred the matter to NHS Protect. I think everyone agrees that the data are now being collected correctly, but historically they have been inaccurate, and patients may have been harmed as a result. I therefore ask the Minister directly whether he is satisfied that the issue is being investigated appropriately and that the investigation will be concluded as speedily as possible, so that local people can get to the bottom of what has been a historical problem.

Kettering general hospital is perhaps the most important facility to local people in Kettering. I know that it is important to my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough and for Corby as well, and we will not let any opportunity go by in this place without reminding Her Majesty's Government how important the hospital is to local people. All is not well with the hospital, and these things can be put right. There has been a problem of the chief executive changing too often. We have lost some good people and replacements have not stayed for too long. The Minister has met Fiona Wise, the acting interim chief executive, but she will not be there for too much longer, because a more permanent replacement is being sought. There have also been leadership issues at the hospital in the past, which we need to tackle. The chairman, Graham Foster, is doing his level best—I commend him for his efforts—and there is tremendous

team spirit at the hospital. It got extremely good marks in the CQC inspection for the quality of the care that all staff provide to local patients.

All is not well, however, and we need the Minister's continuing attention to ensure that we can address the issues involved. In particular, will he urge NHS Improvement to prioritise its analysis of the urgent care hub proposals? I understand that NHSI, which used to be called Monitor, has now approved the funding for the preparation of the business case for the hub. That is likely to be submitted to NHSI in September, and I hope that it will be at the top of its in-tray so that we can get a move on with a project that everyone—the Government, the hospital, the patients and the CCG—agrees is the key development that needs to take place if we are to continue the distinguished history of a hospital that has been going for 120 years.

6.5 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip Dunne):** Let me start by congratulating you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the resumption of your rightful place in the Chamber. It is a delight to serve under you in what I think is the first Adjournment debate that you have chaired in the new Parliament. I am delighted that you are looking after our proceedings this evening.

Let me also join in the congratulations of all who have spoken in the debate—apart from his usual modest self—to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone), who has been so gracious in encouraging me to take a personal interest in the hospital in his constituency. He was forthright in inviting me to join him last year when we previously debated the hospital, and I was pleased to be able to take up his invitation. Invitations have been flowing around the Chamber once more this evening from his neighbours, who show a consistent and collegiate approach to managing health issues in their constituencies and Northamptonshire in general.

When I visited Kettering in April, I was delighted to see my hon. Friends the Members for Corby (Tom Pursglove) and for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) taking such a close interest in the primary acute facility serving their constituents. I feel that the area is well represented by its Members of Parliament, who take such an active interest in health.

One thing that disappointed me about the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering was the fact that his detailed grasp of the issues confronting the hospital was almost as good as that of the officials who helped me to prepare my speech. I therefore may not tell him too much that he does not know already, but it is a tribute to his perspicacity that he has such a good grip.

My hon. Friend raised a number of detailed issues relating to Kettering general hospital, and I shall try to address as many of them as possible in the time that is available to me. He concluded his remarks by making it clear that his No. 1 priority was to see progress on securing funds for the development of an urgent care hub at the hospital. I am pleased to join him in welcoming the progress that has been made since our debate last October. In particular, the foundation trust has secured funds from the Department of Health, with agreement from NHS Improvement, to enable the production of

an outline business case, which, in the NHS approval system, is a necessary precursor of any significant capital investment.

A mobilisation meeting was held only last week to discuss the preparation of the outline business case, which is a welcome development. The initial draft of the outline business case is expected to be shared with NHS Improvement in August. The current intention is for the trust board to approve a final outline business case by the end of the year, provided it is satisfied with the progress that has been made, before a formal submission is made to NHS Improvement. I hope that that gives my hon. Friend some idea of the pace of the process. I am talking about a period of months, but I am afraid that that is the nature of the world we are in. It must be ensured that all appropriate internal procedures are followed correctly in order to give the proposition the best prospect of success.

The business case is intended to create a long-term solution for the hospital: a 10 to 15-year proposition that will take into account the significant increase in house building envisaged in the local plans, and the accompanying population growth to which my hon. Friend referred. In the meantime, the trust has put in place as a temporary facility a modular unit—a Portakabin—which we visited a couple of months ago. The outline business case will include plans to replace it with a permanent structure in due course.

More immediately, I am delighted to join my hon. Friend in welcoming the solution to the current challenge, which was very evident to me when I visited, that faces staff and patients trying to gain access to the hospital. The challenge of finding somewhere to park for anyone arriving by car was such that I had to be plucked out of the queue waiting to get into the car park by the chief executive herself, who had come to find me. Otherwise I might have spent my entire allotted time for the visit trying to get into the car park. The good news, as my hon. Friend has identified, is that work begins next week on the construction of the second level of the car park. The additional tier will provide an extra 240 spaces. I am told that the work will be completed by mid-November, which sounds like pretty pacey progress. This will cost some £1.3 million over five years, and the funding has been found by the trust from its own resources, which is very welcome.

My hon. Friend made reference to various pressures affecting the hospital. NHS England is working closely with the two local clinical commissioning groups to ensure that local care homes, general practices and the ambulance service are supported to care for patients outside the hospital, when that is appropriate. That is designed to help to reduce pressure on the hospital, and it was referred to in the interventions from my hon. Friends the Members for Corby and for Wellingborough.

In the longer term, the draft Northamptonshire sustainability and transformation plan, which was published last December, proposes an early focus on improving the urgent care system to reduce the pressures on A&E. Part of that will include introducing more front-door clinical streaming at Kettering general, with plans to put in place a seven-day discharge capability to help patient flow through the hospital. However, I have heard the comments in this debate about the quality of the STP, particularly from my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough. The STPs are being assessed by the

Department of Health, and we will be making some comments before the summer recess on their relative attributes. We will see where Northamptonshire comes out in the context of the others.

**Tom Pursglove:** As part of that work in the Department, will the Minister take away from this debate the significance of the Corby urgent care centre to our local health economy, particularly in the context of how it relieves the pressure on Kettering A&E? Will he also acknowledge that there are significant healthcare needs in the Corby community that that facility helps to address?

**Mr Dunne:** I was not going to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Corby to leave without passing comment on the Corby urgent care centre, so I shall do that now, as he raised the matter so specifically. As we have heard, the STP does not perhaps place as much emphasis on what is to happen outside the acute hospital setting as hon. Members would like, and I shall take that away.

One of the issues that we need to address is the urgent care centre in Corby. As I understand it, the current service expires at the end of September. A new contract will be let as a caretaker arrangement for the ensuing 12 months to ensure that the existing facility continues, thereby allowing time for the CCG to engage with the public about the future shape of urgent care services in Corby, which will help to inform the development of the STP plan for the long term. The intent is that public engagement will lead to a proposal for an enduring longer-term contract to be procured in the next calendar year—during 2018—which will take into account the additional population around Corby. As we have already heard, the population is extensive around Kettering, but that is not unique to that part of north Northamptonshire. I am reassured by the CCG that the temporary arrangement will continue to provide the highest standards of patient care and safety for Corby's population. My hon. Friend should not be concerned; this is a short-term contract extension that is facilitating a much longer-term solution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering referred to the better care fund and how services are being provided in the community beyond the acute setting. As he knows, the fund supports programmes not only at Kettering general, but at Northamptonshire general. The better care fund and what we are describing as the improved better care fund—a similar pot of funding for the current financial year—are being used to fund both non-elective admissions and discharge to support at Kettering general, which is aimed at relieving pressure on the hospital.

My hon. Friend mentioned the special measures regime, which was the immediate trigger for my visit in April, the time of the publication of the CQC report that rated the trust as inadequate. I was pleased that he welcomed the introduction of special measures, because they provide an opportunity for focus across the NHS on areas that have been rated as not performing as we would all like. The evidence thus far is that trusts that go into special measures get considerably more attention not only from NHS Improvement, but from right across the NHS and up to a ministerial level. Special measures have a significant impact on improving performance within a hospital. I see that as a positive step, and I was pleased that he welcomed it. NHS Improvement has agreed an initial

[Mr Dunne]

6.17 pm

package of support. It has allocated an improvement director who will be working with the trust from next month. NHSI is also setting up “buddy trust” arrangements with highly rated trusts.

*House adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 9(7)).*



# Written Statements

Thursday 29 June 2017

## DEFENCE

### Afghanistan: Update

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

On 1 June I said that NATO had requested additional troops to support the non-combat train advise and assist Resolute Support (RS) mission in Afghanistan. This request went to all countries that are part of the RS mission to implement a new strategy developed by NATO, in partnership with the Afghan Government, to reinvigorate the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF). The strategy's goal is to expand governance and security throughout Afghanistan and, in turn, set the conditions for progress on a political settlement with the Taliban.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains challenging. The ANDSF are improving but the rate of their development is affected by a range of complex challenges, not least the nature and strength of a determined insurgency. The NATO strategy will address these challenges.

The Government have carefully considered the NATO request and we have decided to increase the UK's troop contribution to the RS mission by around 85 personnel. These troops will serve in non-combat roles to support directly the implementation of the NATO strategy. We will increase the number of mentors advising the Afghan army and police, and the Afghan air force, and provide further support to ANDSF training and leadership development. This deployment will add to the significant contribution the UK is already making to the RS mission. We have around 500 troops based in Kabul serving in roles focused on improving the capability of the Afghan security institutions, developing the Afghan national army officer academy and providing vital force protection for NATO advisors through our leadership of the Kabul security force. Through helping to achieve progress in Afghanistan, our troops have helped to reduce the terrorist threat to the UK from this region.

Military support is only part of the solution. Our continued military, diplomatic and financial assistance is designed to enable and support the advancement of the Afghan-led peace process to deliver a political settlement and lasting stability.

Finally, I wish to record my gratitude and admiration for all of our brave men and women who have served in Afghanistan. The UK will never forget the sacrifice made by the 456 members of the armed forces who died during operations there. They helped protect our country from the threat of terrorism and, through our continued support to the mission, we are working to protect their legacy.

[HCWS16]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: 20th Anniversary

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** 1 July marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong special administrative region (SAR). The UK joins Hong Kong in celebrating the success of the SAR, and its continued prosperity and vitality. Hong Kong is dynamic, innovative and forward-looking. Hong Kong's success is built on its high degree of autonomy, as enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and Basic Law (Hong Kong's constitution), centred on key freedoms, strong rule of law, and an independent judiciary.

As set out in the Government's latest six-monthly report to the House on 24 February, the Government's assessment remains that the "one country, two systems" principle is functioning well in the vast majority of areas. "One country, two systems" has allowed the UK's relationship with Hong Kong to flourish across a whole range of areas, including trade and investment, education, science, innovation and technology. Hong Kong is our second biggest export market in Asia with UK exports worth just over £8 billion and over 630 British companies have offices in the territory. Both the UK and Hong Kong SAR Governments share the same commitment to making global trade easier and more transparent.

The UK recognise the specific concerns over the implementation of "one country, two systems", as set out in the Government's six-monthly reports to the House. The UK believes that it is vital for Hong Kong's continued success that the SAR's high degree of autonomy and rule of law are preserved and that the principle of "one country, two systems" is fully upheld. The UK therefore welcomes statements by the Chinese Government and the Hong Kong SAR Government expressing commitment to the faithful implementation of "one country, two systems".

The UK continue to believe that it is in Hong Kong's best interests that discussion resumes between all parties in Hong Kong in order to make further progress towards a more democratic and accountable system of Government, as provided for in the Basic Law.

The UK Government congratulate the new Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR Government, Carrie Lam, on her forthcoming inauguration on 1 July, and wish her a successful term in office. The UK Government look forward to working with the Chief Executive to deepen UK-Hong Kong relations and support Hong Kong to prosper long into the future.

[HCWS19]

## PRIME MINISTER

### Grenfell Tower Fire

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May):** I am announcing today the appointment of Sir Martin Moore-Bick to head the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire. The inquiry will be established under the 2005 Inquiries Act, with full powers, including the power to compel the

production of documents, and to summon witnesses to give evidence on oath. The inquiry will be held in public.

In relation to the appointment of the Chair, the Lord Chancellor asked the Lord Chief Justice for the name of a judge who, in his view, would be best suited to the task and available to start work immediately so that we can get answers to what happened as quickly as possible. The Lord Chief Justice recommended Sir Martin Moore-Bick: a highly respected and hugely experienced former Court of Appeal judge. I have accepted the Lord Chief Justice's recommendation.

I am determined that there will be justice for all the victims of this terrible tragedy and for their families who have suffered so terribly.

The immediate priority is to establish the facts of what happened at Grenfell Tower in order to take the necessary action to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again. But beyond that immediate focus it is also important that all the wider lessons from both this catastrophe, and the inspections of other buildings around the country that followed it, are identified and learnt.

Before the inquiry starts Sir Martin will consult all those with an interest, including survivors and victims' families, about the terms of reference. Following that consultation he will make a recommendation to me. I will return to Parliament with the final terms of reference once this process has taken place. Then the inquiry will begin its work.

We must get to the truth about what happened. No stone will be left unturned by this inquiry, but I have also been clear that we cannot wait for ages to learn the immediate lessons and so I expect the Chair will want to produce an interim report as early as possible.

[HCWS18]

## TRANSPORT

### Crossrail: Annual Update

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Maynard):** I am pleased to report that earlier this month, the first new class 345 train entered passenger service on the TfL rail line between Shenfield and Liverpool Street. Although the trains were due to enter service in May 2017 some of the testing, assurance and approvals took a little longer than originally expected. The successful introduction of the train marked the first stage of the five-staged Crossrail opening strategy<sup>1</sup>. The service will be named the Elizabeth line when the central section opens in central London from December 2018.

Stage 2 of the Crossrail opening strategy, which will see TfL rail services operating with the new trains between Heathrow terminals 2, 3 and 4 and Paddington (high-level station), is due to start from May 2018. A major step forward in delivering this new service was the installation of new digital signalling in the Heathrow tunnels in April 2017. Testing and commissioning of the new signalling system is now under way, ahead of the new trains commencing testing later this year.

I am pleased to report the Crossrail project's health and safety indicators demonstrate strong performance over the year with all the key indicators exceeding the corporate objectives for the year 2016-17.

In the past year significant progress has been made across the project. The Crossrail programme is approaching 85% complete. In the central tunnel section all platforms have now been completed, track installation is over 90% complete, power and ventilation installation have reached 70% and 30% complete respectively, and installation of platform edge screen doors has commenced at Bond Street and London Paddington. Architectural finishes are being applied and escalator and lift installation has commenced across the central stations. Testing of the new central section infrastructure and systems will commence by the end of 2017, with the new central section stations being completed during 2018.

The critical works for the stabling facility at Ilford depot were completed in May 2017, to support the introduction of new trains into passenger service. Further work at Ilford depot to support stage 4 (Paddington to Shenfield) opening continues and is expected to be delivered by May 2019. Works continue at Old Oak Common depot to support stages 2 and 3 (Paddington to Abbey Wood).

Major surface works were delivered by Network Rail on the existing rail network this year. During the Christmas 2016 blockade an unprecedented level of works were successfully delivered on the Great Western and Anglia railways. These works included the entry into service of the new Acton dive-under and the Stockley flyover, both of which will improve capacity and reliability between Heathrow and Paddington. Christmas 2016 also saw the start of the remodelling of tracks at Shenfield, which was completed during May 2017.

Manufacturing of the new trains is progressing. Trains will be progressively introduced over the next few months, with 11 in service by autumn, replacing just over half the existing train fleet. In preparation for the operation of the Elizabeth line services a purpose-built facility has been commissioned to simulate the operation of passenger services and ensure key components and software are tested. The Crossrail integration facility is an essential element to support the next stages and success of the Crossrail opening strategy.

Training of the new operations workforce is well under way. Drivers are familiarising themselves with the new trains and route. There are now circa 700 apprentices who have gained experience across the project. Crossrail's purpose-built training facility, the tunnelling and underground construction academy, has now become part of Transport for London and will continue to offer apprenticeships and training to support the next generation of skills for rail and tunnelling projects.

The Crossrail board forecast that the cost of constructing Crossrail will be within the overall £14.8 billion funding envelope (excluding rolling stock costs). Cost pressures are increasing across the project and Crossrail Ltd is identifying and implementing initiatives to deliver cost efficiencies until completion in 2019. Crossrail's joint sponsors (Department for Transport and Transport for London) will continue to meet regularly with Crossrail Ltd to ensure that the project is being effectively managed and will be delivered within funding and on schedule.

During the passage of the Crossrail Bill through Parliament, a commitment was given that a statement would be published at least every 12 months until the completion of the construction of Crossrail, setting out information about the project's funding and finances.

In line with this commitment, this statement comes within 12 months of the last one, which was published on 30 June 2016. The relevant information is as follows:

Total funding amounts provided to Crossrail Ltd by the Department for Transport and TfL in relation to the construction of Crossrail to the end of the period (22 July 2008 to 29 May 2017) <sup>2</sup> .	£10,860,539,046
Expenditure incurred (including committed land and property spend not yet paid out) by Crossrail Ltd in relation to the construction of Crossrail in the period (30 May 2016 to 29 May 2017) (excluding recoverable VAT on land and property purchases).	£1,636,471,000
Total expenditure incurred (including committed land and property spend not yet paid out) by Crossrail Ltd in relation to the construction of Crossrail to the end of the period (22 July 2008 to 29 May 2017)(excluding recoverable VAT on land and property purchases).	£10,886,978,000
The amounts realised by the disposal of any land or property for the purposes of the construction of Crossrail by the Secretary of State, TfL or Crossrail Ltd in the period covered by the statement.	Nil

The numbers above are drawn from Crossrail Ltd's books of account and have been prepared on a consistent basis with the update provided last year. The figure for expenditure incurred includes monies already paid out in relevant period, including committed land and property

expenditure where this has not yet been paid. It does not include future expenditure on construction contracts that have been awarded.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Crossrail's opening strategy introduces services in five phases to gradually increase the number of services. The phases are:

- i. May 2017—The new rolling stock is introduced on existing suburban services between Liverpool Street and Shenfield.
- ii. May 2018—The Heathrow Connect service will cease and Crossrail will operate a stopping service between Heathrow terminal 4 and Paddington high level which from this date will double in frequency to four trains per hour.
- iii. December 2018—Crossrail services commence in the central tunnel section between Paddington low level and Abbey Wood.
- iv. May 2019—Crossrail services commence between Paddington low level to destinations on the Great Eastern route (Shenfield).
- v. December 2019—Full Crossrail services between Reading, Heathrow and Paddington in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east.

<sup>2</sup>The total funding amounts provided to Crossrail Ltd by the Department of Transport and Transport for London refers to the expenditure drawn down from the sponsor funding account in the period 22 July 2008 and 29 May 2017. Included within the amount is £642,959,962 of interim funding that has been provided to Network Rail to finance the delivery of the on-network works. This amount is due to be repaid to Crossrail Ltd by 30 September 2017.

[HCWS17]



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