

**Tuesday  
11 July 2017**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Tuesday 11 July 2017**

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# House of Commons

*Tuesday 11 July 2017*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

### CITY OF LONDON (OPEN SPACES) BILL

*Ordered,*

That the promoters of the City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Bill, which originated in this House in Session 2015-16 on 22 January 2016, may have leave to proceed with the Bill in the current Session according to the provisions of Standing Order 188B (Revival of bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

### MIDDLE LEVEL BILL

*Motion made,*

That the promoters of the Middle Level Bill, which originated in this House in the previous Session on 24 January 2017, may have leave to proceed with the Bill in the current Session according to the provisions of Standing Order 188B (Revival of bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*To be considered on Tuesday 18 July.*

### NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY BILL [LORDS]

*Ordered,*

That the promoters of the New Southgate Cemetery Bill [*Lords*], which originated in the House of Lords in Session 2015-16 on 25 January 2016, may have leave to proceed with the Bill in the current Session according to the provisions of Standing Order 188B (Revival of bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

## SESSIONAL RETURNS

*Ordered,*

That there be laid before this House Returns for Session 2016-17 of information and statistics relating to:

- (1) Business of the House
- (2) Closure of Debate, Proposal of Question and Allocation of Time (including Programme Motions)
- (3) Sittings of the House
- (4) Private Bills and Private Business
- (5) Public Bills
- (6) Delegated Legislation and Legislative Reform Orders
- (7) European Legislation, etc
- (8) Grand Committees
- (9) Panel of Chairs
- (10) Select Committees.—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

# Oral Answers to Questions

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

### Illegal Wildlife Trade

1. **Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help tackle the illegal trade in wildlife. [900338]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** I wish to begin by congratulating Iraq's security forces on liberating Mosul from the pitiless grasp of Daesh. The flag of Iraq flies once more in the country's second city and I pay tribute to the pilots of the RAF who played a vital role in supporting this operation, delivering more airstrikes than anyone else apart from the United States. The House can take pride in what they have done.

On the illegal wildlife trade, we can be pleased with the agreement that the Prime Minister helped to secure at the G20 summit in Hamburg. It is about cracking down not only on the trade in charismatic megafauna, but on those who engage in gunrunning, people trafficking and much other human misery, as well as illegal wildlife trafficking. We can be proud of what we are doing.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I applaud the efforts the Government are making in this area. I am also pleased that the UK will host the illegal wildlife trade conference in 2018. Can the Foreign Secretary confirm how much money the Department has committed to tackling the illegal wildlife trade and how effectively the money is being spent?

**Boris Johnson:** I can confirm that we are increasing our contribution to £26 million—another £13 million to tackle the illegal wildlife trade. I have myself seen what UK-financed projects are doing in Kenya to crack down on this vile trade.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I say to the Foreign Secretary that we simply have to give this subject a much higher priority than we do—not only our Government, but across the world. Every week or month we see programmes on our televisions—55 African elephants are poached every day. He has to make this a priority. It is not good enough for us to look at our television screens and feel sorry about it—we have to have a far greater commitment to do something about it.

**Boris Johnson:** I completely share the hon. Gentleman's zeal and passion. The UK has in fact been in the lead on this for several years now, and we will continue to push the agenda, not just at the G20, as the Prime Minister did, but at the IWT summit that we will host in October 2018 in London.

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend talk a little about his strategy on this issue, because the link between the illegal wildlife

trade, smuggling, people trafficking, and lawlessness and violence in many countries is extremely real? Addressing the illegal wildlife trade may seem esoteric, but it is not: it is about the stability of many nations that are firm partners of the United Kingdom.

**Boris Johnson:** My hon. Friend is right: this is far from esoteric. It not only touches the hearts of millions of people in our country—as the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) said—but helps to cause increased human misery. The same people are involved in trade in drugs, arms and people, worth up to £13 billion a year, and we are playing a major part in frustrating that trade.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): There is increasing evidence that the UK's legal ivory market has been used as cover for illegal trade. What discussions will the Foreign Secretary have with colleagues about an all-out ban on the ivory trade, as previously committed to?

**Boris Johnson:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government have a commitment to an all-out ban on the sale of ivory in this country, and that is what we intend to pursue.

### Exiting the EU

2. **Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help support and deliver an effective departure for the UK from the EU. [900339]

14. **Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to help support and deliver an effective departure for the UK from the EU. [900351]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** My Department continues to support EU exit negotiations, and the Government work to strengthen our relations with partners worldwide. As a champion of free trade, we will continue to seize the opportunities afforded by Brexit and guarantee our long-term global prosperity.

**Rachel Maclean:** Businesses in my constituency are seeking to make the most of the opportunities that Brexit provides for them, but can my right hon. Friend assure me that he will work closely with the Department for International Trade and the Department for Exiting the European Union to ensure that businesses that are already trading with the single market are helped to build new export markets for their goods and services around the world, to secure their continued prosperity?

**Boris Johnson:** Absolutely. I congratulate my hon. Friend on what I believe is her first question—I think it is a very good one. She can reassure her constituents that not only will the excellent companies in her constituency be able to continue to enjoy free trade with the rest of the European Union—with the EU27—but they will, of course, have the additional opportunity afforded by the new free trade deals that we will be able to strike with countries around the world. I am pleased to say that they were queuing up to make that point to the Prime Minister at the G20 in Hamburg.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Today is the feast day of St Benedict, the patron saint of Europe, who famously warned about “murmuring in the community” against the abbess. Will my right hon. Friend please proclaim that we do not want any murmuring from anyone against our vision of an open, free trade Europe—the best possible free trade deal, leading the world towards free trade and untold prosperity?

**Boris Johnson:** My hon. Friend has made an excellent point. Members on both sides of the House know very well that 80% or 85% of us were elected on a very clear manifesto pledge to come out of the European Union, to come out of the single market and—as the leader of the Labour party has said—to come out of the customs union as well. Nothing could be clearer than that. I think that what the people of this country want us to do is get on and deliver a great Brexit, and I have no doubt that, with the support of Opposition Members, we can achieve it.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): Does the Foreign Secretary agree with the Chancellor and the First Secretary of State that we shall need a transitional period of at least three years during which we will remain under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice?

**Boris Johnson:** No. Neither the Chancellor nor the First Secretary of State has said any such thing.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. My apologies to the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), who rose momentarily after his right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw)—cue him being called second, but I am sure he does not mind.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

In March, the Foreign Secretary said that leaving the EU with no deal would be perfectly okay. Last month, however, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that that would be a very, very bad outcome for Britain. Given that the two positions are clearly completely contradictory, who should the British public believe?

**Boris Johnson:** I think that what the British public can take from both the Chancellor and myself—and, indeed, from the vast majority of Labour Members, as I understand their position—is that we all want to get on and do the deal, to do the best deal possible, and to leave the EU.

**Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): What lessons does my right hon. Friend take from the Australian Government, who negotiated free trade deals with China, Japan and South Korea in very short order by focusing on trade itself rather than getting bogged down in disputes with regard to standards, legalities and regulations?

**Boris Johnson:** I agree very much with what my hon. Friend has said. I think that, with a bit of gumption and a bit of positive energy, there is no limit to what we can achieve, and we should get on and do it. Of course, we cannot ink in the free trade deals now, but we can certainly pencil in the outlines.

**Mr Chris Leslie** (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): Yesterday, the Prime Minister's spokesman was reported as saying that,

"the transition rules could involve the European Court of Justice for a limited time...that's all a matter for negotiation."

That is the quote that was reported. So can the Foreign Secretary confirm this change in Government policy, and set out the rationale behind it?

**Boris Johnson:** We are in a negotiation whose objective is to come out from under the penumbra of the European Court of Justice, and outside the EU legal order, and that is what we will achieve.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Since we joined the Common Market on 1 January 1973 until the date we leave, we will have given the EU and its predecessors, in today's money in real terms, a total of £209 billion. Will the Foreign Secretary make it clear to the EU that if it wants a penny piece more, it can go whistle?

**Boris Johnson:** I am sure that my hon. Friend's words will have broken like a thunderclap over Brussels and they will pay attention to what he has said. He makes a very valid point; the sums that I have seen that they propose to demand from this country seem to me to be extortionate, and I think that to "go whistle" is an entirely appropriate expression.

21. [900358] **Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Will the Secretary of State ensure, in a spirit of co-operation, that the final Brexit deal is endorsed by the devolved Parliaments before it is signed?

**Boris Johnson:** As the hon. Gentleman knows very well, we work closely under the Joint Ministerial Committee to bring in the devolved Administrations and make sure the great deal we are going to get has their endorsement and approval.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): Further to the question by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), did my right hon. Friend hear the report on the "Today" programme this morning that other European leaders were making it clear that they would not accept a deal on any terms, and does he share my view that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander?

**Boris Johnson:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on the birth of what I believe is his sixth child. He makes a very good point about the negotiating stance of our friends and partners across the channel. They do sound at the moment pretty hard over, as we say in the Foreign Office, but I have no doubt that in the fullness of time a suppleness will descend, and a willingness to compromise, because, after all, a great Brexit deal, a great free trade deal, and a deep and special partnership is in the interests of both sides of the channel.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): Given the Prime Minister's appeal to these Benches to help her out today, where does the Foreign Secretary think there are areas for compromise?

**Boris Johnson:** As I have said before, the striking thing about this debate is how much unanimity there really is between the two sides of the Chamber on these fundamental questions, and I have been very struck that the leader of the Labour party seems to be very much on all fours with the objectives of the Brexit—[*Interruption.*] He very much agrees with the position we are taking, and I hope to see him in the Lobby with us.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I hate to disagree with the Foreign Secretary: while he is right to say that the Leader of the Opposition is fully behind the Government and those on the Conservative Benches are fully behind the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, the Opposition are hopelessly split on this issue, and is that not hindering the Government's negotiating position?

**Boris Johnson:** It is not for me to comment on the ability of the Labour leader to control his own party. I take it that Labour Members are all following official Labour party policy, which is to come out of the EU and the single market. If they are not, they can stand up now and, by their questions, betray their real position, but as far as I know they are supporting the will of the British people as expressed last year. If they wish to dissent from that, now is the time.

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): May I start by welcoming the new Foreign Office Front Benchers to their positions? Back in July last year, they chastised me when I wrongly accused them of being an all-male team. If only I had waited a year, I would have been correct after all.

Talking of female Tory MPs, the hon. Member for Newton Abbot (Anne Marie Morris) used a disgusting, racist phrase in her comments at the East India Club, and I hope the Foreign Secretary will join me in condemning them; I hope he will agree that derogatory, offensive language deriving from the era of American slavery has no place in modern society. But the hon. Lady was at least trying to ask a valid question—a question about what would happen if Britain failed to reach a deal on Brexit. So may I ask the Foreign Secretary to answer that question today? Can he explain what that no deal option would mean for the people and businesses of Great Britain?

**Boris Johnson:** As I said before, the chances of such an outcome are vanishingly unlikely, since it is manifestly in the interests of those on both sides of the channel to get a great free trade deal and a new deep and special partnership between us and the European Union. That is what we are going to achieve.

**Emily Thornberry:** I thank the Foreign Secretary for that answer, but unfortunately it leaves us none the wiser. This is slightly baffling because it was, after all, the Prime Minister—the Prime Minister for now, at least—who decided to put the no deal option on the table. She could not stop using the phrase during the election campaign. But now, when we ask what it would mean in practice, the Government refuse to tell us. The Foreign Affairs Committee said in December:

"The Government should require each Department to produce a 'no deal' plan, outlining the likely consequences...and setting out proposals to mitigate potential risks."

It went on to state that anything less would be a "dereliction of duty", and that we cannot have a repeat—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I apologise for interrupting the right hon. Lady but she really does need to bring herself to a single-sentence question, because there are lots of colleagues who want to take part. She is normally very succinct, but today is an exception. Return to form!

**Emily Thornberry:** Given that a plan for no deal would be worse than that dereliction of duty, will the Foreign Secretary spell out publicly what no deal would mean? If he is not prepared to tell us that publicly, can he reassure us that at the very least he has a detailed private plan to manage that risk?

**Boris Johnson:** There is no plan for no deal, because we are going to get a great deal. For the sake of illustration, I remind the right hon. Lady that there was a time, which I am old enough to remember, when Britain was not in what we then called the Common Market.

### Mayflower Pilgrims

3. **John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower pilgrims in 2020 in the UK and abroad. [900340]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** Foreign Office officials are working closely with colleagues from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to prepare for the 400th anniversary. I am pleased that Oliver Colville, the former Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport, has been appointed chair of the Mayflower committee by the Prime Minister. The committee will make the most of the opportunity to commemorate the legacy of the pilgrims and the special relationship.

**John Mann:** I thought the Prime Minister wanted help from Opposition Members, and here I am, available—the re-elected co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the Mayflower pilgrims—unlike Olly, who now has other pursuits to pursue. I was prepared to offer my services to take on that role, rather than a non-parliamentarian. Nevertheless, can the good people of Bassetlaw expect support from this Government, as promised by George Osborne, to properly celebrate the fact that the pilgrims and their legacy—including the modern United States—originated in Bassetlaw?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** At least the hon. Gentleman did not claim that Bassetlaw had strong coastal links. We already welcome his contribution to the House in the form of the comments he made on 9 March 2016, when he reminded us that the anniversary would provide an “historic opportunity” for us to celebrate. Across the House, we will think of every possible way in which we can do so to best effect.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): The importance of this anniversary, in British-American relations, can hardly be overstated. Would not 2020 be a more suitable date for a state visit from the President of the United States, to mark that anniversary, rather than in the months to come?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I note my hon. Friend’s suggestion, but that matter is already in train and the visit—offer to the President—stands.

### Ukraine

4. **Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): What steps he is taking to support economic and political development in Ukraine. [900341]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** The UK is in the lead on this issue, helping Ukraine to make the vital reforms that it needs, and to continue to crack down on corruption, which is so important if we are going to encourage long-term and continued investment in a successful Ukraine.

**Mr Whittingdale:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the organisation last week of the Ukraine reform conference in London, which demonstrated that Britain will continue to play a leading role on the world stage in the years to come. Can he confirm that, while Ukraine still faces major challenges, progress is being made in areas such as tackling corruption? Will he also tell us what more can be done to assist it?

**Boris Johnson:** May I get the ball back over the net by congratulating my right hon. Friend on becoming chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Ukraine? All of us in this House have a clear interest in a strong and successful Ukraine, which is why we have invested another £33 million in helping the Ukrainians to tackle their governance problems. The House should be in no doubt about what is going on in Ukraine. It is, if you like, an arm wrestle between two value systems: our way of looking at the world and the Russian way of looking at the world. It is vital for our continent and for this country that our way prevails. With British help, I believe that it is prevailing and will prevail.

23. [900360] **Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Is not one of the real problems that the Russians are actively meddling in Ukraine? So far, there has been no sign of all the efforts that Britain has rightly made paying dividends in Russia stopping its corrupt meddling in that country.

**Boris Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that the fault lies squarely with Russia. Russia annexed Crimea and continues to drive the problems in the Donbass. The UK is contributing to the efforts to stave off Russian military meddling with the non-lethal equipment that we have agreed to send to Ukraine. More importantly, however, we are engaged in helping the Ukrainians to sort out their domestic political scene and to crack down on corruption. To be fair to them, not only are they seeing growth of 1.5% or 4%, depending on whose figures are to be believed, but they have made more progress in cracking down on corruption in the past three years than in the past 25 years. A very different country is being born.

### Canada: Diplomatic Relations

5. **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the strength of the UK’s diplomatic relations with Canada. [900342]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** Our bilateral relationship is strong because it is a deep bond of friendship that is rooted in our shared histories and common values. We look forward to strengthening those ties over the coming years and have agreed to hold regular strategic talks to maximise the full potential of this important bilateral relationship.

**Andrew Percy:** I thank the Minister for that response. Canadian investment is hugely important in my constituency and across the UK. As we move forward with leaving the European Union and seeking a free trade deal with Canada, our relationship will be more important—specifically our relationships with the provincial governments. Do we have a network in place across Canada to ensure that we are making the best of those relationships?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** On the House's behalf, may I express our sympathy to all those in British Columbia who have been affected by the damaging wildfires? Our consulates-general in Calgary, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver work with provincial governments to increase bilateral trade and investment, particularly in the infrastructure sector. We are working across all levels of the Canadian Government to ensure that British companies can take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement.

**Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op):** I have strong family relationships in Canada. Is the Minister not aware that senior diplomats in Canada are absolutely aghast at how this Government are handling our withdrawal from Europe and its impact on world trade? They believe that this swashbuckling sector of Ministers are not the right people—[*Interruption.*] Well, I have to say that positive energy and gumption will not give us a good deal in Europe. We need people who have an eye for detail; this Foreign Secretary has no idea about detail.

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I simply do not recognise the analysis that the hon. Gentleman offers the House on any matter that he just mentioned. Our opportunities for future trade with Canada will be enormous once we have left the European Union.

24. [900361] **Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con):** I thank the Minister for his answers so far. As he will be aware, 2017 marks the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation, and our two nations have faced together some of the most difficult challenges in history during that period. Does he agree that that provides a great opportunity to build on our relationship and that we should reject the nonsense that we have just heard?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** Yes, I agree emphatically with my hon. Friend. We offer our congratulations to Canada on the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation, and we are pleased that Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall were able to join the celebrations in Ottawa to mark the occasion. On a practical basis, the Foreign Secretary met Foreign Minister Freeland last week and agreed to hold regular strategic talks to ensure that we can maximise the full potential of this important and close bilateral relationship way beyond the expectations of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman).

## Diplomatic Relations: Philippines

6. **Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con):** What steps he is taking to strengthen diplomatic relations with the Philippines. [900343]

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):** We have a strong and wide-ranging relationship with the Philippines on prosperity, education and security issues. Ministerial visits to the Philippines and annual high-level talks between officials help to progress that co-operation—my hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma), the former Minister for Asia and the Pacific, was there as recently as last December—which enables us to discuss human rights concerns while pursuing closer diplomatic and trade links.

**Justin Tomlinson:** My constituent Kevin Taylor has been held in the Philippines since 2008. The Filipino authorities continually delayed his case, held him in unsafe conditions and, finally, sentenced him to 12 years for an employment offence. They have now failed even to acknowledge a clemency request, despite his very poor health. With his health failing further and amid concerns about the safety of the institution, and with his parents worried that they will not see him again, will my right hon. Friend set out what is being done to support the family's efforts to bring him home?

**Mark Field:** I thank my hon. Friend for all his assiduous work over many years on behalf of Mr Taylor's parents, his constituents in North Swindon. We have been providing ongoing consular and welfare support to Kevin Taylor since his arrest almost 10 years ago. Most recently, he was visited in prison, and we liaised with his parents only yesterday. Our consular support has also extended to delivering funds and vitamins. Most recently, we requested additional medical appointments after Mr Taylor brought his health concerns to our attention. A clemency request was made as recently as 2015, but I reassure my hon. Friend that we will do our level best to continue that work. I will be in touch with our department in Manila to ask it to redouble those efforts in the days ahead.

**Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab):** In the year since Rodrigo Duterte became President of the Philippines, 13,000 people have been killed. He has threatened to extend martial law across the entire country, and last week he said that he would eat the livers of terrorists with salt and vinegar, but the Secretary of State for International Trade claims that Britain has "shared values" with President Duterte. Can the Minister tell the House which values we share with the President?

**Mark Field:** The hon. Lady will recognise that there are shared values on international trade, and it is not an issue of ditching anything else. I, like her, am very concerned by the high death toll in the war on illegal drugs that has come to a head under President Duterte. We have been urging much more thorough and independent investigations into all violent deaths, and the Foreign Office has repeatedly raised, and will continue to raise, human rights concerns with the Administration. I hope to visit Manila at some point to make precisely the case that the hon. Lady has made.

## Zimbabwe

7. **Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. [900344]

**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** I pay tribute to the hon. Lady's long campaign on this subject. Our policy on Zimbabwe continues to be to try to balance our deep distaste at the horrifying record of the Mugabe regime with a genuine concern for the humanitarian needs of the Zimbabwean people, who have suffered terribly over the past 40 years.

**Kate Hoey:** I welcome the Minister to his position and wish him every success.

Mugabe spent \$53 million on private travel overseas last year. At the same time, the United Kingdom is paying proportionately more in aid to that country than to any other country in Africa. Does the Minister think that, with the elections coming next year and Mugabe refusing to implement the 2013 constitution, now is the time to put some of that money into helping voter education in those rural areas controlled by ZANU-PF, or we will not have free and fair elections?

**Rory Stewart:** I agree. We are trying to balance a very difficult thing, which, as the hon. Lady says, is the terrible performance of the Mugabe regime with the fact that people in that country have been dying of cholera and suffering extreme humanitarian need. The hon. Lady is absolutely correct that focusing on free and fair elections is one of the most important things we can do in a country such as Zimbabwe.

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): The policy of incremental engagement with Zimbabwe is obviously the best—sometimes an unpalatable best—policy, but will the Minister consider visiting Zimbabwe in the near term, as that would be a great step forward and would perhaps put the UK in a better position for the relationship in the longer term?

**Rory Stewart:** My hon. Friend has huge expertise as a former Africa Minister. The decision on whether or not I, as the Minister, visit Zimbabwe depends a great deal on the genuine commitment to reform of the Zimbabwean Government, and I will be guided by the ambassador in the country on when such a visit would be necessary and possible.

## Venezuela

8. **Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): What discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the breakdown in the rule of law in Venezuela. [900345]

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** My colleagues and I are in close contact with our international counterparts, including most recently at the Organisation of American States summit in Cancun last month. I issued a very strong statement on 6 July, utterly condemning the 5 July attack on Venezuela's National Assembly and its elected Members, and calling for the Venezuelan Government to uphold the constitution and show respect for democratic institutions. That statement was echoed by many colleagues across the world.

**Robert Neill:** The Leader of the Opposition described the regime in Venezuela as offering an “alternative agenda” from which we could learn. The alternative agenda has seen the economy collapse and poverty increase. It has seen scores of people killed in civil unrest and now an attempt to undermine both the elected Congress and the independent attorney general. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Her Majesty's Government strongly condemn the attempt by the Maduro regime to rewrite the constitution and rub out democracy?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** The Leader of the Opposition does seem to be a great fan of the Venezuelan Government, giving a passable impression himself of Fidel Castro, one sometimes thinks. What is happening to the Venezuelan economy gives us a clear indication of what would happen to the UK economy if ever the right hon. Gentleman were Prime Minister.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): What practical steps have the British Government taken to deal with famine on the border between Venezuela and Colombia?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** There are no easy such attempts; we do not have a bilateral programme, but we are in touch with the United Nations. The hon. Lady's very question illustrates the extent to which the Venezuelan Government have driven their own people to poverty; they are running short of the some of the most basic goods on which they have to live.

## Illegal Settlements: Occupied Palestinian Territories

9. **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): What steps he is taking to encourage the Israeli authorities to stop the building of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [900346]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** We regularly raise these issues with Israel, calling for a reversal of the policy of settlement expansion. I reiterated that in the House of Commons last week, and recently both the Foreign Secretary and I have made statements strongly condemning proposals for new settlement expansion in both the west bank and East Jerusalem.

**Tommy Sheppard:** Only last week, the right-wing Israeli Government announced a further expansion of the illegal settlement programme, so it is clear that whatever action the British Government are taking it is not working. Is it not therefore time that Her Majesty's Government gave a more robust response to this problem, including by discouraging investment in and trade with the illegal settlements, and ensuring the proper labelling of imported goods so that they are designated as coming from “an illegally Occupied Palestinian Territory”?

**Alistair Burt:** This is a long and difficult process, as the hon. Gentleman rightly knows. We have a policy on labelling, and continued conversations will go on with the state of Israel in relation to suggestions, such as we heard last week, that new housing units should be built in East Jerusalem. This is a complex process and the UK does not believe in boycotts or sanctions, but clear labelling has been in place for some time so that consumers can take their choice.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): We have contributed to a number of EU structures that have been demolished. Will my right hon. Friend ask the Government of Israel for our money back?

**Alistair Burt:** I think my right hon. Friend is referring to some work done by the EU. The EU has not sought compensation from the state of Israel in relation to that, and no decision has been taken on any further action.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): Settlements are a barrier, but they are far from the only barrier to peace. The building blocks for the peace process are trade and economic development in the west bank; demilitarisation and democracy in Gaza; and support for co-existence projects that get Israelis and Palestinians working together, the funding for which, I am sorry to say, this Government have stopped. Will the Minister reinstate funding for co-existence projects, to build the peace process?

**Alistair Burt:** The hon. Gentleman understands this issue extremely well, and I agree with his analysis that this is a complex issue, where there are many different building blocks to try to revitalise the peace process, and settlements are far from the only barrier to that. Trade and investment remain important, but we will be looking further at what prospects there are for any new initiatives. I am aware of the co-existence projects that he mentions, and I will certainly be looking at that when carrying out my joint responsibilities in the Department for International Development.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): We are all glad to see the Minister for the Middle East back and working on this issue again, but this is the second time in the space of a week that the Foreign Secretary has declined to speak about the middle east and devolved the job to the Minister instead—and that follows his failure even to mention Israel or Palestine in the Tory election manifesto. I simply ask the Minister: when are we going to hear the Foreign Secretary stand up and condemn the new illegal settlements?

**Alistair Burt:** I thank the hon. Lady for her warm welcome. I much enjoy being back in this role, no matter what is thrown at me as part of it. The Foreign Secretary strongly condemned the proposals that were announced for the west bank recently. I like to think he has confidence in his Minister for the Middle East—as he has confidence in his full ministerial team—to answer appropriate questions, although I have never known him to be shy of answering a question when necessary.

### Climate Change

10. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): What steps the Government are taking to support the implementation of the Paris agreement on climate change. [900347]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** The United Kingdom was instrumental in securing the Paris agreement on climate change. We are helping other countries to meet their

targets and we are confident that we will be able to meet our own groundbreaking target of reducing emissions by 80% by 2050.

**Alex Norris:** Last week, Downing Street said that the Prime Minister intended to challenge President Trump on climate change at the G20 meeting. Would it not have been better to do that before he announced that the United States was pulling out of the Paris agreement, rather than after?

**Boris Johnson:** As I have told the House before, we have repeatedly made our views clear to the US Administration. We have expressed our dismay that they have withdrawn, but on the other hand all Members, on both sides of the House, should in all fairness acknowledge that the United States has made and continues to make, even under this Administration, substantial progress in reducing greenhouse gases. This country has reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 42% since 1990, despite a 67% increase in GDP; the United States has achieved comparable progress, and we intend to encourage it on that path.

**Mr Khalid Mahmood** (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): Following Donald Trump's isolation on the issue of the Paris agreement at last week's G20 summit, and his further postponement of his visit to the UK, I ask the Secretary of State a simple question: do the Government still regard President Trump as the leader of the free world? If so, how do they rate the job he is doing, as a mark out of 10?

**Boris Johnson:** I hesitate to say it, but we certainly regard as very considerable the Prime Minister's achievement in getting the US President to sign up to the G20 agreement on climate change, as she did.

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): What?

**Boris Johnson:** Absolutely right. The Prime Minister was instrumental in getting the Americans to sign up to the communiqué. Members on both sides of the House will appreciate that whatever their disagreements with the current incumbent of the White House, the President of the United States is the leader of our most important ally, and he therefore deserves this country's respect and consideration.

### Human Rights

11. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What discussions he has had with his counterparts in other countries on promoting human rights. [900348]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** With the Foreign Secretary's permission, I can say that ensuring the promotion of human rights and engaging with this issue is an essential part of the foreign policy of global Britain. Ministers meet their counterparts regularly and raise issues including those relating to LGBTI people, gender equality, modern slavery, freedom of belief and religion, the death penalty and torture. This is an essential part of who we are as the United Kingdom and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

**Liz Twist:** Back in March, the UN Human Rights Council established an independent commission to investigate the many alleged atrocities committed against the Rohingya people in Myanmar. In the light of ongoing abuses, including recent reports of Rohingya women being raped by the security forces, does the Minister agree that the perpetrators of such crimes should be brought to justice as a matter of urgency, and what steps is he taking to progress these cases?

**Alistair Burt:** I welcome the hon. Lady to the House. I was recently in Burma and was able to reaffirm the United Kingdom's support for the independent United Nations Commission. Again, those in Burma are wrestling with this very difficult issue. The United Kingdom remains very close to the humanitarian needs of the Rohingya people in Rakhin.

**Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con):** The World Trade Organisation estimates that three out of four new trade deals include provisions to improve human rights around the world. What discussions has my right hon. Friend had with his colleagues in the Department for International Trade to ensure that, where appropriate, our new trade deals include obligations to improve human rights?

**Alistair Burt:** My right hon. Friend is right: ensuring that human rights are an essential part of the United Kingdom's policy on trade deals is an important part of the future and will continue to be a key part of our prosperity drive.

25. [900362] **Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab):** Following the arrests of Amnesty International Turkey director and chair, Idil Eser, and Taner Kılıç—both examples of a worrying shift away from respect for human rights in Turkey—what steps is the Foreign Secretary taking to ensure their immediate and unconditional release?

**Alistair Burt:** The right hon. Lady knows these issues extremely well. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the matter with his counterpart, and the Prime Minister raised it with the President of Turkey at the G20. This remains a very important issue for the United Kingdom.

15. **Mr Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con):** [900352] On his recent visit to Burma, did my right hon. Friend encourage the Burmese Government to allow full access and to co-operate fully with the fact-finding mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees into human rights issues in that country?

**Alistair Burt:** Yes, indeed. It is a difficult issue, but we have made it clear that the UN independent report needs full consideration. We have urged the Government to do all they can to facilitate what the UN needs to complete its work. An internal investigation is already being carried out by the Burmese Government.

19. [900356] **Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** Kamal Foroughi and Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe are in prison in Iran. We have been unable to gain access to them through our consul. What efforts are being made

to use other countries to ensure that the human rights and, in particular, medical needs of these two people are protected?

**Alistair Burt:** I met Richard Ratcliffe and the family just last week. I have already raised this issue directly with my counterpart, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, and with the Iranian ambassador here. We remain very concerned about this and other consular cases involving Iran. I assure the hon. Lady and the House that we will continue to raise them at the highest level.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I hope to hear briefly from Fabian Hamilton from the Front Bench, because I want to get through two more questions.

**Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab):** As the Government celebrated their victory in the High Court over arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the number of people affected by the cholera epidemic in Yemen passed 300,000. Humanitarian workers now face the agonising choice of whether to use their dwindling food supplies to feed those children suffering from malnutrition or those infected with cholera. In that context, will the Minister tell the House why the Saudi-led coalition continues to use British bombs to attack farms, food factories and water plants?

**Alistair Burt:** Yesterday's court judgment was unequivocal in stating that the United Kingdom had fulfilled its obligations on controlling the arms trade. The work being done with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on its response to international humanitarian law was fundamental to that judgment. The situation in Yemen remains a humanitarian disaster. The United Kingdom is actively involved in seeking to do all it can. The cholera outbreak is currently claiming some 6,500 new cases every day. I am pleased that the Department for International Development is fully engaged and is trying to do all it can to mitigate these actions.

**Mr Speaker:** Question 12.

**Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con):** My right hon. Friend—[*Interruption.*]

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):** He is new, and I thought that I was new too.

### Maldives

12. **Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con):** What recent assessment he has made of the political situation in the Maldives. [900349]

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):** Like many in the House, I am concerned that democratic freedoms continue to face restriction in the Maldives. Pressure on Opposition politicians, including arrests and prosecutions, has grown. Human rights activists, civil society and the media are under increasing threat. Her Majesty's Government, I assure the House, raise these issues frequently with the Government of the Maldives, and we led the recent UN statement in the June Human Rights Council.

**Zac Goldsmith:** Apologies, Mr Speaker; I am new to the House.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will know that a coalition of opposition parties in the Maldives, led by former President Mohamed Nasheed and committed to democracy and to improving relations with this country, has secured a majority in that country's Parliament. Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the regime of President Yameen might resort to illegal means to prevent Parliament from functioning properly in that country?

**Mark Field:** I am very concerned about that prospect. In recent years, in any part of the political environment in the Maldives, no one's hands have been entirely clean—it has not been a happy situation across the board. The Government's biggest regret is that the Maldives unilaterally left the Commonwealth in 2016, and I very much hope that a new regime will bring them back into the international regime.

### UN Peacekeeping Operations

13. **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential effect of proposed reductions to US financial contributions to the UN budget on the delivery of UN peacekeeping operations. [900350]

**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** We should pay tribute to what the United States has done with its peacekeeping budget. It provides well over a quarter of the global peacekeeping budget: over \$2 billion a year, which is largely not "odorable". We need to pay tribute to the US and to encourage it to continue to play a role, as it is a central part of peacekeeping worldwide. Its sticking to the congressional limit of 25% is vital for UN peacekeeping operations.

**Mr Cunningham:** Does the Minister agree that the loss of financial support from the US will be devastating for UN agencies such as the World Food Programme and the UN Refugee Agency? Will he therefore urge the Trump Administration to reconsider their planned cuts?

**Rory Stewart:** It is absolutely right, of course, that in the current global situation UN peacekeeping operations are vital, but reforms can be introduced. The move in Cote d'Ivoire to close down the peacekeeping operation and the changes in Darfur are welcome. We can reduce peacekeeping costs, but it is vital that the United States and others continue to play a strong role. American financial support has been vital for the past 50 years, and we hope that it will continue to be over the next 50.

### Topical Questions

**Mr Speaker:** May I remind colleagues that topical questions are supposed to be short? If Members insist on asking long questions they will be cut off, as it is not fair on colleagues.

T1. [900328] **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** My immediate priority is to help to resolve the tensions in the Gulf, where Britain has old friendships and vital interests. That is why I have just returned from visits to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait

and Qatar, where I reinforced the need for dialogue and de-escalation. Tomorrow, I will attend a summit in Trieste on the western Balkans region, where the UK is playing a vital role in guaranteeing stability and resisting Russian ambitions.

**Bob Blackman:** In Jammu Kashmir yesterday terrorists brutally murdered seven Hindu pilgrims, including five women, as they undertook amaranth yatra. What action has my right hon. Friend taken to condemn that terrorist outrage, and what support will he give to recovering and bringing to justice the terrorists, who, we believe, emanate from Pakistan?

**Mark Field:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. We are in close contact with the Indian and Pakistani high commissioners about Kashmir. I assure him that we will bring this up over the next 24 hours and ask for a plan of action, as he requests.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that if there is to be an extension of military action in Syria there should be a full debate and vote in the House?

**Boris Johnson:** That is for the Leader of the House to consider, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that no such request has been made. The difference in the American Administration's attitude and engagement, for which many Opposition Members have called, is to be welcomed.

T2. [900329] **Sir Nicholas Soames** (Mid Sussex) (Con): As America appears to be voluntarily surrendering both power and influence, and with our impending departure from the main platform of our influence over the past several decades, is it not vital that the Foreign Office now invests substantially to beef up our diplomatic effort so that we may retain our prosperity, security and influence abroad?

**Boris Johnson:** I am delighted to welcome my right hon. Friend to a cause that is gathering strength among Members on both sides of the House. Everybody understands that a truly global Britain must be properly supported and financed. We have a world-class network of 278 embassies and legations across the world. We have the best foreign service in the world, but it needs proper financing and support.

T4. [900331] **Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): The Foreign Secretary has spoken in the past about his ardent opposition to female genital mutilation. Will he therefore have a word with the Home Secretary, who is yet to respond to me and my constituent Lola Ilesanmi? She is threatened with deportation and her child faces mutilation. I raised her case with the Prime Minister but have yet to receive an answer.

**Boris Johnson:** I think I heard the hon. Lady raise this matter before. The case of her constituent is, indeed, very troubling. I am sure that the Home Secretary will have picked up what the hon. Lady has said today.

T3. [900330] **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): I welcome the part played by British forces in stabilising the threat posed by Daesh. What role does my right hon. Friend see for British forces in ensuring that such an insurgency does not recur?

**Boris Johnson:** I thank my hon. Friend for a really excellent question. It is one thing for us to drive Daesh out of Mosul and Raqqa, but we must ensure that the reasons it sprouted in those cities do not recur and that the Sunni minority in Iraq have conditions of governance that give them confidence in the future of their country.

T5. [900332] **Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Not since the Suez crisis have the United Kingdom Government been so comprehensively defeated at the United Nations as they were last week over the Chagos Islands. In this week's spirit of bipartisan co-operation, should the Foreign Secretary not just grant the right of return?

**Boris Johnson:** I respectfully disagree with the hon. Gentleman. In point of fact, we secured rather more positive votes than we expected. As it happens, the other side of the case got fewer than half the members of the UN in support of its cause. Most impartial observers would agree that that side of the case had been substantially weakened as a result—not that it was a strong case to begin with.

T10. [900337] **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said last week that he would continue paying prisoner salaries, even to people who have murdered innocent civilians, if it cost him his job. Does the Minister agree that there is no way in which there will be peace in the middle east without co-existence projects and support for co-existence on the Palestinian side?

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** My hon. Friend is right: there are a number of barriers on the Palestinian side to being able to make progress, including support for incitement and terror. The Department for International Development is looking extremely carefully to ensure that no payments go in the wrong direction. It is certainly true that the Palestinian Authority needs to look very hard at ensuring that it is not giving the wrong signals as we try to make progress on the middle east peace process.

T6. [900333] **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): We are having Foreign Office questions, and still my constituent Ray Tindall and the other men of the Chennai Six are incarcerated in India. Will the Secretary of State pick up the phone to his opposite number in India and do a deal to get the men deported so that Ray and I can have a pint in Chester before the summer is out?

**Boris Johnson:** I appreciate the persistence with which the hon. Gentleman campaigns for his constituents. He has raised this issue with me several times. As he would like, I have personally raised the matter repeatedly with my Indian counterparts. They have told me that they cannot interfere in their court system any more than we can interfere in our own. That is where the matter currently stands, but I assure him that we continue to raise it on his behalf and on behalf of his constituents.

**Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): It is striking that Commonwealth countries trade 25% more with each other at a cost that is 90% lower than with non-Commonwealth countries. Does the Minister agree that, as we leave the EU, we have a great opportunity to

boost our mutual trade and security interests by enhancing our diplomatic relations with Ghana and other Commonwealth countries?

**The Minister for Africa (Rory Stewart):** I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who is our trade envoy to Ghana. Ghana is one of the most impressive recent developments in Africa, with three recent transitions of democratic power and a rapidly growing economy. It is a huge example of how the Commonwealth can become one of the great success stories of Britain's next five years, as we move towards the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

T8. [900335] **Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): The Paralympic games in Rio were a great success, showcasing inspirational talent and the importance of sports inclusion worldwide. What discussions has the Foreign Office had with Japanese counterparts to lend our full support to the Tokyo Paralympic games?

**Mark Field:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. She can rest assured that a huge amount of work is going on, partly on the security side, with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Security, but there is also, very importantly, as she rightly says, the sheer organisation. We are working closely to make sure there is seamless progress between 2012 and 2020, albeit that we have had Rio in the meantime. I think the Paralympic games in Tokyo are going to be a great success.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): In the next few weeks, the House of Representatives Government from Benghazi in Libya are coming to visit the UK. Would my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary or any of his colleagues on the Front Bench like to meet them, because they are playing a pivotal role in trying to keep peace in Libya?

**Alistair Burt:** An expansion of the Libyan political agreement is necessary to move matters along. There is a lot happening on the political and the business side in Libya as it gets back on its feet. I would be happy to meet those whom my hon. Friend wants to bring forward.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Given the collapse of the talks in Cyprus and the fact that the Government remain a guarantor of the process, what are they going to do now?

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** Very sadly, the Cyprus talks, on which people had done so much work for over two years, collapsed in the early hours of Friday morning in Crans-Montana, near Geneva. This was a once-in-a-generation chance to reunify the island; sadly, it has been missed and rejected, so we go back to the status quo ante. It is an enormous pity—indeed, a tragedy—for future generations that agreement was not reached.

**Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): In view of the continuing concerns about human rights in Hong Kong, does my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary intend to make any further representations on the joint declaration?

**Mark Field:** I hope my hon. Friend will be assured that the UK has been very active in emphasising the significance of the Sino-British joint declaration—a legally binding treaty registered with the UN that continues to be in force today. During my meeting with the Chinese ambassador on 5 July, I stressed the UK's strong commitment to that joint declaration. We urge the Chinese and the Hong Kong special administration Governments and all elected politicians in Hong Kong to refrain from any actions that fuel concerns or undermine confidence in the one country, two systems principle.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The Foreign Secretary has rightly underlined the importance of US-UK relations in this new world, but that relationship is kept alive by cultural and exchange programmes such as the Fulbright programme, which is now imperilled by President Trump's proposal to cut 47% from its budget. Will the Foreign Secretary make representations to underline the fact that we think programmes such as Fulbright should be expanded and not pushed to the point of extinction?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I stand here as a Kennedy scholar, which is a very similar structure, and we have a fantastic programme of Chevening scholars sponsored by the Foreign Office. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has confirmed that he will raise the Fulbright scholarships with Secretary Tillerson when he next sees him.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): With 250,000 people from Burundi now refugees as a result of the repression and human rights abuses in that country, what is the Foreign Secretary doing to stimulate dialogue to resolve the political impasse there?

**Rory Stewart:** The situation in Burundi is very disturbing. We call, above all, on the Burundian President to respect the Arusha accords and to give proper space to the former Tanzanian Prime Minister in leading the peace talks. In Burundi, as in so many countries in the world, the only long-term solution is a political solution to a humanitarian crisis.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Foreign Secretary meet the members of the all-party group for friends of Syria to discuss the desperate need to get more aid to the hundreds of thousands being starved to death by al-Assad in Syria?

**Boris Johnson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his persistence in pursuing this cause. He is absolutely right, and we have spoken across this Chamber many times about the humanitarian crisis in Syria. I will have great pleasure in meeting the Syria group to discuss what the UK is doing, but the House will know that this country is the second biggest contributor of humanitarian relief aid to Syria in the world.

**Sir Hugo Swire** (East Devon) (Con): While I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister raised the issue of the Chennai Six with Mr Modi at the G20, may I urge my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to focus his

efforts on the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and to seek an urgent meeting with her? Our boys have been languishing in jail there for almost four years—I visited them myself—and it is time, frankly, that they were brought home.

**Boris Johnson:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. He suggests an interesting avenue for further work. I will certainly look at the possibility of talking to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Whether we will be any more successful with her in making our points, I will ascertain, but we will leave no stone unturned.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Last week, at the same time as representatives of 57 Parliaments were meeting in Minsk to discuss co-operation on human rights issues, the Belarusian authorities were convicting a human rights activist on charges on which defence witnesses were not allowed to testify. The defendant was taken to hospital during the trial and convicted in his absence. What action are the Government taking to make sure that the authorities in Belarus recognise the absolute right of anyone to a fair trial?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** The most important thing we can do is to enhance our bilateral relations by visiting. No Minister has visited Belarus for many, many years, if at all, and I intend to do so at the earliest opportunity.

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): As well as the physical rebuilding of Mosul, one of the ways to reassure the people of Mosul is to devolve power to them, for which the Iraqi constitution allows. Will the Foreign Secretary urge the Iraqi Administration to look seriously at devolving power to the people of Mosul?

**Boris Johnson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is of course right. Iraq is an ethnically divided and religiously divided country. We must make sure that everybody feels properly represented in the new constitution, and devolution to Mosul is certainly an option that we will be exploring.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), before the Foreign Secretary meets the all-party friends of Syria group, will he discuss a comprehensive strategy to protect civilians with the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence so that we can have a proper joined-up strategy at last?

**Boris Johnson:** I can tell the hon. Lady that that is already happening.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I am extremely grateful to the Foreign Secretary. I recognise that there is still unsatisfied demand, but not as much as there might have been if I had not overrun, which I was pleased to do. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary was equally enthusiastic.

## Taylor Review: Working Practices

12.37 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the independent review of modern working practices which was led by Matthew Taylor and published earlier today.

The review sets out that British business is successful at creating jobs, enhancing earning power, and improving life chances across the UK. Employment rates are the highest since records began. Unemployment and economic inactivity are at record lows. More people are in work than ever before, and minimum wage rates have never been higher. This is a story of success that this Government will seek to sustain.

The UK economy's continued success is built on the flexibility of our labour market, which benefits both workers and business. Businesses can create jobs and individuals can find work because our labour market regulation balances the demands of both. Minimum standards set a baseline beyond which there is flexibility to set arrangements to suit all parties. Our dynamic approach responds well to fluctuations in the economic cycle, without the structural weaknesses present in some other countries. It is important that we preserve this success but also enhance it further. While the majority of people employed in the UK are in full-time, permanent employment, globalisation, demographics and especially technology are changing the way in which we work. We need to make sure the British labour market stays strong and everyone in the UK benefits from it.

That is why last year the Prime Minister asked Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the Royal Society of Arts, to lead an independent review into employment practices in the modern economy. That review has now been published, and I am delighted to lay a copy in the House Library today. It is a thorough and detailed piece of work for which I am very grateful, not only to Matthew and his panel members but to the numerous businesses, trade unions, organisations and individuals who have provided their views on this very important topic.

The review has a strong, overarching ambition that all work in the UK should be fair and decent, with realistic scope for fulfilment and progression. Matthew has outlined seven principles to meeting that ambition. I urge hon. Members to examine those principles and the rest of the report in detail, since it is an important contribution to a crucial subject.

In summary, those principles are that our national strategy for work should be explicitly directed towards the goal of good work for all; that platform-based working offers welcome opportunities for genuine flexibility, but there should be greater distinction between workers—or, as the review suggests renaming them, “dependent contractors”—and those who are fully self-employed; that there should be additional protections for that group and stronger incentives for firms to treat them fairly; that the best way to achieve better work is through good corporate governance, good management and strong employment relations; that it is vital that individuals have realistically attainable ways to strengthen their future work prospects; that there should be a more

proactive approach to workplace health; and that the national living wage is a powerful tool to raise the financial baseline of low-paid workers, but it needs to be accompanied by sectoral strategies, engaging employers, employees and stakeholders to raise prospects further.

This is an independent review addressed to Government. Although we may not ultimately accept every recommendation in full, I am determined that we consider the report very carefully and we will respond fully by the end of the year.

Matthew Taylor has been clear: the UK labour market is a success—the “British way” works. He has also said, however, that there are instances where it is not working fairly for everyone. For example, he highlights where our legislation needs updating or where flexibility seems to work only one way, to the benefit of the employer. We recognise the points made. We accept that as a country we now need to focus as much on the quality of the working experience, especially for those in lower-paid roles, as on the number of jobs we create, vital though that is.

This Government have made a commitment to upholding workers' rights. The Prime Minister has said repeatedly, in this House and elsewhere, that as we leave the EU there will be no roll-back of employment protections. The Queen's Speech also set out that this Government will go further than that and seek to enhance rights and protections in the modern workplace. Today's publication of the “Good Work” review, and the public consideration of Matthew's recommendations that will follow, will help to inform the development of our industrial strategy this autumn. I commend this statement to the House.

12.42 pm

**Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab):** When the Prime Minister took office last year, she stood on the steps of Downing Street stating that she was on the side of working people. Despite that rhetoric, the Conservatives have been in government for seven years and in that time have done very little for working people. They have presided over a lost decade of productivity growth. They have implemented the pernicious Trade Union Act 2016, which is, frankly, an ideological attack on the trade union movement, curbing its ability to fight for and represent workers' interests. They have inflicted hardship on public sector workers with a pay cap that was confirmed for yet another year by the Department for Education yesterday. They promised workers on boards, but rowed back scared when powerful interests said that they were not particularly keen on the idea. And they introduced employment tribunal fees, which have made it much harder for workers to enforce their rights.

Today's publication of the Taylor review was a real opportunity to overhaul the existing employment system in a way that would protect workers in a rapidly changing world of work. But, in the words of the general secretary of Unite, the biggest union in the UK:

“Instead of the serious programme the country urgently needs to ensure that once again work pays in this country...we got a depressing sense that insecurity is the inevitable new norm.”

Indeed, the Minister confirmed that she might not even accept all the proposals in the Taylor report, in any event.

Although the report is positive in sentiment in many areas, it misses many opportunities to clamp down on exploitation in the workplace. I do not have time to cover them all today, but I have specific concerns that the report may allow the Government to interpret references to the so-called dependent contractor in such a way as to allow them to row back on recent court victories for workers such as Uber drivers and those who work for Pimlico Plumbers.

Recent case law has suggested that a worker on a platform should be entitled to the minimum wage as long as the app is switched on and they are ready and willing to accept trips. However, the review suggests that the platform may insist on payment by piece rate, such that only an average driver, working averagely hard, will earn 1.2 times the minimum wage. That raises issues of enforcement and regulation—what constitutes a reasonable piece rate across platforms?—and it is something of a retreat from the common law position. Will the Minister confirm that the Government will not undermine workers' rights on the minimum wage in that way? Founder of Pimlico Plumbers and Conservative donor Charlie Mullins said this morning that the report holds Pimlico Plumbers up as an example of

“best practice in the gig economy.”

This is a company that our judicial system has found to be an example of worst practice.

The report does very little to strengthen the enforcement of workers' existing rights. Although Taylor agrees with Labour's position on shifting the burden of proof to employers in determining self-employed status, the report does little else in that area, and it needs much more work. There is, for example, no movement at all on employment tribunal fees, which are a barrier to justice for many workers.

If the Prime Minister wanted ideas on strengthening workers' rights, she could just have come to us. Just four of our manifesto commitments would go a long way to ending the scourge of exploitation in the gig economy: giving all workers equal rights from day one; strengthening the enforcement of those rights by beefing up and better resourcing Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, rather than imposing pernicious cuts, and by allowing trade unions access to every workplace; abolishing employment tribunal fees; and fining employers who breach labour market rights and regulations.

In the spirit of the so-called collaboration that the Prime Minister is so desperately seeking, will the Minister commit today to implementing those four simple measures, as a start? If not, will she accept that the Conservative party is not, and never will be, on the side of working people?

**Margot James:** I am glad that the hon. Lady found some positive aspects in the report on which to compliment Matthew Taylor. I appreciate that she will not have had time to read it all yet, but I urge her to do so. It contains many recommendations that will be of benefit to workers and are worthy of the greater consideration that the Government will give them.

I will not comment on each of the recommendations that the hon. Lady raised, because they are Matthew Taylor's suggestions and, as I have said, they will be given due consideration. She criticised the Government's record, so I would like to remind her that this Government

have introduced the national living wage and presided over the minimum wage reaching its highest rate, in real terms, since its introduction. The wage increases in the last year have been highest among the lowest paid, thanks to the national living wage. We have nearly doubled the budget for the enforcement of the national living wage. We have doubled fines for companies that underpay their employees. We have banned the use of exclusivity clauses in zero-hours contracts. We have done all that against the backdrop of protecting the growth in employment, which is, at almost 75%, at its highest level since records began.

Our record is one of achievement. The hon. Lady criticises us for enacting the Trade Union Act 2016, but most reasonable people would not criticise the idea that workers who are members of trade unions should have a proper say when their union decides to take strike action. That is the primary purpose of the legislation.

It is not all a garden of roses, otherwise the Prime Minister would not have requested Matthew Taylor to undertake the report. The Prime Minister said, when she announced Matthew Taylor's investigation, that flexibility and innovation are vital parts of what make our economy strong, but it is essential that those virtues are combined with the right support and protections for workers. The Taylor review came to understand that flexibility does work for many people, and it is clear that an agile labour market is good for protecting employment.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that productivity is at the heart of boosting wages for lower-paid workers? There are some really good examples of employers, working with the Living Wage Foundation and others, who have managed to boost the pay of lower-skilled workers by focusing on productivity, and that should be at the heart of this issue.

**Margot James:** I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. Productivity is central to our industrial strategy. We have established a £23 billion fund to promote quality jobs, better skills and the higher pay that is, as he says, so important.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and my trade union activity over the 20 years before my election.

Today's response to the Taylor review from the Government tells us everything we need to know about their frailty and approach to workers' rights—a weak set of proposals that probably will not be implemented and a set of talking points that leaves the balance of power with employers and big business. It was interesting that neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister mentioned or commended the role of the trade unions in securing fair rights at work. Does the Minister agree that a “right to request” is different from a fundamental right enshrined in law? If a request is refused, what enforcement action will the Government take to force employers to do better?

Does the Minister accept that the report makes no distinction between a flexible workforce and the exploitation of that workforce? Does she also agree that while the Taylor report tries to propose new rights, some of those rights have been secured by trade unions taking employers to court, as the shadow Minister suggested? Can the

[Chris Stephens]

Minister tell us what action the Government will take to enforce minimum wage payments when 200,000 workers in the UK are not paid the minimum wage? Will the Government advertise rights at work services, such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and does the Minister agree that it is time for a fair rights at work Act to guarantee fundamental rights at work?

**Margot James:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his critique. The “right to request” has been useful and valuable when it comes to requesting flexible employment. In any case, it is a recommendation that Matthew made, but it certainly warrants careful consideration. The hon. Gentleman mentions enforcement, and we are committed to making sure that workers on zero-hours contracts or the minimum wage get paid what they are legally entitled to be paid. That is why we have doubled the resources available to HMRC in the last two years to ensure enforcement of those important laws.

**Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con):** I welcome Matthew Taylor’s report today and commend the Minister for her statement, especially on tackling maternity and pregnancy discrimination, which the report says has doubled in the last decade and needs more action. Will the Minister outline what provisions in the report address the issues raised by the Women and Equalities Committee about workers’ lack of rights to access antenatal care during the working day, which the Minister—in her response to the Committee’s report—indicated would be addressed through the Taylor report?

**Margot James:** I commend my right hon. Friend for the work that the Committee, which she chaired, has done to tackle the outrageous discrimination against pregnant women, which has no place in the modern workplace. There are provisions in the Taylor report, but work is ongoing across Government to improve the opportunities for pregnant women in the workplace to ensure that we make history of such discrimination.

**Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab):** As someone who lobbied the Prime Minister with reports on the gig economy to establish such an inquiry, may I thank the Minister for her statement today? May I tease from her a little more about the Government’s position on the trade-off between minimum standards at the vulnerable end of the labour market and flexibility? If the news reports are right, Matthew Taylor goes for flexibility rather than always implementing the national minimum wage. May we have an undertaking from the Government that they will always abide by the national minimum wage, even if that means a loss in flexibility?

**Margot James:** I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on all the work he did on these matters in chairing the Work and Pensions Committee in the last Parliament. I can assure him that minimum wages rates are sacrosanct. There will be no trade-off when it comes to ensuring that everybody is paid at least the minimum wage. When he reads the report, he will be more encouraged. Many of the people who attended the Taylor review’s evidence sessions said that they liked the flexibility of working atypically and that we should not lose that, but that flexibility should not be a one-way street with

individuals absorbing all the risk. Although we will consider the recommendations further, I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I very much agree with those sentiments.

**Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con):** Does the Minister welcome the fact that the review established that the majority of employers follow good practice, and agree that our focus should be on those who do not to ensure that we level the playing field for all employers, all employees and all businesses?

**Margot James:** I agree strongly with my hon. Friend. Employers who choose to break the rules—they are a small minority, but they exist—must expect consequences for their actions. The vast majority of businesses behave properly towards their employees, and they must not find themselves at the wrong end of an uneven playing field.

**Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD):** I declare an interest having done some work with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development during my time outwith the House.

I welcome the Prime Minister saying that there will be no roll-back of workers’ rights, but let me just say that those words are rather a departure from my experience of the Conservative position when I was Liberal Democrat Minister for employment relations in the coalition. I know that the Minister is genuine on this important issue, and it is a thoughtful report of more than 150 pages. As she prepares the Government’s response to the report, will she commit to consulting widely across the House through debates and speaking to the Select Committees on Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on Work and Pensions, and on Women and Equalities, to get the right response?

**Margot James:** I thank the hon. Lady for her comments and commend her for her role in the coalition Government. I am glad that she acknowledges that the Government have moved forward in their appreciation of the difficulties faced by certain workers in the areas on which Matthew Taylor has focused. I can give her every assurance that we will indeed consult widely not only with industry, trade unions and members of the public, but across the House.

**Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con):** I welcome the report. At this early stage, can my hon. Friend give any indication as to what enhanced opportunities may be created for people with disabilities who are in the world of work or trying to enter it? They are a very important part of our constituency.

**Margot James:** I thank my hon. Friend for that important point. The Department for Work and Pensions is undertaking various measures to improve the chances of people with disabilities accessing the workplace, and my Department is giving all the support it can to that inquiry.

**Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab):** Matthew Taylor said today that he wants employers to pay national insurance for people with whom they have a controlling and supervisory relationship. Do the Government plan to implement that aspect of the Taylor review, and can

the Minister reassure workers that the Government do not plan to U-turn on their U-turn and increase national insurance for the genuinely self-employed?

**Margot James:** I can assure the hon. Lady that, as the First Secretary of State said earlier this week, Parliament has spoken on the issue of national insurance class 4 contributions. That matter is now settled, and will not be revisited. I agree with her that we should pay close attention to ensure that people who are genuinely contracted to provide an ongoing service are given the protections that workers enjoy, and are not falsely labelled as self-employed.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): On a similar point, will my hon. Friend confirm that there is a real risk that introducing the term “dependent contractors” will fudge the issue of whether someone is really employed or self-employed? Should we not focus on ensuring that the line is drawn in the right place and that those who engage so-called dependent contractors are paying employers’ national insurance, so that our own tax regime does not distort the market?

**Margot James:** We will certainly consult carefully on those points. We will make sure not only that the Treasury is satisfied in respect of tax issues, but that we are satisfied that people are getting their rights if they are employees or workers—or, as Matthew Taylor is proposing to rename them, dependent contractors.

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): The Minister has welcomed the report. Is she in a position to accept any of its specific recommendations today? Can she tell us when there will be legislation to implement at least something in it, or is this all going to be batted off into the long grass?

**Margot James:** As I said earlier, we will look at and consult on every single recommendation, but at this very early stage it is not really for me to say which I am personally inclined to recommend accepting and which I am not. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will bear with us. Over the next six months—well, I said by the year end; it might be a little longer than six months—we will consult widely across the House, and the right hon. Gentleman will have every opportunity to make his views known.

**Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): I spent 45 years in the gig economy, and what I liked about it was that it was very flexible. In order to build a career, I found myself delivering bacon across north London from Smithfield market. I also became a removal man, among many other things. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is welcome that the report supports a flexible labour market, and is not in favour of restricting that flexibility when individuals want it?

**Margot James:** I think my hon. Friend has read the summary of Matthew Taylor’s report very carefully because he understands that balance. He does not want us to end the flexibilities that have helped him in his career and close them off for people who are starting out on their careers now. As I have said, however, we must of course ensure that protections are in place.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): It is not just my constituents who are part of the gig economy who do not have security. Many of my constituents have jobs in which they work 15 hours a week. They are pleased and proud to be working, but when they want full-time employment they instead see more people in the same organisations being given part-time hours. When will the Government get to grips with that element of the economy, and ensure that all those workers have a fair deal and the chance to work the full-time hours that they want so much?

**Margot James:** The whole basis of the report is good work and the aspiration of good work for all, including, I believe, the constituents to whom the hon. Lady refers, but let me reassure her. Two years ago, the Office for National Statistics labour force survey found that nearly 70% of people on zero-hours contracts were content with the hours that they were working. However, that does mean that a third want more hours, which is a finding that we must embrace in the context of some of the changes that Matthew Taylor is recommending to help to achieve the good work and the working hours that the hon. Lady’s constituents want.

**Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): I, too, welcome the report. Does my hon. Friend agree that flexibility in the labour market benefits workers and employers equally?

**Margot James:** My hon. Friend asks me a difficult question. I do believe—Matthew Taylor’s report bears this out—that flexibility benefits employers and employees, but I am afraid that the evidence given to the inquiry suggested that in too many cases that flexibility is a one-way street, as I said earlier. We must deal with the problem of people who are really at risk and whose employment position is far too insecure.

**Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): I welcome the Minister’s commitment to the Government’s upholding of workers’ rights, but as part of the Government’s response to the report, will she consider enabling workers to uphold their own rights? Will she look again at the fees for employment tribunals, which have led to a 70% reduction in cases brought by single claimants, such as those working in the gig economy, against their employers?

**Margot James:** The hon. Lady makes an important point, but it is really a matter for the Ministry of Justice. Matthew Taylor has not actually recommended that we get rid of fees for employment tribunals, and I think we should recognise the positive aspect: the upsurge in the number of employment disputes that have been settled through mediation. However, I will continue to look at the issue that the hon. Lady raises.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): The report praises and supports flexibility in the labour market, where individuals want it. Does my hon. Friend agree that it may be especially, but not exclusively, beneficial to students and young people?

**Margot James:** I do agree with my hon. Friend. The figures suggest that nearly 20% of people on zero-hours contracts are students. Such flexibility also benefits many people who have parenting or caring responsibilities

[Margot James]

and do not want to work full-time. We certainly do not want to end that flexibility but, as I have said, we do want to improve protection.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The gig economy brings insecure work. Insecure work demands new rights, but those rights will be worthless unless the Government are prepared to put more resources into enforcement, regulation and inspection. Will the Minister commit herself to providing those additional resources when implementing the Taylor review?

**Margot James:** I very much agree with the right hon. Gentleman that enforcement is crucial. As I said, we have doubled the resources available to HMRC for enforcing the minimum wage and they will continue to rise throughout this Parliament. We have also strengthened the powers of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, and the recently appointed director of labour market enforcement has been tasked with bringing the work of the three major enforcement bodies together to understand the extent of the abuse and to recommend ways of giving those agencies the resources that will enable them to deal with it. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be pleased with the outcome, in due course.

**Amanda Milling** (Cannock Chase) (Con): I welcome the report and my hon. Friend's statement. Does she agree that not only is it absolutely right for us to ensure that workers are treated fairly, but it is good for businesses too, because they will have a more engaged and therefore more productive workforce?

**Margot James:** I heartily agree. This is all about improving work so that we have good work, with people who are able to grow in their careers, and a system in which those who are low-paid to start with need not be low-paid forever but can aspire to a better future. That will benefit British productivity and, as my hon. Friend suggests, improve the competitiveness of British companies.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Lab): Vital protection for all workers is provided by trade union membership and by trade union recognition. Since my time at the TUC more than 40 years ago, trade union membership in Britain has halved, while workers' and trade union rights have been undermined by Tory legislation. When will the Government reverse that legislation?

**Margot James:** The Government cannot mandate people to join trade unions. Trade unions are still an important force for the protection of workers' rights among the sectors of the economy in which they are still dominant, and I commend them for their work.

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): If one talks to drivers for Uber or cleaners using platforms such as Hassle, they will largely acknowledge the benefits of flexibility to them. To coin a phrase, would it not be morally unacceptable to misread the 21st-century labour market and construct a set of rules that forced those people out of work, rather than allowing them to stay in it?

**Margot James:** My hon. Friend will no doubt be pleased that Matthew Taylor very much agrees with his thesis.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): Over 1 million workers are being exploited by sham umbrella companies and bogus self-employment. Changes to tax policy are what is needed to tackle that, but the Government prohibited Matthew Taylor from making any firm recommendations on changing tax policy, so how seriously can we take the Minister's comments today, and when on earth are the Government going to eventually address these tax anomalies?

**Margot James:** I assure the hon. Lady that no bar was put in front of Matthew Taylor; he was able to investigate as freely and as fairly as he saw fit. It is up to the Treasury to assess the tax situation and any potential loss of revenue, which of course arises due to bogus self-employment.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): To contrast the previous question, will my hon. Friend join me in recognising one of the key findings of the review: thanks to the Government's tax policies, once tax levels and tax credits are taken into account, average take-home pay for families with at least one member in full-time employment is higher in the UK than in any other G7 country?

**Margot James:** I commend my hon. Friend for bringing that important fact to the notice of the House.

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): I am pleased to hear the Minister promoting this Marxist revolution that we are now living through, as the means of production are increasingly in the hands of the workers. Further to what she has just said, does she agree that the answer to some of the challenges is not just better regulations, but helping people to organise? If so, will she meet me, the Community trade union, the co-op movement and Indycube to discuss our work helping the self-employed to organise and unionise?

**Margot James:** I am aware of the independent union of self-employed workers; it has been a force and has contributed to the inquiry. However, I will be only too pleased to meet the hon. Lady and her Community organisers as part of my consultation.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): There is a marked difference between people who set up a business and take risks, including the risk of self-employment, and a few unscrupulous employers who force workers to go self-employed. In response to this excellent report, what will my hon. Friend do to ensure that people who are genuinely self-employed continue to receive benefits, but the unscrupulous employers do not?

**Margot James:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. We do not want to stand in the way of the incentives for people who genuinely take a risk by starting a business. They are the majority, and we do not want to do anything that upsets that balance. At the same time, as my hon. Friend will realise, we need to end the scourge of fake self-employment.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Disappointingly, the report does not go far enough on the issue of zero-hours contracts. The Labour Welsh Government have failed to support the prohibition of zero-hours contracts in devolved areas on seven occasions. Is it not the case that vulnerable workers in Wales are being let down by both the Tories and the Labour party?

**Margot James:** As I have said, many individuals want to work in the flexible way that is afforded by zero-hours contracts, and almost 70% of people on those contracts are happy with their hours. As I have also said, we must take steps to promote the value of good work as an opportunity for the third who are not, whether they are in Wales or the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): The Minister tells us that 20% of such people are students and that 70% are satisfied. Can she complete the hat-trick by telling us what the mean weekly earnings for someone on a zero-hours contract actually are?

**Margot James:** I am afraid I will have to write to my right hon. Friend with that answer.

**Mr Speaker:** Put a copy in the Library; I am sure it will be of educational value to all of us.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Matthew Taylor writes in his report:

“We must equip our children and young people to enter the labour market successfully, but Government, employers and individuals also need to make sure everyone is best placed to thrive throughout what might be a working life spanning 50 years or more.”

How do the Government square that with the previous Prime Minister’s policy of stopping compulsory work experience in schools, which in its first year led to a drop of 60,000 work experience placements in our schools across the country? Will she look at that again?

**Margot James:** That is a matter for the Department for Education. I agree that work experience is very important to young people and I am sure the Secretary of State will look favourably on that. My Department is looking to boost opportunities for lifelong learning to engender a culture in which people can progress in their careers.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): Before I became a Member of Parliament, I was self-employed for almost 30 years. I was also the self-employment ambassador to the previous Prime Minister, David Cameron, and I worked with Matthew Taylor on this report. I found him to be extremely non-partisan and an absolute gentleman. May I urge my hon. Friend to accept the proposed measures for the self-employed, especially the maternity and paternity benefits?

**Margot James:** I will certainly take on board my hon. Friend’s views, which are based on many years’ experience. I thank him for his contribution to the report.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): We have flexibility in the labour market on one side of the coin, but insecurity for people in employment on the other. There has been criticism, for instance from Unite the union this morning,

that insecurity is to be the new norm, and we want to avoid that. Will the Minister think about reversing the coalition’s decision to extend from one year to two the protection of employment threshold?

**Margot James:** I do not accept the premise that insecurity is the new norm. One of the purposes of this report was to look closely at the extent of insecurity and to produce recommendations on how that might be mitigated when it is not desired by the workers. I will consider the question that the hon. Gentleman raises, but it was not addressed in this report.

**Teresa Pearce** (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): Speaking at the launch this morning, Mr Taylor suggested that traditional cash-economy workers such as window cleaners could use an app to collect money and declare directly to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, so why does Uber, which has the most cutting-edge, fully automated app, not seem to declare the payments it makes to drivers directly to HMRC or to collect the national insurance numbers of drivers? Will the Minister strongly suggest that it does so?

**Margot James:** The app was one of the most interesting suggestions. There might be limitations to the apps currently available, but in no way was Matthew Taylor advocating that these should be mandatory. They should, however, be available in a more sophisticated form than at present.

**Ronnie Cowan** (Inverclyde) (SNP): As the Government look towards this gig economy, will they consider Matthew Taylor’s remarks that:

“Our welfare system is a cruel mess”?

On universal credit, he said that

“no one outside Government thinks it will make the system fairer...There is a better way. A universal basic income...can improve incentives and rewards for work, increase human freedom and dignity”.

Will the Government consider his conclusions?

**Margot James:** That matter has not been addressed by the report. I urge the hon. Gentleman to address his questions to Work and Pensions Ministers.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Matthew Taylor urges the Government to consider reducing tribunal fees. May I urge the Minister to go further, particularly in relation to pregnancy discrimination? Get on with abolishing them, and extend the period during which a case can be brought before a tribunal, because a period of pregnancy and maternity is a busy time when people are unlikely to be thinking about a court case.

**Margot James:** I agree with the hon. Lady’s concluding remarks and hope she will input her views as part of the consultation.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): The Minister has twice referred to the fact that flexibility seems to work only one way—to the benefit of the employer. Does that flexibility include her Government’s failure to prosecute a single employer in Wales last year for flouting the minimum wage rules?

**Margot James:** To correct the record, I was not saying that flexibility was always a one-way street in favour of the employer; I said that this was, in exceptional cases, a real problem that needs addressing, but that is not necessarily the norm. In response to the other matters the hon. Lady has raised, I urge her to contribute her views as we go through the consultation.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): When the Minister is considering how to respond to the review, will she talk to her colleagues in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport about the youth full-time social action review, which is considering the question of long-time volunteering? I realise that these are slightly different issues, but there is still a considerable overlap. The question of safeguards and protections is the same in some cases, so it seems sensible to wrap the two together.

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman makes good points about volunteering and the framework that governs it, and I hope that he will make them during our consultation.

**Jim McMahan** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): I want to ask the Minister two quick questions. First, on the extension of workforce protections, will that include secondary contractors? For instance, if one person in a team of three or four is the main contractor, will dependent contractor status be extended to other people in the team? Secondly, while being a dependent contractor might provide a minor uplift for people who are self-employed, does the Minister agree that some employers will see this as an opportunity to downgrade people with employment protection to the status of dependent contractor against their will?

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman raises a number of issues. There is no intention to downgrade anybody's rights. We want to be in a position to safeguard people's rights and, when possible, improve them—we certainly do not want to downgrade them. I am sure that he will put his detailed observations into our consultation.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): This Government continue to justify the existence of zero-hours contracts on the basis of flexibility, but the problems could largely be addressed if flexible working could be properly expanded and given a framework so that we knew exactly what it meant. Will the Government use this opportunity to properly expand flexible working and explain what it actually means?

**Margot James:** I cannot accept the premise behind the hon. Gentleman's question. We are not seeking to end zero-hours contracts, because too many people want them and the flexibility associated with them, but we are seeking to root out abuse where it exists.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): The Taylor review recommends that the Government should make it easier for people in flexible arrangements to take their holiday entitlement. In the past, the Minister has struggled to explain the Government's powers in this area. Will she tell us what powers currently exist to enforce the payment of holiday pay and, with the summer fast approaching, will she act on the Taylor report's recommendations swiftly?

**Margot James:** I can reassure the hon. Lady that Matthew Taylor has recommended that we take the issue of holiday pay seriously and ensure that it applies to all workers who are entitled to it. The Treasury will be taking forward those suggestions.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Minister is right to say that the transfer of risk is at the heart of the problem. Drivers at AO World in my constituency are classified as self-employed but treated as employees without rights. Is there anything in the Taylor report that would end the practice of fining drivers every time there is an accident?

**Margot James:** Perhaps the hon. Lady would like to write to me with more details because this is the first time I have heard of that particular practice. It certainly sounds wrong, and I would be delighted to consider it further within the powers that currently exist.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Page 11 of Mr Taylor's report says:

“we have to examine why, with employment levels at record highs, a significant number of people living in poverty are in work.”

For as long as I have been here, when Members have asked questions about poverty, it has been the Government's practice to respond with statistics about employment and unemployment. Will they now finally accept that such a thing as in-work poverty not only exists, but is a brutal fact of life for millions of people on these islands?

**Margot James:** We have always been absolutely committed to reducing poverty, wherever it exists. The national living wage has gone a long way towards providing workers with a framework so that they need not sink into poverty, and I urge the hon. Gentleman to consider that fact further.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): As someone who has done a few gigs in his time, may I urge the Minister to reject the execrable think-tankery jargon of the term “dependent contractor”? Work is work, and workers are workers. “Dependent contractors of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains,” is not going to change anything.

**Margot James** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. For those new Members of the House who are not aware of the musical distinction of the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), I can inform them that he is an illustrious member of the parliamentary rock band, MP4. If colleagues have not yet heard the band, they have not fully lived. I hope that they will hear the band in due course, preferably in Speaker's House, where it has played before and will play again.

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman refers to the term “dependent contractor”. This recommendation was designed to improve clarity and to increase the chances of workers getting the rights to which they are entitled, but it is just that: a recommendation. He is free to lobby against our acceptance of it during the course of our consultation.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I welcome the report's acknowledgement that employment tribunal fees are a barrier to justice. The recommendation of fee-free tribunals to establish employment status is positive, but what can be done to ensure the quality of representation at the tribunals? What protection will there be to prevent the detrimental treatment of someone bringing a claim? Is it also the case that, once someone's status has been determined, a fee will still have to be paid?

**Margot James:** One of Matthew Taylor's recommendations is that before an employee takes a case to an employment tribunal, they should receive firm advice on what their status is in reality. That would end a huge amount of uncertainty and unnecessary expense. We will consider that and all the other recommendations in this excellent report, which I commend to the House. I found much of it inspiring, and I hope that we can all work together to improve the quality of work in this country, as well as the number of jobs.

## Points of Order

1.26 pm

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Would it be in order for a Minister to attend the House and make a statement on why there is no one authority with responsibility for the safety of rivers and canals? Last night, my 12-year-old constituent Owen Jenkins drowned at Beeston weir. It appears that he went into the River Trent to assist another youngster who had got into difficulty in the water. This seems to have been an act of great courage by a remarkable young man, and I am sure that the whole House will join me in sending our heartfelt condolences to his family, his friends and all the other pupils at Chilwell School. Summer is here and the schools are now breaking up for the holidays. Our rivers, canals, quarries, ponds and lakes are potentially dangerous places, especially for children and youngsters, yet there is no one authority that has responsibility for safety in those areas. I think that a Minister should come along to the House and explain how we can ensure that all those places are safe for all of us, and especially for young people.

**Mr Speaker:** I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for her point of order, and for her courtesy in giving me notice of her intention to raise it. She has paid warm and eloquent tribute to young Owen Jenkins, and I am sure she speaks for all of us in saying that we send our deepest condolences to all his friends and family. We shall remember the remarkable courage that he showed. I am not aware of the intention on the part of any Minister to come to the House to make a statement on this matter, but the right hon. Lady asked whether it would be in order for a Minister to do so. It certainly would, and we still have several sitting days before the recess. If a Minister were to come to the House to make a statement on that matter, to explain the delineation of functions and the allocation of responsibilities and to answer questions about this, that would be very well received by the House and, I dare say, by the family of young Owen Jenkins.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I understand that the Prime Minister has announced that there is to be a judge-led public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal. Would it not have been better if, just for once, such an announcement could have been made to hon. Members in this House?

**Mr Speaker:** The short answer is that it is better if key announcements of policy or other Government intent are communicated first to the House when the House is in session. I have been attending to my duties in the Chair, so I am unaware of the announcement. It may well be that it will be warmly welcomed, and I do not cavil at that, but the hon. Gentleman asked me a specific question, to which I have given him a specific answer.

Yesterday, when the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) sought leave to secure an emergency debate on a specific and important matter, namely her sense of the need for a full public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal, there had obviously been no such announcement. I judge that it was indeed a proper matter to be debated under the

[Mr Speaker]

terms of Standing Order No. 24. Notwithstanding any announcement outside of the House, an indication of parliamentary opinion on the subject remains extremely germane and arguably just as urgent. I agreed to it yesterday but, more particularly, the House gave its approval to the hon. Lady to pursue this matter, and I felt and still feel that it warranted and warrants up to three hours of debate today. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), but the announcement certainly does not in any way dissuade us from a proper and comprehensive focus on this matter now.

## Contaminated Blood

*Emergency debate (Standing Order No. 24)*

1.31 pm

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the need for an independent public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal.

May I first thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing this emergency debate? This is the first such debate on the contaminated blood scandal, and it arises, as you know, after further evidence of criminal actions was produced by the right hon. Andy Burnham and after a joint letter calling for a Hillsborough-style inquiry from all six non-Government Westminster party leaders. After the announcement this lunchtime from Downing Street of a full inquiry into the scandal, emergency debates may become an even more popular route to get the Government to listen and act.

In the light of the announcement, I want to acknowledge all the people who have been involved in getting us to this point. I will start by thanking my constituent Glenn Wilkinson for his persistence and dogged determination when he came to see me in 2010 to tell me his story. I have kept him at the centre of whatever I have attempted to do on this issue. I also thank the many individuals and campaign groups who have fought for years to get to this point: the Manor House group, the Contaminated Blood Campaign, and Tainted Blood. I thank the Haemophilia Society, in particular Liz Carroll, its chief executive, and Jefferson Courtney, the policy and public affairs manager. Over 2,400 individuals have tragically lost their lives. They are not here to see this announcement, but their voices live on through their family members, who have never given up fighting for them. The campaign, which has run for many years, has at times had the great benefit of brilliant investigative journalists, including Caroline Wheeler of *The Sunday Times*, who was formerly a correspondent on the *Hull Daily Mail*, and the many researchers and journalists who worked on the BBC "Panorama" documentary on the disaster from just a few months ago. I know that the *Daily Mail* is not a favourite of yours, Mr Speaker, but it also ran a good story on its front page last week.

I thank the 111 parliamentarians who are members of the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, particularly my co-chair the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), the previous chair Jason McCartney, who is no longer a Member, Margaret Ritchie and Mark Durkan, who are also no longer Members but were vocal in the campaign, and of course the right hon. Andy Burnham, who set out clearly in his valedictory speech why this was unfinished business and why we needed a public inquiry. Finally, I thank the late right hon. Paul Goggins, who was a huge inspiration in this cause.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): My hon. Friend is completely right to thank all those people, but there is one person missing from that list: herself. The whole House should thank her for her tireless work over the past seven years on this absolutely brilliant campaign. This shows how Parliament should work: a constituent raised the issue with her; she campaigned on it non-stop; she was not fobbed off; she pursued it doggedly; and she has played a huge role in bringing us to this point.

Last night, I had a load of emails from constituents who have been affected by this scandal, and I want to say how grateful they are to my hon. Friend for the work that she has done.

**Diana Johnson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those comments, but this is down to the combined effort of so many people over so many years.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has been dogged in her determination and in not giving up. My constituent David Thomas came to see me in similar circumstances, as many constituents have done with Members on both sides of the House, but if he had not done so I would not even have been aware of the scandal, let alone of the need to deal with it so fully. Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the national and regional groups, such as Haemophilia Wales, who have done so much to stand up for those affected in particular locations? Their work has highlighted that this was a legacy issue from the UK Department of Health and that complications relating to the devolved status of health services across the UK need to be addressed in the inquiry.

**Diana Johnson:** My hon. Friend makes that point well.

I want to comment on how we handle disasters and on the best way forward for a Hillsborough-style inquiry established by the Government.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I add my congratulations to the hon. Lady on her brilliant leadership on this issue. While the announcement is incredibly welcome news, does she agree that there is an urgency here, because the people who continue to suffer need help now? There is a danger of the process going on for years and leaving them still waiting for support.

**Diana Johnson:** The right hon. Gentleman makes an important point. The timetabling of any inquiry needs to be set out clearly, and I hope that the Minister may be able to help us with that.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way on that point, and I congratulate her and Andy Burnham, because this issue has been going on for a very long time. Has she had any indication from No. 10 Downing Street about the form of the inquiry? Some of my constituents have similar problems to her constituents, so can she give us any clarification?

**Diana Johnson:** Just like every other Member, I have only seen what is out in the media, and I understand that there will be a consultation on the form of the inquiry. I am sure that the Minister will be able to help us in his contribution.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): I join in the tributes to the hon. Lady and the all-party group, of which I have been a member, because this is an example of how Parliament can work well. There is a family in Letchworth who said to me:

“As a family, we have suffered years of misery because of this scandal.”

Does the hon. Lady agree that it is right to consult the victims and their families on the form of the inquiry?

**Diana Johnson:** Absolutely. The right hon. and learned Gentleman makes a good point and I will come on to that.

I do not need to remind the House of the damage that public disasters do to all those who are affected, as we know from the Hillsborough tragedy in 1989 and, more recently, the appalling fire at Grenfell Tower. Every public disaster of this kind is different: their causes differ; the victims suffer in different ways; and the measures necessary to support those affected, and their families, also differ. However, every victim has a fundamental right to one thing: answers. They deserve to be told what went wrong, why it went wrong, and who is responsible for what happened. The story of the injustice they have suffered needs to be set out and told to the wider public. Their voices need to be heard. Apologies, compensation and other forms of support are essential, but if their right to answers is not also satisfied, they will be denied true and meaningful justice.

**Mark Tami** (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a powerful case, and I thank her for all her work. As she said at the beginning, many, many victims have died. Their families are still here and are still grieving, and they need answers as much as the victims.

**Diana Johnson:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This tragedy has taken the life of more than 2,400 people with haemophilia, infected mainly through blood factor concentrates. Many others, without bleeding disorders, infected through blood transfusions and other means have also lost their lives. Thousands more have been left devastated. The survivors have been left to live with a combination of HIV, hepatitis C and a range of other viruses.

My constituent Glen Wilkinson is one such individual. He has haemophilia and was infected with hepatitis C when he was just 19 during a routine tooth operation. Glen is one of thousands of people who have fallen victim to the worst treatment disaster in the history of our NHS, and one of the worst peacetime disasters ever to take place in this country. Indeed, each of the 15 or so non-terrorist related public disasters I have looked at—ranging from the Bradford City stadium fire in 1985 to the Clapham Junction crash in 1988, the Marchioness disaster and, of course, Hillsborough—was a tragic event, and I do not wish to detract from the magnitude of those events, but the House should note that all those disasters led to a public inquiry.

Hon. Members and their affected constituents are entitled to ask why the same has not happened with contaminated blood. Had more than 2,400 people died over the course of one day or one year, it would be inconceivable for any Government to refuse calls for a public inquiry, yet the devastation caused by the contaminated blood scandal has been spread not over days or years but over several decades.

We must also bear in mind the profound effect this scandal has had on one community, those with bleeding disorders, many of whom were provided with contaminated blood factor concentrates sourced from profit-making American firms. Virtually everyone who had haemophilia at the time has been infected.

Hon. Members will appreciate that the impact can be devastating when friends and close-knit communities are hit by a collective tragedy. Consider, for example,

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the Treloar school for disabled children, a special school with a large number of pupils with haemophilia: 72 of its pupils have died because of this scandal. Many were forced to be silent to the suffering, either for fear of the stigma of having HIV, hepatitis C or other viruses, or because they were not even aware that they had those conditions. Important though that distinction is, it does not excuse the fact that successive Governments of all colours have sidestepped the issue for too long.

Internationally, an investigation saw the imprisonment of the former head of France's blood transfusion service and his deputy, and a former French Health Minister was found guilty of manslaughter. In Japan, three company executives were imprisoned and an official was convicted on negligence charges. In the United States, the private companies involved in this tragedy paid out millions in out-of-court settlements across the world.

But nothing of that kind has happened in the UK. In 1991, in response to the threat of court cases, the Government set up an *ex gratia* payments scheme. There was no implication of liability, no use of the word "compensation" and waivers renouncing the individual's right to the take further legal action had to be signed before they could obtain small sums of money.

**Mrs Anne Main** (St Albans) (Con): A constituent, who does not wish to be named, wants us to include the remit of the Skipton Fund in this review. She, and many others, feel that the remit was wrongly drawn up, and that she and others have been denied the justice they should have had.

**Diana Johnson:** The hon. Lady makes an important point.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on her work on this issue. I welcome the fact that there will be a public inquiry, eventually and at last. Does she agree that that public inquiry should address why the UK was the last country in the western world to introduce a test for hepatitis C, why vital documents were destroyed by the Department of Health and why the UK took 13 years to be self-sufficient in blood products, when it took Ireland only five years?

**Diana Johnson:** Those are important questions for any inquiry to address.

On today's announcement, the Westminster leaders' joint letter of 7 July provided a blueprint for how such an inquiry should be conducted. First, as with Hillsborough, there should be a commitment to secure full public disclosure of details related to this tragedy, through a process managed by the affected community. There should be a mechanism to ensure all public bodies involved in the scandal are compelled to give oral and written evidence to the inquiry. There need to be assurances that the inquiry will cover the role of American firms in providing blood factor concentrates to people with haemophilia. There should also be an investigation not just of the run-up to the scandal but of its aftermath. Finally, the inquiry has to address the allegations of criminal conduct. As I said earlier, I hope the Minister

will also be able to help us with a timetable for the inquiry, as those affected have waited so long to get to this point.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): I pay tribute to the hon. Lady's chairpersonship of the all-party parliamentary group. My constituent Cathy Young is grateful to her and to other MPs, because those affected would have given up if not for Members of Parliament pursuing this issue. Cathy Young now has access to her husband's health records, which she describes as a fairy tale. Does the hon. Lady agree that those affected by this scandal, if they have not already done so, should get, and have a look at, their family health records?

**Diana Johnson:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and I certainly agree.

**Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): I pay tribute to the hon. Lady for her outstanding leadership on this important issue. My constituent Alex Smith has been affected by contaminated blood. A great deal has been said about the Government response and the potential criminal cover-up, but there is also the immoral way in which the victims have been treated and the payments they receive. Many are living in absolute destitution and poverty as a result of Government penny-pinching, which should form part of the review.

**Diana Johnson:** My hon. Friend is correct. We need to look carefully at the support that has been provided for this group, and at what should be provided in the future.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I add my thanks, on behalf of my constituent Haydn Lewis and his family. Haydn and his brother have died, and other members of their family have been affected. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should learn from the lessons of the thalidomide inquiry and compensation fund to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes that were made on thalidomide?

**Diana Johnson:** That is an excellent point, and it needs to be considered.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Diana Johnson:** I will give way one last time.

**Hywel Williams:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I pay tribute to her on behalf of my constituent Jane Jones, whose family have had to deal with great privation for many years because of the scandal. In a written answer to the Welsh Assembly on 27 March there was confirmation that the payments continue to be made on an *ex gratia* basis, but with no liability being accepted. The answer was in Welsh, but it confirms that the payment of £10,000 to a partner or widow continues on an *ex gratia* basis.

**Diana Johnson:** That goes to the heart of it. There has never been any finding of liability, which has resulted in very low payments being made on a support basis, rather than on a compensatory basis.

I strongly believe, and I think the majority of the APPG believe, that a Hillsborough-style inquiry is the best way forward in this case, putting those affected at the heart of whatever is created and set up. They should be given the opportunity to have an input into the terms of reference. They should be able to look at people being considered as the chairperson or panel members of the inquiry, which has to have the support and confidence of all those affected. That is why the Hillsborough inquiry seemed to work effectively. In the case of Hillsborough, this was known as “Families First”, and I hope that approach might be able to continue in this inquiry as it is set up. All those affected need to be treated with the utmost respect and reverence, and to be fully consulted; any information that becomes available should first go to them.

In the remaining few minutes, I wish to talk about the four questions that I think the inquiry needs to look at. Andy Burnham set out in his speech why an inquiry was necessary, and of course he was one of two former Health Secretaries, the other being Lord Owen, who had raised serious concerns about the scandal. We know that the “Panorama” programme and the *Daily Mail* article followed. Given what Andy Burnham said and all the developments in the past few months, serious questions still need to be addressed by a public inquiry. First, why did the Government not act sooner to protect blood supplies once the risks became known? And why were we so reliant on American commercial products for haemophilia patients?

The UK was not self-sufficient in blood supplies, so profit-making American companies played a considerable role in supplying factor concentrates to haemophilia patients. That blood was sourced from much riskier patients, including prison inmates, who were much more likely to have infections and had a financial incentive to be less than honest about their risks of infection. The dangers of American products were discussed in public not from the 1990s, nor the 1980s, but from 1970. As the *Daily Mail* reported last week, files now suggest that at least as early as 1980 officials had even put an estimate on the number of haemophilia patients being infected from these products with what we now know to be hepatitis C. They put the figure at 50 a year, yet it was not until 1986 that they took any action to address that.

If the whole of the UK had been self-sufficient in blood supplies, fewer haemophilia patients would have been infected. We know that, because Scotland had higher levels of self-sufficiency than England. As the BBC “Panorama” programme outlined, that meant that haemophiliacs in England were twice as likely to be infected with HIV as those in Scotland. Even in the mid-1980s, when the dangers of hepatitis C and HIV became known, it appears we could have acted sooner to remove risky blood products. And when the United States started screening its commercial products from March 1983, we carried on using non-screened American supplies that we had purchased before then; how can that possibly be justified?

My second question for the inquiry is: why were patients kept in the dark and not told of the risks once they became known? There are many aspects to this controversy that I know other hon. Members may wish to touch on, but I want to draw the House’s attention to

developments in 1983, in the midst of the AIDS epidemic, when there was still uncertainty over whether AIDS was a blood-borne disease.

In November 1983, the then Health Minister, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), told Parliament that there was

“no conclusive evidence that...AIDS is transmitted by blood products.”—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 327-8W.]

Yet earlier that same year his Department was preparing internal documents that said the opposite: in August 1983, that same Department was telling practising homosexuals and drug users not to give blood because of the risk of transmitting AIDS; in the summer of 1983, the Department was preparing a blood donor leaflet that said AIDS was “almost certainly” transmitted by blood and blood products; in July 1983, the UK Haemophilia Centre Doctors’ Organisation said that young children with haemophilia should receive a less risky form of blood product due to the dangers of AIDS; and between March and May 1983, the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service prepared a leaflet for blood donors, which included “haemophiliacs” and “recipients of blood transfusion” on a list of people who could get AIDS, and asked those same individuals not to give blood. Of course, the Scottish Penrose inquiry itself acknowledged that in adopting its position in November 1983, the then Government relied on

“a highly nuanced use of language.”

My third question is: why were some people tested for viruses without their knowledge and only told of the results many years later? There are many such cases of this happening, but I will make reference to just one: Jonathan Evans first tested positive for HIV in 1984 yet was not told of this until seven months later, in mid-1985. That posed a huge health risk to his wider family, and the history of this scandal is full of cases of spouses infecting each other. Tragically, the virus took his life. His son, Jason, was just four years old when his father died. He is still campaigning for justice for his father, and he has been instrumental in generating recent news coverage in the *Daily Mail* article and elsewhere.

Fourthly, there are allegations of a criminal cover-up, on an industrial scale, from the highest ranks of government downwards. At every stage of this scandal, there are concerns that officials knew more than they were letting on. Almost everyone affected by the scandal has encountered issues with lost medical records. Others have recovered their files, only to find that any mention of the connection with contaminated blood has been removed. Some individuals today are unable to access financial support via the Skipton Fund because of what has happened to their medical records. These cases of lost records also extend to the highest level of government. During the Archer inquiry, Lord Owen requested his departmental papers from the time when he was a Health Minister in the 1970s. He was told they had been destroyed

“under the 10-year rule”,

even though there is no evidence of the existence of such a rule.

Finally, when people were forced to sign waivers in 1991, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, they were asked to commit to bringing no further hepatitis C litigation as well as HIV litigation. These individuals did not yet know they had hepatitis C, as the disease has

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a long incubation period. It seems that the inescapable conclusion is that departmental officials knew more than they were willing to disclose.

In conclusion, earlier this week the Prime Minister expressed her intention to work more with other party leaders to act in the best interests of this country. She has shown a laudable commitment to that with respect to other public disasters, including the child abuse inquiry and the Hillsborough disaster. Alongside the many thousands of people who have campaigned for justice for so long, I want to personally thank her for showing that same commitment with respect to the contaminated blood tragedy.

There are still questions to be answered on the detail of an inquiry. In welcoming this announcement, we must also be mindful of those who will never see its results: the more than 2,400 people who have tragically lost their lives. Many never even knew of the true scale of the scandal that was impacting on them. Those infected, and their families, will be waiting anxiously to know that the Prime Minister's announcement will truly give them the justice they have so long been denied. But today the Prime Minister has earned a place in history as someone who has listened to an issue that her predecessors had ignored, and put party politics aside in the name of giving people the answers that are their basic right. For that, she has my gratitude.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Just before I call the first speaker from the Back Benches, I should say that at this stage I have not imposed any formal time limit, but a substantial number of people wish to contribute. Therefore, I know that the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) will exercise a magnificent self-denying ordinance in the length of his oration.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Do we really have to have it? I know what I am doing and am perfectly capable of handling the matter. If it is about the order of speeches—

**David Hanson** It is the Minister—

**Mr Speaker:** No, no. I do not need to be advised by the right hon. Gentleman on the handling of the debate. Let me just say that in so far as this was not clear, it was as a result of a failure of communication between the two Front-Bench teams. These matters should be sorted out between the Government and the Opposition, not with people yapping at each other across the Floor of the House or very close to the Speaker's Chair. The Speaker is happy to give effect to what the two sides of the House want, within reason, but that was not made easy on this occasion, and I am seeking to address the matter by consensus. I know that the right hon. Gentleman means well and his offer of assistance is greatly appreciated, but I do not need to take him up on it on this occasion.

1.59 pm

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): I am very grateful to you, Mr Speaker. May I join colleagues in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon

Hull North (Diana Johnson) and the work she has done in leading the all-party group, as well to my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), who has been a joint chairman of that group?

I have been working with the victims in my constituency since 2011—for the past six years—and I consider myself a new boy when it comes to this particular tragedy and scandal. My right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) has spent many hours working tirelessly on behalf of those of his constituents who are victims. I pay tribute to him; I know he wanted to take part in the debate but could not because of Government business.

I thank the Prime Minister for listening to the victims of this extraordinary tragedy and to colleagues in the House, and announcing the inquiry. I acknowledge the Minister's saying to colleagues that the Government are in listening mode on the inquiry's terms of reference and that they will put the victims at its heart. That is what the victims would expect, and they will be grateful for it.

Many victims—this is certainly true of my constituent Clare Walton—initially did not want an inquiry; they wanted a settlement instead. I pay tribute to Andy Burnham for his work on this issue, as well as to the journalists the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North cited. The new evidence that was uncovered led Clare Walton to change her view, and she is now very much supportive of and looking forward to engaging with the inquiry.

It is important that the inquiry looks into the subsequent treatment of victims and holds the relevant bodies to account. On Clare Walton's behalf, I have been attempting to communicate with the Macfarlane Trust, which was one of the five charities set up to help the victims. I say "help," but I have to tell the Minister that in my experience the Macfarlane Trust has done anything but help my constituent. It has behaved in an utterly despicable way. It refuses to meet my constituent or me—I have requested meetings for the past six years, but they always come back with a reason why they cannot meet.

The trustees of the Macfarlane Trust have bullied my constituent and "fed her with scraps"—those are her words—while at the same time having a charge over her property for all this time and making a profit on it. The trust refuses to discuss the future of the charge on her property. The scheme administrator will soon be changed to the NHS business advisory service, so she wants to know what will happen when that change takes place. I hope the Government will take some of these issues away and respond more fully at the appropriate time. The Macfarlane Trust says that it cannot give any more information until it has clarity from the Department of Health about transitional arrangements; Clare really wants that clarity. I hope the Minister will intimate, as his predecessor did, that the Macfarlane Trust is not much longer for this world. I have struggled even to speak to the trust on the phone.

Another of my constituents, Adrian Melson, is particularly concerned about the discretionary payments on which many victims rely. I hope that as the Minister begins to look at the evidence before him he will look closely at making sure that, if discretionary payments have become something much more permanent, they are recognised as such and not treated as discretionary. Under the previous Prime Minister, whom I commend

for coming out and wanting to resolve this issue, we promised our constituents that no victim would suffer financially under any compensation structure we put in place.

I shall take Mr Speaker's eloquent words on board and end there, other than to say that this is not a party political issue: successive Governments have failed the victims. I hope we can now come together and have this inquiry, but we must make sure that there is a clear timeline and a deadline.

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Môn) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on her leadership on this issue. On the hon. Gentleman's point about coming together, it is important for this issue to be considered at a UK level, because it predates devolution. It is important that the Minister—I thought he was going to speak second in the debate—works with the devolved Administrations and that any future compensation is provided at a UK level so that there are no second-class citizens in the United Kingdom.

**Nadhim Zahawi:** I think the victims who looked at the Scottish settlement have taken that point on board—that is certainly the case with Adrian Melson—and I am sure that the Government listened to the hon. Gentleman's view. Let us come together and provide a clear timeline for when the victims can get not only justice but compensation.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that. Just before more Opposition Members are minded to grumble about the fact that the Minister has not yet spoken, and that he is not necessarily next, I should point out that I was in receipt of representations from Opposition Front Benches on this matter. Some communication between Members on the Opposition Front Bench and Back Benches would be greatly advantageous to the conduct of our proceedings. Before I call the shadow Minister for public health, the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), may I gently implore her to speak for no more than 10 minutes, and preferably for fewer, because there are a lot of Members who wish to contribute? After the hon. Lady, the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), will helpfully set out the Government's position. We will then open up to a wider debate. I will not promise complete satisfaction, because that is without precedent in the House, but I will try to ensure that there are as many happy Members as possible.

2.6 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): Thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker.

First and foremost, thanks must go to my outstanding hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson), who has so valiantly campaigned on this issue for numerous years now. Without her and the dedicated resolve of her and all those she cited who have been involved in this campaign, we would not be where we are today. Thanks must also go to the former Member for Leigh, Andy Burnham, for the debate he

led at the end of the previous Parliament, for which I had the honour of being present. He helped to add expediency to this issue with his commitment to go to the police with the evidence he has if the Government failed to come forward with an inquiry to seek justice for those who have been neglected

For too long, the contaminated blood community have been simply failed by their Government and ignored by those who have let the demands of those affected fall on deaf ears, leaving the community without justice. It is very welcome—as we have heard in the news in the past hour and a half or so—that an inquiry may finally be happening, and I look forward to hearing further details from the Minister when he responds. I am grateful that he and you, Mr Speaker, have allowed me to speak first so that he can answer the questions I pose. This is a rather unusual format, and I had no prior knowledge that it was going to be changed. I hope that other Members who speak and pose questions will get a response from the Minister; I do not know whether he will get two bites at the cherry or will have to intervene to answer other Members' questions.

This emergency debate is timely and allows the House to have its voice heard fully, which is right after the decades of neglect the contaminated blood community has faced. At any point prior to 12.30 pm, when the announcement was made in the news, the Minister could have come forward and made a statement. That would have saved my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North from having to apply for an emergency debate yesterday. It feels like the order of things has been a little forced, and it is sad that it has had to be forced in this way. But we are where we are.

Labour Members are resolutely in favour of a Hillsborough-style public inquiry, as we made clear in our manifesto a couple of months ago—my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North and I pushed for that to be included. The Labour party believes that that style of inquiry would get to the heart of the problems that unfolded in the 1980s and hold to account those who were to blame for this scandal, before it is too late. It is not just our party, but all the parties—especially those on the Opposition Benches—that have made a commitment to stand up for those people seeking justice. That was so clearly documented in the joint letter, which was published on Sunday, from the leaders of every single opposition party here in this House, including, I am pleased to say, of the Democratic Unionist party.

Last November, in a debate secured by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North, we discussed a whole host of issues that this community faces, including how people could be compensated for the terrible events that have occurred. Today, we are here to debate the fight for justice, which should have happened a lot sooner.

In my contribution, I want to impress on the Minister two key points: first, that the previous two inquiries have, categorically, not been sufficient in seeking justice, which is why a Hillsborough-style inquiry must be actioned; and, secondly, that the evidence presented so far is clear that if we are to have truth and reconciliation after the murky covering up of this scandal, then the strongest of daylight must be shone on every aspect, leaving no stone unturned.

[Mrs Sharon Hodgson]

The two previous inquiries—the Archer inquiry in 2009 and the Penrose inquiry in Scotland in 2015—did not go far enough in the eyes of the affected community in getting the truth and justice that they deserve. The Archer inquiry, which was not Government-backed, failed because there were no Department of Health witnesses giving evidence to the convened panel. The Penrose inquiry also did not go far enough in seeking the truth, as it was unable to compel witnesses from outside Scotland when, at the time of the scandal, most, if not all, of the decisions were made in Whitehall. That failure to compel witnesses to attend from outside Scotland meant that the inquiry failed to provide the justice and answers that people from right across the UK deserved.

There are many allegations around this scandal, ranging from Department of Health officials destroying evidence as part of the cover-up, to victims' medical details being tampered with to hide the cause of their infections.

**Ian Austin:** Two of my constituents have two particular matters that they want the inquiry to consider: first, one said that he was infected with hepatitis C and exposed to the HIV virus, but was not informed of that by the NHS until years afterwards and he wants to be assured that the inquiry will reveal why the truth was hidden; the second wants to know about doctors and scientists being paid by the drug companies and about the precise nature of those deals. He thinks that those deals have to be really properly and rigorously exposed by this inquiry, so that we can get to the bottom of whatever vested interests existed during this scandal.

**Mrs Hodgson:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. The evidence on those things has been well documented, especially by the former Member for Leigh and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North. Those who have lived with these conditions, who are brave enough to come forward—and who are at the sharp end of this heinous negligence and the recent uncovering reported in the *Daily Mail* last week—have proved just how important it is that a Hillsborough-style inquiry is set up.

**Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):** Does my hon. Friend agree that the report, “Self Sufficiency in Blood Products in England and Wales” is unauthorised, and could be perpetuating inaccuracies and outright lies, as my constituent says in a letter to me?

**Mrs Hodgson:** All of this evidence will have to be examined. In recent days, constituents affected by this scandal have been in contact with my office with intricate details that must be addressed. It is important that those questions, no matter how small they may be, are answered, as they reflect the issues that have inextricably affected that person's whole life. It is most important that those issues are addressed, so that those who have lived with the ramifications of this serious negligence can finally have the justice that they deserve.

Getting to the bottom of the allegations and the evidence and having a full and frank inquiry that brings justice for the many people affected are the reasons why we must have this inquiry. As the joint letter by the

Opposition leaders said, if a panel were to be convened, it must disclose any and all documents related to the scandal, which involves the victims at every stage; and it must compel all parties involved to participate in the disclosure process and not to hinder justice any further. It must also investigate the events leading up to an individual's infection and the aftermath, including allegations of medical details being tampered with, whether people were unknowingly tested for viruses without their knowledge and whether enough was done to identify those at risk of infection. As part of this inquiry, there must also be an investigation into the role of profit-making American firms, which supplied the blood factor concentrates to people with haemophilia.

Although none of this will bring back loved ones and those who have died as a consequence of this scandal, or change the life circumstances of those who are alive today living with these conditions inflicted on them, there is still something that we can do, which is to hold an inquiry. It is the very least that we can do. The thousands of people affected by this scandal must be supported and we must stand beside them in seeking justice, as that is our duty as elected representatives of the public.

I want to conclude with this final remark: none of us here has a magic wand—I know that our constituents think that we do—and we cannot turn back time and stop this scandal happening. Sadly, that power does not exist, but the power that does exist, at the behest of the Minister before us today, is that of facilitating the justice for those who live with the aftermath of this scandal. Here, today, we can send a message—a loud and strong message to those who campaign on this issue day in, day out—that Parliament has listened and is on their side. We in this House have heard them; we in this House are there with them; and we in this House will do all that we can for them in their quest for justice. We cannot let them down. We can help facilitate the truth once and for all. Parliament is listening to the individuals who have spent decades fighting against the system to get the truth that they seek, and the Government must listen to Parliament. Parliament is saying: fix this, provide those thousands of people who never asked for this to happen to them with the justice that they so rightly deserve. We cannot fail them any longer.

2.16 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip Dunne):** I thank you, Mr Speaker, for explaining to the House the sequence in which we are speaking today in this very important debate.

I wish to start by offering my personal apology to all those who have been affected by the tragedy of infected NHS-supplied blood or blood products. This has had a terrible impact on so many individuals and families. I know that, quite rightly, there have been many debates on the subject in this Chamber, which have been prompted by the quite proper concern of Members on both sides of this House over many years.

There have been two previous inquiries on this issue: the privately funded Archer report, which was published in 2009, and the Scottish Government-funded Penrose inquiry report, which was published in 2015. However, I am aware that, over the years, there have been several calls for a full independent inquiry.

In addition to those reports, the Department of Health has worked to bring greater transparency to the events. Many documents relating to blood safety, covering the period from 1970 to 1995, have been published and are available on The National Archives website. Those documents provide a comprehensive picture of events and decisions, many of which were included in the documents reviewed by the Penrose inquiry. However, I recognise that, for those affected, these steps do not go far enough to provide the answers that they want or to get to the truth of what happened.

In the light of those concerns and of reports of new evidence and of allegations of potential criminality, we think that it is important to understand the extent of what is claimed and the wider issues that arise. I am pleased to be able to confirm to the House that the Government intend to call an inquiry into the events that led to so many people being infected with HIV and/or hepatitis C through NHS-supplied blood or blood products.

**Norman Lamb:** I am very pleased with the news that the Minister has just confirmed. Will he ensure that the process that is followed—I very much support a Hillsborough-style inquiry—facilitates the ability to bring criminal charges so that the full force of the law can be applied to anyone who may be guilty of criminal wrongdoing?

**Mr Dunne:** I shall come on directly to the form that the independent inquiry should take, and I hope that that will help to address the right hon. Gentleman's question.

We have heard calls for an inquiry based on the model that was used to investigate the Hillsborough tragedy—the so-called Hillsborough-style panel—which would allow for a sensitive investigation of the issues, allowing those affected and their families close personal engagement with an independent and trusted panel. There have also been suggestions that only a formal statutory inquiry led by a senior judge under the Inquiries Act 2005 will provide the answers that those affected want. Such an inquiry would have the power to compel witnesses and written evidence—an apparent shortcoming in previous reports. The Government can see that there are merits in both approaches, and to ensure that whatever is established is in the interests of those affected we will engage with the affected groups and interested parties, including the all-party parliamentary group, before taking a final decision on the type of inquiry.

**David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con):** Will the terms of the inquiry allow for recommendations to be made about the correct levels of compensation for those who have been affected?

**Mr Dunne:** I shall make a little progress, then endeavour to answer that.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Ministers at the Department of Health will meet those affected and their families so that we can discuss the issues and understand their preferences directly about the style, scope and duration of the inquiry.

**Diana Johnson:** I am grateful for what the Minister is saying, but can he give a time estimate of when the meetings will take place? My experience of the Department

of Health is that, on this issue, deadlines are not met and things have to be dragged on to the Floor of the House to get Ministers to respond. Is there a set timetable for when a decision will be made and those meetings held?

**Mr Dunne:** The hon. Lady, who has taken an active lead in encouraging inquiries, will want to make sure that we get it right. We will take the time that is necessary to consult colleagues and interested groups. Our intention is to be able to come back to the House as soon as practicable—I anticipate in the autumn.

**David Hanson:** The Minister has mentioned the Department of Health, and he will know that my constituents live under a devolved Administration in Wales but were infected in a hospital in Liverpool. What consultation is he undertaking with the Welsh Assembly, including on the schemes that it is running, and on the liability ultimately for any objective?

**Mr Dunne:** We recognise that there is a legitimate interest for all constituent nations in the United Kingdom. As many of these incidents took place before devolution, we intend to consult devolved Governments.

**Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con):** Does my hon. Friend agree that, quite rightly, the inquiry has to give answers to the victims of the scandal and their families? There will be great interest in the conclusions of the inquiry in the House and among the wider public to ensure that historical circumstances that led to the scandal are never repeated.

**Mr Dunne:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Dunne:** I shall make a little progress on devolved matters before responding to other colleagues. Regardless of the style of the inquiry, our intention is that it should cover the whole of the UK, so we will be in direct contact with counterparts in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to discuss that with them and to seek their views before determining those aspects of the inquiry.

**Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind):** First, I apologise to the House, the Minister and to you, Mr Speaker, for not being present at the beginning of this very, very important debate. The Minister said that he is going to consult on the inquiry, which will be UK-wide. He will know that we do not have an Assembly, and there is no corresponding Health Minister in Northern Ireland, which is absolutely disgraceful. There is no prospect of our having such a Minister before the autumn, so with whom will the Minister liaise in Northern Ireland in the Assembly's absence?

**Mr Dunne:** We will ask the Northern Ireland Office to facilitate discussions with officials and representatives in Northern Ireland.

**Albert Owen:** On the point about devolution made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (David Hanson), is the Minister telling the House that this is a UK-wide inquiry and that the consultation will take

[Albert Owen]

place across the UK, so that there will be equality for people such as Mr and Mrs Hutchinson in my constituency in the outcome of the inquiry?

**Mr Dunne:** The scope of the inquiry will be determined as part of the discussions which, as I have said, will take place over coming weeks and short number of months. Our intention is that the devolved Administrations and their residents will have full access to participation in the inquiry, irrespective of where people live or were infected.

The Government intend to update the House once the discussions are complete, and I encourage colleagues with a specific interest to engage in discussions through the all-party group or other relevant groups. In the meantime, if anyone in the House or outside has any evidence of criminality, they should take that evidence to the police as soon as possible. If anyone has any other evidence that they want the inquiry to consider, I would request that they submit it to the inquiry once it has been established. The Government will write to everyone in receipt of payments from the current schemes to make sure that they all know about today's announcement and to inform them of next steps.

**Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con):** I very much welcome the Minister's comments. Will he confirm that when the scope of the inquiry is drawn up care will be taken not to do anything that might endanger future trials? Will he further emphasise that anyone with information should make sure that it is made available to the police?

**Mr Dunne:** My hon. Friend will recollect that the recent Hillsborough inquiry gave rise to certain information that was made available to the police and led to charges being made. We would envisage that the inquiry that is established would have the ability to do the same thing if appropriate.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Dunne:** I must make progress, because Mr Speaker has encouraged me to take 10 minutes so that everyone can make a contribution, and I have already exceeded that.

I should like to take the opportunity to inform the House that implementing the reforms to the infected blood ex-gratia support scheme remains a priority for the Government. That is why, as David Cameron established a year or so ago, within this spending review period, until 2020-21, up to £125 million of additional funding has been added to the budget for the ex-gratia support scheme. That more than doubles the annual spend over the spending review period. The second consultation on scheme reform, which closed on 17 April this year, received over 250 responses. The consultation contained proposals for a special category mechanism that would allow people with stage 1 hepatitis C to apply for the higher annual payment, greatly increasing the number of individuals eligible for the higher payment. The responses are being looked at and the consultation response will be published in due course. All the annual payments will remain linked to the consumer prices index and will be disregarded for tax and benefit purposes.

**Stephen Doughty:** I thank the Minister for what he said about input into the inquiry. As the new chair of the all-party group on HIV and AIDS, I am sure that our members will want to contribute. I want to press him on the financial liabilities arising from the inquiry and the impact of devolution. Will he guarantee that, no matter where anyone was infected or where they live now, they will be treated with equality across the United Kingdom when it comes to financial liabilities and payments arising from the inquiry?

**Mr Dunne:** I have just described the additional contribution to the financial scheme for England. It will be for the inquiry to decide whether it wants to make recommendations about financial arrangements. At present, I am not in a position to give the hon. Gentleman the confirmation that he is seeking. That will have to come through the inquiry.

**Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con):** My constituent Lesley Hughes was infected with hepatitis C in 1970, but this was discovered only about three years ago. Will any consideration be given to those long years of suffering when the compensation scheme is put into effect?

**Mr Dunne:** I offer my sympathy to my right hon. Friend's constituent for the challenges she finds herself facing. We have to say at this point that it will be down to individuals to make their applications. We will respond to the consultation in due course. I strongly encourage my right hon. Friend to make representations on his constituent's behalf to the inquiry when it is established.

**Chris Stephens:** I thank the Minister for being extremely generous in giving way. May I press him on the issue of health records? Many families are still trying to establish what has actually happened, while the Minister is discussing the scope of the inquiry. Should we write to the Minister if there are any issues with families obtaining health records?

**Mr Dunne:** I think it would be appropriate to write to the inquiry, once it is established. I completely concur with an earlier point about ensuring that any evidence of medical records being tampered with should be made available to the inquiry.

I am afraid that I must bring my remarks to a conclusion. I thank those on both sides of the House who have worked tirelessly on the issue over the years. I add my voice to those of others who have already spoken to commend the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson). She has spoken very powerfully in the House on this subject not only today, but on many occasions and for many years. I also commend my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), who co-chairs the all-party parliamentary group. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North did, I thank past and present members of that group, notably the former chair, Jason McCartney, late of this parish. Finally, I thank ministerial colleagues who have handled this delicate issue in previous Administrations, particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), who has worked so hard not just for his constituents, but for all those affected by the tragedy.

**Mr Speaker:** I appeal to the Scottish National party spokesperson certainly not to exceed 10 minutes, and preferably less. The Minister took a little longer, but he did take several interventions and was setting out the Government's position, but there is no requirement or need for the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) to take quite as long.

2.32 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) said, 2,400 people have died following the worst disaster in NHS history. That was due to a shortage of blood and clotting factors, which led to the NHS sourcing products from America. The problem is that the factor IX concentrates for men with haemophilia or women with Von Willebrand disease are made from thousands of samples. The moment one or two people within that collection are affected is the start of the virus, and that was why these patients were affected at a much higher rate than those who had a single blood transfusion. The problem is that the issue goes back decades and it has not been properly dealt with, as has been said already.

There have been multiple debates, statements and urgent questions on the issue during the two years in which I have been in the House—I, too, pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North for keeping at it with the all-party parliamentary group—but most of them have been about support. It was only last July that the Government finally came forward with a strengthened support package for these people. It is important to recognise that the payments are not compensation; they are *ex gratia* support payments, and they do not recognise the loss and suffering of the victims of contaminated blood. This seemed to come about only after the Scottish Government came up with a much more generous package in the form of a much larger lump sum, ongoing payments and, in particular, a 75% pension to the spouse and bereaved families. Such people still do not get sufficient support here in England, but it is not right that someone who has lost a partner to this scandal is not compensated.

We heard in March this year—a mere seven months after the announcement of a support package—that the Government were consulting on perhaps restricting who would qualify for the highest payments, and that the payments would not be index-linked. The youngest remaining victim is approximately 35. They have a whole lifetime to go through. That might be a shortened lifetime in comparison with ours, but we cannot suddenly leave people in poverty further down the line. These things need to be dealt with. I welcome the Minister's commitment that the payments will be linked to the consumer prices index. We may need a debate on support, but that is not what this debate is about.

**Hywel Williams:** I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Lady's remarks, but may I point out that the support also extends to Wales, not just to England? As far as I understand it, there is also a £10,000 payment for spouses in Wales. Is it the hon. Lady's understanding that the inquiry's terms of reference will include the actions of the Governments in Wales, Scotland and possibly Northern Ireland, as well as what has happened in England? I had intended to ask the Minister that question, but could not make an intervention.

**Dr Whitford:** The Scottish Government set up the Penrose inquiry, but I would assume that any inquiry will look at the whole UK, and the Minister has committed to that. It must be remembered that the decisions that led to the scandal were taken here and in Whitehall. This was before devolution. Governments such as the Scottish Government have tried to step up to support citizens who have been affected, but getting the answers to what caused the situation is a matter for this place.

**Catherine West:** Does the hon. Lady agree that the lack of trust has been enhanced by documents such as "Self-Sufficiency in Blood Products in England and Wales"? That was a Department of Health document, but many people felt it was inaccurate and contained outright lies?

**Dr Whitford:** The inquiry will have to look at all those things. Documents, patients' records, things that were altered and hidden, and things that are hiding behind public interest barriers now all need to be opened up so that light can be shed on the matter, as with Hillsborough.

Penrose was a Scotland-only inquiry. The Department of Health was invited to take part and turn it into a UK-wide inquiry, but it declined. One of the key weaknesses of the inquiry was that Penrose did not have the right to summon documents or people.

I remember when the scandal started to unfold in the '80s. As a surgeon who was, of course, using blood on her patients, I remember how shocked I was at the mere thought that an action I might have taken could have harmed a patient I was looking after. In my elective surgery, I set about chasing every single blood cell to avoid spilling blood. I used electrocautery and all sorts of modern techniques. If I were to wheel out the staff from my theatre now, they would moan about how long I used to spend doing that. If a clinician is dealing with someone who has been hit by a bus, however, they have no choice.

I remember a critic of Penrose in 2015 saying that they were surprised that clinicians showed so much trust in the quality of blood, but a clinician who is using hundreds of drugs, implants, machines and blood products must be able to trust them. We have no mechanism personally to check them. That is the role of the Government and all their agencies. It is why we have licensing and inspections, and it is why action must be taken when there is a suspicion of harm. Failing to act, hiding and not dealing with the situation at the time all happened pre-devolution, and this inquiry must take account of that.

At a conference in Glasgow in 1980, clinicians were already raising concerns about changes in the liver function of patients who were receiving blood concentrate for haemophilia. A 1981 meeting of the UK's Blood Transfusion Research Committee, which we have all read about recently, recognised that about 50 patients a year developed some form of liver damage. Yet the decision at that meeting appeared to be to let that continue and simply to study the situation, using those patients as a way of developing a test for what was known at the time as non-A, non-B hepatitis. It is important that we ensure that this inquiry looks at all this. The official from the Department of Health and

[Dr Whitford]

Social Security who was at that meeting would not attend Penrose. Such people need to be called by this inquiry.

Going forward, the inquiry must include the families and the victims so that we are sensitive to what they want to know. This is also about not just the Government but producers—and not just producers in America. We try to make ourselves feel better by blaming this on the States, where people bought blood, and where people with addictions, people living in poverty and prisoners were used. In the mid-70s, prisoners in this country were also used, and it is claimed that that was encouraged by the Home Office as part of prisoner rehabilitation. We need the documents on that; we need to understand if that decision was made. UK producers have often been found wanting in the quality of product they came up with, so we must not pat ourselves on the back and imagine that the UK product was somehow safe and that this was all due to the US. We need to follow this right down and get the answers.

These people have been failed so many times, over and over, and it is crucial that that does not happen again. We need to keep the Government on their toes. We need to have reports back from this inquiry as it is set up, so that we know what it is actually going to look into. If we fail to get answers this time, and particularly if we fail to deliver compensation for the lives lost, the suffering, the failure to get a mortgage or insurance, and the costs of care, we will have failed these people all over again.

2.41 pm

**Mims Davies** (Eastleigh) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on securing this important debate. I was in the Chamber when the former Member for Leigh raised these very concerning issues, which need to be looked at in the inquiry. That struck a chord with me, so I am delighted to be back in the Chamber to see this debate.

Like many Members on both sides of the House, I have been contacted by constituents who have told me about their experiences and about how contaminated blood has affected them, their family life and their friends. Every so often as a constituency MP, we meet the saddest constituents who tell us the most heartbreaking stories. We sit there week in, week out, and those stories resonate with us, but they are not stories for the victims—they are daily life. These are wrecked lives, but the people have done nothing wrong of their own accord—it is pure injustice.

It is clear that the contaminated blood products that were used decades ago have continued daily to affect people's lives in a devastating and destructive way. When I have heard the stories of how people have been affected, they have lived with me, and I can understand the campaigning that has been done by Members on both sides of the House. I am therefore delighted to talk about my constituents' experiences.

Today, we finally recognise what has happened, and the Government are ready to tackle this injustice. I am delighted that that is being done in the name of the victims and their families, who did nothing to bring this on themselves.

After I became the MP for Eastleigh in May 2015, I met one of my constituents from Bishopstoke, Gary Webster, who has been left coping with HIV, hepatitis C and possibly variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease as a result of the NHS blood products that were used during a routine procedure in the 1980s to treat his haemophilia.

**Dr Whitford:** It will be important that the inquiry goes far enough back. The decision to heat-treat albumin for hepatitis B was made in the mid-60s, but we did not treat concentrates. We need to make sure that all these conditions are included.

**Mims Davies:** I thank the hon. Lady for that input. It is absolutely right that she, like all our constituents, brings her experience to this. We need to make sure that we do go back far enough.

Last year, Gary attended a debate we had here once again to discuss this heartbreaking issue. He attended a specialist school in Alton, where he was one of many haemophiliacs. He told me that he kept in contact with around 100 other students, all of whom had been affected by contaminated blood, although only around 20 were still alive. These students all contracted illnesses through blood products they had received because of their haemophilia. Tragically, Gary's story is similar to that of thousands of others across the country.

Other constituents, some of whom wish not to be named, have had grave financial burdens placed on them and their families as a result of the diseases they contracted from contaminated blood, which have affected their lives. It is only right that we support those whose lives have been significantly affected by these contaminated products. I am therefore pleased to hear about the additional support that the Government will provide to those who have been roundly affected. I am particularly pleased that the annual payments for those with hepatitis stage 2 will increase to £15,500, and then to £18,500 in 2018-19. Payments to those co-infected with HIV and hepatitis stage 2 will also go up, to £36,500 by 2018-19. I am pleased to see that these payments will be linked to CPI.

That will help to support all our constituents we know have been affected. I know from speaking to Gary and others about the real hardship and challenges these conditions have brought to their lives, and about the difficulty they face in working, and in bringing up and supporting their families in the way they would have liked had they not been affected.

Almost £400 million has been paid out to those affected by five different organisations, which have been funded by the Department of Health. I am delighted to hear about the £125 million the Government have committed as additional funding for the reformed scheme, which will double the Department's annual spend on the scheme over the next five years. That money must go to the people who really need it—that should absolutely be noted—because the daily-life decisions they have made have been really difficult because of their financial impact.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Lab): The hon. Lady talks about a reformed scheme, and some people have fallen outside the existing scheme. My constituent Sharon Moore, who suffered a transfusion of contaminated blood, has been told that she is outside the criteria.

Would the hon. Lady urge the Government to look at cases again under the new scheme to make sure that people are not missed and not excluded unnecessarily?

**Mims Davies:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing that point forward. There is nothing more frustrating for an MP than hearing that people have just fallen outside the bracket. That is the worst place to be, and the scope of the inquiry will perhaps give us the chance to look at that.

This Government have done significantly more than other Governments to protect those who have been affected. There is a commitment to ensure that we pull the five fairly complex schemes together and transfer them into a new scheme in 2017. These people have complicated and difficult lives anyway, and it is only right that we make it easier for victims to get the support they need.

I am so pleased that the Prime Minister made her announcement this morning and that there will be a full and wide-ranging inquiry into the tragedy. I am pleased that the inquiry will be drawn together by the victims, to support and suit the victims. I am pleased that they will finally have a voice—the strongest voice possible—so that they can get the most and the fullest answers they can, which is what they deserve. It is only right that this consultation will be held with those affected by this terrible injustice, so that their families also have a voice.

I hope that the inquiry will provide answers for those who are looking for them. In particular, there are concerns about criminality—when I heard that issue raised in this House, it was extremely concerning. We now have a vehicle to get people's voices heard, and if there is anything that should be going through the courts, we can do something about that.

With this inquiry, we have an opportunity to make sure that no voice is lost, and that the victims and their families get the right inquiry, the fullest compensation and the answers they rightly deserve.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Speaker:** Order. May I just advise the House that with the exception of the maiden speaker whom I am about to call, colleagues should be thinking in terms of speeches of five minutes each, or at most six, if the Chair is to accommodate everybody? I am sure there are colleagues who would like to expatiate eloquently and at length, and on other occasions they might be free to do so, but that will have to wait, I say to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter), for the long winter evenings that lie ahead. Before that, I hope that we can give a warm, enthusiastic and encouraging welcome to our maiden speaker, Anneliese Dodds.

2.50 pm

**Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op):** Thank you very much indeed, Mr Speaker. I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for securing this debate.

As the new MP for Oxford East, I must say that it is a shame to me that it was the Oxford haemophilia centre that produced blood products which resulted in many people contracting blood-borne diseases, and further, that guidance from the centre in the early 1980s advocated

the use of humans to test infectivity. I will repeat that—the use of humans to test infectivity. However, I am very proud of the people from Oxford who have campaigned for so many years for justice, along with many others mentioned by my hon. Friends. Their fight, as we have heard, has been simply for truth and for accountability so that events like these can never happen again. As I start my maiden speech, I would like to dedicate my words to them and to all the other people in Oxford who fought for justice against all the odds—not least, also, the survivors of the Bullfinch sexual abuse scandal, whose bravery has been remarkable and an inspiration.

I am enormously grateful to the people of Oxford East for electing me as their representative. As such, I of course take over from Andrew Smith, who served us for three decades as our MP and who many people in all parts of this House knew very well. Like many people, Andrew came initially to Oxford unsure of whether it would become his home, but quickly recognised the potential of our great city, not least because as a student he met, very quickly, his wonderful wife Val, who was also known by many people in this House. Val was an incredibly powerful advocate for the community of Blackbird Leys, which she served as a county and city councillor for many years. Her wisdom and her kindness is still very sadly missed by many of us.

Andrew is undoubtedly best known in Oxford East as a diligent constituency MP who cares passionately about our city and all its people, including of course those living in his home community of Blackbird Leys. But Andrew also had a very distinguished career in Parliament, including serving in the Cabinet as Chief Secretary to the Treasury from 1999 to 2002, and then as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions from 2002 to 2004. Andrew's work, with others, lifted more than a million pensioners and half a million children out of poverty, helped restore the national finances—a piece of history often ignored or, sadly, distorted in this House—and brought in some of the biggest increases in health and overseas aid spending our country has ever seen. Andrew also presided over groundbreaking disability rights legislation, set up the pension protection fund, and helped bring in the pension credit, among many, many more transformative initiatives.

Andrew is none the less an incredibly humble man. He always stressed how his achievements came about through working with others, either in this House or in Oxford. In fact, Andrew is so humble that when he was in the Cabinet running Britain's welfare state, his own television was so dilapidated that it had to be whacked many times before it would actually work. He is very intelligent but also very straightforward, without any airs or graces, and is immensely respected for it. I am sure that Members in all parts of this House will wish him very well for a long and very happy retirement.

Oxford East could be imagined as a constituency filled only with gleaming spires, detectives driving Aston Martins, and mysterious university dons. But while Oxford East boasts two excellent universities and bustles with students during term time, Oxford also has an impressive industrial heritage, and enormous further industrial potential, with the right infrastructure investment and support. What was the Pressed Steel Company plant, now BMW Cowley, produces nearly a quarter of a million Mini cars every year. Its engineers, technicians

[Anneliese Dodds]

and apprentices are among the best in the world. Oxford as a city voted to remain in the EU, although some areas in the city had a majority to leave. Whether people voted to leave or to remain, no one voted to deny our city its potential. It is essential that European markets remain open to businesses like BMW Cowley, and that we retain Oxford's many and various links with European and global science, as well as protecting the EU citizens who have made their home in our city.

In fact, Oxford is a city that has always looked outwards, as the first ever Oxfam shop on Broad Street reminds us. People with roots from all over the world call Oxford East their home. I am very proud that in my constituency we have five mosques, many different Christian churches, and substantial Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish populations. But I feel that the potential of many people from all of our communities in Oxford East is currently being held back.

Yesterday I attended the funeral of Bill Buckingham, who had been a Labour councillor and campaigner in Oxford East for 70 years; he died at the age of 96. Bill was among many who came back after serving our country in the second world war, determined that Lloyd George's promise after the first world war now had to be turned into a socially inclusive reality, with homes built for heroes as part of mixed communities to be proud of. As Bevan put it at the time, we needed high-quality housing where the doctor, the grocer, the butcher and the farm labourer could all be neighbours, without social distinction.

What of that ambitious vision survives now? House prices and rents in Oxford are the least affordable in Britain outside London. Renters of homes have fewer rights than if they were renting a sofa or a fridge. The rules for housing benefit have been changed so people whose families have lived in Oxford for generations are being forced out of their city for the crime of merely earning an average, not above-average, wage; and, to pay for the right to buy in housing association properties, up to a third of Oxford's remaining council stock could vanish.

For me, people doing their best to bring up their children on low incomes in Oxford are today's heroes and heroines. Often running between more than one job to make ends meet, I must say that it comes as a slap in the face to them when they hear politicians refusing to admit that there is such a thing as in-work poverty. I was disturbed to hear that repeatedly in this House last week. Britain, and especially Oxford, urgently needs more genuinely affordable homes, with affordability not covering homes worth £400,000, as is currently the case. Renters need stronger rights, and they need, above all, a system that recognises homes as homes—as places to live and not merely investment opportunities. We also, of course, need to unlock the potential of our communities and not allow them to be asset-stripped.

I live on the Rose Hill estate in Oxford with my family—I am very pleased that some of them are here today. It is a wonderful, friendly place, albeit one where almost half the children on the estate grow up in poverty. Bill Buckingham, along with many other local people, kept Rose Hill's community centre going through thick and thin, even when it burned down, and now we have a new centre on my estate, but other community

facilities have been run down in recent years. I loved meeting other parents during baby sessions at the children's centre when I had my first child four years ago. As you can see, he is quite grown-up now, albeit a little bit tired. But by the time my daughter arrived 18 months ago, there were no more baby sessions available. Instead, the children's centre is only available for supervised contact sessions and for two—that is two—hours a week of supervised play. Community spaces such as children's centres may not grab the headlines, but for many people they mean the difference between loneliness and friendship, between ill-health and wellbeing, and between division and neighbourliness.

Oxford East and its incredible people have so much potential, but too often, I feel, they are being held back. As their MP, I am ambitious for our city and its people, and I will devote the time they have given me in this place to ensure a better, brighter and fairer future for them, and for people like them, across this country.

2.58 pm

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I, too, start by paying tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for her leadership and persistence on this issue, on which she and my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) have done tireless work. I welcome the Minister's statement that a public inquiry will happen on this most important of issues. The Prime Minister has clearly listened to views across the House on the matter.

At one of my first surgery appointments, Richard and his wife came to see me to tell me his story. Richard was a haemophiliac who was sent to a school for the physically disabled in Hampshire when he was 11. For six years, he was given hundreds of thousands of units of factor VIII. Prior to that he had been given cryoprecipitate, which was perfectly workable in moderating his condition. The factor VIII prophylactic treatment was meant to prevent the dangers caused by haemophilia. It changed Richard's life. Sadly, 64 of the 75 people from Richard's school are no longer with us. Many of those young people died in their early teens.

This case is a double tragedy. Richard and his wife told me the very good news that, in later life, they decided to have children, but due to the risk of his hepatitis affecting the unborn baby, they had to have a termination, so they are childless as well as having been affected by terrible diseases throughout their lives.

I neglected to congratulate the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on her very fine maiden speech. She certainly made a far better job of it than I did of mine when I stood here two years ago. Her tremendous words were highly relevant to the topic under discussion. I am sure she will make many further fine contributions in the years ahead.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the inquiry needs to consider the challenges faced by people affected by contaminated blood who want children? A constituent of mine had one round of IVF treatment covered by the NHS, but he was not entitled to a second round, so he had to pay for it himself. We should consider such issues and their effect on people in the round.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. These terrible diseases have so many tragic implications. Through no fault of their own, people did not know that the treatments would have an adverse impact on their health.

Helen was infected in the 1980s, but it was only when she moved to my constituency in 2006 and registered with a new GP that she was diagnosed with hepatitis and its associated difficulties. She has had many consequent health problems, including four strokes, diabetes and rheumatoid osteoporosis. It has had a huge impact on her life. She calls her health a “ticking time bomb”. She had to relocate back from France after trying to set up a new life there with her husband and two children.

I have spoken to both of those constituents today. It is incredible how lightly they seem to carry their burdens. They have moved on from the principal issue, which was compensation, and what they want now is a public inquiry to get to the bottom of this. It is about getting answers. I am not saying that compensation is not important—it is hugely important, particularly for their spouses and children—but today they want answers.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a very good case. Does he agree that, while we welcome the Government’s inquiry and the funding given so far, transparency should be at its core? That is what it is all about.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** I absolutely agree. The Minister may confirm at the end of the debate, if he gets the chance, that the Government have released all the relevant documents in their possession. It is absolutely right that there should be full transparency and that key witnesses who were involved in this tragedy should be interviewed.

One of the biggest outstanding questions is: what was known? Helen told me that, despite the fact that she did not find out until 20 years after she was infected, the hospital had known for years. That is a tragic set of circumstances.

Richard sent me a passage that he found during his research. As early as 1975, Dr Joseph Garrett Allen, then professor of surgery at Stanford University in California, wrote to Dr William Maycock, then head of the transfusion service in the UK, to warn him of the severe dangers of using US-pooled plasma sourced from paid skid-row donors and prisoners. He said that the situation was extraordinarily hazardous.

My constituents want answers to the following questions. What was known about the risks? Was Parliament informed about the change from self-sufficiency to imported products? What was found out and why were the products not withdrawn? Was it a cover-up or negligence? Did clinicians take a paternalist approach or was it simply incompetence?

I welcome the fact that this Government have done more than any other on compensation and transparency. I welcome the public inquiry and hope I can play my part in making sure that my constituents, their loved ones and everyone else affected by this terrible tragedy get answers.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. May I remind hon. Members that Mr Speaker asked that speeches be kept to about five minutes?

3.6 pm

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for her sterling work, and to Andy Burnham and so many others who have pursued the issue relentlessly over the years. It is a testament to their commitment that they have kept going, even when all hope seemed to be lost.

I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) for her excellent maiden speech. I am sure that we share a lot of common ground, and I hope we will work together over the coming months and years.

Before Parliament broke up back in April, Andy Burnham laid a challenge to all the parties to include in their manifestos a commitment to the victims of contaminated blood. I am very pleased and proud that my party saw fit to do so. Our manifesto stated:

“Victims of contaminated blood products deserve answers.”

In 2008, the SNP Scottish Government established the Penrose public inquiry, which reported in 2015. In government we have also worked with stakeholder groups to develop a substantially improved compensation scheme, which is now the best in the UK. SNP MPs will support a full public inquiry for the rest of the UK, and I am very proud to stand by those words today.

I am incredibly pleased and surprised to hear that the Government have changed their stance. When we last met in April it did not feel as though much more was going to happen, so the change in the Government’s attitude is very welcome. I do not want to appear churlish, but the changed numbers in this Parliament mean that some things that seemed impossible before are now open for debate. I am very glad about that.

There has been recognition of the limitations of Penrose and what the Scottish Government could do. We could not compel witnesses to attend and we had a limited remit to consider negligence, so it is good that we now have this opportunity to relook at all the issues. I am also glad to hear the Government commit to working with the devolved Administrations, because we have the experience of an inquiry, limited though it was. I hope to hear more about the ways in which the Scottish Government and victims in Scotland will be brought in as part of the process.

In the April 2016 debate, I mentioned my constituent Maria. I have not been able to reach her to ask for her views, because this debate and the Government’s announcement came so very late in the day, but I want to put on the record again that Maria contracted hep C in 1981 from a blood transfusion following a miscarriage. She did not find out for many years. Even when she sought a diagnosis, it took two years to get it. She would want this House to know that, having lived with hep C for 36 years, she does not want charity. She does not want vouchers or handouts; she wants to be treated fairly and with dignity. That is the very least she deserves from this process.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): The Oxford haemophilia centre serves my constituents. I thank the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for securing this debate. Does the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) agree that victims want not just transparency but justice, and that if we find evidence of a cover-up, the individuals involved should face the full force of the law?

**Alison Thewliss:** I absolutely agree. I am glad that the hon. Lady raised that point, which I was about to move on to. Without that justice, the victims will never feel as though they have been well served. They will feel as though they have lost out and there has been no justice.

The inquiry must look at the changing of medical records. Somebody must have issued a clear instruction to do so, because such cover-ups do not happen by themselves. We must find the lines of responsibility whereby people were told, “Delete those records, and don’t tell people about this. Test people, but do not let them know.” All those outstanding questions must be answered, and we must find out what was known, when and by whom. In the search for answers, we must recognise that some questions cannot be answered because the relevant information is held in the United States. Ministers must reach out and speak to their counterparts in other parts of the world to try to find answers. Ways must be found to co-operate with the American Government.

We need to be able to have confidence in our current processes. I understand that the US started screening blood donations in 1983, but we did not start doing so until 1991. Every time I donate blood, I am conscious that the integrity of the system is based on my honesty, at every stage. We must find better ways to ensure that our systems are as robust and secure as possible.

The Government have said that during the inquiry they will reach out to those who receive funds through the current schemes. I hope that that will be done in co-operation with the devolved Administrations where they have responsibility. I encourage the Government to find as many ways as possible to contact people and let them know what is happening. In some cases, the individual concerned may have died and their family members may not be aware of what is going on. We must reach out as widely as possible through advertising, social media and all other means at our disposal to involve as many people as possible in the inquiry.

People must be supported to attend and give evidence to the inquiry. The experience may be very traumatic for some, and they may need counselling or financial support to enable them to attend and to ensure that the required documents reach the inquiry. The Haemophilia Society has said that we must treat such documents with the utmost care and protection. People are, quite rightly, sceptical about how their documents will be treated, and we must enable them to trust that if they submit evidence, it will not be lost. That goes for Government evidence as well as for private evidence belonging to members of the public.

We have waited far too long for justice on this matter. I encourage the Government to maintain the sense of urgency during the inquiry, to make sure that it is not dragged out over many, many years without the victims receiving answers. The victims have waited far too long for justice, and they should not have to wait much longer.

3.12 pm

**Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con):** It is a pleasure to see you in your place, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the first time that I have had the honour to be in the Chamber when you are sitting in your rightful place in the Chair.

My involvement in the contaminated blood scandal was as, I think, the second Minister for public health the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) had occasion—I nearly said the great misfortune—to come to see. She brought to that meeting all the vim and vigour with which she has pursued this campaign over seven long years. It has taken seven years for justice to be brought about, and that is too long.

I think I am right in saying that when the hon. Lady came to see me, her biggest concern was the burning injustice. To me, something inherent in the matter just felt wrong. I could not put my finger on it, but I was convinced that something was not right. The attitude of some of the people I encountered strengthened that feeling. They wanted to sweep the matter under the carpet, so that they no longer had to deal with it, and move on to other ways of helping the unfortunate victims.

There are two elements to all this. The first great injustice is the terrible scandal itself, which happened decades ago and which Governments—of all three colours, including the coalition Government—failed to grasp as I and others in government wanted them to.

The second great injustice concerns money. I pay full tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), who absolutely got it, and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Anne Milton). After the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North asked her question of the Prime Minister last week, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and I sat here together. I will not repeat everything that we said to each other, but it boiled down to, “For goodness’ sake”—or words to that effect—“let’s just get on and get this done properly.” We were talking not just about a public inquiry, but, most importantly, about the money. I also pay tribute to Jane Ellison, the previous Minister for public health, because I know that she got this as well.

To get a public inquiry, it was necessary to submit to the Government all the extra material that has been forthcoming in recent times, as further evidence of the need for such an inquiry. No matter how much Ministers and hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the House care about something and see why it should be done, political will is required to make it happen. I pay handsome tribute to the Prime Minister for not messing about. I know that she will have been supported by wise words from the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), and from the Secretary of State, who made the case to her. She has grabbed it by the horns, done the right thing and given us a public inquiry.

I want to go further and talk about the second grave injustice. I was reminded of correspondence that I have had with constituents whose son is a haemophiliac. As if being the parents of a haemophiliac was not hard enough, he was diagnosed at the age of nine with AIDS and hep C. He has faced real challenges in his life, which has been blighted by plain prejudice—I have heard horrible stories about the bullying he encountered at school—because of the triple combination from which he suffers. Now he is married, he is the father of a child and he owns his own home. His parents, who have suffered not just injustice but the real difficulty of watching their son suffer, are such wonderful people.

They give you every faith in people's goodness. They have no grievances against anybody; they just want a proper financial package.

The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) talked about the fact that victims receive an ex gratia payment rather than compensation. I remember those schemes, and I was horrified to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) that they have not been sorted out. I beg the Government to scrap them, and, in blunt, simple terms, to give these people the money that they deserve and need: do not give them that money as ex gratia payments; do not make them scuffle around to find bits of paper that they have to take with them, cap in hand, to ask for money. As if they have not suffered enough, how demeaning is it for them to have to go and, as they see it, beg for bits of money?

I urge the Government to get a load of money—these things are possible; we know that it can be done—of the sum that is required. I know that it is not quite so simple, but the next thing to do is to look not at liability, but at quantum, as we lawyers call it. How much would each individual, or their widow or survivor, be entitled to if liability was not an issue? Then, I ask the Government to do the right thing. I do believe that they can find the money. I know that many in government, including the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, absolutely got this. For whatever reason, his term in office was not the right time to do something, but he understood the human side, as did many of us.

It is now time to sort out the second grave injustice—the money. Get the money together, put it in a pot, decide quantum and give these people everything that they deserve and need. Then, finally, the last grave injustice and national scandal will have been sorted out and solved. Of that, we will all be able to be proud.

3.19 pm

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson), I became engaged in this issue after 2010, when constituents contacted me, and one constituent in particular—a remarkable man called Andrew March, whom I shall say a little about in a moment.

I feel slightly ashamed that I did not fully understand the utter tragedy of contaminated blood, which has not been with us for seven years; it has been with us for more than 30 years. As a country, we need to own up to the fact that we do not do these things very well. The same is true of Hillsborough and, in many ways, of Grenfell. These are not matters that have happened and then been dealt with appropriately. They are things that we have failed to address over years, if not decades.

I would say one or two things on the remit and type of inquiry, because these are multiple failings. Yes, of course, there is the failing that led to the infections and the multiple infections in the first place, but, until recently the Government would not even mention the word “negligence”. Now, I am pleased to say, due in large part to what Andy Burnham has done, we are talking about criminality, but it has taken a long time to get there. On how the victims have been treated by the establishment, again, one could make comparisons with what happened with Hillsborough over many years, such as the way that they have been ignored and badly

treated. In relation to recompense and financing, that includes the fact that the various trusts and schemes, as well as the quantum involved and the administration, have been appalling.

I have said to Minister after Minister over the past seven years that a bespoke solution is needed. We are talking about a finite and decreasing number of people, and we need a bespoke solution for each of those individuals and families, because everybody is in a different position according to their circumstances, health and personal needs.

I again pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North, and to many other Members—I am surprised that the all-party group does not have 650 members, rather than 111—but the real credit goes to the victims themselves, who had to fight and fight and fight to get very little.

I have felt frustration taking part in every debate on the subject over the past seven years and during the endless meetings with Ministers through the all-party group, so I am glad that the Minister has said that his mind is open on the type of inquiry. We need an inquiry with powers, such as an inquiry held under the Inquiries Act 2005 with powers to call witnesses and interrogate them under oath. We need the forensic skills that a judge would bring, but at the same time the inquiry needs to have credibility and trust. We do not want to start making the same mistakes that we made with the sex abuse inquiries and are beginning to make, I am afraid, in the Grenfell inquiry.

The other day, I was listening to Dr Richard Stone on the radio. He assisted the Macpherson inquiry and was trusted by the local community. We need here a combination of those forensic skills and people who know the issues and know the people involved, and are trusted by them. We have to have full access to documentation. We have to have proper rights of audience for the victims and their families. We have to have full representation. That means legal aid. I hope that in the same way that the Government are now discovering their neglect of social housing over many years has been a mistake, they will discover that the cuts in legal aid are also a mistake and are false economies.

I say that while paying tribute to what the Minister has said today, but remembering that in the previous debate, which Andy Burnham held in this House only some two months ago, we were told that a public inquiry was not appropriate. Let us consider just some of the issues that are being dealt with here: non-consensual testing; victims not being informed of the results of that testing; non-consensual research involving previously untested patients; people being informed, if they were informed, in hospital corridors or through the post; and minors being told without their parents being present. All this was happening in our country in the relatively recent past.

Then there is the cover up—the allegations in relation to documents being destroyed and people not being prepared even to answer questions. All that has to be addressed through this inquiry.

Given the time, may I end by talking about Andrew March, as a large part of my involvement in the investigation is down to him? With his consent, I shall discuss personal details, which, courageously, he wants in the public realm because he wants us to get to the bottom of this. In a letter to me earlier today, he wrote:

[*Andy Slaughter*]

“I have been looking at my medical notes, and have discovered that essentially, I am one of the patients who was not informed by their hospital (in my case Coventry and Warwick Hospital) that I had non-A non-B hepatitis throughout the 80s, and similarly, I was not informed that I had Hepatitis C when the hospital tested me without myself or my parents knowing”—

he was a minor at the time—

“despite testing me years earlier, without myself or my parents knowing. I only found out ‘by accident’ in October 1992, when I transferred my care to the Royal Free in London”.

Andrew quotes from the letter from the consultant at the Royal Free, who said:

“On further discussion he did not seem to be aware that he was Hepatitis C antibody positive and we therefore spent some considerable time discussing our understanding of Hepatitis C infection and the implications of antibody positivity.”

Andrew says:

“I am a severe haemophiliac, and one of only 250 HIV positive haemophiliacs who remain alive today. Of those originally infected in the 1980s, more than three-quarters have died during the course of the past 3 decades. Many of them were my friends.

I was also infected with hepatitis B and C, and despite treatment, I continue to live with the adverse effects of cirrhosis of the liver...I am also one of the 3,872 haemophiliacs (and persons with bleeding disorders), who have been notified as being considered ‘At-Risk’ of vCJD (the human form of Mad Cow Disease).”

This avoidable tragedy has completely transformed Andrew’s life and put him at huge disadvantage. He has never received a proper explanation. He has never been properly recompensed. Despite that, he has devoted his life to ensuring justice for all the victims. We owe it to him and to all those other victims—many of them, unfortunately, already dead—to drill down forensically into this tragedy, and to do so reasonably speedily and in a way that leaves nothing unexposed. If we do not do that, a reducing number of people will get justice.

3.27 pm

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): I welcome you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as this is the first time I have spoken with you in the Chair.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter). The case he mentioned is almost unreal, and few of us could believe it to be true if we had not lived through this issue ourselves. I pay tribute to all the campaigners up and down the country who have worked so hard to get this issue on the agenda—in particular the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson), but also many Members from across the House. This shows us pulling together and how Parliament should work. It has taken a long time, but we can make a difference. I hope this really will make a difference to those victims who have suffered, and that today’s announcement will change people’s lives once the public inquiry gets going. I would very much like to thank the Prime Minister and the Government for listening and for responding over this tragic affair.

When I became MP for Taunton Deane, one of the first people who came to see me, who does not want to be named, visited my surgery to tell me the desperate story of how his whole life had been blighted by being treated—inadvertently—with infected blood, as in so many other examples that we have heard today. I was quite naive. I had never engaged with anybody in that

situation before, and I was deeply shocked by his account of all that he had gone through for his whole life. Being given infected blood had plagued and blighted his life. He was ill, of course, but also his quality of life was affected. One of the effects that resonated most with me was that it affected his relationship with his son—he did not have the time to spend with him. We all take for granted that we can leave our children an inheritance, even if it is not very much—some money for a car or a share of a house. My constituent was distraught and felt he had not done justice to his son because his illness meant that he had a problem holding down jobs. Not only was he suffering from the blight of the illness, but he carried that guilt with him.

My constituent raised two practical concerns with me about the system. First, he felt that the level of financial support was not sufficient to enable him to feel secure and he was constantly struggling. Secondly, the scheme that administered his payment—the Macfarlane Trust, which other hon. Members have mentioned—did not work effectively and as a result did not adequately support those it was designed to help.

I have spoken on this issue several times in the Chamber and in Westminster Hall, as well as privately to the Department of Health. I was pleased to hear that the Government had listened to our voices and it is welcome that this autumn a new single scheme will be introduced, with additional funding of £125 million, to replace the complicated system of five different support schemes. The devil will be in the detail, but I know that the Government will take into consideration all the comments from the consultation. I hope that that will iron out some of the problems that so many people have struggled with and make life better for the victims.

I am also pleased with the moves that the Government have made on transparency—another issue that hon. Members have mentioned. I appreciate the serious concerns about how this has been handled in the past, but I know that Ministers are keen from now on to make all information readily available. That has been promised in the inquiry announced today.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because I, too, have a constituent who has been infected by contaminated blood since the 1960s. He will be delighted with the public inquiry, because he wants to know why it happened and how he can gain access to proper compensation. Transparency is vital in this case.

**Rebecca Pow**: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention and I could not agree more. Transparency should be the nub of the inquiry, because it is important for my constituent and for all those who have had their lives changed forever through no fault of their own. We must remember that they have not brought it on themselves.

I thank the Government for listening and giving the issue the attention it deserves. I also thank them for more than doubling the Department’s annual spend in this area. Let us make sure that the funding gets to the people who really need it. I thank the Government for announcing the inquiry as I will be able to give my constituent a glimmer of hope both that the Prime Minister has understood the issues and called for the inquiry, and that we will get the inquiry right. Public inquiries are rare events and we need to make sure this

one works. New evidence will emerge, and I urge that all relevant and commercially sensitive documents are made available. With the right framework, progress can be made and—I hope—the right thing done at last. I urge the Minister to ensure above all that the inquiry does not drag on too long. For those who have suffered for too long already, time is of the essence.

3.33 pm

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): I want to speak in this debate on behalf of my constituents Lin Ashcroft and the Smith family, victims of the contaminated blood scandal.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on an excellent maiden speech. She rightly highlighted the importance of the campaign and her local campaigners, and we look forward to hearing many more speeches from her. I also add to the tributes to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson). We are having this debate because of her, and she has worked tirelessly on the issue with other hon. Members. She has a parliamentary life well spent on the issue, let alone all the other matters that she has campaigned on. But she has done this for the victims, and, in welcoming the Government's announcement of a public inquiry today, I agree with her that it is so important that the families are at the heart of it. The inquiry has been a very long time coming; we failed this community many, many times, and they need to be at the heart of it and have confidence in it.

It is absolutely shameful that 45 years have passed since the first people were infected with HIV and hepatitis from NHS-supplied contaminated blood and blood products, yet we have still not got to the truth for the members of the community who are affected. They have been let down so often, but they still come here relentlessly, all these years later, to see Ministers and lobby MPs to fight for justice. I pay tribute to them for their strength. I remember a family telling me, not so long ago, that in the end they had to stop going to the funerals of the friends whom they had made as part of this campaign, because it had become too heartbreaking: there were just too many funerals to go to. I think that is really sad.

As the former Member of Parliament for Leigh said in his last speech in this place, there is plenty of new evidence that backs up what campaigners have known and felt in their bones for many years: that the risks posed by contaminated blood were known by the authorities and pharmaceutical companies at the time but it was still used; that people were used for testing and as guinea pigs; and that efforts were made to suppress that truth. Let us remember that these were people who went to the NHS for treatment and were infected by blood provided by the NHS—provided by the state. They have had to fight for years for that to be acknowledged, and no fault has ever been admitted by either the Government or the pharmaceutical companies that supplied the contaminated blood products. It was said that that was because no one could have known about the problem at the time but, as a result of the work of campaigners, Members and the media, we now have that new evidence that risks were known. The inquiry must start now, so that we can get to the truth once and for all.

As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North, more than 2,400 people have died and the lives of thousands more have been wrecked. I want to talk about just one of those people, Colin Smith from Newport in my constituency. He was one of the youngest victims of the contaminated blood scandal, and what happened to him illustrates just why the inquiry cannot come quickly enough.

Colin went into hospital in 1983 when he was eight months old with a minor ear condition. As a haemophiliac he received factor VIII, which the family learned, following a freedom of information request, had come from a batch from a prison in Arkansas. He spent his short life fighting illness. He died, aged seven, of AIDS and hepatitis C in 1990. The family did not know he had hepatitis C until three years after his death: it had been kept secret, as so much was kept hidden. I hope that that will be examined in the inquiry, because people like Haydn Lewis, who was mentioned earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jo Stevens), had to battle and battle to obtain such information.

Colin died aged seven in his mum's arms, weighing about the same as a baby. I have told his story before in the Chamber. It is a heartbreaking story, but telling such stories is an important reminder of why we are here today. It is also an important reason for having a public inquiry. We now know something that Colin's family knew in their hearts, I think, for many years, but have since outlined on "Panorama" and in *Private Eye*. One of the recently unearthed letters written by Colin's haemophilia specialist in 1983 recorded that, following his minor incident,

"without any evidence of intracranial bleeding the child was still given factor 8".

The specialist added that

"all these materials carry the risk of hepatitis but this is something haemophiliacs have to accept".

He said that he would keep Colin under

"close observation as months go by".

Six years later, after Colin had died, the same specialist wrote to pharmaceutical companies saying that he could not supply any more "samples" because Colin was no longer at his facility. Colin's family were not aware of that until much later. That and other evidence needs to be put before the public inquiry so that witnesses can be called under oath and all documents can be disclosed, because it indicates that the risks of using this blood—supplied by profit-making American companies—were known in 1980 or earlier, three years before it was given to Colin.

Colin's tribute on the Tainted Blood website says:

"Thousands of people, like Colin... didn't make it this far. He never had the chance to join the cubs, play football for his school, have a girlfriend, go travelling or get married... Instead, his short life was filled with hospitals, doctors and illness. He was just a little boy, but a very special one who we, at TB, always keep in mind as we campaign."

He is in my mind every day, because when at home in my constituency I often drive past the Smith's house, with my eight-year-old son sat in the car next to me, and I imagine how I would feel if this had happened to me. So I just say this to the Minister: would I have been happy if there was a public apology and would I have been happy with the limited financial support that people felt they had to beg for, or would I want to

[Jessica Morden]

finally get to the truth? Nothing can bring back Colin and others, but we can at least have a public inquiry that gets this right. We need to get it right this time, because Colin's family and others have been through so much over the years that we cannot let them down again.

3.40 pm

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): It was interesting to hear the reflections of the hon. Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden) and the personal stories she recounted. That was what brought me to this issue two years ago when I was first elected. Someone came into my office who was heavily disabled, but who should have been fit and healthy. They were relatively young—not much older than me—but their whole life had been dominated by a series of treatments they received back in the 1980s.

This is not an issue of someone having had a couple of opportunities taken away, having lost a couple of quid, or needing to work a little longer before finally being able to retire. This is about people who literally had their whole lives, which were going reasonably, taken away, with all opportunities removed. For many—about 2,500 people—literally the end of their life was caused by a treatment programme that should have helped to cure them.

I agree with the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) that doctors in a hospital or an operating theatre would not be able to look at every single thing; they have to rely on the agencies that vet and certify things as safe. Clearly, in this instance, there was a huge failure.

I am pleased about the progress that has been made over the past couple of years. When I first spoke on this, I remarked that I suspected that my predecessor, at the time he was elected in 1997, would not have expected his successor in 2015 to still be talking about the issue. It is therefore very welcome that we will finally have a public inquiry to examine exactly what went wrong.

I was reassured to hear the Minister saying that there will be genuine consultation around the terms of reference, as they will be very important. If there is evidence of criminal wrongdoing, no aspect of the inquiry should prevent people from being held to account for any criminal liability in a court of law. It would be a great pity if the inquiry that finally brought about justice and answers also prevented people from being held to account in a criminal court.

I was reassured to hear the Minister's reference to the Hillsborough inquiries—obviously charges have followed on from that, although I will not go into them—and I hope that the same pattern can be established for this inquiry if there is evidence to support it. I am sure that we would all join the calls that anyone with evidence should hand it over to the police immediately. People certainly should not be withholding anything that would be of interest to the police and might identify whether individuals need to be held to account.

It is right that there will be proper consultation on the form of the inquiry. It certainly will need to be able to compel people to take part and provide evidence. I was reassured to hear that the Minister is carefully considering those issues, because that could make quite a difference.

If there is an awareness that criminal sanctions might be available but people can just choose not to take part, that might have a negative impact on getting to the truth of what has happened.

It is appropriate that there is some form of time limit on getting to the answers. We can all think of examples of public inquiries that took a long time and seemed to drag on forever. Although people have had to wait decades for this process, there is a limit to how much longer many of the victims—and, in many cases, the children and families of those who have already passed on—will be able to wait for the final answers about what happened.

**Lady Hermon:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Prime Minister recently made the wise announcement that the Government would introduce an independent public advocate to help victims following disasters. Does he agree that it would be wholly appropriate for this independent public advocate to be appointed in time to represent bereaved families and victims right across the UK in this very sensitive and difficult case?

**Kevin Foster:** The hon. Lady makes a powerful point. I am sure that the Minister will have heard it and will wish to consider, as part of the consultation, how the inquiry is structured and how the victims are represented. I can imagine, given the victims' experience over the past 30 years, that they might have strong views on whether they should be represented by a state-appointed person or someone they know themselves. It is important that the way in which they are represented should be determined through consultation. I am sure that all points will be carefully considered to ensure that these people are represented appropriately.

In my constituency, three ladies have raised this matter with me constantly: Jean Hill, Michelle Digby and Margaret Murray. They have been determined to pursue the matter, to find answers and to reach justice. Even while I have been in the House for the Minister's speech, Margaret has been in touch to ask when the compensation payments will be made, given that the forms were sent out over 12 months ago. It is important that we resolve all these issues as well as finding the answers to what happened 30 years ago.

I welcome the Minister's statement today, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on her pursuit of this matter and on securing the debate. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), who has been diligent in pursuing these cases. I hope that those who have suffered for too long can finally get the answers that they deserve and have an absolute right to receive.

3.46 pm

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Thank you for calling me to speak, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the first chance I have had to speak under your chairmanship, and I congratulate you. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on her maiden speech. She made a powerful intervention on behalf of her constituents, and I wish her well in her parliamentary career, which I hope will be at least as long as that of her predecessor, Andrew Smith, who

served in the House for more than 30 years. It is also appropriate for me to pay tribute, as have many hon. Members, to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on behalf of all the Members who have supported her in the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, which has more than 111 members from both sides of the House. The group has looked at the real effects and causes of this scandal, as well as examining the recompense and support given to the people who have suffered as a result of it, and I should like to comment on those issues today.

There are two clear issues that we need to address. The first covers the history of these events, what caused them, what could have been done to prevent them and who is liable and responsible. The second covers the question of what the state does for those who have no blame in this matter, and what type of support is given to those who are now facing the challenges resulting from the scandal. I do not expect the Minister of State, Department of Health, the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), to be able to answer all these questions today. It is clear that the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North and other hon. Members, and the letter from the six party leaders, have focused the Government's mind on how to respond. I accept and understand that, but it is none the less important to put some challenges to the Minister about the form of the inquiry. The Welsh Government in Cardiff publicly called for an inquiry in January, and I know that they will be interested to know that they have the support of the House here today for that response.

I raise these issues because, like all hon. Members who have spoken today, I have constituents for whom the impact of the contaminated blood scandal has run through their lives over the past 30 years. They wish to remain anonymous, and that is quite right, but I have met them and I have seen the impact that it has had on their lives. This involves not only the trauma of the people who were infected and have since died in large numbers but the fact that people cannot get insurance and often cannot maintain stable employment. They have the problem of not knowing whether they are going to live or for how long, and not knowing what will happen to their relatives when they die. I have constituents with young children who might have to face the consequences of their early death at any time.

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con):** The right hon. Gentleman is making a powerful case, and he has just mentioned a point that I was going to make. Many of the people who were badly affected have not been catered for to date. They include constituents of mine whose father was infected and who died. They ended up in a children's home and their lives have been totally devastated, yet they are not within this process. They should be.

**David Hanson:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. The constituents who have approached me are concerned about what will happen to their children in the event of their death. They are concerned about the lack of insurance and the costs as a whole. This worry has been mentioned already, but in one case the records relating to the time of the infection have been lost by the state so some people may not be able hold anyone liable

because the records have simply disappeared. I hope that the inquiry looks in detail at that those challenges.

I was pleased to hear from the Minister that the inquiry will be UK wide. The scandal happened before devolution, but I have constituents in Wales who were infected in Liverpool, which is under the Department of Health's jurisdiction. I have constituents who were infected in Wales who live in Wales. I have also had correspondence with people who were infected in Wales but now live in other constituencies. It is important that we look at the picture as a whole. The Minister has given some indication of it today, but I will be interested to hear about how the devolved Administrations will be involved under the ultimate terms of reference. I want to hear about how the consultation will happen, what the terms of reference will be, and what opportunities there will be for input into the process. My constituents will want to ensure that we get to who is responsible, why it happened, what could have been done and, ultimately, whether any compensation or redress is needed to help meet the challenges they face, such as the one mentioned by the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly).

Given that it will be a Hillsborough-style inquiry, it is important that the Minister—not today, but in due course—clearly sets out not only the terms of reference, but the terms of engagement. I was going to make the same point as the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) in that, to be frank, my constituents want to try to get on with their lives. Something happened to them when they were younger over which they had no control, but it has not engulfed their entire lives, so it would be helpful if the Government set out how victims can engage with the public inquiry in due course. It may be possible to engage through organisations such as the Haemophilia Society and others, but how will individuals who may not be involved with any organisation get representation? They may need financial support for that representation—perhaps they could have the independent advocate that was mentioned by the hon. Member for North Down—and they need to be able to put their case to the inquiry effectively.

**Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab):** I am also pleased to speak on this occasion with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. Picking up on my right hon. Friend's point, a constituent of mine called Michael from Runcorn wants justice, but he wants justice that involves all the families. He wants them to be engaged and to be able to shape this Hillsborough-style inquiry. I welcome the inquiry that the Prime Minister and the Minister have announced, but people are impatient for justice that is shaped by the victims.

**David Hanson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The point that I want to finish on—*[Interruption.]* Does the Minister want to intervene?

**Mr Dunne:** Briefly. I remind the right hon. Gentleman, who is making some important points, that we intend to contact all the families who are in touch with us through the different schemes to alert them to today's announcement, so that they will have the opportunity to contribute to our determination of the best form of inquiry. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, it will be for the inquiry, once it is established, to determine how it engages with people, and those involved will be interested in any advice from Members or others.

**David Hanson:** I am grateful for that intervention, because that reassures me and my constituents about the process. I simply say that confidence, transparency and ensuring that people feel like they can have their say properly and effectively will be key. The inquiry should also have some timescale, so that people know how much of their lives it will take up. If the Minister can do those things and perhaps inform the House about the inquiry's budget, staffing and the other things that we would expect in any inquiry, that will help to reassure people that the Government are not just responding to events and pressure from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North, but are keen on getting a positive outcome for the innocent victims of what is a national scandal. I hope that the Minister will keep the House and, in particular, those who have been infected informed, because at the end of the day this is about their lives and their futures. The uncertainties that they have faced demand the compassionate and considered support that I am sure the Minister will give them.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I do not want to impose a formal time limit, but I would ask Members to try to keep to four minutes. I will not then have to impose a formal time limit.

3.55 pm

**Victoria Atkins** (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): I welcome you to your place, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I join other Members in paying tribute to all those affected by this terrible tragedy, to the families of those affected and to hon. Friends and hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) and my hon. Friends the Members for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi). I also pay tribute to the new hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) for delivering her maiden speech in this important debate.

I speak today to give a voice to a constituent, who understandably wishes to remain anonymous. He was born with haemophilia and has had to endure that terrible chronic condition, the treatment for which has poisoned him—he has been infected with both HIV and hepatitis C. Those infusions have condemned him to a life of pain, of serious medication, which has its own side-effects, of major surgery and of worry. “Worry” seems an inadequate word to describe the constant weight that must be on his mind, and on the minds of those who love him, each and every day of his life.

This tragedy has affected every single day and every single aspect of his life, from his marriage to his ability to work and his family. He told me recently that he and his wife have told their grown-up child of his condition and his infections because, as he told me, “when is the right time to tell your child that you have HIV and hepatitis C?” So my constituent welcomes today's announcement. He asks for a Hillsborough-style inquiry because, as others have said, people affected by this do not have time on their side.

I must declare an interest as a barrister. I hope the public inquiry will ensure that public money is directed towards those who need it most, namely the victims and

their families, not towards massively expensive tribunal costs. I state that warning to any of my former colleagues in the legal profession.

I am conscious that some of my colleagues wish to speak in this debate, so I will finish by talking about a school photograph that my constituent brought into a surgery. It was like any other school photograph—children smiling, and with teachers on either end of the row—but this photograph was different. It showed my constituent's class at the special school he had to attend because of his medical condition. Eight of his school friends had haemophilia. Four of those eight are now dead as a result of contaminated blood infections, and another is so ill that, in his early 50s, he is forced to live in a specialist care home because of how his body has been left.

My constituent and the thousands of others we have heard about today are the victims of a terrible episode in our national life. They have fought for justice for 30 years, and I thank this Prime Minister and this Government for listening and acting. I hope this inquiry delivers answers for those affected.

3.59 pm

**Peter Heaton-Jones** (North Devon) (Con): This is also the first time I have had the pleasure of speaking in this House with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, so may I welcome you to your position? I also echo what has been said in thanking the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for being able to secure this important debate. Let me also say that it was a pleasure to be in the Chamber for the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds). I congratulate her on taking her seat.

I am not going to take up too much of the House's time in this debate, but I want to draw the House's attention to the case of a constituent of mine, one that I have raised in this House before; I have been fortunate to be called to speak on this issue in a number of different debates. My constituent Sue Threakall has been communicating with me for more than two years. She was one of the first people to come to me after my election in 2015 to raise this issue, and this was one of the first cases I decided to take up and follow. Other colleagues have made this point, but I, too, have to feel a sense of shame that I was not aware of the background to this story before I started to hear some of the personal testimony.

I merely intend to read out part of an email that Sue Threakall sent to me yesterday, when it became clear that this emergency debate was going to be held—I have been in constant touch with her. She asked me briefly to share with the House her story, and I am doing so because it says in more powerful words than anyone else could why it is so important that we have this full public inquiry. At the time of this email, we were not aware of the Government's announcement, which I warmly welcome. I pay tribute to not only my hon. Friend the Minister of State, but the Prime Minister for driving this forward.

Let me share with Members what Sue Threakall wrote to me in her email yesterday:

“My husband, Bob Threakall, died in 1991, aged 47. Despite being a severe haemophiliac, he had lived a relatively normal life until he was given commercial blood products. Following that his health, and his life, followed a deep and dark downhill path.

He contracted Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. He died a terrible death, which I believe was wholly avoidable.

He was NEVER informed about the risks known at the time of imported Factor 8.

He was NEVER told he had Hepatitis C, and indeed I only found out myself a few years ago.

His HIV test result was withheld from him for many months, thus leaving me at risk. I was fortunate...many women were not.

From Autumn 1990 until two days before he died, months later, with shadowing on his lungs and despite being at high risk of contracting pneumonia, he was left UNTREATED.

He never had the chance of seeing his eldest son married, nor met his grandchildren.

He didn't see his middle son graduate from university.

He didn't see his youngest son pass his 11 plus and go to grammar school.

Following his death our family basically fell apart. Grief sent us in different directions and for many years we were completely broken. The fallout is still there today, bubbling away, just below the surface."

Sue writes in conclusion:

"It is my firm opinion, following campaigning and researching since 1985, that haemophiliacs were used as guinea pigs. I believe that, had people acted differently at the time, Bob, and so many others, would almost certainly be alive and well today."

I found Sue's email extremely moving, and I have repeated her words to the House today because they say better than almost any of the rest of us could why the decision that has been taken by the Government to hold this public inquiry is so welcome. I will be following this process carefully to ensure that the form of the inquiry is the best it can be, so that victims and survivors, such as my constituent, can get the truth, fairness and justice that they deserve.

4.3 pm

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I wish to start by echoing what has been said by so many in paying tribute to the victims of this tragedy, their families and those many hon. Members who have campaigned tirelessly for such a long time to ensure that this public inquiry takes place. I also pay tribute to our Prime Minister who, after so many people have not, has listened to these concerns and has organised this full public inquiry.

As a doctor, I prescribe blood products—and that will be continuing every day—often for people who are not in the position to make decisions for themselves. I prescribe blood for babies who have been born very prematurely and for children who have cancer—people who are not in the position to make these decisions, just like the youngsters with haemophilia and other constituents who have been mentioned.

This is an issue of trust. It is important that when people go into hospital and receive treatment they are able to trust that the risk-benefit decision that is made with them or, if they are very small or very unwell, on their behalf, is made on the basis of all the known facts and all the available information. With the contaminated blood scandal, it appears that that was not the case. Despite the fact that people knew that HIV, hepatitis and hepatitis B were transmissible through blood products, that information was not made available to the people receiving such products. The bloods were not being properly screened, and even when, as I understand it, bloods were being screened elsewhere, these products were being used on people in the UK.

**Ms Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Trust is the key word—trust and faith, if people have that, in the inquiry. Every story is different. My constituent Barry Flynn is a twin. His twin is not here, but on his behalf he wants to be able to trust the inquiry. He wants the victims to be heard and to decide the remit, and he wants their evidence to be taken. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the way to get trust?

**Dr Johnson:** Absolutely; the victims and their families have the right and deserve to know what happened. They deserve answers to their questions. They need to know when people knew that these blood products could be causing harm and, if those people did know, why the products were still given.

The House should be under no illusions—I am sure it will not be, after listening to many eloquent Members describe their constituents' cases—about the suffering people have been through, losing their family members. There is a stigma that still exists today around many of these medical conditions, particularly HIV. Other people, such as victims' wives and children, have been put at risk, and many others still suffer today from poor health.

I very much welcome the announcement of the public inquiry, which I hope will get to the bottom of all the issues. I hope that the victims receive the compensation they deserve.

4.7 pm

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): May I, too, welcome you to your new role, Madam Deputy Speaker? I am absolutely delighted. I congratulate the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on her brilliant maiden speech and pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for being such a doughty champion of this issue in Parliament.

This debate has been conducted in a way we can all recognise as hugely positive. It has been very constructive, which I think is what people out there in the country would expect—they would expect us to conduct this debate responsibly because this issue very much affects people's lives. I am acutely aware of that because one of my constituents who has been caught up in this tragedy is Sue Wathen, a local teacher whose husband is a councillor. They are friends I care about very much. Rather like several of my colleagues, I was shocked when, shortly after I was elected, Sue and Peter asked me to go around to their house, where they told me all about the things they had gone through and the difficulties that Sue was facing in trying to access the Harvoni treatment that she so desperately needed.

I know that Sue will be sat at home watching this debate and will welcome the Government's announcement no end. Things went so disastrously wrong in the past and we need to get to the bottom of that. A particular shock to Sue was that she was diagnosed as having her condition after some 30 years. It was a bombshell: she was marking books in her office at school when she received the telephone call telling her that she had this condition.

The most welcome thing about today's announcement is the firm commitment to ensure that the victims of this tragedy are properly listened to and are really involved in shaping the inquiry. There are lessons to be

[Tom Pursglove]

learned from what happened with Hillsborough. It does not surprise me in the slightest that the Prime Minister is so committed to addressing this issue: we have seen her take up a number of injustices, of which Hillsborough is one example. I hope that we can get to the bottom of this particular tragedy. The victims know how it affects them on a day-to-day basis. They know what the consequences are for their families and they should be listened to and encouraged to help shape the inquiry.

One key point that I suspect will come up in these discussions in the weeks and months ahead is access to treatment. Unfortunately, from time to time, NHS bureaucracy gets in the way of people accessing treatments. In Sue's case, we went through a multitude of dramas to get the Harvoni treatment that she so desperately needed. In the end, we were successful. I am very grateful to Ministers for all their efforts in helping to achieve that. I remember what Sue said to me when we first had that early conversation. She said, "I am not worried about compensation; I just want to get better." There is a lot in that. These are all issues that the public inquiry should consider and address. I welcome it very much and look forward to the debates ahead.

4.10 pm

**Wendy Morton** (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): Like other hon. Members, Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome you to the Chair. I also wish to put on record my thanks to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for securing this debate. In the short time that I have been a Member of this place, I have been struck by her determination and perseverance with this campaign. Clearly, it is an issue that goes right across the Chamber. I also wish to thank and to recognise all those Members who are not in the Chamber today or who have perhaps moved on following the election for playing a part in this campaign. That includes David Cameron, who, at his last Prime Minister's questions, said that he wanted more to be done on this very important issue.

This is a very important matter to many of us both inside and outside this House. As we have heard today, so many constituents have been affected by this issue and are still affected today. It was first brought to my attention about a year ago when a constituent came to my surgery, but the issue that she raised was slightly different. We have heard a lot of stories about victims and those who are suffering as a result of the contaminated blood tragedy, but this lady came to raise the issue of support for the spouses of those who have died from contaminated blood. She had a number of questions and concerns, particularly around the discretionary payment fund. In particular, she wanted to know exactly what her position was, saying that she felt as though she was in limbo when it came to her monthly payments.

This is a tragedy that means so much to so many people. Through no fault of their own, they have suddenly found themselves in hardship and really suffering as a result of what has happened. We know that this tragedy goes back to the 1970s and 1980s and that it is an issue that has spanned several Governments. It is a long-running issue, but for those families in my constituency and across the country, it is still a priority for them and

rightly so. From what we have heard from the Minister today and from the Prime Minister in her statement, I sense that it is still a priority for the Government as well. We should continue to provide support for those affected by this tragedy.

I am very conscious of time, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I will draw my comments to a close by saying that I hope that this inquiry brings together all the parties, including the families and the victims, because, after all the time that has elapsed, there are still families who want answers, and a sense of conclusion and closure to this tragic issue.

4.13 pm

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I, too, welcome you to your place, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have a confession, or an apology, to make: when I was first briefed on this issue, I put it into the "too difficult to deal with" category—perhaps it was too niche, too much of the past. It lacked a contemporary feel to it. I was wrong and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) has proved the point today, and she is to be congratulated on that.

Listening to this debate, I have been reflecting on the fact that so many of our constituents view this place through that very narrow prism of 30 minutes or so on a Wednesday. This debate has shown Parliament at its best—Members from across the parties with an interest in an issue coming together to try to find a solution. I welcome the words of the hon. Lady in relation to my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister. As a number of hon. Members have pointed out, many Ministers have listened, and just as many Ministers listened to the tragedy of Hillsborough. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister seems to have something in her essence, as she does not listen but decides to act in a fair, calm and sensible way, always in the pursuit of justice for our constituents and fellow citizens.

This issue speaks to a time long past—a different time for procedures, practices and medical processes. It certainly predates patients' rights and, as a number of hon. Members have said, the devolution settlement, which will doubtless throw up challenges for the inquiry. However, it is also a contemporary issue, as it causes pain, suffering and anxiety, as many colleagues across the House have referenced. I strongly welcome the Government's decision to move towards a single payment scheme. Having five silos to which people can try to apply and have to justify their needs to—my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) alluded to such cases—has added indignity to injustice.

Money is not everything, as a number of colleagues have said. Yes, the ill health unnecessarily—and probably avoidably—experienced by sufferers as a result of contaminated blood means that they must bear greater medical costs as well as greater social and lifestyle costs. But the inquiry is crucial. I confess that I am sanguine, on a personal level, as to whether there should be a panel or a judge-led inquiry. If the latter—I agree entirely with the Minister that this has to be done in concert with the survivors to identify the best way—I hope that we can rally around the authenticity of the judge and not question their motivation or bona fides.

The sufferers do not have time on their side, and we must move forward quickly. This is a campaign that has festered too long.

I conclude by congratulating again the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North. I hope that people who are suffering, who are bereaved, who are in pain, or who are anxious today are in some way sustained and comforted by a brighter glimmer of the hope of justice at the end of the tunnel.

4.17 pm

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): I thank the Government very much for the announcement. I am new to the issue, and I pay tribute to hon. Members who have done much work in previous years, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson), my hon. Friends the Members for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) and for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), and others who had the wisdom to champion this cause when it was not fashionable to do so.

Islanders who have been affected will be relieved that all the truth behind the scandal will come out. I suspect that some of it will make for very difficult listening indeed. I did not know whether I should speak in this debate, but I decided to do so after listening to the moving experiences of some of my residents, who asked me to come to the Chamber and listen to the debate. I am glad that I have done so, and I thank them for that suggestion.

I represent residents, as we all do, who have lived with this for decades, including people who contracted illnesses linked to contaminated blood, some of whom were infected when only nine years old. One resident, Janet Sheppesson from Freshwater in the west of my constituency, worries not only for herself but for members of her family. She told me that her life had been turned upside down by the contaminated blood:

“My infection has caused me to suffer from a disabling and debilitating autoimmune disease. You may be amazed, as I am, to know that, despite all this, I was refused funding for the new generation, direct-acting antiviral treatment for Hepatitis C by NHS England and was obliged to buy it myself earlier this year.”

Not only do the residents I represent suffer but they feel that the NHS, which let them down in the first place along with others, has not provided the support that it should have done, which concerns me.

The light of investigation, whether by the Government, media or interested parties, is critical to making progress in our society, to upholding justice and to lessen suffering. Those inquiries are often difficult, as we have seen from Hillsborough and may well see from Grenfell Tower and others. Such inquiries ask questions of those in authority and test the system. The outcome should be justice and, as other hon. Members have said, trust in the system and in people here, who are doing the right thing and battling for their constituents.

Islanders want to know the answers to a series of questions, some of which have been asked. I will not repeat those, but there are two or three outstanding questions. Will the Government at some point explain the difference between a statutory and a Hillsborough-like inquiry, especially for my constituents who are interested in participating in it? How will the widows and families of the 2,400 people who have already died be treated as participants, and how will their financial and other

claims be handled? The potential criminal elements have to be investigated to their ultimate conclusion. Will the Minister reassure us that the inquiry will be time-limited, while being as comprehensive as possible?

4.21 pm

**Suella Fernandes** (Fareham) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for calling the debate and for her indefatigable campaigning on the subject. I congratulate the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on an excellent maiden speech; I am confident that it was the beginning of many excellent contributions in this Chamber.

Many colleagues on both sides of the House have been tireless in their advocacy for the victims of this unspeakable tragedy over many years. I am a relative newcomer to the issue, but I speak today on behalf of my constituent Jackie Britton, who lives in Portchester. Jackie has met me on many occasions, for she, too, has not given up on this fight. She contracted hepatitis C in 1982 from a blood transfusion during childbirth, but she was only diagnosed in 2011. For many years, she has been afflicted with and has suffered from a debilitating illness. Her daughter has also been very ill with various medical conditions.

I am sure that Jackie would welcome today's news about a public inquiry into this matter. It is clear that the Government are seriously reflecting the concerns and voices of those who have been tragically affected by the incident. The inquiry is the latest in a series of actions taken by this Government over several years. The Government have increased the amount of money spent on payments to victims to record levels since 2016, with an additional £125 million in support funding for those who need it. I am pleased that the Government announced last year that they would reform the package of support measures for those affected. For the first time, almost 2,500 beneficiaries with chronic hepatitis C were eligible to receive an annual payment of £3,500 a year. That progress results from listening and action on the part of the Government.

I will conclude my comments because I am aware that other colleagues want to contribute. There is nothing that anybody can do to change the past, and this awful incident and tragedy, but I hope, for the sake of Jackie and all those victims about whom we have heard today, that the inquiry—the process of discovering the truth and bringing some justice to those affected—will provide some solace and finality to this heartbreaking tragedy.

4.24 pm

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly** (Huntingdon) (Con): Welcome to your place, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you for squeezing me in at the end of the debate.

For the many reasons explained in the many excellent speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House, I have been really impressed and pleased that the Government have thought this issue through afresh, which is significant, given the previous inquiries and many debates on it. The apology given by the Minister today was an important step, which will be appreciated by the victims.

I note what the Minister said on the need to consult on the form of the inquiry. Given the numerous positions on that issue alone, he has made the right decision to

[Mr Jonathan Djanogly]

engage with the affected groups. However, I hope that an element of urgency will now be forced into this process to move things forward, and that we think always about the victims and how they have been waiting so long.

I hope the inquiry will look into the decision to acquire these products in the first place and into who was responsible—that is, at the period before anyone in the UK became infected.

This is a tragic story from start to finish. I acknowledge the persistence and total commitment of my affected constituents and those involved in the wider campaign to seek the truth. It is due to them that we are here today, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) on leading the all-party group and on calling this debate.

We must acknowledge that there are variations in the interpretation of the facts and history of this scandal. One of my constituents, Tony Farrugia, feels that evidence from his infected father's medical notes—namely, a letter—was removed from them. The letter was noted in the 1991 HIV litigation, but has been removed since. When my constituent received the notes, the letter was missing, and his attempts to retrieve it from the Department of Health have failed. The letter states that his father was given a bad batch of F8 in 1980, and that was reported on on 7 June 1983. However, surprisingly, his father was not told until February 1985—nearly two years later.

I do not know the answers to those questions, and I do not believe that my constituent knows all the answers, but it seems to me from discussions with my constituents, and from the limited documentation I have seen, that there was a series of horrific mistakes, leading to a series of unimaginable consequences. That makes it really important that we get to the truth of what happened.

Efforts to deal with this issue to date—and we need to recognise that there have been a number—simply have not satisfied the people concerned, or many of them at least. The point is that many people affected by this tragedy—especially children and wider family members—have not been offered compensation. In any event, they do not feel that there will ever be closure until the full facts are known and they themselves are included in the process.

I do appreciate that the Government feel there has been proper disclosure of the information they have, but the fact remains that there is a clear disconnect between the various parties on this issue. As ever with such events, it is not just what happens between the various parties where one can see fault, but in the lack

of information afterwards. That not only can make the original situation worse, but is immensely frustrating for the victims' families.

As has been explained to me by my constituents Tony Farrugia and Chris Smith, who are members of the Fatherless Generation action group, this is a scandal of epic proportions, and I look forward to seeing continued progress on it.

4.27 pm

**Diana Johnson:** It is delightful to see you in your new place in the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) on her maiden speech. That was an excellent start, and I am sure she will have a very long career in the House of Commons.

We have heard some really important and excellent contributions. I think we were all moved by the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden) when she talked about Colin Smith—a little boy who received contaminated blood products when he was quite tiny, and who eventually died of AIDS and hepatitis C. That reminded us all that this is about boys and girls, husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters who have been affected by this scandal.

**Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab):** Does my hon. Friend agree that these blood products should have been withdrawn as soon as the risks involved in their use became clear?

**Diana Johnson:** That is a good point, and I hope the inquiry will be able to get to grips with it.

I am really pleased we have had this announcement today from the Government, but I gently say to the Minister that we will not be going away on this: parliamentarians on both sides of the House will be following carefully how the consultation takes place and who is consulted, and making sure that there is a good, timely timetable, that there is legal support for those who need help with representation, and that there are regular updates to Parliament.

I want to finish with a quote from a person who has just emailed me and says that this is

“just the end of the beginning and still a long way to go before truth, justice and holding to account are achieved”.

We will now be watching very carefully what the Government do next.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the need for an independent public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal.

## Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill

*Considered in Committee*

[MR LINDSAY HOYLE *in the Chair*]

### Clause 1

AIR TRAVEL ORGANISERS' LICENCES

4.31 pm

**Karl Turner** (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): I beg to move amendment 2, in page 1, line 13, at end insert—

“(4) The Government must publish a review within one year of this Act receiving Royal Assent on the impact on UK consumers using EU-based companies affected by changes to consumer protection introduced by this section.”

*This amendment requires the Government to review the impact of provisions under this section to ensure that they are not adversely affecting UK consumers using EU-based companies.*

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** With this it will be convenient to consider clause 1 stand part.

**Karl Turner:** The amendment would require the Government to review the impact of clause 1 to ensure that it does not adversely affect UK consumers using EU-based companies. Essentially, the clause updates ATOL—the air travel organisers' licence—to ensure that it is harmonised with the 2015 EU package travel directive. The provision therefore extends ATOL to cover a wider range of holidays and protect more consumers. UK travel companies, we are told, will be able to sell more seamlessly across Europe, as they will need to comply with protections based not in the country of sale, but the country in which they are established. Those are the objectives that the Government seek to achieve. There is no difference of principle between the Government and the Opposition on this matter. Indeed, it is due to the package travel directive that it has been necessary to put such a provision into the Bill.

However, we seek clarification on some issues, which was why we tabled amendment 2. The amendment would provide a guarantee that the Government will review the impact of the ATOL revisions to ensure that they do not adversely affect UK consumers using EU-based companies. The whole idea of the clause is to improve the range of protections available. The broad substance of the changes to ATOL are necessary and are broadly welcome. As I said, they will harmonise UK law with the latest EU package travel directive, and that should have many benefits. A wider range of operators, including more dynamic package providers, are likely to be covered by the changes. That will hopefully bring protection to many more UK holidaymakers who are not covered under existing ATOL provisions.

For UK travel companies, standards will have to be in line with those of the country in which the company is established, rather than the place where the company sells the holiday. That should mean that companies established in the UK can sell far more seamlessly across Europe by simply adhering to the widely respected ATOL flag. However, the changes at the EU level could have adverse effects for UK consumers who purchase

their holiday or travel from EU-based travel companies, rather than British companies that sell into other European countries.

Amendment 2 would address that issue. The changes made through the directive will now mean that EU-based companies selling in the UK will have to adhere to ATOL-equivalent insolvency protections laid out in the member state where the business is based. In practice, that could lead to unintended consequences and, more significantly, costs for UK consumers. Processes and timescales for recompense may be distinctly different from what many travellers would expect under the current ATOL provisions, which are in many ways regarded as the gold standard.

The impact assessment warns:

“If consumers purchase a trip from a business established elsewhere in the EU and the company becomes insolvent there may be some costs to the consumer of processing a claim with a non-UK insolvency protector.”

Based on the latest Civil Aviation Authority figures, this will affect not just a relatively small number of holidaymakers. If this goes wrong, more than 500,000 passengers could be compromised, so a significant number of people could be adversely affected. It is therefore important that the Government take steps to anticipate and prepare for any possible negative impacts.

Amendment 2 would achieve that by requiring the UK Government to monitor the impact on UK consumers using EU-based companies. That would help to inform whether the UK Government should consider issuing further guidance, or co-operating with consumers and member states to ensure that protections are adequate.

The changes envisaged by the clause clearly make sense and are in line with what is required under the package travel directive. There is no doubt that when UK-established companies are selling into other countries, the consumers in those countries will have the benefit of the gold standard of ATOL protection. However, we are concerned about the protection given by EU-based companies selling in the UK. We hope that it will be equivalent to that under ATOL, but it will be subject to the rules and regulations of the EU country concerned. We are nervous about whether UK holidaymakers could lose out, so we are asking the Government to consider the issue and to monitor the situation properly.

As with so many other things, the environment is changing, particularly in relation to Brexit. ATOL will still be there post-Brexit, but we will explore possible changes when we discuss the next group of amendments. The package travel directive will no doubt still be there for those states that will still be members of the EU. What is uncertain at this stage is what the interface will be between the two things post-Brexit.

**Stephen Hammond** (Wimbledon) (Con): I have been following the hon. Gentleman's line of thought carefully. He seems to be seeking full protection for UK consumers buying in the EU. The EU package travel directive applies while we are still a member of the EU, but when we cease to be a member, the repeal Bill will have put its provisions in UK legislation, so surely the hon. Gentleman's argument is unnecessary.

**Karl Turner:** With respect, we do not know that yet, and nor do we know what the insolvency arrangements will be for companies abroad. The Government must address this real issue.

**Stephen Hammond** *rose*—

**Karl Turner:** I will not give way.

We ask the Government to get the ball rolling within a year of the Bill receiving Royal Assent, but a regular review is also needed, particularly in the light of Brexit. Our amendment is supported by the Association of British Travel Agents and other travel organisations. Despite ministerial assurances, we want our amendment to be made to the Bill, so we will press it to a Division.

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr John Hayes):** I welcome the spirit in which the Opposition have gone about their business on these provisions. We have had measured and sensible exchanges, first when we started to explore the issues in the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill earlier this year, before the election, and subsequently in last week's Second Reading debate on this Bill. There is a determination across the House to get these matters right and a recognition that the protections that these measures offer travellers are important. Furthermore, as the Opposition spokesman made clear a moment or two ago, there is a recognition that we need to maintain the fitness for purpose of these arrangements to take account of changing circumstances in the travel market.

We must remember the context in which we are considering the amendment. The whole House shares the view that it is right for ATOL to continue and to respond to changing market conditions, and that the Government must do their part by ensuring that the necessary framework is in place. In respect of the amendment, I can go even further.

**Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con):** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I will happily give way, after I have made this telling and interesting point. I said to Labour Members not long ago that I understand that it is now *de rigeur* for parties from across the House to work together. That has become immensely fashionable recently; frankly, however, it has been my practice forever. I feel as though the world is catching up with me, and that is a great place to be.

**Julian Knight:** The Labour spokesman suggested earlier that there might be some rowing back of holidaymakers' rights after we leave the EU, but is that not quite wrong? The UK has led the charge in the EU for holidaymakers' rights. Will the Minister reassure the House yet again that we will protect holidaymakers' rights post Brexit?

**Mr Hayes:** Although I do not want my sermocination to be excessive, I will deal with those matters at greater length in my later remarks. My hon. Friend is right to say that Britain can be justly proud of our record in respect of ATOL. To be clear, the Labour party acknowledged that on Second Reading a few days ago. There is an acceptance across the House that Britain has done this well; that that is recognised in continental Europe; and that there is a desire to ensure that future arrangements are inspired by, and perhaps even emulate, the best practice exemplified by the United Kingdom.

I said that I could go further still in building a bridge across the House, and that is because I am sympathetic to the aims behind the amendment. It is crucial that we

carefully craft our policy, and the regulatory framework is the key to good governance. To governate is to be prepared to listen and learn, and it is absolutely right that we do so in respect of the changes that the Bill will make. It would not be fair to set any of this in stone, which is why I accept the need to consider these matters, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) set out, in the context of future changes to our relationship with Europe.

As I have said repeatedly, I am open-minded about reviewing the effects of these changes, but let me explain a little more. The Bill introduces the ability for ATOL to protect sales by businesses established in the UK and in other member states. It will be for protection schemes in other member states to provide the protections for UK consumers to which the amendment refers. That is not our responsibility—we do not have the power that the amendment suggests we should have—so I am not sure that the amendment works on a technical level.

The amendment does, however, highlight an important point, which it is right for us to consider. It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman's argument was twofold: first, that we need to understand the potential impact on UK consumers of purchasing from traders that are based overseas under different protection regimes; and, secondly, that we need to consider how Government should keep that element of protection under review. Let me deal with those points in turn.

**Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con):** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I will happily give way to my hon. Friend, who is a great authority on these matters, having led the process that resulted in the directive that was mentioned earlier.

4.45 pm

**Vicky Ford:** I do recall mentioning in the Chamber the last time we discussed the Bill that I chaired the negotiations on the package travel directive in my previous role.

My right hon. Friend refers to the technicalities of the amendment. Of course we should continue to review the impact of the changes on British consumers, because the Bill means that the ATOL guarantee will cover companies based in the UK, not companies selling into the UK, so it would not, for example, have caught the Low Cost Holidays situation last year.

On the technicalities of the impact assessment, if we read the underlying package travel directive, member states in Europe are not due to implement—

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order.

**Vicky Ford** *rose*—

**The Chairman:** Order. It is one thing to intervene, but another to make a speech. Please, if the hon. Lady needs to do that, she should do it over a couple of interventions. When I stand and say, "Order," she should please sit down. I do not want to stop a new Member;

I want to try and help you, but you have to help me as well. If you need to come back, I am sure the Minister will give way again.

**Mr Hayes:** I am extremely grateful, Mr Hoyle.

I will address my hon. Friend's remarks later in my brief speech. She is right, of course, that it is too early to know how the package travel directive will lead to changes in purchasing behaviour across borders. That was a point that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East made, too. We hope—

**Karl Turner:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I think this might make the hon. Gentleman's point even better than it would be otherwise. I described earlier the desire of the Europeans essentially to—I hate to use this word, because it is so often a loaded term when it emanates from the EU, but I will—harmonise arrangements across Europe, but he is right to say, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford), that we do not know.

**Karl Turner:** That is the precise reason we need a review.

**Mr Hayes:** Yes, which is why I have said that, in principle, I agree. I will come to how I am going to satisfy the hon. Gentleman by assuaging his fears. He has already declared his intent to divide the Committee, Mr Hoyle, but I might be able to persuade him not to. I might be able, in the generous remarks that I am about to make, to discourage him from that course of action. We shall wait to see. If I do not, I am not going to blame myself. Just so you know, Mr Hoyle, there will be no self-blame here; I will blame it on the hon. Gentleman. But let me do my best.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is not clear how this will work out. If other member states implement as they are required to, consumers will be able to purchase across Europe knowing that the protection offered will need to meet the improved standards in the new directive. In practice, that should see insolvency protection across the EU improved to levels, as my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Julian Knight) said, that are broadly in line with ATOL.

There is also an increased onus on member states to ensure that businesses in their own territory have effective protection in place, but if the Civil Aviation Authority or trading standards has doubts or concerns about traders based overseas, it will be able to contact designating bodies in other member states to check compliance. We will ensure—I say this directly to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East and to the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald)—that compliance in other member states is a matter that the CAA monitors, and that it makes contact with its like in those member states to ensure that proper practice is being observed. But—

**Vicky Ford:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I will, before I move to the next exciting piece of my speech, because I want to go further to satisfy all Members of the House.

**Vicky Ford:** Given that other member states do not need to implement this measure until halfway through next year, would not an impact assessment within a year be too soon? Should we not be calling for a more constant and regular review of the impact on British holidaymakers, and a review once the system is established in 2021, say, like the European legislation?

**Mr Hayes:** In that punchy and pithy intervention, my hon. Friend made the point that I made when we debated these matters in the Committee considering the previous legislation of which this was originally a part. That is rather convoluted, but it makes the point. I said that the problem with an early review is that it would be too early and would not take account of the changing circumstances in exactly the way she suggests. But I am minded to go further. Given that we discussed the issue in Committee on the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill, I want to make two further points.

First, the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015—I have a copy with me for the benefit of any hon. Member who may wish to look at the particular clauses—makes a review obligatory within five years of the passing of the legislation. That existing obligation would of course apply to ATOL. However, we can do better than that. I am proud of my Department's reputation for producing robust analysis to underpin and inform policy decisions, including providing full regulatory impact assessments to assess the effect of significant changes to regulation. That is a principle to which we have adhered in recent years throughout the ATOL reform process. We have already reformed ATOL once, in 2012, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East knows. We went through a consultation exercise, which I also have with me, and it is important that we continue the process of consulting and publishing the kind of impact assessments I have described before any regulatory changes take place.

It is really important that, when we changed the Civil Aviation Act 1982 in 2012 better to reflect current market practice, the call for evidence on the long-term review of the ATOL scheme produced responses that both informed the changes we made then—as they certainly did—and any further changes.

**Julian Knight:** My right hon. Friend has been most generous in taking interventions. He mentioned that ATOL was last reformed in 2012. Is not the truth that the process will not end with Brexit or with the Bill? It is an ongoing process of reform and renewal.

**Mr Hayes:** That is true and in a sense it is more catalysed by the changing character of communications and the way in which people organise and book their holidays than it is by our relationship with the continental countries of Europe. It is affected by both, but my hon. Friend is right to say that even if we were not leaving the European Union—and, my goodness, I am glad we are—we would still need to reflect on and consider changes that take account of the changing patterns of the way in which people organise and book their holidays. Indeed, he is right that the process of reflection, consultation, impact assessment and review needs to be a continual one.

Last year we consulted on the changes to the Civil Aviation Act 1982 that we are discussing today. We are about to launch a series of consultations on the detailed

[Mr John Hayes]

regulations that will follow, including on this particular issue. Each stage of the work will be the subject of impact assessments and consultations, so we will both consult and publish impact assessments on each stage of the changes that I have described and which will be drawn to the House's attention by various hon. Members—

**Stephen Hammond** *rose*—

**Mr Hayes:** I see another hon. Friend who wishes to do so.

**Stephen Hammond:** I always hesitate to stop the Minister in full flow because he is such a joy to hear. Surely his commitment is the key point, because the Government consulted in 2012 and have committed to consulting in bringing in this legislation and aligning ATOL with the European directive. That needs to continue, because we will not transpose it into law until next year.

**Mr Hayes:** That is also true, and it is certainly true that we cannot be premature about imagining, or speculating about, the outcome of that process; but I think we can offer some certainty about our determination to consult on the arrangements in respect of this particular set of regulations—partly, of course, because they exist irrespective of the European Union. ATOL's coincidental genesis with our entry to the European Union is just that, a coincidence. ATOL, I guess, would have existed regardless of our relationship with the European Union. Indeed, the regulatory and legislative framework that underpins it is domestic. So the domestic legislation that gave life to ATOL, and continues to do so, was very much at the behest of this Parliament, and of successive Governments—of all parties, by the way—who have continued to support that scheme.

**Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con):** This is a fascinating topic. Are we seeing an example of what happens when EU regulation is really rather good, and we accept that and transpose it into our law? Does my right hon. Friend not agree that there are many who supported our leaving the EU on the basis of some, I think, fanciful notion—I am sorry, Mr Hoyle, but I think this is an important point—that we would be stripping away all this sort of regulation and entirely doing our own thing? This proposal, however, seems to be rather a good idea.

**Mr Hayes:** In the darkest recesses of the darkest places there is occasionally a glimmer of light, and so it is with the European Union. One would not want to claim that every single aspect of every single thing that has been done over all the years of its existence has been malevolent. There is the odd measure which may be said to have shed just a glimmer of light, and in that sense, my right hon. Friend may be right.

Let me move on. During an evidence session earlier this year, Richard Moriarty of the Civil Aviation Authority told the Committee considering the Vehicle, Technology and Aviation Bill that he hoped the Government

“will follow the practice that they have followed today: consult with us, consult the industry, do the impact assessment, and so on.” —[*Official Report, Vehicle Technology and Aviation Public Bill Committee*, 14 March 2017; c. 65, Q150.]

For the reasons that I have given, the current process is one from which I will not deviate. We will ensure that any changes that are made after the passing of the Bill, or as a consequence of it, will be subject to that rigorous and transparent process; but I want to go even further in satisfying the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East, because even that is not enough for me.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the Air Travel Insolvency Protection Advisory Committee, or ATIPAC, as it is commonly known. Earlier, I described darkness and glimmers of light in respect of the European Union. So it is with Labour Governments. It is a great mistake in politics to demonise one's political opponents, because Governments of all colours do some things well and some things less well. All Governments introduce legislation that they subsequently regret, and omit to introduce legislation that they should. In grown-up politics and proper political debate—and this is a mature Parliament that is capable of such debate—we should freely acknowledge that.

In 2000, a Labour Government set up ATIPAC. Its purpose was to provide advice for the Civil Aviation Authority, the Air Travel Trust and the Secretary of State for Transport on policies that should be pursued to protect customers. It consists of representatives of industry, consumers, the CAA and Trading Standards, which means that it is well placed to provide an informed and independent review of policies. That committee already submits a substantial report to the Secretary of State each year. I have a copy of such a report, for the consideration and, I hope, education and enjoyment of any Member who may wish to cast an eye over it. The report includes drawing the Secretary of State's attention to any concerns on which ATIPAC's view is that further action is necessary to maintain strong consumer protection. This includes advice on changes in the market and, where appropriate, their potential impact on consumers and the financial protection arrangements.

5 pm

I am sure—absolutely confident—that the committee is already minded to keep a close eye on the impact of the directive on UK consumers. However, in the light of this amendment, the brief debate we have enjoyed and the responsible stance taken by those on the Opposition Benches—

**Julian Knight:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I am moving to my exciting peroration, but I will give way.

**Julian Knight:** Is my right hon. Friend saying that the industry experts—the people who really know—are saying in effect that this amendment is superfluous and is unnecessary?

**Mr Hayes:** I do not want to disagree with any hon. Member unnecessarily, and certainly not with a Member on my side of the Chamber. However, it is true—as my hon. Friend will know as he is a student of these matters who has taken a keen interest in this Bill from its inception—that ABTA has produced a briefing for this debate, and in a moment I will go through it in some detail. While it is true that ABTA welcomes, as the Opposition have, the changes that we are making to

ATOL, and there is a broad recommendation from it that we should be doing just that, it has given a detailed critique of the measures we are introducing and the amendments, and, at face value—that is something of an understatement—it seems rather sympathetic to the Opposition amendment. However, it will not have had the benefit of the further commitment I am about to give, which this Committee will be the first to know, for that is as it should be.

I am now going to catch the eye of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East. I am sure that that independent committee, which was set up by a Labour Government for the very purpose of reviewing these matters regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose and with the mission of observing and making recommendations in the interests of consumers will doubtless want to consider the impact of the changes we are making, and will of course be aware of the contextual changes in our relationship with the European Union and the effect of the directive on other countries and their arrangements. Nevertheless, I am prepared to write to the committee reflecting the sentiments the hon. Gentleman has articulated persuasively enough—I was going to say “so persuasively,” but I do not want to overstate the case—to encourage me to make this commitment, and to ask it not only in its annual report to review the implementation of these changes, but also to take account of the other remarks he has made.

**Vicky Ford:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that ATIPAC meets every year to review issues affecting consumer protection for British travellers buying not only from EU-based companies, but from anywhere they wish to travel in the world so, of course, British travellers will have this review every year?

**Mr Hayes:** On the pithiness index that you are clearly keeping, Mr Hoyle, that was not quite as pithy as my hon. Friend's first intervention, but it is still pithy enough for me—and, I am sure, for you, Mr Hoyle, the ultimate arbiter of these things. My hon. Friend is absolutely right, of course: the committee, set up by a previous Labour Government, does indeed have exactly that purpose. It produces that annual report, which is a public document, but I have said that I would go further than that and request that that committee looks particularly at the very things this amendment seeks. So, not only are we going to have impact assessments and full and comprehensive consultations, not only have I committed to subjecting any further regulations to that kind of transparent and open debate with the appropriate scrutiny, and not only does the committee exist for the very purpose of producing an annual report in the interests of defending consumers in this field of work, but, further than that, I will write to the committee to tell it that it should do exactly as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East has asked.

**Vicky Ford:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I am frightened that my hon. Friend's pithiness will decline over time, but I give way to her.

**Vicky Ford:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if we pass this Labour amendment, we will be asking for a review that is to take place anyway, and that the amendment is therefore unnecessary?

**Mr Hayes:** That is a perfect cue for what I was about to say. Knowing that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East is a reasonable and sensible man, and knowing that the shadow Secretary of State has some experience in this field, having debated these matters with me on more than one occasion, I cannot believe that a responsible Opposition would, in the light of the pledges I have made today, on the record, push these matters to a vote.

I will ask the committee—which is already there to do as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East has asked and is already producing the annual report that the amendment requests—to deliver the very assurance that he has requested. Those experts—for that is what they are—submit their report to the Secretary of State within four months of the end of each financial year. However, I am going to go even further. I am determined that the hon. Gentleman will be so captivated, encouraged and illuminated—not surprised; I would not go that far, because he knows what a good bloke I am—by the offers that I have made that he really will not want to push this matter to a vote. I am going to go further. The committee, which does indeed publish an annual report, can, as necessary, report more frequently if circumstances require. Should it believe that it needed to do so because of this legislative change, we would, ironically, have less scrutiny, fewer reports and less analysis if we were to pass the amendment than is the case now.

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab) *indicated dissent.*

**Mr Hayes:** There are those on my side of the House who take a less generous view than I do of the Labour party. However, I know that what I have just described is not the intention of Her Majesty's Opposition. They do not want to have less scrutiny, less analysis, less certainty or less clarity. They want the same degree of clarity that I seek. I am prepared to acknowledge that. However, the effect of their amendment might be to leave us in a worse position than we are in at present, and that surely cannot be right.

**Ms Nadine Dorries** (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): I apologise for intervening so soon after arriving in the Chamber. Does my right hon. Friend not agree that most of these issues will be taken care of in the great repeal Bill anyway?

**Mr Hayes:** That is of course right; the committee will look at all those matters in that context. I said that earlier. I have also said, however, that I want to go further and to ensure that this stands proud as an example of analysis. Of course the great repeal Bill and our relationship with the European Union are bound to be the context in which the committee considers these matters; I guess that that is true. However, these ATOL arrangements predate our relationship with the European Union, or, if they came into force at the same time, it was a coincidence. Given that they are framed in domestic legislation rather than European legislation, I believe that ATOL would have existed regardless of our association with the European Union.

**Stephen Hammond:** Just for clarity, when I intervened on the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, he was making a point about insolvency, but the generous offer that my right hon. Friend just made would clearly cover insolvency as well.

**Mr Hayes:** Generosity needs to be reciprocal. It is not for me to say how the Opposition will conduct their affairs, but surely they will recognise that we are going as far as it is possible to go to ensure that the process is reviewed in precisely the way that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East described. He says that we cannot be absolutely certain how things will pan out in practice, and I agree. The spirit of his amendment seems to be the right one, so I have made it clear that I will facilitate just such an analysis of the impact of the changes. The point is that it is not as if the mechanisms do not exist for us to do that, and they do not merely rely on the legislative strength of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015, which says that there must five-yearly reviews. Issues will go to the committee responsible for overseeing such matters, which was set up by a previous Labour Government, and we will insist that the impact is reviewed—more than once a year if necessary.

**Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con):** May I ask my right hon. Friend for more clarity on that? Can the committee review things as often as it wants? I am sure that the committee will have been taking this debate seriously and that this particular part of it will be receiving attention. Can he confirm that he will be encouraging the committee to take its responsibility to review the proposal very seriously?

**Mr Hayes:** As you know, Mr Hoyle, it is not my habit to speak at length in this House. I like to abbreviate my remarks to a sufficient degree to make my point, but not to exaggerate the arguments. In the light of that intervention, however, I am inclined to go into rather more detail about the ATIPAC report, which is the document submitted to the Secretary of State in the way that I have described and then made public. The latest report states:

“The Committee’s role is to provide informed advice to the Government and the regulatory authorities on financial protection for consumers in the event of a holiday company’s insolvency. Its Constitution sets out the role and membership of the Committee, and can be reviewed in Appendix 4.”

I will not go into the details of appendix 4.

**Hon. Members:** Go on!

**Mr Hayes:** Well, okay. I am being persuaded to do so by popular demand and acclamation.

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. The Minister says “by popular demand”, but those Members were not here when he first started. He has had to wait until now.

**Hon. Members:** Start again!

**Mr Hayes:** I have drawn them to the Committee by the power of my oratory and my performance. They are like moths to a flame.

**Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con):** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Hayes:** So, appendix 4, to which I referred—

**Hon. Members:** Give way!

**Mr Hayes:** Oh! I will happily give way to my hon. Friend.

**Simon Hoare:** May I say to my right hon. Friend, with the seriousness and candour that the moment demands, that he is a bright flame on a dull and grey afternoon to which the moths of Parliament are being drawn?

**Mr Hayes:** I do not know whether anyone else wants to—

**The Chairman:** Order. The danger is that someone might blow out that light. Come on, Minister.

**Mr Hayes:** I just wondered whether anyone else wanted to intervene in a similar vein.

**Mims Davies (Eastleigh) (Con) rose—**

**Hon. Members:** Hurrah!

**Mr Hayes:** I will give way to my hon. Friend.

**Mims Davies:** I thank the Minister for giving way. It has been announced today that easyJet is to fly for the first time from Southampton airport, which is in my constituency. It is fantastic news, and I am heading off in about 10 minutes—[*Laughter.*] Like me, is the Minister wary of committing the Government to something that may adversely impact the industry during the Brexit process? I say that on what is a positive day for my constituency.

5.15 pm

**Mr Hayes:** There is no wish to do that on either side of the House. There is general agreement on both sides of the House that the measure must act in the interests of both consumers and businesses. It is certainly in the mutual interest of the travel industry and of those who use it that these protections are in place, which is precisely why Governments of all colours and persuasions have continued to invest in and support ATOL over the years, and it is why I said earlier, before a number of Members entered the Chamber, that there is general cross-party agreement among all contributors to these discussions that it is necessary to reform ATOL to take account of the changing way in which people book their holidays online and in other ways. People plan holidays rather differently from how they once did.

**Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con):** My right hon. Friend and Lincolnshire neighbour, as a Transport Minister, has been diligent in attending to the concerns of my constituents about the infamous Bull Ring bottleneck in Horncastle, where the A153 and A158 cross. Has he paid the same diligence, care and attention to this Bill, such that he is able to reassure the Committee that the amendment is not to be passed and that we must keep the Bill as it is?

**The Chairman:** I have been quite generous to Members coming in late and intervening. If you are going to intervene, let us have short interventions.

**Simon Hoare:** It was short.

**The Chairman:** Mr Hoare, I assure you that I do not need any advice. I remind the Minister that there are others who wish to speak, including on his own Benches.

**Mr Hayes:** Then I will draw my remarks to a gradual conclusion. I have already brought my introductory remarks to their conclusion, and I am now moving to the main thrust of my response to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Far be it from me to prevent the Minister from continuing to drag things out. I apologise, but I do not have one of the intervention sheets that have been circulated. A few interventions ago, the hon. Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Ms Dorries) suggested that the great repeal Bill will account for this amendment. Can the Minister explain how the yet-to-be-published great repeal Bill will supersede or take account of it?

**Mr Hayes:** What I actually said is that the Air Travel Insolvency Protection Advisory Committee, which is missioned to consider these matters in the way I described, will doubtless take account of the contextual changes associated with our independence from the European Union, and I use the word “independence” advisedly. It is inconceivable that the committee would not make reference to that in its annual report, but I also said that I would write to draw the committee’s attention to the specificity of the measures we are bringing before the House to ensure that it carries out the very kind of report and review called for by the amendment.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Hayes:** I really must press on.

Appendix 4 of the annual report is categorical about the committee’s constitutional role, and it sets out the committee’s membership, which includes the Association of British Travel Agents, the Association of Independent Tour Operators, the Association of Airline Consolidators, the Board of Airline Representatives in the UK and the Travel Trust Association. The committee also includes up to 10 independent members, of whom one will be the chair. Of course, as I set out earlier, the committee’s independence and expertise mean that it is in a perfect place to do the very work that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East perfectly properly recommended to the House and that the amendment seeks to achieve.

Therefore, in the light of the fact that the Government have already obliged in law to review legislation within five years and have set up the independent panel of experts to report; that I have committed to seek guidance on the important issues the hon. Gentleman raises and to write to that committee asking it to review the legislation; and that the committee will report more often than annually as necessary, it would be extraordinary if the Labour party pushed this matter to the vote. It would be unreasonable for it to do so, but in the end that is a matter for it, not for me.

**Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): Last week, there was uncharacteristic consensus in welcoming the Second Reading of this Bill, as it is perfectly desirable and sensible to update the ATOL

scheme to ensure more protection for travellers when they go on holiday and to align it with the latest EU directive. However, there undoubtedly are a number of questions that will arise in relation to this scheme once the UK leaves the EU. We need cast-iron guarantees that the rights of and protections for travellers will not be diminished after Brexit.

On Second Reading, the Minister was clear in saying that he wished to protect passengers, but we lack the detail on that. We do not know when the UK will develop its own system of passenger rights and compensation in the aviation sector after Brexit, how similar it will be to current arrangements or how it will affect EU airlines and passengers. Scottish National party Members fully support the Government’s reviewing the impact of provisions under this amendment; surely it is right that they review the impact of the provisions to ensure that UK consumers are protected and are not disadvantaged by using EU-based companies. When we leave the EU, passenger rights must not be affected, and consumers and companies based in the UK and/or the EU need clarity on what their obligations are in respect of the ATOL scheme.

We have heard today that this will all be taken care of in the great repeal Bill, and I am sure we all hope it will. Last week, the Minister said he was keen to protect consumers, and I am optimistic that that will be in evidence today. His reasons for resisting reviewing the impact of provisions under this amendment do not seem clear. Periodic reviews still make sense; having a review within one year will inform the impact of the provisions and will still be helpful. The Minister is an eminent and sensible man, but I am at a loss here: if ATIPAC already carries out yearly reviews, why resist this? The reviews we are talking about merely write into legislation something that it appears is already happening. What has the Minister to lose? The committee provides advice, we are told, and this amendment writes into legislation—

**Mr Hayes:** This is very simple: if something is already happening—if it is already in law—one does not have to legislate for it again.

**Patricia Gibson:** The Minister is being a wee bit disingenuous here—

**The Chairman:** Order. That is not a word we would use, and I am sure the hon. Lady can think of something much more pleasant. The Minister is a nice man, after all, and I do not believe he would mislead the House.

**Patricia Gibson:** The Minister is an eminently sensible man, but the point is that I can only wonder why he is resisting yearly reviews which he has told us already happen. If they already happen, why not write them into this piece of legislation, if for no other reason than to reassure passengers as we face a post-Brexit world? I know he is an honourable man, and I urge him to reconsider and accept the amendment.

**Karl Turner:** The Minister is a terribly generous chap, but his attempts to pacify the Opposition with his promise of a letter to ATIPAC simply are not enough. That does not cut the mustard, so we will push the amendment to a vote.

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The Committee divided: Ayes 271, Noes 305.*

**Division No. 5]**

**[5.24 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
 Abrahams, Debbie  
 Alexander, Heidi  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Austin, Ian  
 Bailey, Mr Adrian  
 Bardell, Hannah  
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Blackford, Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Brabin, Tracy  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brake, rh Tom  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Brown, Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burden, Richard  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cable, rh Sir Vince  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Chapman, Jenny  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Clwyd, rh Ann  
 Coaker, Vernon  
 Coffey, Ann  
 Cooper, Julie  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Crausby, Sir David  
 Creagh, Mary  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Cunningham, Mr Jim  
 Davey, rh Sir Edward  
 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  
 Farron, Tim  
 Field, rh Frank  
 Fitzpatrick, Jim  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flint, rh Caroline  
 Flynn, Paul  
 Fovargue, Yvonne  
 Frith, James  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gaffney, Hugh  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 George, Ruth  
 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  
 Haigh, 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  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hollern, Kate  
 Hopkins, Kelvin  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Jones, Darren

Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, Helen  
 Jones, Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Kane, Mike  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Killen, Gerard  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Laird, Lesley  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lamb, rh Norman  
 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, Stephen  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lucas, Ian C.  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Marsden, Gordon  
 Martin, Sandy  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Mc Nally, John  
 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  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, Ian  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Owen, Albert  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pidcock, Laura  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pollard, Luke

Pound, Stephen  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Rashid, Faisal  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rowley, Danielle  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Ryan, rh Joan  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin  
 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  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
 Swinson, Jo  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Keith  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 Watson, Tom  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitfield, Martin  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Williams, Dr Paul  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Wilson, Phil  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Woodcock, John  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Vicky Foxcroft and**  
**Nic Dakin**

## NOES

Adams, Nigel	Drax, Richard	Hughes, Eddie	Offord, Dr Matthew
Afolami, Bim	Duddridge, James	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	Opperman, Guy
Afriyie, Adam	Duguid, David	Hurd, Mr Nick	Parish, Neil
Aldous, Peter	Duncan, rh Sir Alan	Jack, Mr Alister	Patel, rh Priti
Allan, Lucy	Dunne, Mr Philip	James, Margot	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Allen, Heidi	Ellis, Michael	Javid, rh Sajid	Pawsey, Mark
Amess, Sir David	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Penning, rh Mike
Argar, Edward	Elphicke, Charlie	Jenkin, Mr Bernard	Penrose, John
Atkins, Victoria	Eustice, George	Jenrick, Robert	Percy, Andrew
Bacon, Mr Richard	Evans, Mr Nigel	Johnson, rh Boris	Perry, Claire
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Evennett, rh David	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Philp, Chris
Baker, Mr Steve	Fabricant, Michael	Johnson, Gareth	Pincher, Christopher
Baldwin, Harriett	Fallon, rh Sir Michael	Johnson, Joseph	Poulter, Dr Dan
Barclay, Stephen	Fernandes, Suella	Jones, Andrew	Pow, Rebecca
Baron, Mr John	Field, rh Mark	Jones, rh Mr David	Prentis, Victoria
Bebb, Guto	Ford, Vicky	Jones, Mr Marcus	Prisk, Mr Mark
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Foster, Kevin	Kawczynski, Daniel	Pritchard, Mark
Benyon, rh Richard	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Keegan, Gillian	Pursglove, Tom
Beresford, Sir Paul	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Kennedy, Seema	Quin, Jeremy
Berry, Jake	Frazer, Lucy	Kerr, Stephen	Quince, Will
Blackman, Bob	Freeman, George	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Raab, Dominic
Blunt, Crispin	Freer, Mike	Knight, Julian	Redwood, rh John
Bone, Mr Peter	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Kwarteng, Kwasi	Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Gale, Sir Roger	Lamont, John	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Bowie, Andrew	Garnier, Mark	Lancaster, Mark	Robinson, Mary
Bradley, rh Karen	Gauke, rh Mr David	Latham, Mrs Pauline	Rosindell, Andrew
Brady, Mr Graham	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Ross, Douglas
Brereton, Jack	Gibb, rh Nick	Lee, Dr Phillip	Rowley, Lee
Bridgen, Andrew	Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl	Lefroy, Jeremy	Rudd, rh Amber
Brine, Steve	Glen, John	Leigh, Sir Edward	Rutley, David
Brokenshire, rh James	Goldsmith, Zac	Letwin, rh Sir Oliver	Sandbach, Antoinette
Bruce, Fiona	Goodwill, Mr Robert	Lewer, Andrew	Scully, Paul
Buckland, Robert	Gove, rh Michael	Lewis, rh Brandon	Seely, Mr Bob
Burghart, Alex	Graham, Luke	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Selous, Andrew
Burns, Conor	Graham, Richard	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Shapps, rh Grant
Burt, rh Alistair	Grant, Bill	Lidington, rh Mr David	Sharma, Alok
Cairns, rh Alun	Grant, Mrs Helen	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Shelbrooke, Alec
Cartlidge, James	Gray, James	Loughton, Tim	Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Cash, Sir William	Grayling, rh Chris	Mackinlay, Craig	Skidmore, Chris
Caulfield, Maria	Green, Chris	Macleane, Rachel	Smith, Chloe
Chalk, Alex	Green, rh Damian	Main, Mrs Anne	Smith, Henry
Chishti, Rehman	Greening, rh Justine	Mak, Alan	Smith, Julian
Chope, Mr Christopher	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic	Malthouse, Kit	Smith, Royston
Churchill, Jo	Gyimah, Mr Sam	Mann, Scott	Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Clark, Colin	Hair, Kirstene	Masterton, Paul	Soubry, rh Anna
Clark, rh Greg	Halfon, rh Robert	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Clarke, Mr Simon	Hall, Luke	Maynard, Paul	Spencer, Mark
Cleverly, James	Hammond, rh Mr Philip	McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick	Stephenson, Andrew
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hammond, Stephen	McPartland, Stephen	Stevenson, John
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Hancock, rh Matt	McVey, rh Ms Esther	Stewart, Bob
Collins, Damian	Hands, rh Greg	Menzies, Mark	Stewart, Iain
Costa, Alberto	Harper, rh Mr Mark	Mercer, Johnny	Stewart, Rory
Courts, Robert	Harrington, Richard	Merriman, Huw	Streeter, Mr Gary
Cox, Mr Geoffrey	Harris, Rebecca	Metcalfe, Stephen	Stride, rh Mel
Crabb, rh Stephen	Harrison, Trudy	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Stuart, Graham
Crouch, Tracey	Hart, Simon	Milling, Amanda	Sturdy, Julian
Davies, Chris	Hayes, rh Mr John	Mills, Nigel	Sunak, Rishi
Davies, David T. C.	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Milton, rh Anne	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Davies, Glyn	Heapey, James	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Davies, Mims	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Moore, Damien	Syms, Mr Robert
Davies, Philip	Heaton-Jones, Peter	Morgan, rh Nicky	Thomas, Derek
Davis, rh Mr David	Henderson, Gordon	Morris, David	Thomson, Ross
Dinenage, Caroline	Herbert, rh Nick	Morris, James	Throup, Maggie
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hinds, Damian	Morton, Wendy	Tolhurst, Kelly
Docherty, Leo	Hoare, Simon	Mundell, rh David	Tomlinson, Justin
Dockerill, Julia	Hollingbery, George	Murray, Mrs Sheryll	Tomlinson, Michael
Donelan, Michelle	Hollinrake, Kevin	Murrison, Dr Andrew	Tracey, Craig
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Neill, Robert	Tredinnick, David
Double, Steve	Holloway, Adam	Newton, Sarah	Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
Dowden, Oliver	Howell, John	Nokes, Caroline	Truss, rh Elizabeth
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Huddleston, Nigel	Norman, Jesse	Tugendhat, Tom
		O'Brien, Neil	Vara, Mr Shailesh

Vickers, Martin  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Mr Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 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:**  
 Stuart Andrew and  
 Andrew Griffiths

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

## Clause 2

### AIR TRAVEL TRUST

**Patricia Gibson:** I beg to move amendment 1, page 2, line 10, at end insert—

“(8) Regulations under subsection (6) may not be laid before Parliament until the Secretary of State has published an assessment of their impact and has launched a consultation on the proposed amendments to the definition of “Air Travel Trust.””

*This amendment requires the Secretary of State to undertake an impact assessment and launch a consultation before bringing forward any regulations to amend the definition of Air Travel Trust under this Act.*

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 3, page 2, line 10, at end insert —

“(8) Before laying regulations under subsection (6), the Secretary of State must publish a full impact assessment and consult on the proposals.”

*This amendment would require the Government to undertake a full impact assessment and consultation before bringing forward regulations to create any new air travel trusts through an affirmative resolution.*

Clause stand part.

**Patricia Gibson:** Amendment 1, which stands in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), would require the Government to undertake a full impact assessment and consultation before introducing any regulations to amend the definition of air travel trust under the Bill. Clause 2 requires that—*[Interruption.]*

**The Chairman:** Order. There is a lot of conversation. I really am struggling to hear, and I am not sure whether the mic is picking up this speech. Would hon. Members please have their conversations when they have left the Chamber?

**Patricia Gibson:** Clause 2 requires only that the Secretary of State has an affirmative resolution from each House of Parliament, but that is not enough. The Government should be required to conduct a proper consultation and assess the potential impact of any proposed changes to the ATOL scheme and air travel trust that they intend to introduce through secondary legislation. Any proposals must be fully transparent, and consumers and businesses alike must be formally consulted in the

process to allow for proper scrutiny. We trust that the Minister will accept that and our reasons for tabling the amendment.

**Mr John Hayes:** I can satisfy the hon. Lady entirely. I fully intend to ensure exactly what she asked for: full consultation and a comprehensive impact assessment in respect of any regulations to be made under these measures. On that basis, I hope she will withdraw the amendment. If she does not, she will look rather daft.

**Karl Turner:** We will press amendment 3 to a Division. We seek a commitment that the Minister gave in the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill Committee—that the Government would conduct a thorough impact assessment and consultation before implementing the power. Clause 2 relates to the Air Travel Trust, which is the legal vehicle that holds the money that is then used to refund consumers under ATOL protections. It gives the Secretary of State the power to define separate trust arrangements to reflect different market models, prefiguring some of the changes in the package holiday market mentioned by the Minister.

Amendment 3 would require the Government to undertake a full and proper review, and public consultation, before introducing any of the changes that would be enabled under the powers in clause 2. Unlike clause 1, clause 2 does not seem directly relevant to harmonising EU and UK regulations. Instead, it is a dormant power that the Government will retain in order to make considerable changes to ATOL, and particularly to the Air Travel Trust. That is where Brexit comes in because, were such changes to happen, they would most likely be in the event of the UK leaving the European Union.

During one of the VTAB Committee evidence sessions, Richard Moriarty of the Civil Aviation Authority—a trustee of the current Air Travel Trust—said that he recognised the possible merits of separating the trust to reflect the variations of products in the market. However, he explained that we simply are not there yet, and that it would be wrong for the Government to use the Bill as a means of making wholesale changes without due consultation. The Minister made it clear in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald) that changes would be made only through the affirmative procedure, yet the Bill does not account for any further consultation as part of this measure.

The Government’s impact assessment explicitly states that it

“does not consider proposals for ATOL reform, beyond what is required”

in the package travel directive. It would therefore be rather inappropriate for the Minister to go beyond that, without providing assurances that proper consultation and scrutiny will take place if the Government are minded to go beyond changes that were already envisaged.

During the VTAB evidence session, Mr Moriarty said that he hoped the Government would

“follow the practice that they have followed today: consult with us, consult the industry, do the impact assessment, and so on.”

Amendment 3 simply says that. It is fair and reasonable and would guarantee scrutiny of further changes that may come down the track regarding ATOL protection.

**Patricia Gibson:** In the light of the Minister's assurances to the House, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendment proposed:* 3, page 2, line 10, at end insert

“(8) Before laying regulations under subsection (6), the Secretary of State must publish a full impact assessment and consult on the proposals.” —(*Karl Turner.*)

*This amendment would require the Government to undertake a full impact assessment and consultation before bringing forward regulations to create any new air travel trusts through an affirmative resolution.*

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The Committee divided: Ayes 274, Noes 307.*

## Division No. 6]

[5.44 pm

### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Alexander, Heidi  
Ali, Rushanara  
Amesbury, Mike  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Austin, Ian  
Bailey, Mr Adrian  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Blackford, Ian  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
Blomfield, Paul  
Brabin, Tracy  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brake, rh Tom  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre  
Brown, Alan  
Brown, Lyn  
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris  
Buck, Ms Karen  
Burgon, Richard  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cable, rh Sir Vince  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Chapman, Jenny  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna  
Coaker, Vernon  
Coffey, Ann  
Cooper, Julie  
Cooper, Rosie  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil  
Crausby, Sir David  
Creagh, Mary  
Creasy, Stella  
Cruddas, Jon

Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Cunningham, Mr Jim  
Dakin, Nic  
Davey, rh Sir Edward  
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  
Farron, Tim  
Field, rh Frank  
Fitzpatrick, Jim  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flint, rh Caroline  
Flynn, Paul  
Fovargue, Yvonne  
Frith, James  
Furniss, Gill  
Gaffney, Hugh  
Gapes, Mike  
Gardiner, Barry  
George, Ruth  
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  
Haigh, 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  
Hermon, Lady  
Hill, Mike  
Hillier, Meg  
Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hollern, Kate  
Hopkins, Kelvin  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hussain, Imran  
Jardine, Christine  
Jarvis, Dan  
Jones, Darren  
Jones, Gerald  
Jones, Helen  
Jones, Mr Kevan  
Jones, Sarah  
Jones, Susan Elan  
Kane, Mike  
Kendall, Liz  
Khan, Afzal  
Killen, Gerard  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kyle, Peter  
Laird, Lesley  
Lake, Ben  
Lamb, rh Norman  
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, Stephen  
Lloyd, Tony  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Ian C.  
Lynch, Holly  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Mahmood, Shabana  
Malhotra, Seema  
Marsden, Gordon  
Martin, Sandy  
Maskell, Rachael  
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  
McMahon, Jim  
McMorris, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Monaghan, Carol  
Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
Moran, Layla  
Morden, Jessica  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Onasanya, Fiona  
Onn, Melanie  
Onwurah, Chi  
Osamor, Kate  
Owen, Albert  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Perkins, Toby  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pidcock, Laura  
Platt, Jo  
Pollard, Luke  
Pound, Stephen  
Powell, Lucy  
Rashid, Faisal  
Rayner, Angela  
Reed, Mr Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
Rodda, Matt  
Rowley, Danielle  
Ruane, Chris  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Ryan, rh Joan  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Sherriff, Paula  
Shuker, Mr Gavin  
Skinner, Mr Dennis  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smeeth, Ruth  
Smith, Angela  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Eleanor  
Smith, Laura  
Smith, Nick  
Smith, Owen  
Smyth, Karin  
Snell, Gareth  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Starmer, rh Keir  
Stephens, Chris  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeting, Wes  
Stringer, Graham

Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
 Swinson, Jo  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Keith  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 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:**  
**Vicky Foxcroft and**  
**Jeff Smith**

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Allen, Heidi  
 Amess, Sir David  
 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  
 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  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Mr Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, Colin  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 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  
 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  
 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  
 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  
 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

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  
 Morgan, rh Nicky  
 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  
 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, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Rudd, rh Amber  
 Rutley, David  
 Sandbach, Antoinette  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Mr Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, Alok

Shelbrooke, Alec  
 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  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 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:**  
**Andrew Griffiths and**  
**Stuart Andrew**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 3 and 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

### New Clause 1

#### POTENTIAL IMPACT OF LEAVING THE EU ON CONSUMER PROTECTION UNDER THE ATOL SCHEME

(1) The Secretary of State must carry out an assessment of the potential impact of the UK's exit from the European Union on consumer protection under the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing scheme and the Air Travel Trust.

(2) The Secretary of State must lay a report of the assessment before Parliament within 12 months of the passing of this Act, and once in each calendar year thereafter.—(*Patricia Gibson.*)

*This new clause would require the Government to report regularly on the effect of Brexit on consumer protection under the ATOL scheme and to report annually on the progress that is made.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Patricia Gibson:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause stands in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown). It would require the UK Government to report regularly on the effect of Brexit on consumer protection under the ATOL scheme and to report annually on the progress they have made.

Brexit throws up great uncertainties, not least in the aviation sector with regard to passenger rights, compensation schemes and how much change and/or stability can be expected. There is also the question of how EU airlines and passengers may be affected. The overriding concern about the Bill, welcome as it is, is that consumer protections must be safeguarded and, furthermore, that such protections must continue to be enhanced and updated as society and technology evolve,

just as has happened during our EU membership. The UK cannot be left behind, stagnating in a post-Brexit world.

New clause 1 is an extremely important move to provide some comfort and confidence to consumers; a lack of guarantees will otherwise leave passengers vulnerable and might put people off booking holidays. That could only be bad news for our outbound tourism economy, which is so vital for jobs in Scotland and the rest of the UK. We intend to press the new clause to a Division.

6 pm

**Mr John Hayes:** As I did with the amendments, I start by saying that I fully endorse, and indeed support, the purpose of the new clause. By the way, I am grateful to the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) for withdrawing her earlier amendment following the assurances that I gave her. I say to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) that I am fully committed to full consultation and a full impact assessment on the regulations as they are rolled out as a result of the Bill.

The point is that the ATOL legislation is not dependent on the package travel directive. The Bill will harmonise ATOL with the package travel directive in the immediate term. As I made clear earlier, ATOL legislation and protection will remain in place as we leave the European Union. They are made by, framed in and supported by domestic legislation.

Although I understand the point that the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran makes, I have to tell her that the new clause is unnecessary, because ATOL is enshrined in an Act of this Parliament, and only this Parliament can change that. Mindful of that; mindful of the assurances that I have given about consultation, further review and impact assessments, which I repeat; mindful of the fact that, as I have mentioned, there will be a review of all these matters; and given what I have said about ATIPAC, I hope that she might withdraw the new clause.

**Karl Turner:** New clause 1 seems eminently sensible. These consumer protection measures require an assessment, so we will support the new clause.

*Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.*

*The Committee divided: Ayes 273, Noes 308.*

**Division No. 7]**

**[6.1 pm**

#### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
 Abrahams, Debbie  
 Alexander, Heidi  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Austin, Ian  
 Bailey, Mr Adrian  
 Bardell, Hannah  
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Blackford, Ian  
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Brabin, Tracy

Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brake, rh Tom  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Brown, Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cable, rh Sir Vince  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan  
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie  
 Carden, Dan

Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Chapman, Jenny  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Clwyd, rh Ann  
 Coaker, Vernon  
 Coffey, Ann  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Crausby, Sir David  
 Creagh, Mary  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Cunningham, Mr Jim  
 Dakin, Nic  
 Davey, rh Sir Edward  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 De Piero, Gloria  
 Debonnaire, 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  
 Farron, Tim  
 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  
 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  
 Haigh, 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  
 Hermon, Lady  
 Hill, Mike  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hollern, Kate  
 Hopkins, Kelvin  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, Helen  
 Jones, Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Kane, Mike  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Killen, Gerard  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Laird, Lesley  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lamb, rh Norman  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Law, Chris  
 Lee, Ms Karen  
 Leslie, Mr Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lewis, Mr Ivan  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Ian C.  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Marsden, Gordon  
 Martin, Sandy  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 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  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, Ian  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Onasanya, Fiona  
 Onn, Melanie  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Owen, Albert  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pidcock, Laura  
 Platt, Jo  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Rashid, Faisal  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rowley, Danielle  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Ryan, rh Joan  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Sherriff, Paula  
 Shuker, Mr Gavin

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  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sweeney, Mr Paul J.  
 Swinson, Jo  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Keith  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walker, Thelma  
 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:**  
**Kirsty Blackman and**  
**David Linden**

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Allen, Heidi  
 Amess, Sir David  
 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  
 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  
 Choqe, Mr Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, Colin  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 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  
 Dinéage, Caroline  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Dockerill, Julia  
 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  
 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  
 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  
 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, 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  
 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, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Rudd, rh Amber  
 Rutley, David

Sandbach, Antoinette  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Mr Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, Alok  
 Shelbrooke, Alec  
 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  
 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  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 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:**  
**Andrew Griffiths and**  
**Stuart Andrew**

*Question accordingly negated.*

*The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.*

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

*Third Reading*

6.15 pm

**Mr John Hayes:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

What a pleasure it is to move the motion for the Third Reading of this important Bill, and to do so in the knowledge that it will be considered in the spirit that it deserves. We have had a properly reasoned, measured and sensible debate about its provisions, and I am grateful to Members on both sides of the House for contributing to that process. I did think it a little unnecessary for us to vote once or twice earlier, but let us put that to one side, because I fully appreciate that the Opposition must do their job, if only to maintain the declining morale of a parliamentary party that knows it is no nearer to power now than it was a week, a month or a year ago. *[Interruption.]* But let us put that to one side.

This is an important piece of legislation, which, as we have said repeatedly, brings up to date and up to speed the arrangements under the ATOL scheme which protect travellers. Those arrangements have been proved to be effective time and again. They are necessary and desirable, as has been acknowledged throughout our considerations. Benjamin Disraeli, of whom we have heard too little this afternoon, said:

“Like all great travellers, I have seen more than I remember, and remember more than I have seen.”

What I will remember of today's considerations is that, as I have said, they have been conducted in the way in which Parliament should consider all such matters.

I am entirely confident that the Bill, as it proceeds, will continue to provide the necessary reassurance for travellers and the necessary measures for businesses, and that, in those terms, it will do the Government and the House proud. It is right for Governments to act in the interests of the common good, for that is enshrined in all that we are in my party, and I hope that other parties in the House will gradually, over time, learn from that. I entirely welcome the way in which we have dealt with these matters, and I look forward to further consideration of them once the Bill becomes law. As I said again today, I am committed to reviewing the position thoroughly, and when the regulations come before the House—I repeat this, because I think it important to emphasise and amplify it—we will review the implications in the way recommended by the House.

We can be proud of the Bill. I am sure that it is not just fit for purpose, but necessary, desirable and efficacious.

6.17 pm

**Karl Turner:** The Labour party supports the Bill, and we will vote in support of it. There are, however, some concerns about the impact of some parts of it, which we expressed when the clauses were first debated as part of the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill and again throughout the passage of this Bill. We hope that the Minister has taken on board the points raised by Labour and echoed by the Scottish National party, who re-tabled Labour's amendments to VTAB in Committee. As the House will know, the Prime Minister has asked the Opposition to help the Government by providing some policy suggestions. However, it seems that SNP Members are not even asking for help, but are simply taking Labour's policy ideas as their own. We should probably take that as a compliment.

We support the Bill because it brings ATOL up to date and will ensure that it is harmonised with the latest European Union package travel directive, extending to a wider range of holidays and protecting more consumers, as well as allowing United Kingdom travel companies to sell more seamlessly across Europe. While we harbour some real concerns over whether UK consumers will be sufficiently protected by EU-based companies, as they will no longer be subject to ATOL but to member state equivalents, we welcome changes that will ultimately help to protect more holidaymakers.

The implications for ATOL after Brexit are also a cause for concern. Hidden in the Bill are proposals that the Secretary of State should require only an affirmative resolution to significantly reform ATOL and the air travel trust fund. Labour recognises the merits of some reforms, but we believe that an impact assessment, full consultation and full scrutiny should have been required before any fundamental changes are made to these consumer protections.

These issues bring to the forefront uncertainties over the future of UK aviation following the decision to leave the EU. The Labour party has been clear that, whichever framework is chosen by the Government, we should prioritise retaining an essentially unchanged operating environment. They should prioritise air service agreements as part of exit negotiations. As is customary, such agreements should be negotiated separately from, and prior to, the UK's negotiations on trade with the EU. The Government must not waste the opportunity this Bill presents to clarify their intended future arrangements for our aviation industry.

The UK aviation sector is the largest in Europe and the third largest in the world, supporting 1 million jobs and bringing £9 billion into the Treasury in tax receipts. Over a quarter of a billion passengers were transported in 2015. But aviation also provides a network infrastructure that enables other industries to do well. Half a million jobs in the UK tourism industry are supported by aviation, and 40% of UK imports and exports by value go via UK airports. The EU is the UK's single biggest destination, accounting for 49% of passengers and 54% of scheduled commercial flights. Airlines that operate from within the UK are able to rely on the EU single aviation market, which allows any airline owned and controlled by EU nationals to operate freely in the EU without restrictions on capacity, frequency or pricing.

Additionally, EU carriers are able to take advantage of the traffic rights contained in the many air services agreements that the EU has negotiated on behalf of all member states with non-EU countries. Significantly, this includes the EU-US open skies agreement which enables airlines from the EU and the US to fly between the EU and the US. If Britain leaves the EU without retaining any form of European common aviation area membership, airlines will need to negotiate new rights to operate freely within the EU and operate transatlantic routes. This means that there will be no legal framework that allows airlines to fly to those destinations from the UK. So UK airlines would also lose the right to operate within the remaining EU27, and EU airlines might lose the right to fly UK domestic routes as well.

Aviation is legally unique: it is separate from trade agreements and does not form part of the World Trade Organisation system. Instead, countries negotiate bilateral or multilateral air services agreements to provide airlines

with the legal rights to fly to certain places. To ensure the continuity of connectivity, the UK will need to negotiate a new air services agreement with the EU and countries such as the US. If there is no such agreement by the time the UK leaves the EU, the UK's connectivity will be undermined and its ability to trade will be more difficult. So it is imperative that the Government prioritise retaining an essentially unchanged operating environment. That is why they should prioritise air services agreements as part of Brexit negotiations.

While the measures in this Bill are important and will provide additional security to UK holidaymakers, it is strange that the Government thought it necessary to debate the Bill in a Committee of the whole House. The measures in the Bill were included in VTAB, which had passed through its Committee stages before the Prime Minister decided to call the unnecessary snap general election. I think I am right in saying that these provisions in that Bill were debated in no more than 45 minutes in Committee. The Government have not made changes to their proposals and the Opposition supported them as part of VTAB in the last Parliament, so we simply do not understand why the decision was taken for this small, agreeable and largely non-contentious niche Bill to take up time in the Chamber, other than to try to disguise the fact that this chaotic Government have a threadbare legislative programme for this Parliament.

**Mr John Hayes:** As a result of that scrutiny—which the hon. Gentleman should not disparage because he has played an important part in making it real—we have had a good debate on the issues of review, of impact assessments and of further consultation. He will have heard what I have said about all those things, which are matters close to his heart, so actually the debate has served a really useful purpose.

**Karl Turner:** The Minister makes a fair enough point, but with respect, it has been a terrible waste of time debating this matter in the Committee of the whole House when it was previously dealt with in 45 minutes in Committee upstairs. For the sake of appearances, VTAB has been broken up into its component parts and is now being given undue time for debate in this Chamber.

**Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind):** It is never a waste of time to discuss anything pertaining to the whole of the UK in this House or in a Committee of the whole House. This gives me the opportunity to remind the Minister that we have three airports in Northern Ireland. We are the only part of the United Kingdom that is physically connected to another EU member state—the Republic of Ireland—and it is really important, as has been stated in the debate, that we do not lose air traffic and business from Northern Ireland to airports such as Dublin.

**Karl Turner:** The hon. Lady makes her point on behalf of her constituents, and she makes it well, but I do not think that it requires a response from me.

**Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con):** This is a bit of an occasion, really, because when legislation is debated in this place, the Opposition traditionally complain that it is not given enough time, that the Government have tried to rush it through or that there has been insufficient examination of the

provisions. The shadow Minister seems to be setting a precedent here today, in that he seems to be complaining that the Bill has been given too much time. Why is that?

**Karl Turner:** If the right hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue, I will make the point in a moment that important issues were debated in VTAB that are not now going to be discussed or made into legislation.

As a result of breaking up VTAB, measures that were previously included have been dropped, and measures that could have been included to improve this legislation through new clauses and amendments can no longer be added because they are no longer within the scope of forthcoming Bills. The proposal to make the shining of lasers at vehicles or control towers an enforceable criminal offence, which was strongly supported by those on this side of the House and which we would still be happy to support, has been dropped altogether. That is clearly concerning. We do not want to see avoidable disasters brought about by the malicious use of laser pens, and neither does the Minister, so will he explain why he has dropped these crucial plans, and whether or indeed when he proposes to legislate to tackle this serious problem?

There is also nothing in the Bill on the inclusion of much-needed regulations on drones—a matter previously caught by VTAB. The Government will respond to the consultation on drones in the next few weeks, but they should have made much more progress already, including making decisions on whether the UK should follow other countries by establishing a compulsory registration scheme and getting systematic geo-fencing in place to physically prevent drones from getting near airports and other places where they have the potential to be so dangerous.

It makes no sense for the Government to have abandoned the Bill in which action on drones could have been included. These are decisions that will make aviation less safe than it should be. The latest figures show that 33 such incidents were confirmed in the first five months of this year, and 70 last year, whereas there were 29 in 2015 and just 10 in the preceding five years. We need legislation to regulate the use of drones in order to tackle the worrying trend of near misses with planes. The aviation industry has been clear that it needs the Government to act on these concerns now. The Opposition have been pressing the Government on this issue for many years. Without action, it is a question of when, rather than if, a passenger plane is involved in a drone-related incident, so will the Minister explain why the proposal has been dropped and what plans he has to put this right?

We are just one month into this new Parliament and the Government are already running out of steam, which is why we have been debating this Bill on the Floor of the House rather than upstairs in Committee. The Prime Minister is attempting to crowd source policy ideas from the Opposition, and we can assist in this instance. The Government need to bring forward legislation on the misuse of lasers and on the regulation of drones and to provide clarity and certainty for UK aviation post-Brexit. We would welcome the Government adopting those policies, and they will have our full support if they do so. Labour broadly supports the Bill, because it extends protections to many more holidaymakers, but we want clarity on how EU-based companies, which will no longer be subject to ATOL but rather their

[Karl Turner]

respective member state equivalents, will provide protection to UK consumers. We want the best possible framework to ensure that the sector flourishes, but that means adequately preparing ourselves for the many implications that Brexit will have for ATOL and our aviation sector as a whole.

6.30 pm

**Patricia Gibson:** I end where I began by welcoming and supporting the Government's measures to update the ATOL scheme to provide more protection for passengers when they go on holiday and to align it with the latest EU directives. I welcome the progress made in this evening's debate, but I was disappointed to hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) complain that today's process has taken too long. If he sees that as a problem, I suggest that he perhaps contributed to it with his extensive remarks. I am sure that we all enjoyed them, but he seems to have contributed to the problem that he identified.

**Karl Turner:** I did not complain that the process was taking too long; I simply made the point that time in this House is incredibly important. An awful lot of things that were discussed during the proceedings on the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill could have made this legislation, but time has been wasted. These matters took 45 minutes in Committee. That was my point.

**Patricia Gibson:** I believe that the Minister has taken on board the legitimate concerns expressed tonight about how consumers are to be protected and have their current rights guaranteed as we head towards a post-Brexit world. There must be no diminution or stagnation of passenger rights as society and technology advance. It has been heartening to see how the Bill has proceeded through the House, and I have been delighted to be a part of these debates.

6.32 pm

**Mr John Hayes:** I do not want to delay the House, Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. I am sure that the Minister is going to beg the leave of the House to address the House again.

**Mr Hayes:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do not want to detain the House unduly except to affirm my thanks to all Members who have contributed to the debate. I hear what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) says about the previous Bill. He drew attention to those elements of the Bill that are not being considered today. This legislation is very much part of that earlier Bill, but we made it clear in the Queen's Speech that we intend to introduce further transport legislation. I am happy to continue to have conversations about drones and lasers along the lines that he suggested. It has been a good debate, and it is a good Bill. I think we can leave it at that.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

## High Speed 2: Electronic Deposit of Documents

6.33 pm

**The Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (Michael Ellis):** I beg to move,

That, in respect of any bill relating to High Speed 2 that is read the first time in Session 2017–19 and to which the standing orders relating to private business are found by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills to apply, it shall be sufficient compliance with:

(a) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited or delivered at, or sent to, an office of a government department, body or person if it is deposited or delivered at, sent to or otherwise made accessible at that office in electronic form;

(b) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited with an officer if it is deposited with or delivered, sent or otherwise made accessible to that officer in electronic form;

(c) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be made available for inspection at a prescribed office, or to permit a document to be inspected, if it is made available for inspection at that office, or is permitted to be inspected, in electronic form;

(d) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) or 36(3) relating to private business to permit a person to make copies of a document or extracts from it, if there is provided to that person, on request and within a reasonable time, copies of so much of it as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the person so agrees, be provided in electronic form;

(e) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) relating to private business for a memorial to be made on every document deposited under that Standing Order, if the memorial is made on a separate document;

(f) any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or 224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an office in London.

That this Order shall not affect any requirement under those standing orders to deposit any document at, or deliver any document to, the Private Bill Office or the Vote Office.

That any reference in those standing orders to a document which is deposited, lodged, delivered or sent under those standing orders includes a reference to a document which is so deposited, delivered or sent in electronic form.

That any reference to a document in this order includes a reference to any bill, plan, section, book of reference, ordnance map, environmental or other statement or estimate.

The Gracious Speech gave notice of the Government's intention to introduce a hybrid Bill to Parliament later this year to take forward the next phase of HS2. As a hybrid Bill it will be governed by the Standing Orders for private business. Parliament's review of those Standing Orders, following the passage of the High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Act 2017, has not yet concluded and is the first significant review since 1948. It is therefore necessary to move this motion to update parliamentary procedure to reflect developments in technology since 1948.

I will briefly explain the changes, which replicate those authorised by the House in 2013 ahead of the introduction of the previous hybrid Bill. The House will be aware that, along with the HS2 hybrid Bill later this year, we will provide Parliament with an environmental statement setting out the likely significant environmental effects of the scheme and making proposals for alleviating those effects.

A considerable level of detail is involved in a project of this magnitude. We expect the statement to be up to 12,000 pages long. It is, of course, important that local communities can easily find out what the impact will be on their local area. However, current Standing Orders require us to deposit a paper copy of the document in every local authority area along the line of route. In this day and age that is inconvenient for the communities involved, especially for parish councils, many of which do not have sufficient space, so they ask us to deliver the document elsewhere—often to a library in a nearby town. That is why the motion allows for the electronic deposit of documentation for the HS2 hybrid Bill.

**Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con):** I seriously oppose the project, which runs straight through my constituency. Will the Minister be good enough to give an undertaking that written material of the kind he describes will be provided? I understand why it should be in electronic form.

**Michael Ellis:** It is a permissive power. It does not require documents to be deposited in electronic format only. If a deposit location wants all the documents in hard copy, HS2 Ltd will provide them in hard copy, but the motion allows for the electronic deposit of documentation for the HS2 hybrid Bill. Electronic documentation will, of course, make it easier for communities along the line of route to find the information most relevant to their area without having to work through an otherwise enormous document.

**Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con):** What would happen if, because of the cruelty of this Government, the libraries are closed and there is no room for the hard copies of the Bill documentation, even though the local area wanted them? How would the Minister handle that?

**Michael Ellis:** I do not accept my right hon. Friend's characterisation. On previous occasions when there have been storage problems, nearby community libraries have been asked to store the hard copies, so I anticipate alternative mechanisms could be put in place.

It should be noted that this is a permissive power. It does not require documents to be deposited only in an electronic format, so if a location wants all the documents in hard copy, HS2 Ltd will provide them in hard copy. In all cases HS2 Ltd will make the key documents, such as the Bill itself and the non-technical summary of the environmental statement, available in hard copy.

Further, members of the public will be able to telephone HS2 Ltd to ask for free hard copies of the non-technical summary, the local community area report and the local maps. If a deposit location would like documents in electronic form but does not have the equipment to make them available to the community, HS2 Ltd will provide that equipment at its own expense.

This is a wholly sensible modernisation of Standing Order requirements that were originally conceived in the 19th century, and it is about making it easier for people to engage with the hybrid Bill process, thereby ensuring the most effective decision making by Parliament.

**Sir William Cash:** My hon. Friend has quietly referred to the maps, but of course there are also the specifications and the limits of deviation. He knows perfectly well

how much all this involves. May I have an assurance that, if required, all those things will also be made available in hard copy?

**Michael Ellis:** Yes, that is a reasonable request.

This is a wholly sensible modernisation of Standing Order requirements, and it is about making it easier for people to engage with the hybrid Bill process. I commend this motion to the House.

6.39 pm

**Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab):** I thank the Deputy Leader of the House for his explanation of the changes to the Standing Orders for the purposes of this hybrid Bill. Hybrid Bills are a rarity in the House: a public Bill proposing a law that affects the private interests of a particular person or organisation. This Bill will affect the general public and specific households along the route of the HS2 line, phase 2. The House has agreed these changes in similar circumstances for phase 1 of the HS2 project from London to the west midlands. These changes relate to phase 2, which allows for the construction of the route from Birmingham to Crewe, which are approximately 50 miles apart. These changes to the Standing Orders allowing for electronic copies of documents to be made available are eminently sensible, but may I ask the Deputy Leader of the House to clarify a couple of things?

Paragraph (d) of the motion states:

“copies of so much of it as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the person so agrees, be provided in electronic form”.

Will the Deputy Leader of the House confirm that those documents will not unreasonably be withheld and that the requests will be complied with? I appreciate that people cannot ask for documents outside their area, where they do not have an interest, but who will make the decision as to whether a request is a “reasonable” one? Will he also confirm that households along the Birmingham to Crewe route, who will be directly affected, will be able to receive a free copy of the documents relating to their area? The hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) has suggested that some rural areas may not have internet access and some people may not be proficient in IT, but these people should have those documents free of charge. Will the Deputy Leader of the House confirm that they will be free of charge? He mentioned a telephone number that people can call HS2 on. Will he confirm that that will not be at the premium rate and it will be free of charge? Will he say when we are likely to have the First Reading of the Bill? Will we see it before the House rises for the summer recess?

I am sure we could agree a general amendment to Standing Orders, through the Procedure Committee, so that we do not have to keep coming back to amend them to include a reference to electronic copies. However, Her Majesty's Opposition support these changes to the Standing Orders, which are in line with previous amendments to Standing Orders.

6.42 pm

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):** The House will not be surprised that I rise to my feet to talk about this small motion, but colleagues sitting

[Mrs Cheryl Gillan]

alongside me may be surprised to learn that I rise to welcome it. As a veteran of the hybrid Bill process, I can say that there is no doubt that it is arcane and has tremendous problems with its practices and procedures. My constituents, and many constituents of other hon. Members, certainly have been at the mercy of the hybrid Bill process, and I shudder when I hear a Front Bencher say that the environmental statement will be at least 12,000 pages long. I have experienced something just as large for phase 1 of the HS2 process, and I can say that these are indeed very opaque documents. Will the Deputy Leader of the House say whether these will be sufficiently navigable instruments, as this is being served up to people electronically? I found, as did many of my constituents, that the documents presented by HS2 Ltd were very difficult to navigate and hard to find. Therefore, I would like assurances that some improvements have been made to the way in which people can move around these very large documents.

The Deputy Leader of the House has already given assurances that nothing in tonight's order will prevent communities from accessing paper copies. We must not forget that there is a digital divide. Many of the people affected by this project are elderly and do not access large documents easily on computers. It is very important that they have access, free of charge, to those sections of the documentation that relate to their properties or the area around that part of the route.

**Sir William Cash:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that when this material comes electronically and then has to be turned, at a person's home or office, into the kind of material that makes sense and that they can read, the complexity of the documents—the design specifications and all the other things—and the monumental volume of paper becomes very daunting indeed? To refer back to our previous debate on consultation, does she also agree that HS2 Ltd, as I said to the project manager the other day, had better get its act together on consultation and do it properly?

**Mrs Gillan:** It is clear to me and many others who are involved with the project that HS2 Ltd needs to improve not only its consultation processes but its communications processes, which are still appalling in many instances.

**Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind):** I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene to make a small but important point. She just raised the issue of older people often not being familiar with technology and electronically conveyed documents. Older people often suffer from visual impairments; indeed, some of them will need a Braille copy. Will she seek assurances from the Government that those who are at a disadvantage in reading documents will have assistance?

**Mrs Gillan:** The hon. Lady makes a good point. I am keen to ensure that, in a process that is so inequitable, with the state against the citizen and the citizen receiving very little help, we impress on Ministers and HS2 Ltd that there are people who need assistance to navigate and understand these documents. I feel passionately that they need to have that assistance. Had the hon. Lady seen people who are going to lose their house having to appear alone before a Select Committee of this House, with a silk—a QC; an expensive, highly paid

barrister—set against them, she would understand why I implore Ministers to make sure that suitable personnel are available to help people to interpret and access the documents. The shadow Minister asked for the telephone line to be free; I am going to go further: I want Ministers to ensure that that telephone line is manned by competent people who actually know what they are talking about and can guide people through the process easily. That is extremely important.

I am disappointed that there is currently no provision that will allow petitioners to petition electronically when the Bill is introduced—unless Ministers tell me differently. I had to bring petitions from constituents into the House myself, and they were charged £20 for the pleasure of defending their own properties, so I had to collect money and documents and bring them in to facilitate the process. My constituency is not far outside London; the people who will be affected by the phase 2 Bill live much further up the country. I would have thought Ministers had considered how other MPs' constituents who are going to be affected by phase 2 will be able to submit their petitions this time around. I implore Ministers to look into that, because that is a matter of priority. We should wipe out the £20 fee, which is neither fish nor fowl; it is an insult to the people who are defending their properties and want their voices to be heard and it certainly does not cover the costs of this exercise, so I hope it will be cancelled.

I have another question, on paragraph (f) of the motion, which the Deputy Leader of the House will notice refers to

“any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or 224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an office in London.”

Will he assure me that that does not mean that London will be the only place that such documents will be on sale? When the Bill is introduced, phase 2 will affect people from Birmingham northwards, so would it not be more sensible to make the documents available in, for example, Birmingham and Manchester? That would be of more assistance to the people affected by the project.

I would like to know when the Bill will be introduced and when Second Reading is anticipated. When we have another hybrid Bill of this size and complexity that affects so many people, it is important that as much warning as possible is given by the Government and by HS2 Ltd and that all the information is readily available well in advance and with explanation so that people can get their heads around it. There is no doubt that there will be support for the phase 2 Bill from all parts of the House. Once again, there will be a very small number of MPs opposed to it or raising questions about it, but the Government need not be afeared that they will not get their business through. However, if they are to embark on a project of this size and complexity, I ask them please to learn from the lessons and the mistakes that were made on phase 1, and not to put the people on phase 2 through the same agonies. If we do not learn and we do not then take action, we are failing people in this country.

6.50 pm

**Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** I was not originally going to speak, but I will just say a couple of words if that is okay. As the shadow Leader

of the House said, the changes are eminently sensible. It makes sense to move to electronic issue where possible. However, I gently point out that some Members who are exercised by this electronic issue and are worried about access to hard copies are quite comfortable for people on benefits to be forced to move to online activity. We need to remember that there is a disparity in attitudes.

I agree with much of what the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) said, especially with regard to consultation. People must be able to interact with experts—experts with an understanding of the documents should be able to explain them to people in an impartial way and guide them through the maps. Some people have difficulty reading both hard-copy and online maps, so it is very important that they can access the information and understand it. The Government must ensure that, with any consultation, people are able fully to understand the information.

Can the Deputy Leader of the House tell me whether any savings have been identified through this measure? It seems sensible that there should be savings, as we will not be issuing reams of paper. Equally, that is balanced out with a rather generous offer of giving out IT equipment. Has any assessment been made of how much IT equipment will need to be dispersed?

6.52 pm

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): I have already made a couple of interventions, but I wish to say that I am extremely grateful to my very distinguished and right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) for all the work that she has done on phase 1, which has set a pattern for what is to be done on the second phase, which so directly and detrimentally affects my own constituency. Before the Minister replies, may I make one suggestion? Birmingham has been mentioned. If we take the line between Birmingham and Crewe, the most central place happens to be Stafford in Staffordshire. Will my hon. Friend be good enough to give serious consideration to using the county council facilities, which are extremely good, for copying and all that sort of thing? People from my constituency, at both ends of the line, would be able to visit that central point with a minimum amount of inconvenience. That is all that I need to say for the time being.

6.53 pm

**Michael Ellis:** With the leave of the House, I will, in the limited time available, answer some of these points. The hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) asked what was meant by “reasonable”. The issue is simply this: a reasonable request means HS2 weighing up the cost of meeting a request against whether there is a genuine need for the information to be presented in the format requested. Reasonable requests for hard copies of maps and section drawings will be met. They could be requested from local authorities, which will be provided with hard copies for inspection, or directly from HS2.

I have been asked by a couple of hon. Members about when the Bill will be laid. At this point, I can only say soon. As I have said, all reasonable requests for hard copies of maps and section drawings will be met. In answer to a point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), we are proactively considering using audio, braille, and

easy-read versions. Given the scale of the documentation, it is right that that is considered with regard to accessibility for everyone. I noted the points made about the telephone line, and I shall look into the matter. I understand that it is a London number, to answer the question from the hon. Member for Walsall South about the rate, but I will look into that.

On the issues about London and whether documents could be stored elsewhere, a tiny number of people have requested that, but we will certainly look into those reasonable requests.

**Sir Nicholas Soames:** Is it planned to translate the documents into other languages?

**Michael Ellis:** I am not aware of any such plans. We are considering the issue of braille.

**Mrs Gillan:** Will the Minister tell me what the appeal process is if HS2 Ltd does not deem a request to be reasonable?

**Michael Ellis:** It is fair to say that all reasonable requests will be considered. It is clear and transparent that reasonable requests will be met. It is important that requests are not vexatious, and I know that my right hon. Friend does not want any doubt about that. Reasonable requests will be met, and further consideration can be given to that in due course. This is a sensible modernisation of 19th-century Standing Orders, which have not undergone radical reform since 1948.

**Sir William Cash:** I know that a lot of questions were put to the Minister, but would he respond to the question of whether Stafford and Staffordshire County Council buildings are a convenient place for people to go for documents?

**Michael Ellis:** My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is alive to all the issues that have been raised, including the localities and local communities involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) asked whether Staffordshire would be considered, and I can tell him that it will be.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That, in respect of any bill relating to High Speed 2 that is read the first time in Session 2017–19 and to which the standing orders relating to private business are found by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills to apply, it shall be sufficient compliance with:

(a) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited or delivered at, or sent to, an office of a government department, body or person if it is deposited or delivered at, sent to or otherwise made accessible at that office in electronic form;

(b) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited with an officer if it is deposited with or delivered, sent or otherwise made accessible to that officer in electronic form;

(c) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be made available for inspection at a prescribed office, or to permit a document to be inspected, if it is made available for inspection at that office, or is permitted to be inspected, in electronic form;

(d) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) or 36(3) relating to private business to permit a person to make copies of a document or extracts from it, if there is provided to that person,

[*Michael Ellis*]

on request and within a reasonable time, copies of so much of it as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the person so agrees, be provided in electronic form;

(e) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) relating to private business for a memorial to be made on every document deposited under that Standing Order, if the memorial is made on a separate document;

(f) any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or 224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an office in London.

That this Order shall not affect any requirement under those standing orders to deposit any document at, or deliver any document to, the Private Bill Office or the Vote Office.

That any reference in those standing orders to a document which is deposited, lodged, delivered or sent under those standing orders includes a reference to a document which is so deposited, delivered or sent in electronic form.

That any reference to a document in this order includes a reference to any bill, plan, section, book of reference, ordnance map, environmental or other statement or estimate.

## Mental Health Act 1983

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

6.57 pm

**Sir Paul Beresford** (Mole Valley) (Con): I am delighted to see the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton), in the Chamber. I hope—she is still smiling—that she is in a benevolent and co-operative mood.

As the Minister will be aware, I am raising a small but important matter, in my opinion and that of others, by seeking a small change to section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. She will probably have been made aware that I have raised the matter twice before, for the first time when I presented a ten-minute rule Bill in 2014. I did not proceed with that measure because there was an ongoing Government review of the whole section. Although that review was extensive, it did not consider the specific point that I am raising this evening. The second occasion was almost exactly a year ago, when I raised the matter in an Adjournment debate.

I was initially prompted to seek the change having seen the need for it at first hand on the streets of London. I was with a couple of young officers from the Met in a response car, and our first call was a dash to a flat on the 14th floor of a council residential tower block. The mother of the household nervously let the officers in, and we saw her daughter, aged 22, standing on the window ledge threatening to jump. We quickly established that the daughter had a history of genuine suicide attempts. As the young lady was clearly put out by the uniformed police officers, we were joined very promptly by three further officers, two of them in plain clothes. Fortunately, one of those officers was female.

That officer was very astute and persuasive, and managed to get the young woman to come down off the window sill, sit down on the bed and talk matters through. The young woman made it quite clear that she needed psychiatric help. Much effort was made to persuade her to go to a place of safety for psychiatric and medical aid. The young woman vehemently refused and, when pressed, she struggled to head for the window and jump yet again.

7 pm

*Motion lapsed ( Standing Order No. 9(3) ).*

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

**Sir Paul Beresford**: The other four officers stood on tip-toes waiting to catch the young woman on each occasion when she looked as if she was going to dive through the window. Fortunately, they managed to stop any action. In the meantime, contact was made with St George's Hospital's psychiatric unit to seek urgent hospital psychiatric assistance. After some considerable time, the appropriate psychiatric individual arrived with an ambulance and crew. This immediately inspired further alarm, rejection and, ultimately, a huge struggle. In due course, a sad young lady was transported to the hospital as the designated place of safety, and we had prevented the suicide.

The whole pantomime had occupied five officers and three NHS staff, and took about four hours to sort out. It was obvious from the very beginning that the police themselves could have taken care of the young lady quickly, as indeed they did after instruction from the NHS staff. Immediate action by the police would have taken the lady into care quickly, thus reducing the continuing risk over those four hours, and saving the police and NHS staff a large number of man hours. Under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, the police would have been able to act promptly if this pantomime had taken place in a public place. However, the incident took place at the young lady's mother's home. That was deemed, correctly, to be a private place, which meant that no direct police action was legally possible. I have had discussions with officers in the Met, and I have found that this was not an unusual case.

A more tragic case was the death of Martin Middleton in 2010. He was taken to a Leeds police station by officers who had visited him at home, having been made aware, and then seeing for themselves, that Mr Middleton was making serious preparations for committing suicide. The officers incorrectly believed that they could arrest Mr Middleton and take him from his home under section 136. When they arrived at the police station, the custody sergeant refused to detain Mr Middleton as the arrest had taken place in his home. The officers were therefore required by the custody sergeant to return Mr Middleton to a relative's home, hoping that that was some form of safety. Sadly, Mr Middleton still managed to hang himself there.

At the inquest, the coroner had no hesitation in agreeing with Professor Keith Rix, who was called to give expert evidence, that Mr Middleton fell into a category of mentally disordered persons for whom there is no provision under the 1983 Act. Subsequent to raising the issue, I have heard from many frontline police officers, including those who have campaigned on the issue, and I have also had extensive conversations with Professor Keith Rix, who is an academic psychiatrist and an expert in this area. I am reliably informed that the Garda in the Republic of Ireland have a clear operational advantage over our police because, under section 12 of the Irish Mental Health Act 2001, they can act promptly, even in a private residence.

As the all-seeing Minister will be aware, over the 10 years between 1997 and 2007, admissions to hospital as a place of safety went up from 2,237 to 7,035—those are the latest figures that I have been able to get. The Minister is quick with arithmetic, so she will be able to note that that is a threefold increase. The difficulty facing the police is that the powers on which they can act are limited to persons found by the police in a public place. There is ample anecdotal—and perhaps stronger—evidence that the police in desperation sometimes persuade a person to leave their home, or contrive to remove them to a public place so that they can use the section 136 powers of arrest. In fact, one London-based social services authority's audited figures estimated that 30% of section 136 arrests were recorded as having been made at or just outside the detainee's home. The police do that in sheer desperation to save the individual's life, which would be lost unless they acted. Put bluntly, a tiny adjustment to the legislation would allow the police to act in a private home, as they can in a public place. That would save an enormous amount of time and, potentially, a considerable number of lives.

In my discussions about this, it has been suggested that the police already have sufficient powers—they do not. The second argument is that an amendment would extend the right of the police to enter private properties—yes, it would. There are many legal reasons for the police to enter a private property; perhaps the most obvious and linked one is that if the mentally ill person was threatening, or in the process of murdering, somebody in that private place, rather than killing themselves, the police could act immediately.

There is a simple solution to this: amend section 136 by simply removing the words

“in a place to which the public have access”.

When I raised this issue in the Adjournment debate about a year ago, the Minister's predecessor gave a clear indication that change was being considered. He gave me a commitment that if the Government could not get this right using the measures they were considering, an amendment to section 136 might be exactly what was required.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an important and thoughtful speech. Does he agree that it is possible at the moment for a mental health professional who wants to put someone under section 2 or section 3 of the Mental Health Act to gain entry to their house with the police and a locksmith? It therefore seems strange that the police do not have powers to deal with a very similar situation when they have concerns about someone's mental health and believe they need to exercise section 136 powers.

**Sir Paul Beresford**: I thank my hon. Friend, who is, of course, on his way, with a bit of luck, to being a very senior academic psychiatrist in a couple of years. He is right. In situations such as this, no one rings up St George's Hospital in Tooting and says, “Please could I have a psychiatrist?” They ring the Met police, who then have the difficulty of dealing with the situation, and who stand there holding the detainee in the private home while the psychiatrist is brought in from the hospital.

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will at least be prepared to meet me and Professor Rix to discuss how this difficulty can be sorted out. If necessary, I am prepared to resort, as I have in the past, to the ten-minute rule Bill procedure to bring about this tiny change.

7.7 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sarah Newton)**: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Sir Paul Beresford) not only on securing the debate, but on the measured way he has approached it. He highlighted some of the really serious challenges faced by the police and the emergency services in dealing effectively, but also humanely, with those who are in a mental health crisis. We can all agree that this is a very important topic.

For far too long, the subject of mental ill health has not received appropriate attention. The services for those experiencing mental ill health are sometimes not

[Sarah Newton]

what they should be, and people have been faced with long waits for the help and support they should have received.

However, the Government have made clear their utter determination to improve mental health services, and we have made considerable progress in recent years to address the serious concerns we are discussing tonight. In particular, the use of police cells as places of safety under the Mental Health Act has fallen significantly. Last year, it was down to as few as only 2,100 instances. Some forces, such as Hertfordshire and Merseyside, have achieved zero use of police stations, while others, including West Midlands, Suffolk, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and Lincolnshire, have very low usage—right down in the single figures. We expect to see significant improvement when the numbers come out in October.

This has been brought about by a lot of good local partnership working. Only last week, I was with the police and mental health services in Kent, introducing their new strategy, which involves innovative working between the police and local health partners so that they can respond effectively and swiftly to those who are suffering mental ill health. It is also about bringing together the voluntary sector to enhance the support for local people. There are similar partnerships all over the country as part of the crisis care concordat partnership networks, which are driving forward really good improvements.

Most police forces will now have street triage schemes. This means that, although they are quite different in different parts of the country, most police officers will be deployed alongside mental health professionals, so if a call comes into the centre that somebody is experiencing a problem of the type we have heard about, mental health professionals will be sent along with the police officers as they respond. Alongside the reduction in the use of police cells, we have seen a reduction in the use of section 136 powers as these decisions are being made by health professionals to make sure that somebody in such a crisis can get the care that they need immediately. We have seen really good examples in Norfolk and in the west midlands, with dramatic falls in the number of people being sectioned. I am very happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss this excellent work. In the meantime, I will send him examples that he could perhaps take up with his local police force to make sure that it is drawing on the best possible practice from around the country.

We have increased the availability of liaison and diversion schemes so that those entering the criminal justice system who have mental ill-health or substance misuse issues can be immediately identified and referred into suitable assessment or treatment. These schemes now cover about 75% of the population of England, and we are on track to provide national coverage by 2021. We have provided some £15 million to 88 local projects to increase the provision and capacity of health-based places of safety, focusing on the areas with particularly high use of police cells and limited places of safety. We have announced a further £15 million of funding to continue this vital work.

Just as importantly, we are also bolstering our mental health services. We are investing record levels in mental health and improving access by introducing the first-ever waiting times standards for treatment. We have invested

£400 million to improve mental health crisis care in the community and £250 million to establish liaison mental health services in every emergency department by 2020. Since 2010, we have increased spending on mental health to a record £11.6 billion in 2016-17, and a further £1 billion will be invested every year by 2020-21 so that we can deliver the mental health services that people richly deserve.

In addition to this, we are making £1.4 billion available by 2020 for children and young people's mental health services.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I do, of course, applaud the Government's work in this field. However, I am talking about the particular emergency situation where someone is sitting in a police car, a radio call comes through, they tear up to the incident, and they are two miles away from St George's hospital and the psychiatrist who visits it. They need to do something on the spot.

**Sarah Newton:** I very much appreciate my hon. Friend's specific point. I wanted to set the scene and describe to him the scale of the investment to ensure that we do have the appropriate medical professional to accompany the police. I think we can all agree that we need those trained mental health professionals to be able to assess the person and to make the best judgment call on the best way to treat them. It is unreasonable to expect a police officer to have enough clinical experience to be able to make that call.

Like my hon. Friend, I have spent time with my local armed police officers. I have been out on the beat. I have seen the extent to which, in the course of their everyday working, they encounter people who have mental health problems, and how brilliant they are at handling the situation. We have heard vividly about how well they are able to manage it, as he has seen himself, but that is usually about containing it. They are not qualified to assess the best clinical approach for the individual in the way that a mental health professional is.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I completely agree. If section 136 is used in a public place—and if it were used in a private place—the individual goes into care in a mental hospital environment and must be assessed within 72 hours. That is an added protection. No one expects policemen to be wonders on psychiatry, but the assessment follows very quickly.

**Sarah Newton:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point and he will be pleased with recent legislation that has reduced that timeframe from 72 to 24 hours. That is a big step forward. Whether an incident happens in a public place or in someone's home, we are working towards a situation where a mental health professional will be with the police when they attend. That means that there will be no delay similar to that described so vividly by my hon. Friend. I think that some of the examples he gave happened some time ago. As a result of investment, particularly in the work of the crisis care concordat, which has created the framework for police forces to work with mental health services in their community, all kinds of innovative measures have been introduced to ensure that resources, including mental health nurses routinely working with police officers on the beat and specialist back-up to deal with situations

similar to those we have heard about this evening, are planned and delivered locally. That is how we want things to happen.

As I have said, we are putting the resources in place. Although these services are working in most of the country, additional investment is being provided where that is not the case. There is also support through the crisis care concordat to fill those gaps and to ensure that everyone everywhere has the same experience.

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend is making some thoughtful and good points about the extra resources that are going in to support people with a mental illness. On section 136 powers, the mental health professional who accompanies the police is often a nurse, and they do not have powers to section people. A section 12-approved doctor who accompanies the police, however, does have powers to section people, and the same is true under sections 2 and 3 of the Mental Health Act. I think that is where my hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Sir Paul Beresford) is coming from.

**Sarah Newton:** I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution. The point I was trying to make is that a range of health professionals are working alongside the police in different settings to make sure that their response is appropriate. Sometimes it is mental health nurses who will be on the beat with police officers. My hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley said that the police were called because somebody was in a very aggravated and stressful situation and they might have been prepared to take their own life. A call handler at the emergency centre would triage that situation, understand its severity and send the appropriately qualified medical professional so that they can make those decisions.

I think we are largely in agreement on the progress we have made. I want to focus on my hon. Friend's key point, which is that he does not think that the police have sufficient powers to act quickly in relation to people in private homes who are mentally distressed. I have read through his previous contributions and I am sympathetic to his point. I appreciate how utterly frustrating it must be for police officers who find themselves in a situation where they feel helpless to take action in a reasonable amount of time when they would have those

powers if they were in a public place. Having read previous debates and contributions, however, I think it is right that we consider somebody's home differently from a public place. For most people, their home is their refuge. It is a special place. We allow people to do all sorts of things in their homes that we do not allow them to do in a public place. We have to reflect carefully before taking more powers on the state to allow us to intervene in people's private space. We seek to strike the right balance so that we can intervene to keep people safe and ensure that they get access to services without violating their privacy. We have consulted quite widely on the matter, and we considered it when we were looking at a review of the legislation. There was a lot of discussion about it, and the view was that we had struck the right balance and did not need to take the extra step that my hon. Friend wants us to take.

New powers have been introduced, as I mentioned, in the Policing and Crime Act 2017, and we are monitoring how they are working. I reassure my hon. Friend that if that monitoring suggests that we can or should do more, we will take further action. We expect to see a lot more data from the police this autumn about how sections 135 and 136 are implemented on the ground. We will be analysing the results of a new annual data return to establish whether there are any new trends or patterns that need further response. We will have the opportunity to consider the whole issue in the round as we look, as promised, at the Mental Health Act.

I am happy to meet my hon. Friend and any other colleagues who have a close interest in this policy area, along with Professor Rix and officials from the Department of Health and the Home Office, to make sure that we have this absolutely right. We want to join up mental health professionals and police professionals appropriately to prevent the sorts of situations that we have heard about this evening. I look forward to building on the good progress that we have made, and I will continue to work well with my hon. Friend to make sure that that happens.

*Question put and agreed to.*

7.21 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

*Tuesday 11 July 2017*

[JOAN RYAN *in the Chair*]

## Balancing the Public Finances

9.30 am

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** If Members wish to remove their jackets, they should feel free to do so, and of course their ties—I have removed mine, as you can see.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the matter of balancing the public finances.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship in this new Parliament, Ms Ryan. This is the first time I have secured a Westminster Hall debate since the general election. If you will forgive the indulgence, it is also a great pleasure to see the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride), in his place. He served with tremendous distinction in the Whips Office, which I had the pleasure of leading after the 2015 general election, and I am pleased to see him in his current role. I look forward to him responding to the debate.

I am conscious that a large number of Members wish to speak, so I will speak for a little less time than I had originally intended. The first thing worth drawing to the attention of the Chamber, however, is how few Opposition Members are present, which I find astounding. To draw some conclusions from the attendance, we can see that the Conservative party and our allies in the Democratic Unionist party believe in balancing the public finances and making the difficult decisions necessary to ensure that we can grow the economy and create jobs. Judging by the turnout on the Opposition Benches, or rather the lack of turnout, the Labour party is clearly not interested in balancing the public finances or making sensible decisions; all that it is interested in is spending other people's money until it runs out. Whereas, so many Conservatives are here that they are having to move right around the Chamber and take over the other side.

I will probably have to draw my remarks to a close sooner than I had expected, in order to allow other Members to speak, so let me do a quick précis of my argument. We have come a long way since 2010: we have cut the deficit by three quarters; we have had faster economic growth than almost any country in the G7 largest countries; and we have cut unemployment to levels not seen since I was at primary school in 1975. That is incredibly important, because those are not just statistics; they represent real people getting the opportunities to succeed and thrive.

There are things that we should be proud of, and we could and should have talked about them more during the election campaign. I was very pleased to hear the Chancellor's outstanding speech in the debate on the Queen's Speech, in which he set out our economic record and our plans for the future. My central message

at the conclusion of my speech today will be that although we face difficult decisions and many pressing needs for spending public money, we need to raise that money while keeping taxes low and economic growth moving along. Those are difficult decisions. The Chancellor is the man who must make those decisions, and he must make them in a balanced way, taking into account all the factors, including economic growth. He needs to make those decisions at the Budget in the autumn, and Conservative colleagues should give him our support in doing so.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent speech. Is it not the case that Britain has become addicted to public sector debt? The truth is that since 2002 Governments of both colours have been spending more each year than we have been collecting in taxes. If are to stop doing that in future, it will be a bit like a drug addict coming off drugs.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend sets out clearly what has happened in the past, and I want to spend a little time on the challenges facing us in the future, but it is worth looking at the economic record. We did not make the decisions and get the success we have had easily; they were contested, and our political opponents challenged us every step of the way. But we have been successful, which gives us the credibility to talk about facing the challenges of the future.

When we came to power in 2010, the budget deficit was the equivalent of just under 10% of the size of the economy, at £150 billion a year. According to the most recent set of actual figures, we have reduced the cash deficit to £46 billion—down by 70%—and the deficit as a proportion of the size of the economy is down by 75% to 2.5%. That is a significant achievement, and it means that in this Parliament the size of our stock of national debt as a proportion of the size of the economy will start to fall. That is incredibly important for the future.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing this incredibly important debate. The impact is not simply one of taxes and of borrowing and spending, but of Government spending on personal finances, which has a massive impact because of interest rates and personal interest rates. If we let borrowing get out of control, interest rates in the real economy would rise. That is when we have repossessions, and that then is when we have a depression.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If we let the public finances get out of control, interest rates would rise and hard-pressed families who are having to make difficult decisions would see the cost of their mortgages and other debts go up, which would not make their lives any easier at all.

Let us consider the impact of controlling the public finances on the real economy. If we look at growth, at how fast the economy has grown over the past seven years, we see that our economic performance among the G7 largest countries in the world has been second only to that of the United States. Interestingly, we have grown our economy at almost double the rate of our nearest neighbour, France. In 2014 and 2016 we were the fastest growing G7 country, and the joint fastest in

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2015. That is an impressive record. I mention that because our political opponents often pretend that balancing the public finances has not worked, but in generating economic growth it absolutely has worked.

**Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing this debate. Will he join me in welcoming the fact that the reduction in corporation tax to 19% has brought in the highest yields ever, bringing another £11 billion into the economy? Does he have any thoughts on what increasing the rate to, say, 26% would have on jobs and, importantly, our ability to reduce the deficit?

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend, who makes a good point, tempts me to leap forward to the end of my remarks, but I will say only this about taxes: there is a big difference between rates of tax and how much money is raised. As Conservatives, we believe that the purpose of taxes is to raise money to pay for our public services. The Chancellor made it clear in the debate on the Queen's Speech that by reducing the tax rate, thereby encouraging businesses to locate here and be more successful, we raised more money to pay for those public finances—I think the Chancellor said £18 billion more.

Looking at that performance, it seems to me likely that if we were to raise corporation tax two things would happen: first, we probably would not raise the money, so although we might pat ourselves on the back and pretend that we were raising taxes, we would not raise the money to pay for public services; and secondly, it is fairly obvious to everyone, or to everyone on the Government side of the House, that those taxes do not fall on businesses at all. When we raise taxes on business, there is no mystical “business” to pay them; those taxes fall either on workers, who will receive smaller pay rises, or on customers, who will see higher prices. Taxes all feed through, so everyone in the economy would pay the price of any corporation tax rises, which probably would not raise any more money to pay for our public services, so we would be shooting ourselves in the foot. My hon. Friend the Member for North Warwickshire (Craig Tracey) makes exactly the right point.

I also want to mention our record on jobs, which is what I am proudest of: 3 million more people are now in work than were when we first came into office. Let me give the specific example—I think this will be heartening—of the impact on young people. In 2010 the unemployment rate among young people in this country was about 20%, which is comparable with that of our neighbours in the European Union and in the eurozone. Since we came into office, to this point, in those countries the unemployment rate among young people has been broadly flat, up a little but still around 20%. In our country it is down six percentage points, to 13%. That is not just a statistic; it means that hundreds of thousands of young people have had the opportunity to get a job when they leave school, college or university.

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for securing the debate. We reduced corporation tax from 28% to 20% but actually increased the tax take. As we exit the European Union, we will

need to encourage more businesses to come to this country and create more employment, so it is essential that we reduce taxes further, rather than putting them up. That is the difference between the Government and the Opposition.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. As we are going to leave the European Union, we want to be more global and outward-looking and we want more companies to locate in Britain, so it seems to me that this is exactly the wrong time—if there ever is a good time—to increase corporate tax rates.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): The right hon. Gentleman talks about the importance of what this Government have done for young people, but can he tell us how many people in the figure he mentioned are on exploitative zero-hours contracts? If the Government are so passionate about young people, why will they not pay them a real living wage? Why are they discriminating against the under-25s?

**Mr Harper:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raises zero-hours contracts. It simply is not true that everyone on a zero-hours contract is being exploited. There is some good evidence from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. I am not sure whether these data have been updated, but it did a survey in 2014 that showed that around 63% of people on a zero-hours contract—higher than the proportion of people on a permanent full-time contract—were satisfied with their terms and conditions. Most people on zero-hours contracts actually find that they fit their requirements, because they are either students or people with caring responsibilities.

There are of course people who would prefer not to be on a zero-hours contract. That is why I welcome Matthew Taylor's review, which was published today. He thinks that employees should have the right to ask their company to put them on a permanent contract. Indeed, McDonalds recently offered that to its employees. It is true that some of its staff on flexible contracts said that they would prefer to move to a fixed-term contract, but about 80% preferred to stay on a flexible contract because it suited them. I just do not agree with the contention that a zero-hours contract is by definition exploitative. In many cases, it suits the worker and it suits the business—it is a win-win. But it is completely true that if such contracts do not suit people, it is better that they should have the opportunity to move to a full-time or permanent contract to guarantee them hours. I am pleased with Matthew Taylor's report.

My final point about youth unemployment concerns what happens to young people's opportunities in countries that do not deal with their public finances. The most obvious example is Greece, which clearly has not dealt with its public finances, where 47%—nearly half—of young people are without work. Countries that do not deal with their public finances damage young people's opportunities, probably for their lifetime. I do not want us to go down that road and be that sort of country; I want us to keep focused on balancing the public finances.

There is an interesting factor relevant to my constituency. I looked at a debate in the House in 1983, in which my predecessor but two, Paul Marland, spoke. He pointed out that at that time unemployment in his constituency was 15.3%, which was 2% above the national average. I

am pleased that, seven years into a Conservative Government, unemployment in my constituency is 1.6%, which is below the average for the south-west—1.7%—and below the United Kingdom average. Our economic record has not just delivered for the United Kingdom and for the south-west; it has absolutely delivered for my constituents, who now have the opportunity to be in work, which is important for their families.

**Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): My right hon. Friend is giving a characteristically powerful speech, which is why this debate is so well attended. In my constituency, youth unemployment has fallen by a staggering 61%, making a real difference to people's lives. That is partly due to the expansion of apprenticeships, which more than 10,000 students have started. Last week I was proud to attend once again the graduation ceremony at Swindon College, where we are equipping young people with the real skills they need.

**Mr Harper:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. He knows—not everyone in the Chamber will—that Swindon is my home town. I actually did my A-levels at Swindon College, so I am particularly pleased to hear that that institution is still delivering opportunities. The opportunities that I got at a comprehensive school in Swindon and at Swindon College meant that I was the first person in my family to go to university, and definitely the first person in my family to make it to the House of Commons. I am pleased to have had those opportunities, and I want every young person in our country to have them too. That is why this matters.

All that I will say about the Opposition—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] My hon. Friends make the point that there are hardly any of them here. [Interruption.] An hon. Friend says that they are out spending. They opposed all the reductions in public expenditure over the past seven years. It seems to me, having done a back-of-the-envelope calculation, that the debt would already have been more than £300 billion higher based on the Opposition's public spending plans, and that if they had carried on spending at the rate they were when they left office, an extra £1 trillion would have been added to the public debt by the end of this Parliament. At the last general election, the Labour party manifesto was just, "Spend, spend, spend other people's money," with no credible plan to pay for it. That is not the route that our country should follow. The fact that so few Opposition Members are here to defend their plans tells us everything we need to know.

Having gone through our record and why I think we have been successful, let me say a few words about the challenges we face. Public sector pay is an important topic—in fact, it is what prompted me to call this debate. We all know hard-working public sector workers in our constituencies. It is good to pay them fairly for the jobs they do, but it is also fair that we look at all our constituents—those who work in the public sector and those who work in the private sector. It is worth reminding ourselves that after the financial crash a lot of people in the private sector experienced reductions in their pay, which did not happen in the public sector. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which is a respected organisation, public sector workers are still paid slightly better than private sector workers, even after adjusting

for qualification levels. Even after some public sector pay restraint, the levels of pay in the private and public sectors are about the same, and people in the public sector obviously have the benefit of a more generous final salary pension scheme.

We have not talked much about the fact that the 1% pay cap is of course a cap not on individuals' pay but on the pay scales. Most people will not be aware that, even with that pay cap, many public sector workers have actually seen significant rises in their pay because they have moved up pay bands. I think that half of national health service staff have had a pay rise of more than 3%. Teachers have had an average pay rise of 3%, because many, unless they have a performance issue, move up the pay bands during their career. That is on top of the 1% pay rise. We need to look at all those facts and conduct the debate in the proper spirit.

There are many pressures on public spending. There is public sector pay and funding for our national health service and for social care, and colleagues want more money put into schools. Part of the challenge of being in government is that we cannot say yes to everyone; we have to make choices and set priorities. The right way to do that is to look at the economic growth forecast, at how much tax revenue we think we will have, and at recruitment needs in public services. We have to look at all those things together.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. On the overall issue of rebalancing the public finances, does he agree that there is an example of effective and pragmatic expenditure in the recent announcement by the Prime Minister and the leader of my party? Is not it a good idea to have investment in an area of the United Kingdom such as Northern Ireland, where there has been high dependency on the public sector, in an effort to reduce the debt that is due to Northern Ireland, by the creation of private sector finance and private investment and thus better investment opportunities and more jobs? Is that a good project for the rest of the United Kingdom to follow?

**Mr Harper:** I welcome that intervention, because one of the things that we set out in our manifesto, and that the Chancellor set out in the House of Commons, is our plan to invest across the United Kingdom in infrastructure such as broadband, to help the economy and businesses to be more productive. That is how to raise tax revenue, grow the economy and create the jobs that enable us to spend money on our public services.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing the debate. He is right to highlight the importance of jobs, growth and apprenticeships, which should be at the forefront of any general election debate in a normal time. Does he agree that the public services are under pressure at the moment? We must recognise that. I work in those public services and I see it in my working life. According to the latest forecast, the target—a structural deficit of less than 2% of national income in 2020-21—will be comfortably met by sticking to the current tax and spending plans, so there is about £25 billion of leeway to invest a little more in those important public services, while paying down the deficit in a responsible manner.

**Mr Harper:** I do not disagree with my hon. Friend about investing in public services. He will know that part of the reason why the Chancellor loosened the target a little in his first Budget last year was to build in some flexibility to deal with the headwinds that we may face in leaving the European Union, and some of the challenges, and I think that was right.

I was going to say—my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) has given me an excellent lead-in—that we can pay for our public services only by raising the money through economic growth, as he suggests, or by borrowing more, which I do not think would be sensible. It would damage the public finances, raise interest rates, as my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Julian Knight) said, and put pressure on our hard-pressed constituents. Alternatively, we would have to raise taxes, which I do not think would be the right thing to do either.

When the Chancellor looks at the public finance position in his Budget, he needs to consider the growth forecast from the independent Office for Budget Responsibility—what tax revenues he is likely to have. He then needs to consider the pressures on public servants and public services. He needs to look at all the pressures across the piece and come to a balanced Budget judgment, weighing up all those things. Then we need to back him in those decisions. What we cannot do is have a particular story that goes around each week, or decide that something happens to be the flavour of the month, and discover at the time of the Budget that we have run out of money. That is not the way to run a sensible Government, and that is the message for the Chancellor.

I want finally to consider how we pay for things. I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends that in our manifesto we said that we wanted to keep taxes as low as possible, because taxes are levied on businesses that employ people and on individuals who work hard and face decisions about how to spend their money. We will always be the party that keeps taxes as low as possible, and we want to reduce taxes on businesses and on Britain's working families. We made it clear that we would deliver an increase in the personal allowance, that we would not increase value added tax, and that we would stick to our plan of reducing corporation tax, because that will bring investment and jobs to Britain. As I have already said in response to an intervention, that approach will raise more money for the public finances, not less. We need to stick with that plan and give the Chancellor the opportunity to act in that way.

Any Government worth their salt need to stick with sound public finances. That is how to get the growth, jobs and investment in the public services that we depend on. There are always more pressures on public spending than can be paid for. It is a difficult job for the Chancellor to balance those things. What we need to do, as his Conservative colleagues, is give him space to listen to the input—we can make our bids to him privately. He then needs to balance those things, taking everything into account, and come up with a balanced Budget judgment in the autumn. We need to back the Chancellor, which will mean we are backing our country and its growth prospects, and backing the prospects for jobs, growth and prosperity for all our constituents.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I intend to call the Front-Bench speakers at about 10.30. Given the number of hon. Members who want to speak, I suggest that they limit themselves to a maximum of four minutes, if not a little less. I will not apply a time limit at the moment. We shall see how we go.

9.55 am

**Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op):** I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who made an interesting and succinct speech, as he always does. He has come to be known in this place as a deep thinker about all matters economic, and I hope that one day he will return to the Front Bench, from which he is sorely missed.

I feel somewhat like Custer at the battle of the Little Bighorn, as the Comanches come running towards me. I apologise to those Tories present, because I will pour cold water on some of the more political points raised by the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean. Over the past seven years the Government have been good at one thing—patting themselves on the back and congratulating themselves on what a great job they are doing with the economy. Even though so many families are more pessimistic than ever about the future, the Government still trade on the myth that they are overseeing a strong and robust economy. When they were elected in 2010, they were given a mandate alongside the Liberal Democrats to bring about change. They allowed people—intentionally, I believe—to believe that the deficit and the national debt were one and the same thing, and told the British people in 2010 that they would pay off the debt and bring the budget into surplus by 2015. It is now 2017, and they have failed.

Despite its being enshrined in legislation in October 2015, the Government have now abandoned their plan to achieve a budget surplus by 2019-20. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that the previous commitment will be replaced by a vague pledge to deliver a budget surplus as early as possible in the next Parliament. Since we have had a general election since that statement was made in November 2016, I imagine that that could happen in the next five years. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, even reaching that is likely to be difficult. The deficit this year is forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility to be £68.2 billion, or 3.5% of national income. That is high by historical standards. Over 60 years, from 1948 until the eve of the financial crash and associated recession, average UK Government borrowing was 1.9% of national income.

**Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con):** If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about closing the deficit, why has the Labour party, at every opportunity, thwarted every attempt to keep it under control?

**Chris Evans:** I admire the hon. Gentleman, as he knows; I know his constituency well. I believe that we said there was a rush to pay off the deficit; the former Prime Minister and the previous Chancellor started an unnecessary rush to pay off the debt. We said it needed to be slower. We were concerned about high unemployment and a double-dip recession. But for monetary policy, that might have happened.

After six years of austerity, the deficit this year will be higher than it was for 80% of the time in the 60 years before the financial crash, while debt is now at its

highest level as a proportion of national income since 1965–66. Is it any wonder that when the Tories tell the electorate “Trust us to pay off the deficit”, voters respond by taking their majority away? The Conservative party just do not get it. The electorate told them time and again that they wanted change, but they were given business as usual. Nearly 10 years after the financial crash of 2008, its legacy still weighs heavy on confidence and growth. By its very nature, it rocked financial institutions in this country. Suddenly, phrases such as “safe as houses” or “money in the bank” became laughable clichés. As the Labour Government rushed to bail out the banks and bring about a stimulus that was one of the largest in peace time, the Tories nodded their approval. It was not until much later that, for political purposes, they brought words such as “deficit denial” or “the age of austerity” into the political lexicon.

Sustained austerity has in the main been bad for the British economy. As the deficit fell from 10% to 3.5%, around a percentage point has been reduced from demand each year. The labour market has been unable to return productivity growth to anything resembling pre-crash levels. In June, the British Chambers of Commerce released its second quarterly economic forecast for this year, and the predictions do not make good reading. It forecast that, for the next few years, economic growth would underperform its historical average, falling to 1.3% next year and rising to only 1.5% in 2019. It also predicted that inflation would rise to a five-year high of 3.4% towards the end of the year. Interest rates are also expected to rise by 0.5% in the first quartile of 2018—much earlier than initially predicted. At the same time, there is a tax gap of £36 billion between expected and actual receipts in 2016. We can talk about tinkering with tax levels, but it means very little if we do not collect taxes effectively in the first place.

The Government have still not given any clarity on their plans for the post-Brexit world. The Government’s main tool to address inherent weakness in our economy has been monetary policy. Constraints on how low interest rates could go meant that the Bank of England had to buy gilts—so-called quantitative easing. That move, together with the cut in interest rates to their lowest possible level, has probably kept the lid on high unemployment, but it is only papering over the cracks. Listening to some of the speeches about how sunny the economic outlook is over the years during my time in the House, it has to be asked why people are not cracking open the champagne and singing, “Happy days are here again”? The reason is simple; people feel more anxious than ever, they view innovative technology with suspicion and they fear that jobs will be automated or lost. GDP can be a measure of the health of the Government’s spending, but it can never be a measure of people’s happiness, concerns, or worries.

Productivity has not recovered, and as a consequence, real wages are below what they were a decade ago—something no one alive has ever experienced before. The facts are stark. There is a 16% shortfall in the UK’s productive capacity. Monetary policy can only stabilise demand around the economy’s potential, it cannot increase it. Boosting long-term prosperity is firmly the job of the Government’s structural or supply-side policies—something that has been sorely lacking from the Tories over the past seven years.

Government policies influence investment in education and skills, capacity for research and development, the regulatory environment in which business operates, the flexibility of the labour market and—above all, in the light of Brexit—its openness to trade and investment. In the Queen’s Speech, the Prime Minister said that her Government would work to attract investment in infrastructure, so as to support economic growth. She also spoke of plans to spread prosperity and opportunity across the country.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to welcome record employment in our country?

**Chris Evans:** I admire the hon. Gentleman for the mischief he is trying to cause me. Of course, I will always welcome people being in jobs, but I am concerned about the inherent weakness in the economy, which is the lack of investment and the lack of an industrial strategy over the past seven years.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): I hear the hon. Gentleman saying that the economy is not growing, but my memory of the statistics is that we are the second-fastest-growing economy in the developed world, after Germany. On what metric does the hon. Gentleman say that we are not a fast-growing or strong economy?

**Chris Evans:** The hon. Lady should have listened to my speech earlier—I do not know if she was on her iPhone or something—because I never said anything about growth. I spoke about productivity, which is 16% down. It has not returned to pre-crash levels, and the facts from the IFS bear that out. If the hon. Lady wants to challenge me on that, I am willing to take another intervention.

**Vicky Ford:** I understand that the hon. Gentleman was discussing productivity, but he also challenged the strength of the economy. The economic strength of this country is such that we are the second fastest-growing economy anywhere in the developed world, after Germany.

**Chris Evans:** I accept that we are not growing at the same rate as we have historically. That is the point I was making. I believe there is an inherent weakness in the economy; it has been over-reliant on monetary policy—quantitative easing, low interest rates. But I do not believe that there has been investment in the real economy. That is the point I am making and that is why productivity is down.

The Prime Minister has mentioned the industrial strategy, but it is still empty words. There is no insight or strategy for how the Government will attract investment.

**Neil O’Brien** (Harborough) (Con): The hon. Gentleman says that the industrial strategy is empty words. However, the industrial strategy has involved, for example, the biggest increase in research and development and science spending since 1979. How can he possibly say that those are just empty words? Those are real actions that will increase the trend rate of the growth of the economy.

**Chris Evans:** When productivity is down, those things are too little, too late. They should have been thought of after the financial crash, when the Government told us

[Chris Evans]

from the very beginning that they were going to rebalance the economy and invest in manufacturing. I remember the former Prime Minister even saying at one point that we were going to invest to become an economy that makes things rather than sells them. That has not happened, so it is a bit late in the day to be talking about this.

In the light of the report by the British Chambers of Commerce, it is so important, now more than ever, that the Government implement a strategy to attract investment and generate the economic growth that we all want to see. That is easier said than done in a globalised world. Too many people have been left behind by globalisation. However, globalisation is here, and that will not change. The financial crash was probably the first crisis of globalisation. The only way to address growth, higher inequality and rising insecurity is to build a globalisation that works for all.

Society has to redistribute some of the gains from new technology. Technology constantly evolves and can lead to rapid changes in production, and therefore reskilling must be a constant. In a job market subject to frequent radical changes, people's prospects rely solely on lifelong learning, which should be factored in by each and every employer. In the age in which we live, anyone can produce anything, anywhere. Someone sitting in their bedroom right now can broadcast across the world in minutes. They can sell to anyone at any time. We need to harness that entrepreneurial spirit. It should be the Government's intention to bring that about in a way that equips people with skills for the future.

We live in exciting and changing times. With the right level of investment in our people, the age of austerity can come to an end.

**Leo Docherty (Aldershot) (Con):** The Labour party manifesto had some rather alarming plans for renationalisation, which would have cost more than £100 billion. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how that would be paid for?

**Chris Evans:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for interrupting me just as I entered my finishing flourish; I was trying to come to my rhetorical peak. There are inherent weaknesses in the former nationalised industries. As I was talking about before, people feel that they are being ripped off and have no control. They see energy companies squeezing them all the time, and something has to be done about that. Most people, and basic economics, ask why we would privatise an industry that has no competition. That has been the problem, but that is a debate for another day.

I will finish, because I have spoken for far too long. I have no doubt that, with the right level of investment, the UK economy can seize the opportunities ahead of it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I remind hon. Members that we are very short on time and that there are a lot of Members who want to speak. I suggest that hon. Members keep their remarks to no more than three minutes, otherwise I will have to introduce a time limit after the next speaker.

10.7 am

**Robert Courts (Witney) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan—it is the first time I have had the opportunity to do so. I will keep my remarks very brief because I know a lot of hon. Members want to speak, and I will try not to repeat things that others have said already. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) on securing the debate, which is of enormous significance as we consider the Government's progress since 2010 and where we go as we look forward to a strong economy for the future.

When the Government came to power in 2010, they immediately set about putting right and reducing the massive deficit they inherited from the Labour Government. The deficit has been brought down by three quarters after starting as the highest since records began. At that stage, one pound in every four spent by the Government was borrowed. That deficit has been brought down from 10% of GDP to 3%.

That matters a great deal, for two reasons, the first of which is that anything borrowed has to be paid back. It is a fallacy simply to think that there is a pot of money that can be borrowed and spent, but that there is never a day of reckoning. If the deficit is not dealt with by this Government or this generation, it will have to be dealt with by the generations that follow. It is not responsible—it is not something I wish to be a part of—to hand down to my children and to the children who follow us a debt that we were unwilling to consider repaying.

Secondly, there comes a point when the borrowing rate increases and becomes unsustainable. Owing to the cuts to the deficit that the Government have made, they now pay 1% on their 10-year gilts. That compares favourably with Italy, which pays 2%, or Portugal, which pays 2.9%. That has avoided tens of billions of pounds of extra debt payment.

Borrowing is not free. In the year 2014-15, about £34 billion was spent on servicing debt interest, which is about 4.6% of all Government spending. Depending on how it is managed, that is bigger than the transport budget and approximately equivalent to the defence budget. No one should be under any illusion that, in borrowing such amounts, our spending on debt interest is equivalent to that of a major Government Department of State.

**Neil O'Brien:** You are absolutely right—my hon. Friend is right—to point out that we are paying that much in debt interest payments. You will know that more than a quarter of our debt is held overseas, so by my calculations we are spending something like £10 billion a year to other countries for them to spend on their schools and hospitals. My constituents in Harborough will be shocked that we are spending that much to support public services overseas.

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I remind the hon. Member for Harborough (Neil O'Brien) that he is supposed to address the Chair.

**Robert Courts:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that powerful point. He is right that when we are paying debt interest overseas, we are paying money elsewhere when it could be spent in this country building up the economy and spent on our priorities.

The central point is that a strong economy is needed to fund strong services. It is all very well to have a long list of priorities on which we would like to spend. Let us be under no doubt that everybody Government Member wants strong public services. We want to increase spending, but that must be done in a responsible way. That money, in order to be spent, has to be raised. If public spending is not balanced, it leads to a weaker economy. That means less money to be spent on our public services, and it means that we are in a weaker position to withstand the next economic shock when it comes. In due course, there always will be a downturn in the economy and we need to be in a strong position to meet it when it comes. That is the overriding mistake made by the Labour Government.

Living within our means is not an ideological fixation. It is not simply a desire. It is a necessity to ensure that we can protect our public services and spend sensibly for this generation and for generations to come.

10.12 am

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) on securing this debate. It was somewhat mischievous of him to comment on one side of the Chamber being empty—interestingly, the Government side was empty last week when we were debating WASPI women.

For far too long, balancing the public finances has generally been done on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**David Linden:** I will not, because Members have taken quite a long time. Despite several years of austerity, Her Majesty's Government continue to miss their targets on debt, deficit and borrowing. Quite simply, austerity has failed to rebalance our public finances, and we need to reassess and re-evaluate our approach.

The biggest contributor to a sluggish UK economy and the biggest threat to our public finances is the reckless hard Brexit currently being pursued by Her Majesty's Government. That has not been helped by Labour Members voting to give the Prime Minister a blank cheque by voting against single market membership only two weeks ago.

Scottish National party Members will continue to stand up not only for access to but membership of the single market and customs union. When we look at our public finances, we see a major trade deficit, which in the three months to April was £8.6 billion, up from £6.9 billion in the previous quarter. By turning our back on the single market and pursuing a hard Brexit, we risk delivering further shocks to our already precarious economy.

The UK economy grew by just 0.2% in quarter 1 of this year. In comparison, in the same quarter Scotland's economy grew four times faster. That was somewhat of a surprise, not least because colleagues in the Scottish Conservative party were briefing last week that Scotland was about to move into recession, which certainly did not happen.

We face difficult financial decisions in Scotland, not least because Scotland's budget faces a real-terms cut of £2.9 billion due to UK austerity. That figure of £2.9 billion is significant, because had Barnett consequential been followed during the Government's grubby deal with the Democratic Unionist party, Scotland would have stood to receive £2.9 billion.

I want to move on and to some of my concerns about the deeply worrying consequences posed for Scotland by a hard Brexit. The stark reality is that Brexit threatens to cost the economy around £11 billion by 2030 and result in 80,000 fewer jobs compared with remaining within the EU. We understand and accept that, despite 62% of Scots voting to remain in the EU, we are leaving. However, the Scottish Government have sought to be reasonable and amicable, and have come forward with a compromise that would allow Scotland to remain within the single market. Unfortunately, those pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

We know that Her Majesty's Government are pursuing a reckless approach to the economy, with a hard Brexit coupled to an ideologically driven obsession with austerity. SNP Members believe it does not have to be like that. Cuts are a choice, not a necessity. During the recent general election campaign, we put forward a responsible and credible fiscal plan that would return a balanced budget by the end of the Parliament. However, in doing so, we would generate an additional £118 billion cumulatively over the next Parliament, with around £10 billion flowing to Scotland. Our fiscal plan would stabilise net borrowing at the level it was before the financial crash and see debt begin to fall as a share of GDP from 2019-20.

Ministers and Conservative Members regularly tell us how employment is high under this Conservative Government. What they do not say is that much of that is due to part-time work or, worse still, exploitative zero-hours contracts. Unstable and low pay is a worry for my constituents in the east end of Glasgow, with the Resolution Foundation estimating that the period 2011-2020 will be the worst decade for wage growth in 210 years. That is before we take into account the Government's con trick of the living wage, which will actively discriminate against under-25s.

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**David Linden:** I will not, because of time pressures.

Austerity strangles the lifeblood out of an economy by exacerbating inequality. The Government's tax and welfare reforms disproportionately affect the least well-off. Charities have warned that current planned welfare cuts are set to drive a potential fall in incomes of 10% for the poorest third of working-age households and a rise in inequality not seen since the 1980s.

**Mr Harper:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**David Linden:** In conclusion, let us have a debate about balancing public finances but let us be serious and not balance the public finances on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. I am going to apply a three-minute limit. That still might mean that not everybody gets in. It is for Members to police it and to go below three minutes—you will not be able to go above the three minutes.

10.17 am

**Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) for securing this much-needed debate and for his excellent points.

I want to focus my comments on one issue only: income inequality, which the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) referred to. Almost a year ago today, the Prime Minister gave a statement on the steps of Downing Street in which she focused on her aim to make Britain a country that works for everyone by tackling deep-rooted injustices such as income inequality. That is one of the most pernicious issues facing our country, and it lies at the heart of our Prime Minister's vision for our country. In this Parliament, we are setting out the meaningful ways in which we will effect change.

One thing that came up time and again in my election hustings, and I am sure those of other hon. Members, was the idea of taxing the rich more to pay for all the things on which Opposition Members propose to spend money. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has proposed that as a highly desirable option, which he thinks would lead to lower inequality in our country. However, far from having the desired effect, would that not have precisely the opposite effect?

Is it not a fact that, under the Conservative Government, the people who pay the highest taxes in actual and relative terms are the rich? In 2016-17, the richest 1% in our country are set to pay 27% of all income tax revenue, a higher proportion than under the Labour Government. The richest 5% will pay 38% of total tax. I welcome that. Never let it be said that the Conservatives shy away from taxing the rich. We do tax them, but we do it in a way that delivers real income to the Exchequer. Labour Members—if they were here—would do it in a way that damages the economy, hurts businesses and jobs, and results in tax hikes for ordinary hard-working people, including my constituents in Redditch. Is it not a fact that, under the Conservatives, people on lower incomes are paying less tax than they did in all the years of the Labour Government?

**Mr Harper:** I will be very brief, but I cannot let what the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) said go unchallenged, which is why he did not give way to me. Over the years that the Conservatives have been in power, income inequality has reduced. The country has become more equal, not less. That does not support Opposition Members' arguments, which is why they do not want to hear it, but it is a fact of which Government Members should be very proud.

**Rachel Maclean:** I thank my right hon. Friend—he has managed to make my speech a bit shorter.

I will focus on the lower paid, hard-working earners. For 2017 to 2018, the personal allowance is being raised to £11,500, which means that the amount of tax-free income someone can earn will be more than 75% higher

than in 2010. That means more money in people's pockets to cope with the cost of living, because taking people out of tax has the same effect as giving them a pay rise. We have discussed the importance of giving pay rises to everybody, which I welcome. People are keeping more of what they earn.

I reiterate my right hon. Friend's comment that income inequality is in fact at a 30-year low. It continues to fall, and we want to see it go further. It is the Conservatives who are on the side of the lowest paid—we have taken them out of tax. We are on the side of those earning the minimum wage, and we are boosting their incomes with the national living wage. We are on the side of hard-working people, and we are stabilising the economy so that it creates jobs for people, and they can go to work and earn a decent living. It is the Conservatives who believe in fairness, because we have delivered the lowest levels of income inequality for 30 years, giving people a sense that our country works for everyone.

10.21 am

**Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con):** I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) on securing this debate. I just wish it was much longer, as do we all.

As my right hon. Friend knows, every morning we are admonished about having a desire to please, but it is a salutary warning. It is too easy to spend other people's money, particularly when it is future generations' money we are getting through. I have to take issue with the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans). He referred to the financial crisis and the stewardship of the economy under Lord Darling. It was a privilege to serve in the Treasury in that period. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that no one was under any illusions that, no matter how tough the decisions to be made in 2008 and 2009, the real tough decisions and the real grinding work would happen in the 10 years that followed as we sorted out the fundamental problems left to us by the Labour Government.

A lot of good things have been said today, and I intend to speak briefly so that other good things can be said. My hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts) referred to the level of debt interest payments and the cost of servicing that debt. We have done an extraordinary job as a Government of reducing the share of our deficit from 10% to 3% of GDP. That has still left us with a monumental debt pile, which we all recognise. My hon. Friend the Member for Witney referred to the cost of servicing that debt pile in terms of transport, but I think of it in terms of policing and schools—just to service that debt is equivalent to the amount of money we are spending on both.

We have to consider what would happen if in some ghastly, dreadful other world this country chose to elect a Government that had less of a reputation for fiscal competence and in international markets. Where would our blended interest rate go from then? If it was to the rates currently endured by Spain, Italy or Australia, we would be looking at an increase in our debt service level of 40%, 80% or 120%.

It does not end there. It does not end on the immediate fiscal impact, with the money having to be raised in tax or added to our debt pile. It would also come in the dynamic effects that would flow—it would come in

lower levels of confidence and investment and fewer jobs, meaning lower tax receipts, more borrowing, higher inflation and lower confidence. The cycle goes on.

The Labour manifesto was stuffed full of examples of desiring to please, and the impact on our economy would have been disastrous. Every pound that we borrow now and every pound added to the debt pile is a pound for future generations to pay off with interest. Every pound added to our already high levels of national debt reduces our ability to take sensible measures and make sensible fiscal interventions when the next cyclical downturn happens, as assuredly one day it will. Were we to fail in our generation to rebalance our books, it is the next generation that we would be failing.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. The time limit will now reduce to two minutes.

10.24 am

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I had 90 seconds at the end of the Queen's Speech debate, as the last Government Member to speak, and I will continue that speech for these two minutes.

The point I made then was that austerity is not a choice; that is a facile argument. It is a mathematical reality determined by the size of the national debt, and most importantly, the future liabilities we are starting to accrue. The Office for Budget Responsibility says that in 50 years' time, public spending is expected at current prices to be £156 billion larger than it is today, which is the cost of the NHS plus £10 billion. We have to find that money somewhere or consign our children and grandchildren to terrible austerity.

There are two suggestions for where we find that money. The most important relates to productivity in the public sector. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, if the last Labour Government

"had managed to maintain the 'bang for each buck' at the level it inherited in 1997, it would have been able to deliver the quantity and quality of public services it delivered in 2007 for £42.5 billion less"—

that is equivalent to the defence budget. The enormous savings that come from better productivity cannot be underestimated.

The other part of this, which I feel most passionately about, comes from the debate that came up in the general election about care and the intergenerational covenant. It is a staggering fact that the value of equity in the homes of those over 65, according to Savills, is now £1.5 trillion and earned £26,000 last year for each pensioner household, compared with average national earnings of £27,000, or a graduate entering the workplace on £19,000, with no prospect immediately of getting on the housing ladder and no occupational pension, probably retiring at 75.

If people think we can put off that issue through parliamentary arithmetic, they are deluded. Economic arithmetic means that at some point in the future, as a mathematical certainty, whether we like it or not, the issue of equity for those who benefited from the housing

boom will come up. We have to decide whether we deal with it voluntarily or put it off until we are bankrupt and in desperation.

10.26 am

**Gillian Keegan** (Chichester) (Con): We can change many things in this House. We can pass and change many laws, but the laws we cannot change are those of arithmetic. No matter how big the abacus, no responsible person can ignore the size of our country's debt and the deficit we inherited. Our debt as a percentage of GDP was roughly 30% to 40% for decades, yet now, courtesy of the last Labour Government, compounded by a global recession, that debt is above 80% of GDP. Those figures alone should make it clear that borrowing more at this stage would be completely irresponsible.

How much does that debt cost us in interest payments? Currently we spend £48 billion servicing our debt. That is dead money. What else could we spend it on? There are many areas where we could use that extra cash. It is nearly half the NHS budget; that is a lot of doctors and nurses. It is more than our whole education budget; that is a hefty pay rise for teachers and more school facilities, with plenty of spare change.

I understand that many years of trying to live within our means is hard. However, the short-term happiness of spending will have dreadful consequences for our country's finances and make things even harder. It would be the height of irresponsibility to mortgage our future, and there is no moral case for bingeing on the nation's credit card, least of all when we are forcing others to pay the bill—namely, our children and grandchildren. As anybody who has ever got themselves into credit card debt will understand, it is impossible to pay back the original debt when all your cash is taken paying off the interest payments alone.

That would set us back just at the point when all our leading indicators are heading in the right direction: we have seen a significant reduction in the deficit, which is down by two thirds; unemployment is the lowest it has been for 40 years; the minimum wage is up by 26%; pensions are protected; 1 million new businesses have been created since 2010; and we continue to invest more in our NHS and schools. Those are signs not of a country living under austerity but a nation starting to prosper, despite the dreadful debt burden handed to us by the last Government.

10.28 am

**Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) on securing this really important debate.

Everyone who argues for a splurge on public spending needs to explain where that money will come from. It comes either from increasing taxes or from more borrowing. If we increase taxes, that dampens the economy and takes away people's hard-won earnings. If we borrow, it drives up interest rates. At the moment, we are very fortunate, in that we have hard-won respectability in the financial markets, which has kept interest rates incredibly low. At a time when the Bank of England is warning banks to increase their capital and about the level of household debt, the risks of increased interest rates to

[Charlie Elphicke]

households and mortgage holders are great indeed. We must be mindful of any idea of increasing public spending, given the constraints.

When it comes to tax, we need to look at reforming the system and particularly at how taxation of multinationals works. Amazon pays very little tax in this country and hardly any business rates, yet it is killing our high streets. That is not fair. We need to rebalance the tax system to make a level competitive playing field, not just on our high streets but across the piece in business, so that we have more fairness and all businesses can succeed and compete equally.

Finally, we have a productivity challenge. We must get more investment into the real economy, which is why there should be a much greater focus on both sides of the House. We owe it to all our citizens to do all we can to get the nation a pay rise.

10.30 am

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Economies that lose control of their finances lose control of their destiny and that is why it is absolutely right to focus on living within our means. Conservative Members believe that the best way to do that is to power up an enterprise economy. We all hate austerity; we believe in prosperity. We believe in creating businesses and helping them to grow and expand to create the wealth to fund public services so that we can see them grow and develop.

We must be conscious that as a country we need not only to live within our means but to help our lower paid workers to have the means to live. I am proud of what the Government have done with the national living wage because we want well-paid jobs and decent public services. Productivity is the absolute key to higher wages, often for lower paid workers—a good movement, “Be the Business”, has been launched by Charlie Mayfield today. Technical education is at the heart of that, so the Government are putting it to the front. Dealing with extortionate housing costs in London and the wider south-east is also key to the productivity issue, because high housing costs are a drag on the economy. Our national productivity infrastructure fund, focusing on transport, digital, research, investment and housing, is absolutely the right way forward. We should have common purpose across the House; we must all focus on driving up the country’s productivity.

I am proud that, as a result of the hard things that the Government have had to do, the richest 1% are paying more in tax than happened under Labour and that income inequality is at its lowest since 1986—according to the Office for National Statistics, not the Conservative research department. Finally, the Government have taken 75 measures to raise an extra £140 billion in tax.

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** I will now call the Front-Bench spokesmen. If they take eight or nine minutes each, Mr Harper will have one minute at the end.

10.32 am

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to be in Westminster Hall with you in the Chair, Ms Ryan. I thank the right hon. Member for

Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) for bringing this debate to the House. It is an important debate to have. It highlights the fact that a huge number of Conservative Members live on a different planet from the rest of us. In particular, the speech of the hon. Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean) did not seem to have any link with reality as I and my constituents know it.

Conservative Members are putting out economic soundbites that could easily have been lifted from the Conservative party’s manifesto, but that is not the lived experience of real people. That is not what is happening or what the just-about-managings are facing. They do not feel like their wages have gone up; they do not feel like the reduction in tax credits is at all helpful. I get that the personal allowance has been raised; that is brilliant and I am pleased that it has happened. I also get that the minimum wage has been raised, but it is not to a level that people can live on. That is the problem. It is still a minimum wage and it is not applicable to younger people in the job market. They may have families and housing costs—the same costs that those of us who are over 25 have—yet they are not worth the same wage as others. I am frustrated by the debate because I cannot believe that Members can spill this nonsense.

When the Chancellor gave the spring Budget statement, he reckoned that inflation would be 2.4% in 2017. Actually, in the 12 months to May, it was sitting at 2.9%. The forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility for earnings growth in 2017 was 2.6%. If inflation continues to grow at 2.9% and wages continue to grow at 2.6%, there will soon be a serious problem, particularly for households that are struggling with increasing levels of household debt. The Bank of England is concerned about the increase in household debt, which is at its highest since 2008. This is a real problem for families, especially when they will see their real wages eroded.

**Jeremy Quin:** Is the hon. Lady proposing higher Government spending, higher inflation and higher interest rates?

**Kirsty Blackman:** I was literally about to come to that. There are three ways for the Government to increase spending on public services: higher taxes, higher borrowing or higher growth. Those are not my words but those of the Chancellor, yet whenever an Opposition hon. Member suggests increasing public spending or simply not reducing it, Conservative Members say, “Oh, you will have to put up taxes.” As the Chancellor said, there are three ways to increase public spending.

Some of the things that Conservative Members said are a concern. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) said that, according to the Resolution Foundation, 2011-21 will be the worst decade for pay growth for 210 years. That is quite some statistic.

It is interesting that the Government talk about how wonderfully they are doing for young people. The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that those born in the 1980s have by their early 30s accumulated half as much wealth as those who were born in the 1970s. The right hon. Member for Forest of Dean mentioned the IFS as a respected think-tank, and it won an award last night. If we are talking about mortgaging our future and concerns for the future, the lack of wealth accumulation compared

with previous generations is a real problem, including for millennials. The way the Government are dealing with it is not working.

**Royston Smith** (Southampton, Itchen) (Con): Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Kirsty Blackman:** Not just now; I am conscious of time.

The Government are increasing spending on infrastructure. A recent report from the Institute for Government said that

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

We agree that infrastructure spending is a good thing, but we believe that the processes in place and the Government’s choices are poor and could be much better directed to infrastructure projects that will increase economic growth and create, as the Chancellor said, better spending on public services by growing the economy rather than simply cutting things or increasing taxes.

10.38 am

**Peter Dowd** (Bootle) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your stewardship today, Ms Ryan. I welcome the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to his position. I have no doubt we will have many of these debates in future. I thank the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) for tabling this debate on this important issue and on the need for Governments to balance the books. I also thank hon. Members for inviting me to the 1922 Committee. It is a pleasure. That was a joke—give it a bit of thought and try to keep up.

It is worth looking at the Conservative Government, in which the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean was a Minister for six years when all those decisions were made. Since coming to office, the Conservative Government have consistently failed to balance the books and to abolish the deficit, despite continually pledging to do so.

**Andrew Selous:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Dowd:** May I get further into my speech? I will then be happy to give way.

First, it was promised that the deficit would be abolished by 2015. Then it was pushed back to 2020. We have now been told by the Chancellor that it is likely that it will not be abolished until 2025. The phrase used in the Conservative manifesto—hon. Members will appreciate that I read it avidly—was

“by the middle of the next decade”.

A full 10 years after the former Chancellor originally pledged to do it, and a full 15 years since the Conservatives started making the promise, the books still will not be balanced.

**Andrew Selous:** Does the hon. Gentleman think that our task of reducing the deficit would have been easier or more difficult if we had acceded to the Labour party’s continual requests for more spending and its opposition to every single reduction in spending that we put through?

**Peter Dowd:** The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I am not going to get into hypotheticals or “what ifs” in this debate. We are looking to the future. That was promised. [*Interruption.*] I am sorry; I did not hear what was said. That was promised, but the Conservatives failed to deliver. I do not think that there is a case in modern political history of a British Government so regularly failing to meet their own economic targets.

**Royston Smith:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Dowd:** In a moment, if I may.

A Government can balance the books in many ways, and very many difficult decisions have had to be taken during the past seven years. No one doubts that. However, this Government chose the path of austerity over the long-term prosperity of everyone in the country. Some hon. Members have said that that was not a choice, but it was. The Government chose to cap public sector wages and to cut local council budgets by 40% and in certain cases by as much as 60%, with more on the way.

**James Cartlidge:** Does the hon. Gentleman remember that the 2010 Labour manifesto promised a 1% cap on public sector pay? Does he think that that was because the Labour party does not support public sector workers, or because it was the right thing to do given the circumstances of the economy?

**Peter Dowd:** The reality is that that pay cap has now been institutionalised. It has been there for virtually a decade and it will continue. The Government have also chosen to underfund the NHS and cut £4.6 billion from social care, and they now threaten huge cuts for schools. However, despite those huge and deeply unfair budget cuts to public services, the Government have been able to find £70 billion of tax cuts for those who need them least of all.

Throughout the election campaign, which I might add is a happy memory, we were told that there was no magic money tree that could be used to solve the nation’s financial problems. If anything was magic about it, it was that it turned into a cherry tree, and the Prime Minister proceeded to pick the cherries and hand at least £1 billion-worth to the Democratic Unionist party to keep her in No. 10.

**Alex Chalk:** Under the previous Labour Government, low-paid workers were required to pay tax on earnings above about £6,500. The position now is that they do not pay it on earnings up to about £11,500. Is it not a positive thing to take low-paid people out of tax? Does the hon. Gentleman not welcome that?

**Peter Dowd:** Yes, I welcome anything that helps the low-paid, but that is not the only element in someone’s life chances or in people’s prosperity. The reality is that there was a mendacity in the deal with the DUP that will take a long time to be wiped clean.

Similarly, the Chancellor, in the spring Budget, was able to find a temporary £2 billion to backfill the cuts to social care and then further money to do a U-turn on raising national insurance contributions for the self-employed. There was a bit of cherry-picking there as well. It is clear that the Tories can find money when it is needed to oil the palms of certain people in order to

[Peter Dowd]

assist the Prime Minister in retaining the tenancy of No. 10, and it is all dressed up as being in the national interest. That is not real and it is not acceptable.

When it comes to the long-term health of our economy and a wage rise for dedicated nurses and teachers, there is no money. They will have to continue with the pay they have, year in, year out. The truth is that austerity is not a necessity, but has been used by the Government to fulfil the ideological aim of shrinking the state beyond comprehension and privatising public services. That is a choice that the Government made. They should simply acknowledge that.

There are countless examples of countries taking a different approach. One hon. Member referred to Greece, and another referred to Portugal. The Government of Portugal, our oldest ally, have reduced the country's deficit faster than us, but simultaneously they have restored state pensions, wages and working hours to pre-bail-out levels, and they managed that without crippling austerity. When we use examples, let us have a spread of international examples.

The well-off have done much better in austerity Britain. Meanwhile, those in the public sector have not seen their wages increase. The richest 100 families in the UK have seen their wealth increase by £55.5 billion. The Public Accounts Committee has reported that, while income tax for all taxpayers has risen by 9% under this Government, income tax receipts from high-net-worth individuals have fallen by 20% since 2009-10. That is typical of this Government's approach: those who had nothing to do with the global financial crisis—the bulk of low and middle-income households—are made to pay the price of austerity through slashed services, increased taxes and falling wages, while the richest in society and big corporations get greater tax benefits. The old chestnut that we are all in this together is still trotted out.

**Rachel Maclean:** I made this point in my speech, to which I refer the hon. Gentleman. Does he not agree that the richest 1% in our country are set to provide 27% of all income tax revenue in 2016-17, and that that is a higher proportion than it was under the Labour Government?

**Peter Dowd:** The hon. Lady made that point before, and I will repeat the point that I have just made. The claim is that we are all in this together, but Newcastle University has showed that, while my constituents saw a £195 per head reduction in spending by my local authority between 2010 and 2015, the constituency of the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean had cuts of only half that amount. If we are all in it together, is that fair or reasonable? It is not reasonable. Of course we need to balance the books, but doing it fairly rather than by cherry-picking is crucial. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has reported that for the Government to reach their target, they will have to find an additional £15 billion-worth of spending cuts or tax rises.

There is another question that we must ask ourselves. If this issue is so important, why are we waiting for the Finance Bill? We have waited and waited for the Finance Bill. I hope we get it this side of Christmas—we might get it next Pancake Thursday. I hope we get it on the Floor of the House so that we can debate it.

We can either carry on with the redundant approach of industrial-size spending cuts for most people and tax cuts for the rich and corporations, leading to an economy in the doldrums and falling household incomes, or we can start investing in our country, ensure that everyone pays their fair share, and use a growing economy to help to balance the public finances. We need a real long-term economic plan, without magic cherry trees, without bungs and smoke and mirrors, and without a Prime Minister who barely has the support of her Cabinet, let alone her party, and certainly not the country. We need a long-term economic plan for the many, not the few, and given the state of the Tory party under the Prime Minister, I do not think that that is far away.

10.48 am

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):** It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) for securing this extremely important debate and for the impassioned and meticulous way—we have grown used to that in his case—in which he dealt with some of the most important issues that our nation faces.

Many hon. Members have this morning gone back to 2010, as is right and proper, and set the debate in that context. Let us remind ourselves that in 2010 the deficit was 9.9% of GDP. To put that in context, the last time the Labour party put us into very deep and troublesome economic waters was in 1976, when the figure was somewhat lower but still led to the then Chancellor, Denis Healey, having to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund because this country was bust. That is the perilous background.

Over the past seven years we have made extremely good progress. We have reduced the deficit by three quarters and, according to OBR forecasts, are probably about two years ahead in terms of the interim targets that we have set and that have been discussed in this debate. One of the most spiriting aspects of the debate on the Government side of the Chamber has been the focus that was rightly placed on our huge economic achievements. Let us not forget that employment is at a record high, there are more women in employment now than at any other time in our history, unemployment is at its lowest level since the mid-1970s and, as many Members have rightly pointed out, we have sustained levels of economic growth that other members of the G7 would be proud of and wish to achieve.

However, as many Members have said, we cannot duck the fact that our level of indebtedness, which will peak at the end of this financial year at 89% of GDP, is too high. It is unsustainable. It is not just a burden on future generations, as has been pointed out, but means that we are vulnerable to external economic shocks. We need to get that level down.

**Alex Chalk:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a sobering fact that in 2007 Greece had a debt to GDP ratio of 100%? The fact that ours is close to 90% means that we have to take this matter very seriously for our national security and that of future generations.

**Mel Stride:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If we do not start to see the figure coming down, it can only bode ill for the future. That is why we are so determined to get it down.

Turning to the contributions that have been made, my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean made important points about our record on growth and jobs, about the threat of interest rate hikes if we fail to get on top of our debt and about keeping taxes low, particularly for our businesses. Many Members have made the point that as we have reduced corporation taxes the actual tax yield has increased, which rather suggests that the Opposition's policy of raising them would be counterproductive in every sense. He made very important points about public sector pay. Let us not forget that this is not just about controlling public sector pay and spending, but about preserving jobs. The OBR reckons that by sticking to our plans we are protecting about 200,000 jobs in the public sector. When we talk about the 10,000-plus more nurses and 10,000-plus more doctors in the NHS, one of the reasons we have them is that we have given ourselves the room to afford them.

If I may, I will turn now to the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans), who made an impassioned attempt to take on the powerful arguments from the Government side. He is somewhat outnumbered. He suggested that he was like Lieutenant Custer. Of course, at Custer's last stand, which was in 1876 at the battle of the Little Bighorn, unfortunately Custer was annihilated: he lost five companies, two of his brothers, a nephew and a brother-in-law to boot. It is remarkable that the hon. Gentleman is still standing after the onslaught from the hordes on our side of the Chamber today.

The hon. Gentleman made one point about the tax gap. He bemoaned the fact that, at £36 billion, it is higher than we would like it to be. That is absolutely true, but what he did not mention is that it represents 6.5% of the tax that we raise and is at the lowest level for very many years. As another hon. Member pointed out, since 2010 we have had about 55 new tax avoidance measures that in total have raised no less than £140 billion, which is three times the size of the deficit we face.

My hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts) delivered the essential truth that borrowing must be repaid and the intergenerational unfairness of failing to do so. He made important points about the cost of servicing our debt and that if we lose the confidence of financial markets, those costs will rocket, to our detriment. The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) referred to Brexit as an ideological obsession, but I say no, actually: it is respecting the democratic will of the people. Although I, probably like him, was on the other side of that argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean) made some very important points. The Opposition always say that we are looking after the wealthiest in society, but the truth is a long way from that. Some 27% of tax is paid by the wealthiest 1% in this country. A statistic that could also have been used is that the wealthiest 3,000 people in our country pay as much tax as the poorest 9 million. We are doing a huge amount on the issue of income equality.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin) made an impassioned speech in which he referred to the importance of keeping interest rates low by keeping on top of the debt. My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartledge) finished his contribution on the Queen's Speech debate today, and I am glad that

he did because he made some important points, particularly on productivity, and quite rightly referred to our £23 billion productivity investment fund.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) gave a powerful speech and referred, I think, to the shadow Secretary of State for Education's performance on "The Andrew Marr Show" on Sunday, when the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner) referred to Labour having a large abacus. I have to say that my jaw hit the Stride sofa when I heard her say that it would cost about £100 billion to wipe out student debt and that this was something they were looking at.

**Mr Harper:** The other point that the shadow Education Secretary made was putting her leader straight when she admitted that more working-class children were able to go to university with tuition fees and that it is simply not correct to keep asserting what he says, which is that fewer had done so. The fact that she put her leader right was spot on.

**Mel Stride:** As ever, my right hon. Friend is entirely correct.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke) made important points about retaining the confidence of financial markets, and my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) talked about the importance of productivity, technical education, infrastructure, housing and all those elements, which matter.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) did at least welcome the personal allowance increases that we have implemented. They are now at £11,500 compared with about £6,500 in 2010, and will increase to £12,500 over the coming period. She made various comments about pressures on pay and wage growth, but one fact that I will share with her is that those in full-time work on the minimum wage have actually seen pay boosted by £1,400 a year going back to 2010. That is an achievement that this Government should be rightly proud of.

I very much welcome the hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) to his place and look forward to a constructive engagement over the weeks, months and years of this Government. He said that he has read the Conservative party manifesto. I urge him to read it again and again and to learn from it. I am afraid that even though he has read it, he has failed to explain how to square more spending and spending, taxing and taxing and borrowing and borrowing with future sustainable economic success.

May I finish with one overall observation? The Opposition are very keen at every turn to say that our commitment to what they call "austerity" and what I call "living within our means" is some form of harsh, uncaring cruelty. Surely the cruellest cut of all is when a politician struts the stage telling the audience that which they most dearly wish to hear, but knowing in his heart that he has no way of delivering it—knowing in his heart that what he suggests will lead to financial and economic ruin. When we look at that situation, what question do we have to ask? We have to ask: who will be most hurt if we go back to the days of 1976? The answer is the most vulnerable—the poorest—because they are the least nimble and the least well-resourced to get out of the way of the damage. They are the people who lose their jobs and cannot cope. They are the

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people who see interest rates on their mortgages go through the roof, and struggle to pay as a consequence. As many Members have also said, the others who suffer are the young and the as yet not born—those who end up being saddled with the debt of the profligacy of our generation and have to pay it down themselves.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean for securing this debate. We must stay the course. We must make the hard choices. We must make it the first priority of this Government to have a responsible stewardship of our public finances.

10.59 am

**Mr Harper:** I am particularly grateful to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury for closing his speech so excellently, because it leaves us with this one thought: balancing the public finances and having sound public finances is not an academic exercise; it is about enabling growth and jobs and allowing us to protect the most vulnerable in society, allowing the investment in public services, as my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) set out, and making sure that we can deliver on those important promises. Those who do not want to live within their means—the hon. Member for Bootle (Peter Dowd) spent a lot of money in his speech but did not set out how he could save it—would disappoint people, let them down and fail them. That is not a mistake that we are going to make.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

## Social Inequality (Children's Centres)

11 am

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the role of children's centres in tackling social inequality.

It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. This issue is close to my heart. I am a secondary school teacher—at least, I used to be—and a primary school governor, and I have a burning desire to ensure that every child, no matter what their background, gets the best possible start in life. I keep reading that the Government agree, but where is the consultation on children's centres that we were promised in late 2015? A recent ministerial written answer said that the details will be published in due course. I start with a simple plea: please do not wait. We are days away from the summer holiday. In new, young lives, one year without intervention squanders many years of potential rewards.

I will make the case for why children's centres are worth investing in. The accelerating demise of access to children's centres across the country over the last seven years is one of the saddest outcomes of austerity. The evidence showed that they worked. If we are serious about creating a society where every child fulfils their potential, we need to get serious about breaking cycles of deprivation. We must not just listen to the evidence but act on it.

It is a sad fact that a child's parents' circumstances remain the best predictor of how that child will do as an adult. Well-respected organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children have presented evidence over many years showing that, if we want to break that cycle and create a fairer society, we must not only focus on the bottom 5% but cast a much wider net to avoid stigmatisation and build community resilience.

Every single one of the children's centres in my constituency closed last year. In fact, Oxfordshire County Council set out in 2013 to close all 44 children's centres in Oxfordshire, explicitly to save £8 million from the early intervention budget as part of a £22.5 million saving across the department as a whole. Following a big grassroots campaign, the Liberal Democrats proposed a £1 million transition fund, which was added to a cross-party budget in 2014. It has led to support for 29 community-led schemes, including in Kidlington, Cutteslowe, Botley and soon South Abingdon. However, they will provide only some of the services previously provided by the children's centres, and one is run entirely by volunteers—I thank those volunteers especially for their hard work and service. There is no clear plan for what will happen after three years, and no long-term, sustainable solution.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Lady will know that I have some involvement as Chair of the Select Committee on Education at the time that children's centres were established. She is right: all the research shows that early interventions such as Sure Start and children's centres are the answer, but up and down the country, children's centres have closed, and there is no policy and no money for early years intervention. I am glad that she is taking up the cudgels.

**Layla Moran:** These stories demonstrate why it was a big mistake to remove the ring fence from the Sure Start budget. What we have seen across the country is that the seemingly more urgent issues of older children, such as behaviour management and preventing teenage pregnancy and drug use, win out. The older a child gets, the harder it is to intervene, and the more expensive the interventions become. Given the difficult choices and the reality of cuts, it is no wonder that measures provided by children's centres have not been given the prominence that they deserve. After all, those children have yet to impact others.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. Clearly, there is a lot of evidence that investment in the early years is good for children's future life chances, but does she also agree that the issues are not entirely mutually exclusive? Unwanted pregnancies and the issues facing single-parent families can be dealt with through effective interventions linked to children's centres. They work well. That is an important point for investment.

**Layla Moran:** I agree entirely. Joined-up thinking in early intervention is important.

Parents tell me that children's centres are a lifeline. The services that they provide, such as parenting support and breastfeeding and baby health advice, are valued by many, but almost as important is the sense of community that they create. Families who would never normally interact bond over the common challenge of making it through the day with a delightful but occasionally demanding toddler. How many parents have met friends for life at Stay and Play? It takes a whole community to achieve such aims, and there should be no stigma in asking for help.

In the past, the Government have accused those who raise the issue of being obsessed with the number of buildings. I am not, but I am obsessed with outcomes and access, and I can tell the Minister that we have a problem, especially with access. The impact on access comes from a double whammy: the remaining centres are far apart, and local transport links have been reduced. The convenience of getting to a site is a key factor for the families who need the services the most. I believe that we are at risk of leaving behind the same families that the Government purport to want to target.

I met a lovely woman a few weeks ago in Kidlington who explained that the new centre there has reopened but on a different site, and that it offers fewer services than the original centre. She had recently given birth to her seventh child, in a family that already included two sets of twins—I told her I thought she was a saint. Both she and her partner work full-time to support them all, but they are just getting by. Because the centre has moved out of walking distance and there is no direct bus link, she feels she can no longer get there. She said, "I can't face the journey, and also when I get there, they can't cater for everyone. I used to be able to go and there was something for all of us as a family to do. I really love to go, but it's just too much hassle."

**Mr Sheerman:** The hon. Lady is being generous. Did she see the Children's Commissioner's report, launched yesterday, on how many children in this country are

vulnerable on all the criteria? Will she please talk to the Children's Commissioner about her campaign? At the moment, there are so many vulnerable children out there, and given the cuts in local government finance, local governments are unable to run proper children's services?

**Layla Moran:** I imagine she was quite busy with her seven children, but I will encourage her to do so.

One anecdote should not policy make. As motherhood and apple pie as this all sounds, I believe that education policy should be firmly evidence-based, so let us consider that. More needs to be done to ensure that all services provided by children's centres are evidenced and effective. I applaud the work of the Early Intervention Foundation as one of many organisations adding to that body of evidence. We need much more of it. I also believe that all staff should be well-trained and properly qualified, and that allowances need to be made for differences in population. What works in one setting does not always work in another. We need to give credit to the professionals who can make an in-depth judgment, in the moment, of what works for the families in front of them.

The Government's own evidence shows that interventions for one to three-year-olds play a vital role in life chances, especially for the poorest children. The Oxford University children's centres study that was instigated by the Department for Education reported last year. It backed up what countless studies before it had showed: the benefit of interventions such as baby health and parenting support. Not only do they give value for money by improving outcomes for families as a whole; down the line, they help to reduce the chances of bad behaviour or smoking and raise educational attainment. The study further extrapolated that interventions will reduce joblessness and raise incomes for children in the future. What is there not to love?

As we have seen in Oxfordshire, the problem is that there is no budget. We need real long-term thinking at central Government level. The results of these interventions will not be seen again by the Exchequer until the children themselves start to pay it back in decades to come, but in my view it is worth the wait. Part of the answer is money. Hon. Members ask where it will come from. Frankly, it will come from the future. We borrow to invest in our own finances at home to reap rewards later, and the same principle applies. There is no single magic wand, but several magic wands waved early enough can make a big difference.

I look forward to the Minister's reply and to contributions from colleagues. In my view, nothing is more important than the wellbeing of the next generation. Children's centres are a proven and cost-effective way of promoting just that. Let us give our children everything we can and invest in them now, as a down payment on a more equal and fairer society in future.

11.11 am

**The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Robert Goodwill):** I am very pleased to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Ryan. I congratulate the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) on securing this incredibly important debate.

Tackling inequality is an absolute priority for the Government. I am pleased to have the opportunity to set out our position on the valuable contribution that

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children's centres can make to the lives of disadvantaged children. I reassure the hon. Lady that I, too, have a burning desire to help these children. The Government are committed to improving social mobility and extending opportunity to all.

Children's centres can play a very important role in offering families access to a wide range of flexible local services. I was fortunate enough to visit a fantastic children's centre in my Scarborough constituency not so long ago, where I saw for myself how important children's centre services can be to families with young children. Indeed, all three children's centres in my constituency are still open. I was interested to hear from families and staff there that the people they really want to help are not in the children's centres—they are the people who do not engage and do not see the advantage of coming. One of my tasks in my new role is to ensure that we can get to those families who are not in the children's centres and in some cases are not even taking up the free childcare that is available. They are probably at home watching daytime television and do not see the importance of the home learning environment, or indeed the importance of taking up the offer that is there from this Government.

Children's centre services can include early years provision, child and family health services, information, advice, training and employment services for parents, and social services for those parents who need extra support.

**Dr Poulter:** On improving the offer for people who are among the most disadvantaged and most in need of support and help, does the Minister agree that there is a certain fragmentation when it comes to joining up the work of health visitors and family nurses, who support some very disadvantaged families, with the opportunities available in children's centres, which support some equally disadvantaged families?

**Mr Goodwill:** My hon. Friend makes a very reasonable point that relates not just to children, but to the elderly: health and social services do not necessarily speak to each other or work together as much as they might want to. However, I pay tribute to the tremendous work of health visitors, particularly when new babies are born and families need assistance.

**Mr Sheerman:** I welcome the Minister to his role. I do not want to be nasty to him on his first outing, but he mentioned people watching daytime television. I have to say that many of the people we are talking about are trying to keep their lives together by doing three jobs on zero-hours contracts rather than watching daytime television. How many children's centres are still there? How many were there in 2010, how many were there in 2015, and how many are there now? That is the crucial point: they are closing all over the country, especially in the areas of greatest deprivation. What is the Minister going to do about it?

**Mr Goodwill:** I should make a particular point about the offer that is available from this Government. We are improving the amount of childcare available. The point I made about daytime television was a point made by the staff at the children's centre I visited. The issue that

the hon. Gentleman should look at, particularly in respect of those working, is the offer coming forward in September for 30 hours of childcare for those in work. It will be a great opportunity for those who have been juggling work and childcare responsibilities. Indeed, many people will now be able to work during office hours, so to speak. Many families have had the problem of the husband and wife passing in the doorway at 6 in the evening when the husband returns from work and the wife has to go out to do additional—

**Mr Sheerman:** Will the Minister give me the numbers at some stage?

**Mr Goodwill:** Yes, I will. The position is not as bad as the hon. Gentleman points out. Let me give him some figures on childcare centres. Oxfordshire County Council had to close 41 of its children's centres in the first quarter, including several in the constituency of the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon. However, according to information supplied by local authorities, there were 2,447 children's centres and an additional 735 linked sites—a total of 3,182 children's centre sites—at the end of May 2017. Some 457 children's centres had closed since 2010, and 14 new centres had opened.

I hope those figures clarify the matter. There had been some confusion in cases where a number of sites had been operated by one provider. Those should not be counted as closures, because those sites are still open.

**Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con):** On a positive note for the provision of children's services in Oxfordshire, does the Minister join me in welcoming the council's development of a new service for children that will combine children's social care and early intervention, so that there is one seamless service?

**Mr Goodwill:** Yes, absolutely. It is about providing a joined-up service, and enlightened local authorities understand that. They also need to ensure that the additional offer and the additional money going into childcare—more than £6 billion by 2020—dovetail with their own provision.

My next point follows on from that. Children's services do not have to deliver all their services themselves. Indeed, they deliver many of them through local statutory, voluntary, community and private sector partners. The context in which children's centres operate has changed since they were established. Funding for children's services, including children's centres, gives local authorities the freedom to decide how best to target resources and respond flexibly to local need.

We believe that it is up to local authorities to decide how to organise and commission services from children's centres in their areas. Local authorities are best placed to understand local needs and how best to meet them, which does not always have to be through a children's centre building. For example, the Government have established the troubled families programme to support those with multiple problems. Responsibilities around public health for under-fives now sit with local authorities.

**Dr Poulter:** The Minister is being generous in giving way. I congratulate him, as I should have done earlier, on his new position. The point about troubled families is concerning for all hon. Members present, given the

difficult financial position that local authorities find themselves in. The level of provision is left to local decision making, but local authorities in difficult times often provide only the statutory minimum. There is a real challenge here, so what will the Minister do about it? How will he link up the good work done in early years by health visitors with what happens afterwards? Many disadvantaged families are losing out, which is affecting the children as well as the families themselves.

**Joan Ryan (in the Chair):** Order. Interventions need to be pithy.

**Mr Goodwill:** My hon. Friend makes another very reasonable point. Indeed, one of the challenges in our opportunity areas, where we are particularly focusing on disadvantage and how we can close the attainment gap, is considering how we can make early interventions with those hard-to-reach families, many of whom do not take up the childcare offer that is available—15 hours of childcare are available for disadvantaged two-year-olds. Indeed, for those in work—many of these families are in work despite having difficulty in making ends meet—the 30 hours available from September will be a great fillip.

**Mr Sheerman:** Before the Minister moves on from that point, will he allow me to make one more intervention?

**Mr Goodwill:** Yes, by all means.

**Mr Sheerman:** The Minister is a good, honest Yorkshireman—I know him to be one—so will he give me a straight answer to a question? He knows that the Children's Commissioner made that announcement to which I referred. There was no Government Minister at the launch of the commissioner's report on Monday, and I cannot understand why. Regarding all these vulnerable children, we know that the troubled families programme has been a disaster. What have the Government learned from that and what are they going to do to react to the commissioner's report, which, as I say, was launched only this Monday?

**Mr Goodwill:** I met the commissioner the week before and we discussed some of the points that she has made. Indeed, her work is very valuable in feeding into what this Government are doing and will continue to do in future to address the problem. As I have already said, we have introduced 15 hours a week of free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds and the diversity of childcare provision means that children's centres play less of a role in delivering childcare themselves.

I am sure hon. Members agree that it is vital that every child, regardless of their background, is given the opportunity to reach their full potential. We know that the first few years of a child's life are critical to shaping their future development. We also know that high-quality pre-school education reduces the effects of multiple disadvantage on later attainment, and on progress in both primary and secondary school. We recognise the crucial importance of early years education. With two fifths of the attainment gap embedded by the age of five, improving outcomes for our most disadvantaged children remains a top priority for this Government.

The evidence shows that all children benefit from a high-quality pre-school experience, but disadvantaged children see additional benefits that continue beyond school. Children from less advantaged backgrounds can be up to 19 months behind in their learning by the time they start school. That is simply unacceptable. We want to close this gap. High-quality learning from the age of two can help us to do so.

This Government have invested heavily in childcare and early years education. By 2020, we will spend a record £6 billion per year on childcare. We will also invest an additional £1 billion per year by 2020 in the provision of free childcare entitlements. In response to concerns from providers, we have increased the average funding rate for disadvantaged two-year-olds from £5.09 per hour to £5.39 per hour. The early years pupil premium continues to provide over £300 per eligible child, and we have also committed to provide supplementary funding of around £55 million per year for maintained nursery schools until 2020.

It is fantastic that more and more children are benefiting from that support. Currently, 97% of four-year-olds and 93% of three-year-olds are accessing funded early education. In addition, I welcome the figures that were published just last week showing a further increase in the proportion of the most disadvantaged two-year-olds accessing funded early education, which now stands at 71%. Nevertheless, I am happy to work with the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon to increase that figure, including in her constituency.

**Mr Sheerman:** That is a deluge of statistics and information, which I very much appreciate—all Members who are here today will be grateful for them and we will all want to trawl through them. However, has the Minister discussed the present situation with the National Day Nurseries Association, which is a very lively organisation that is based in my constituency of Huddersfield? Its staff are very wise, so will he please meet them very soon to discuss early years provision?

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right—we have a deluge of delivery for our young children. I am very proud that we are stepping up to the mark in that regard. I would be more than happy to meet his constituents in Huddersfield to discuss that. My wife used to run a pre-school playgroup and then went on to work as a classroom assistant, so I know from experience within the family how important this type of provision is—if it helps at all, my mother was a primary headteacher.

What is more, the 30 hours programme, which will roll out nationally in September, will support around 390,000 working parents with the cost of childcare. I am pleased that 100,000 working parents have already registered for this additional childcare. I encourage working parents who have not already registered to do so before the deadline at the end of August.

Although children's centres themselves provide just 1% of funded early education places for three and four-year-olds, they can help to identify and support families who otherwise would be unlikely to take advantage of early childhood services. In particular, children's centres often encourage eligible families to take up our offer of 15 hours a week of free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds. Children's centres also work

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closely with local providers, offering funded places for two-year-olds to four-year-olds to ensure that families who need that crucial extra support receive it.

I am pleased that outcomes for children are improving. Early years foundation stage profile results show that, in 2016, 81.6% of children achieved at least the expected level in communication and language, compared with 72.2% in 2013. More children are achieving a good level of development by the age of five, and the gap between disadvantaged children and others continues to narrow, from 19 percentage points in 2013 to 17.3 percentage points in 2015-16. That is encouraging news and I am determined to make further progress.

The quality of early education is hugely important. In December 2016, 93% of providers on the early years register were judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. As of January 2016, most two-year-olds benefiting from free early education were doing so in a high-quality setting. We also know that we need to invest in the dedicated people who are responsible for delivering early years education and care including, I suspect, those represented by the organisation that the hon. Member for Huddersfield referred to, which is in his constituency. Earlier this year, we published our early years workforce strategy to help employers to support, attract, retain and develop staff to deliver high quality provision.

I have a few moments to comment on some of the points made in the debate. The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon referred to the previous commitment to consult on the future of children's centre services, of which I am aware. The Government are committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of background, get the best possible start in life. I will consider carefully whether we can take additional steps. Indeed, the debate has fed into my thoughts.

The hon. Lady mentioned the closure of Sure Start children's centres. Children's centres have an important role to play in tackling disadvantage, but it is for councils to decide the best solutions for their area. Some councils are merging centres to deliver services more efficiently. Where councils decide to close a children's centre, they must demonstrate first that children and families, and particularly the most disadvantaged children and families, will not be adversely affected. Secondly, they must demonstrate that they still meet the duty to have sufficient children's centres to meet local need.

I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon for raising the incredibly important issue of tackling inequality. This Government have made a substantial financial investment in the early years and we want to ensure that it works for everyone, including the most disadvantaged.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.28 am

*Sitting suspended.*

## Social Mobility

[MARK PRITCHARD *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Government policies on social mobility.

It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. This debate builds on debates that were called in the previous Parliament. I believe that social mobility—or the lack thereof for the many—is the big issue of our time. It is creating a divided Britain, which not only is bad for our economy and our future, but is the defining issue of our time, as we have seen in recent elections and referendums.

**Thelma Walker** (Colne Valley) (Lab): The recent report on social mobility confirmed the points that have been raised about our divided nation. Over the past 20 years we have come to have a new geographical divide, an income divide and a generational divide. The geographical divide is between successful city regions and places such as my constituency of Colne Valley and Kirklees, which have seen a lack of regional investment, leading to cuts that are affecting the most vulnerable. This Government have failed to address social inequality in all three areas.

**Lucy Powell:** I thank my new hon. Friend for raising those important points, which I will elaborate on further.

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Not that the hon. Lady needs any time to prepare her answer to that question, but may I just say that I think the gentlemen might be suffering a little with the heat? It is very warm, so colleagues should please feel free to remove their jackets.

**Lucy Powell:** That is why some of us wore dresses.

There is the intergenerational inequality and the lack of opportunity for today's young people to progress, which I think was brought to the fore in the general election, and there is also the huge regional inequality that my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Thelma Walker) mentioned.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate on such an important topic. The Government are currently undertaking the youth full-time social action review, and last year I was lucky enough to visit City Year UK, which is a full-time social action programme. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important to support such organisations and that the Government should listen to the review's recommendations when they are published in December?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes a good point, and I am sure that the Minister will listen to what he has to say.

We have huge regional inequality and many communities have been left behind, which I think was expressed in the Brexit vote. We have stubborn wealth inequality, with a growing divide between rich and poor. Our country's failings on social mobility is the national challenge. As the Social Mobility Commission's excellent report "Time For Change: An Assessment of Government

Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017” shows, despite some progress and well-intentioned policies, progress by successive Governments over the past 20 years has been painfully slow. The report by the commission, which is chaired by the right hon. Alan Milburn, states that

“successive governments have failed to make social mobility the cornerstone of domestic policy”.

That is the argument that I am putting forward today.

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): My hon. Friend is right to refer to the report, because it is a powerful document. Much of it talks about the need for investment in early years and schools as the vehicle for social mobility. How does she think the Government can square that with the cuts to early years and schools? For example, Parris Wood High School in my constituency—a school she knows well—faces losing the equivalent of 30 teachers between now and 2020.

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. Parris Wood High School, which I attended and which my son now attends, is an outstanding comprehensive school, but it will struggle to continue to be so if those cuts come forward.

**The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Robert Goodwill)** *rose*—

**Lucy Powell:** Perhaps we will hear more from the Minister on that point.

**Mr Goodwill:** I thank the hon. Lady for calling the debate, which provides us with a good opportunity. Will she welcome the fact that in her constituency 29,686 more children are in good or outstanding schools than were in August 2010? Is not that great progress from this Government?

**Lucy Powell:** We have seen some great progress and I will come on to that. In my constituency most of that progress has come from local leadership as well, and I will mention that later.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): What the Minister says is belied by the fact that in further education in Coventry there have been cuts of roughly 27% and in the youth service there will be no funding for youth leaders, which does not exactly help the situation. Does my hon. Friend agree that if we are not careful we will create another lost generation?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. Post-16 and youth service funding is critical to the debate and I will touch on that later.

I urge all colleagues to read the Social Mobility Commission’s powerful report. It highlights the fact that the challenges we faced in 1997 are very different from those we face in 2017. It rightly calls for social mobility to be at the heart of all Government policy, decisions and actions, because it is only through a prolonged, determined and comprehensive Government-wide strategy that we may actually start to change the entrenched inequalities and the lack of social mobility for the many. The social mobility agenda is about the many, not the tiny few we often hear about who manage

to get themselves from the council estate to the boardroom or around the Cabinet table. The Prime Minister says that she is looking for a national purpose that brings all parties and the country together, and I say to her that if she made tackling social mobility her calling and the key test for her Government, against which all her actions were tested, she would get wide support from across the House.

Before looking at some of the policy areas where more needs to be done, let us remind ourselves why tackling the divides in Britain is so important. The Sutton Trust has found that failing to improve Britain’s low levels of social mobility will cost the UK economy a staggering £140 billion a year by 2050, or the equivalent of 4% of GDP. On current trends, by 2022 there will be 9 million low-skilled people chasing just 4 million low-skilled jobs, yet there will be a shortfall of 3 million higher-skilled people for the jobs of the future. The economic divides are even starker when we look at the regional disparities. Output per person in London is more than £43,000 a year, yet in the north-east of England it is less than £19,000. London and some of our renewed cities, such as my own city of Manchester, are increasingly the home of graduates and have vibrant growing economies.

**Gloria De Piero** (Ashfield) (Lab): Getting kids from ordinary backgrounds to university is a key way of enabling them to move up and get on. Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the previous Labour Government on increasing student numbers, while acknowledging that there is still work to be done, particularly in post-industrial towns such as Ashfield, where we send only 21% of 18-year-olds to university, compared with an English national average of 32%?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend’s excellent point fits entirely with one of the main thrusts of the Social Mobility Commission’s report, which is that there are huge regional inequalities, particularly between our growing and vibrant cities, where many graduates live and work, and our heartland towns and former industrial places.

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): My hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way. Does she agree that it is not just geography but ethnicity that makes a difference? We sing long about the successes of London, but if we look at who is doing well in our schools, we see that it tends to be young people from black and Asian backgrounds, with white working-class kids still not making progress.

**Lucy Powell:** That is another excellent point. My hon. Friend will know about that issue from her own constituency.

**Rishi Sunak** (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con): Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Lucy Powell:** Yes, but then I will have to make some progress.

**Rishi Sunak:** I thank the hon. Lady for giving way, and I commend her for securing this debate on a topic I know she is passionate about, and about which she has spoken passionately in the past. She was just talking about access to higher education. Will she welcome the

[*Rishi Sunak*]

fact that access for working-class families is at an all-time high, with students from working-class backgrounds now 70% more likely to apply to university than 10 years ago? Indeed, that was one of the areas on which the Milburn report gave a green light when evaluating the Government's progress.

**Lucy Powell:** I am happy to accept that point, which the report talks about more broadly, but challenges remain. There are some warning signs on the horizon and we should be careful that we do not end up taking a backward step in this important area.

The Social Mobility Commission has found that the generational divide is yawning. Over the past 20 years, poverty among pensioners has halved and their income today, on average, exceeds that of working adults. Meanwhile, young people's earnings have fallen. That cannot continue. It is no wonder that we saw a huge upsurge of anger, activism and engagement from younger voters at the general election. The wealth and income divide has also become much wider over the past 20 years, with top pay increasing much faster than the incomes of lower earners. In 1998 the highest earners were paid 47 times that of the lowest. By 2015 the highest earners were paid 128 times more than the lowest. Gaps in wealth have also grown exponentially, with home ownership and house price inflation benefiting the lucky few who already own their home. It is not just about the economic price we pay for these failings; as a society, these divisions are causing unrest, anger and resentment. That is leading to political volatility and, arguably, the rise of populism.

Those are just some of the reasons why the social mobility agenda is so important. It needs to be not only at the heart of all Government policy, but a national mission for our country. Successive Prime Ministers—Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and our current Prime Minister—have spoken a great deal about social mobility. Most recently, the current Prime Minister spoke about the “burning injustices” of our society. However, the Government's approach, while making progress in some areas, has not matched the rhetoric and has been piecemeal and disconnected.

Let us look at what could be done about social mobility. There are many recommendations in the Social Mobility Commission report and from the Sutton Trust, Teach First and many others. Recommendations should not be limited to education policy—far from it. Every Budget, every Bill and every policy should be judged against whether it tackles inequalities and boosts social mobility for everybody, everywhere. There needs to be a single cross-departmental plan to deliver social mobility.

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate and making an excellent opening speech. We know that the challenge with social mobility begins in childhood. An estimated 3,300 children in my constituency are living in households with problem debt. One suggestion has been to give a breathing space to families facing problem debt by giving them 12 months to try to get back on their feet. Does she agree that that is one step the Government could take to make a big difference to families getting themselves out of problem debt?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. That is another great idea that I hope the Minister will respond to, and it shows the extent to which these policy areas need to be looked at across the piece.

Tackling social mobility also means looking at difficult issues such as inheritance tax, transport spending and social care. All those policies need to be looked at through the lens of social mobility. However, today I will focus on a few areas for which the Minister has responsibility, and for which the evidence and action needed are known and relatively straightforward. The first is early years, which colleagues and the Minister will know is a bug bear of mine, so I hope they will allow me to expand on that for a moment. It is well documented that by the time children reach the age of five there is already a big gap in school readiness or development between those from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Action for Children found that more than half of children from low-income families do not reach the expected milestones by the age of five. Often that gap is never fully closed during a child's schooling.

Given that we know some of what works, why are we not doing more? Over the past 20 years we have made some progress through family support services, Sure Start centres, quality early education and targeted approaches, such as the offer for two-year-olds. However, in recent times and with what is upcoming, the agenda seems to be moving backwards.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Does she agree that one of the Departments that needs to be brought into this conversation is the Home Office? I am thinking specifically about incidents of domestic violence, which have been increasing in my constituency. Experiencing and being a victim of domestic violence impacts on children, particularly very young children, and their educational attainment.

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. Being in a domestic violence setting at home can have the most profound impact on the outcome of any child. We need to link that with children's services and other family support services. She is absolutely right.

The Government's emphasis is now almost entirely on childcare support for working families. That is a laudable aim in itself, but it perhaps focuses huge resources away from social mobility outcomes. Almost all the money for the 30 hours of free childcare for working families and tax-free childcare will go towards better-off families. Those policies are taking the Government's focus away from other issues. By definition, the most disadvantaged do not get the extra support, and the delivery of the new policies is also having a real impact on quality institutions

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Lady must understand that people working 16 hours on the minimum wage qualify for the additional 15 hours of funded childcare. Indeed, many people who cannot get into the workplace because of the cost of childcare will take the opportunity of 30 hours of childcare from September. That policy is a great achievement and will improve social mobility among people on low wages.

**Lucy Powell:** By definition, the most disadvantaged will not benefit from the policy. What we are seeing in some places, certainly in Manchester and other local authority areas, is that free childcare was given to the most disadvantaged, but that is now having to be switched from them to deliver the 30 hours for working families, and that surely is not what the Government intended. The Minister needs to have a look at that. Another unintended consequence of the new offer is the impact on our maintained nursery schools, which are an outstanding resource. Every single one—100%—of our maintained nursery schools are good or outstanding. Nearly all of them are in areas of high deprivation and disadvantage, but due to the new funding formula and the changes to funding, they are now under threat. Ministers need to look at the policies they are delivering and ensure that they meet the social mobility test and are not simply about getting people back into work.

Action for Children, the Social Mobility Commission and many others are calling for a clear plan to boost social mobility in the early years. That must include quality teaching, family support, children centres getting the resources they need and boosting the early years pupil premium. What happened to the life chances strategy that the Government spent two or three years working towards? It seems to have evaporated overnight.

Next, I want to turn my attention to schools. I do not want to take up too much time, although I have taken lots of interventions. As Teach First has shown, the social mobility challenge in our schools remains. While much progress has been made at primary, progress remains slow at key stage 4. One in three teenagers from poor families achieves basic GCSEs, compared with two thirds overall. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Gloria De Piero) highlighted, if bright children from poor families had the same support as others, four in 10 would go to a top university. Today, only one in 10 does.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing an important debate. She is making some excellent points, but in improving the life chances of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, is there not a case for putting money behind university outreach programmes to identify young people with ability and talent, as happened under the previous Labour Government? That would make opportunities for those people so that they can be helped into careers that they otherwise might not have thought were even possible, such as healthcare, where there is a real lack of people from working class and disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Lucy Powell:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The widening participation agenda has been successful in places and is important, but other barriers to getting those jobs remain for kids who perhaps do not have the same social networks or support at home, even if they have the same qualifications as some of their peers.

**Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): The hon. Lady is making an excellent speech in this important debate. I think we can build a cross-party consensus, based on the report, about access to social and emotional learning. I might call it character education—I think one of her predecessors as shadow Secretary of State for Education and I debated that issue. Persistence, resilience and grit

skills, as well as self-confidence and self-belief, are very important. They are often not given the same weight and therefore those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds do not get that access; access to extra-curricular activities is picked up in a similar way. Would the hon. Lady agree that that is something from the debate that could benefit from cross-party working?

**Lucy Powell:** I strongly agree with the right hon. Lady. I thank her for the joint working we have done on some of the issues in the past, and I hope that that will continue. When she was Secretary of State for Education, she was a strong champion for character education and extra-curricular education. I hope that that is something we can all work on going forward.

**Jim McMahon** (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): All the additions are absolutely right, but the foundation has got to be strong as well; the funding for our school places is important. If my son Jack decides to go to university, he will be the first in our family to do that, but the school that he is attending faces losing 19 teachers. The sixth-form college that he would almost certainly go to faces losing 22 teachers. At the same time, the Government have wasted more than £10 million on a failed university technical college and a failed free school. How can that make sense?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend raises a very important point. I know that he has been championing the issues in Oldham, and I hope to work with him to continue to do that. I will say something on school funding in a moment, if I could make some progress.

Of all the measures and policies of the last 20 years, one that stands out as transformational for our schools is the London Challenge. London went from having some of the worst schools to now achieving the narrowest attainment gap of anywhere in the country. It is a key part of the overall London effect; 30 of the top 50 constituencies for social mobility are in London.

There are two key learnings from the London Challenge, which are now seriously at risk. The first is the supply of great teachers. The Minister's colleague in the Department for Education has finally started to recognise that recruitment and retention are major issues. Figures obtained by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner) show that a quarter of teachers who have qualified since 2011 have left the profession. Statistic after statistic backs that up, and we know that it is the poorest children and the struggling schools that suffer most when teacher numbers drop.

Teachers deserve a pay rise. Yesterday's pay settlement is a huge disappointment. Real wages of teachers are down by more than 10%. But it is not just about pay; it is about workload and the constant changes to curriculums and expectations. Ministers really must get a grip of the issue and do it fast.

The second learning from the London Challenge is about funding, which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) mentioned. The increase in school budgets over many years, coupled with targeted support such as the pupil premium, has had a real impact on the attainment gap, which was narrowing until very recently. It has narrowed significantly in London, where funding was boosted the most. The real terms cuts to schools' budgets that schools are now having to make—before we even get to the national

[Lucy Powell]

funding formula—will, again, hit the poorest hardest. Interventions, extra support and supported activities all benefit the poorest most. Recent teacher polling has shown that a third of school leaders are now using the pupil premium to plug the gaps in general funding, that almost two thirds of secondary heads had had to cut back on teaching staff and that schools with more disadvantaged intakes were the most likely to report cuts to staffing.

The Government are totally kidding themselves if they think that the real terms cuts to school budgets, together with the teacher supply crisis, are not going to show in a widening of the attainment gap and a major step back in social mobility in our schools.

**Gloria De Piero:** I met with the headteacher of Ashfield Comprehensive yesterday. The school faces a budget cut of almost £1 million from last September to this September, and he is facing a choice between bigger class sizes and fewer subjects. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the sort of thing that hinders social mobility?

**Lucy Powell:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those are some of the unpalatable decisions that headteachers are having to make. There is no question but that those decisions will have a real impact on outcomes, so I am sure we would all support the Minister going back to the Treasury to say that the real-terms cuts need addressing, and quickly.

Social mobility should be at the heart of education policy; every part of the system should work to unleash the talents of all young people. That means that existing grammar schools must do more to tackle the issues, rather than entrenching advantage and damaging wider social mobility. I am very pleased that the Government have dropped their plans to open new grammar schools. However, they said that they would tackle social mobility in existing grammar schools. Figures that I have released today show that since 2016, the number of children on free school meals in grammar schools has hardly shifted at all—it has gone up by just 0.1 percentage point—despite calls from Ministers that existing grammar schools should increase their intake of low-income children.

In the “Schools that work for Everyone” consultation, Ministers said that existing grammar schools needed to do more. They are now saying that they feel that they have fulfilled that objective and so are dropping plans to require existing grammar schools to address the issue. If existing grammar schools do not reform their admissions and play their part in boosting social mobility, they should cease to receive public funding. We should be rewarding the schools that do the most for pupil progress for the majority of pupils, and that narrow the attainment gap, which is why we should reform league tables so that they show not just attainment but pupil progress, and progress in narrowing the attainment gap.

I cannot cover everything in the short time we have. Needless to say, huge gaps remain in post-16 education. I hope that the new T-levels and quality apprenticeships will help to address that, but that will happen only if they remain focused entirely on social mobility outcomes and people do not get distracted by other agendas. As

others have said, and as the Sixth Form Colleges Association and others have shown, post-16 funding in Britain is still among the lowest in the OECD. We need to address that too.

As we have discussed previously, access to university and, crucially, outcomes and access to work beyond university remain a huge concern. Too few graduates are working in graduate jobs; in fact, we have the third lowest level of graduates working in graduate jobs of all OECD countries. The only countries behind us in that league table are Greece and Estonia. That is a travesty and it brings into question whether the debt, and the exercise, is worth it. Destinations of graduates and others are still most determined not by qualification and ability but by networks and social connections.

We could have a whole other debate about regional inequalities and how we boost social mobility everywhere. The devolution agenda that we all support must also have social mobility at its heart.

I know that the Minister will want to tell us why we cannot afford any of these plans. I would say that we cannot afford not to do them. Our economy and society pays a heavy price for people working below their ability and for wasted talent and wasted communities. The Minister's economics are false economics and will end up costing us dear in the long run. Achieving a step-change in social mobility for the many, not just the lucky few, is the challenge of our time. Opportunity and progress for the young, a new deal for left-behind communities and a radical rethink on tax and spend policies all need reshaping around a new national mission to make Britain a world leader in social mobility, not a country that sits towards the bottom of the pack, as we do today. Although Brexit will dominate and define, I am sure that we across the House will all come together around that national mission.

2.59 pm

**Paul Masterton** (East Renfrewshire) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) for securing this important debate. The Government have made significant progress on tackling social mobility, but we need to do more to remove the barriers that stand in people's way. People should not be prevented from fulfilling their potential because of their age, family circumstance, race, disability, sexuality, postcode or simply how much their parents earn. Too often, the ladder of opportunity runs out of rungs pretty quickly. The Government are already getting on with some of that, and we are seeing results. I am sure my hon. Friends will want to talk in more detail about that.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that half of 18 to 24-year-olds believe that their destination in life is based on their parents' socioeconomic status? How depressing is that in the 21st century?

**Paul Masterton:** I am aware of that. The hon. Lady may not be aware of this, but in Scotland roughly one in five people leaves school and goes straight into the dole queue. That is why it is important that we look at both Governments' policies on improving social mobility and continuing to provide good jobs. The record employment under this Conservative Government is so important.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place as a newly elected Member. He is talking about the figures for Scotland, but does he recognise that, under the Scottish Government, more children are progressing from school to positive destinations than ever before? [*Interruption.*]

**Mark Pritchard** (in the Chair): Order. A phone just went off. Can people keep their phones on mute or vibrate?

**Paul Masterton:** I am aware of that, but some of the things the Scottish Government consider to be positive destinations are things that most people would not consider to be so.

The Government are getting on with some of those things, but we need to be imaginative in our responses. We know that two children with parents on the same income and with the same educational qualifications will experience different levels of social mobility depending on their surroundings. A person is more likely to be upwardly mobile if they live in a mixed socioeconomic neighbourhood, so how do we create policies that bring different parts of the community together and expose our children to people with different views, values and backgrounds?

More and more people are working atypical hours, which often conflict with the opening hours of essential public services. If someone does not have a network to fall back on or someone to pick their kids up from school, they are more likely to drop out of the jobs market. If someone struggles to get a doctor's appointment around their working hours, they are much less likely to get early help for a health problem.

As well as social mobility, we need to talk about social exclusion, because the latter is hugely detrimental to the former. Of course, a huge driver of social mobility is earning power and the confidence and self-reliance that comes from being in work. Conservative action to support a modern industrial strategy, invest in infrastructure, provide city deals for places such as the Glasgow city region, and cut taxes for small businesses, corporations and families alike, is helping to drive employment growth. We have more jobs and record employment. More low-paid are out of taxation, and the national living wage has been introduced. Those things really matter, because they broaden opportunity, deliver jobs and improve future generations' life chances.

It is true that in-work poverty is too high in Scotland and the rest of the UK. There are UK-wide levers, such as tax and benefits policy and the national minimum wage, but the agenda can be set at a more regional level, both by the devolved Administrations—particularly Scotland, if there are further transfers of tax and social security powers—and by local councils. That should not be overlooked. Regional economic development can drive up wages and increase the demand for employees to work more hours. Skills development can help workers move into better-paid jobs, and a focus on economic diversification can aid unsatisfied workers change industry. For example, the underemployed—people who would like more hours but cannot get them—are more likely to work in fluid sectors such as hospitality and retail. That all helps to motor social mobility, and it must continue to form the cornerstone of the policy agenda. The Taylor report provides a fantastic opportunity for the

Government to revisit many of the structural issues in the modern world of work, and to adapt and create policy that takes the new landscape into account.

Although education is devolved, there are things that we can learn from each other on both sides of the border. I believe that a good education is the single biggest social mobility tool we can provide. Much of the education debate centres on higher education and tuition fees, so I was pleased that the hon. Member for Manchester Central focused more on early years, because that is key. Many people have been dealt their cards for life by the time long before they fill in their UCAS form, so if we are serious about social mobility, funding has to be ploughed into early years. It is about not just increasing hours for three and four-year-olds, which most parents cannot access anyway—the Governments in Westminster and Edinburgh appear to be in an arms race to do that—but investing in high-quality childcare.

The Scottish Conservatives have a distinct voice and get it right on that issue. We say, first, that before increasing hours for three and four-year-olds, we need to extend the current allowance to two-year-olds and more disadvantaged one-year-olds; and, secondly, that we need to ensure that funding is used to train up a more highly qualified professional workforce. Early years education and childcare need to have a real purpose of intent. We must develop literacy and numeracy, which are dropping very quickly in Scottish schools, as well as social skills, to narrow the divide that is currently so wide as to be almost irrecoverable by the time our kids walk through the primary school gates. We must bridge the gap between the point maternity leave ends and free childcare provision begins. We need to understand that the driver of social mobility is in those crucial early years, when the attainment gap takes root.

Students from the most advantaged areas are four times more likely to go to university than those from the least advantaged areas in Scotland—it three times more likely in Wales and Northern Ireland, which is lower but still high, and two and a half times more likely in England. That starts right back in nursery. In Scotland, the gap in attainment can start as early 18 months.

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend is making a very thoughtful contribution to this excellent debate. I completely agree with him about the need for investment in early years. We need to take a longer-term look at public investment, which does not always happen, to ensure the investment improves children's life chances from very early on. Given that local government budgets in England are under a lot of pressure, and that a lot of early years funding comes from local authorities, what is his advice to the British Government about how to improve things in England, drawing on his Scottish learning?

**Paul Masterton:** I have learned that it does not tend to go down well when Scottish MPs stick their oar in, so English MPs should deal with their own system. There have been large local government cuts to the settlements in Scotland, which are impacting on services. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to talk about the long-term view, but unfortunately Governments of all colours in all Parliaments around the UK often look for short-term quick fixes.

One of the things I am particularly pleased to see down here in Westminster is the UK Government's focus on technical and vocational education. We have

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not seen that in Scotland, where there have been huge cuts to technical education and more than 150,000 college places have been cut. The Scottish National party and the Scottish Government have decided to value academic education over and above technical education. That is completely the wrong way to do it. I am very excited to see what these changes and reforms in the English school system will do. The Scottish Government have finally given way a bit on things such as Teach First. The hon. Member for Manchester Central talked about the London Challenge, which was hugely successful, and which we can learn a lot from in Scotland. I am very excited to see how some of those reforms play out.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)  
*rose—*

**Rishi Sunak** *rose—*

**Paul Masterton:** Ladies first.

**Deidre Brock:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution. He would accept, though, that the Scottish Government have very recently announced that they will be putting £750 million extra into closing the attainment gap.

**Paul Masterton:** I would, but the Scottish Government have been in power for 10 years, and they seem only now to have decided to make education their priority. That has come a bit too late for many families and a lost generation of kids who have been in education under devolution.

**Rishi Sunak:** My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. I welcome him to his place. I want to touch on his comments about technical and further education. I have campaigned in this House to ensure parity of esteem between those routes and higher education. He talked about filling out UCAS forms. I have talked to Ministers about the idea of having a UCAS for apprenticeships system, which Alan Milburn recommends in his report and which was included in the Government's industrial strategy. Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming that proposal, which could ensure parity of esteem and make it easier for young people to embrace a career outside university?

**Paul Masterton:** Absolutely. Just to be controversial, I commend the Scottish Government on the work they are seeking to do on apprenticeships. They have cottoned on to that major issue and are doing some good work on that front.

**Catherine McKinnell:** I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman raised the issue of apprenticeships. It is important that we focus on access to university and higher education, but for an awful lot of young people, a route into an apprenticeship can unlock their potential. I co-chair the all-party group on apprenticeships, and we are launching a report today that focuses on what the Government can do to increase massively what schools and colleges do to promote apprenticeships, to ensure that schools are incentivised to send their children and young people into apprenticeships rather than just the university route. Otherwise, they close up avenues to

young people who would benefit from apprenticeships. I encourage the Government to take up some of the recommendations in the report.

**Paul Masterton:** The hon. Lady makes me think of the number of graduates not going into graduate-entry jobs, which the hon. Member for Manchester Central mentioned earlier. Partly that is because of the exponential rise in the number of graduates, and because the UK jobs market has not kept pace with it. That brings us to the wider issue of whether there are a lot of people going to university whose future potential would be best tapped into through another route.

Kids learn differently, so we need to allow them to be taught differently. They have different skillsets, so we need to have an education system that allows all of those skillsets to be nurtured and developed. Ultimately, kids have different aspirations and goals and we need to ensure that we have guidance and routes in place to help every child get to where they want to be, rather than being funnelled automatically through to university education as a default, which is what happens in a lot of schools.

Many have said in the past that poverty is a cost that the UK cannot afford. They are right. We need to move from treating the symptoms of poverty to treating its underlying and fundamental causes. The commission, which is a few years old now, found that £4 in every £10 was spent on dealing with the causes of poverty after they had occurred, not on preventing them. That simply wastes bad money.

The Government have a great story to tell, but people are ultimately more than numbers on a spreadsheet or plots on a graph. Social mobility and the effectiveness of the Government's policies are measured just as much in how people feel their lives are going on the ground. Far too many people feel let down and passed by. It is simply not okay for the UK to be a country where it is still better to be rich and a bit dim than poor and clever.

What was so important about the Prime Minister's first speech outside No. 10 was that, like David Cameron's life chances agenda, it understood that, although income is crucial, we will not get rid of poverty and improve social mobility by lifting income levels alone. We have to deal with some of the underlying causes, which means that too many people simply do not get a fair shot.

It is absolutely vital that, whatever else might be going on, the Government go back to the speech and put it at the heart of everything they do. If they can do that, they can truly tackle the potential sapping prejudices people face every day and make a real push on social mobility.

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Order. There are five speakers. I shall impose a time limit of three minutes because of the amount of interest in this debate, and because we have to allow time for the Front Benchers to wind up.

3.12 pm

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing this debate. Obviously, party political points can be made about funding and the closure of Sure Start and children's centres and suchlike but, leaving those to one side, I hope the Minister will not be

defensive. He was very defensive in responding to one or two of the comments made and said, “Oh, this is what the Government are doing.” My hon. Friend had a powerful message: there is a need for a national crusade to tackle inequality and social mobility in our country. The various reports that have been mentioned have a powerful message. They state that there has been progress, but under successive Governments it has been slow and the gap between people has increased. It is now a national disgrace that, in one of the richest countries in the world, life is so unequal and so lacking in opportunity for people born into certain situations. The Minister needs to respond to that challenge rather than say, “This is what we are doing.” There is a time for a party political debate, but this is not the right time.

I will explain why I think this issue is so important. I started teaching in 1976. After my post-graduate course, I was able to choose which school I went to. I had studied social background and educational attainment, so I chose to go to a school with some of the most difficult challenges. The school was in an educational priority area. Teachers were paid more money to go there and the best people were recruited. If we went back to that area now, 40 or so years later, we would find that many of the same families are still stuck in a state of poverty and low achievement. I am not a prophet of doom, but that tells us that that situation simply cannot be right. It is simply unacceptable that we drive round our cities or our rural areas and can almost point to where there is low achievement and low aspiration. The challenge to the Government—hopefully the next Labour Government—is what are they going to do about it? We cannot go back to the policies that have not worked or have worked too slowly.

This is difficult for the Minister. We cannot pass a law that says there should be good parenting, but some of our families and parents need more support. It cannot be right that sometimes when a child goes to school or nursery, they cannot use a knife and fork. Something is wrong and we need to look at how we support families to get their children to the point they need to be at to enter our schools or our nurseries. We need to get them to the point where we can really say social mobility is the priority of whatever Government of the day.

3.15 pm

**Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) for a very thoughtful speech, particularly on evaluating pupil progression and outcomes for graduates. There is much more work we can do in both those areas. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) for his excellent speech.

Opportunity for all was my calling into politics—we all have our own individual callings. I went to a school that was at the bottom of the league tables. My father died at an early age and I understood the importance of opportunity for all, regardless of background. In my remaining two and a half minutes, while celebrating the fact that record employment has seen youth unemployment in my constituency fall by a staggering 61%, which is a vital tool for helping social mobility, I have a quick wish list of things that I want a proactive and constructive Government to deliver.

First, it is welcome that 1.8 million more children are in good or outstanding schools, but as a society we need to do more to celebrate the very best of teachers: those who have made the biggest difference, particularly to those from the most challenging backgrounds. We need to make more of those really outstanding individuals. I am not biased because my father, grandma and grandad were all teachers.

We need far more mentors to come into schools, engaging the local business community and the voluntary sector, because the people who have made a difference can inspire young people. I still remember my careers teacher telling me I had no chance of getting into Parliament, so anything is possible.

I am a big fan of university technical colleges, but they have a challenge. The entry level is two years after the typical secondary school enrolment, so there is a disincentive for secondary schools to suggest their best students go there. Perhaps the Government should consider lowering the age of entry or share the school league table results of the students so that those who are more technically minded can embrace their full potential.

I am a huge fan of apprenticeships. I was proud once again to attend the graduation ceremony at Swindon College last week where people from some really challenging backgrounds have started their first step into a successful career. I love the idea of the UCAS system, but we need to do far more to promote the opportunities of apprenticeships to small businesses. The sugar tax is a wonderful opportunity to provide constructive sport, after-school and holiday activities, which make a difference to busy parents as well as providing enjoyment, confidence and teamwork skills.

The national citizen service is a brilliant scheme, but in recent years I feel the quality of the leadership there is not as good as it used to be, so we are missing a trick. I am a big fan of the introduction of the named work coach in universal credit that will for the first time provide support for those in work and not just finding work. Finally, on the income divide between the older and younger generations, only six Governments since the second world war have collected more in taxation than they spend. When that does not happen, a further burden is put on our children. We must never forget that.

3.18 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing another debate on this incredibly important subject. As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on social mobility in the previous Parliament, I have read with increasing alarm the numerous reports produced by the Social Mobility Commission. Its recent report, “Time for Change”, was a real wake-up call. As my hon. Friend said, it is the challenge of our time. I was attracted to the idea of breaking down recommendations into four life stages, but the report shows that unless we get the right measures in place at the first stage in the early years, everything else becomes much more difficult. Sadly, falling behind in those early years is often a portent for one’s entire life.

Hon. Members have already talked about the geographical divide, but there is also a generational one. I do not believe that the recent general election was a

[Justin Madders]

ringing endorsement of the status quo. We saw that the more young people engaged with the question of what they wanted from the Government, the more they turned away from the existing set-up—and who can blame them? Do they want to better themselves and study at university? There are more opportunities now, but they come with an eye-watering debt that might never be paid off. Do they want to own a home of their own? Unless the bank of mum and dad is there to fall back on, it could be a long wait. Do they want to build a career in a profession doing something rewarding, financially and intellectually? Those opportunities exist, but for the few, not the many.

Young people's more likely experience in the job market will be casual work, low pay and chronic insecurity. As the commission's report highlights, young people's wages have fallen by 16%; one in five people in the UK are stuck on low pay—a higher proportion than in comparable nations—wages have stagnated in real terms, leading to falling living standards, particularly for young people; and, although youth unemployment has fallen, the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has barely changed. The number of young people receiving careers advice or work experience has fallen, and more new apprenticeships have gone to older workers than to younger ones.

As the report suggests, we should adopt what I would describe as a “mobility in all” approach, and examine every Government policy or proposal for how it would improve social mobility. One good example of how we are not doing well at that is the Government's decision to expand the number of medical school places. The all-party parliamentary group's report on access to the professions recognised medicine as one of the areas in which those from privileged backgrounds are disproportionately represented. I recently asked the Minister a written question on what steps the Government were taking to address that. His response was:

“Funding an additional 1,500 medical school places in England will provide more opportunities for people to study”.

Perhaps it will, but without further intervention it is more likely just to repeat the pattern of professions being dominated by people from fee-paying schools.

However, it is not only on access to professions that we need to do more. If the reports that up to a half of all jobs will be automated in the next decade are correct, we will have to undertake a massive, state-sponsored exercise in reskilling the workforce. The world of work is changing rapidly. Training and redeployment are threads that should run through a person's entire life. Three, four or five career changes will be the norm in the future, and we are not ready for that.

3.22 pm

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Mr Pritchard. The recent work of the Social Mobility Commission, which has already been mentioned by a couple of hon. Members, was so damning that I rather suspect the commission is not long for this world. In two decades there has been no real progress: 20 years in which the only movement seems to have been backwards. From my brief look at the research papers, it appears that Scotland is not particularly included in the analysis. I

do not know whether I would have found references to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if there had been more time, but the report seems mainly to be a body of work referring to England. Scotland, of course, has its own Government and Parliament, to take forward more progressive policies—policies so progressive that Labour copied them wholesale in its general election manifesto and was then praised for being radical.

Social mobility, however, depends on a lot more than the current devolved powers can deliver. It requires easy access to social security—a helping hand for people who want to make a better life through education and perhaps start their own business. It also requires a good health service, good housing and a cohesive society. It needs opportunities to be available—an economy that works in the best interest of us all, rather than just a few. It needs the Government to take an attitude that encourages new enterprise rather than protecting those who already have money. Real social mobility requires an expansive, open attitude to the world—the kind of attitude that would embrace the EU and immigrants, and the opportunities that both bring. Social mobility needs parity of esteem between people, which seems to me to be in pretty poor supply in this place.

To deal briefly with the commission's research, it said that both Tory and Labour Governments have largely failed the people they were elected to represent. I was particularly taken by what it said about the stalling of young people's ambitions or, to put it in brutal capitalist terms, the waste of the great resource of youth. Young people's wages are lower now than they were in 1997, for goodness' sake; they should be building their lives, and the economy should benefit from their frittering away, if you like, a decent disposable income before they get serious financial commitments that eat it all up. That is before we consider the damage that carrying a huge student loan does to people's prospects.

**Paul Masterton:** First, I am sure that the hon. Lady is aware that the rise in low pay is much slower in Scotland than in the rest of the UK. Secondly, given that in 2014 Alan Milburn said that a lack of political debate and engagement on social mobility in Scotland meant that it was sleepwalking into a social mobility crisis, does she accept that perhaps the Scottish Government had other things on their mind in about 2014, and that they took their eye off the ball in relation to social mobility policy?

**Deidre Brock:** I remind the hon. Gentleman that youth unemployment is at its lowest rate since records began in Scotland—it is the second lowest in the EU—that free tuition has been reintroduced and protected, so that young people do not start their working lives with enormous debts, and that a record number of Scots are supported into university. He appears to have forgotten those facts.

The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is still at the same level. A valuable workforce in England is wasted, sitting on the sidelines whiling their lives away. Retention and graduate outcomes for disadvantaged students have barely improved. Careers advice and work experience opportunities are disappearing and apprenticeships go to older rather than younger workers. Generation after generation have been failed by the paucity of ambition of Governments

who thought it more important to curry favour with the wealthy and privileged, and left a fabulous resource untapped. That is short-sighted at best, and more likely cruel and thoughtless. Social progress and social justice require social mobility. Governments, Parliaments and politicians fail if we do not facilitate that.

3.26 pm

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): I think that the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) read a different report from the one I read, which highlighted both successful and unsuccessful policies. We should not finish the debate without mentioning one of the most extraordinary Ministers I have ever met—Lord Adonis. His work on the London challenge is a beacon, showing what can be done.

Housing is the largest issue facing my south-west London constituency, so I want to mention some housing facts. Owning a home is an important part of people's feelings of self-worth and success, and social mobility. It was the most financially important thing to happen to my mum and dad in their lives. That is why it is worrying that home ownership among the under-25s has dropped by 50%. Even more worryingly for children, home ownership rates for 24 to 35-year-olds have reduced from 59% to 37%. It strikes me as extraordinary that the report suggests that some of the poorest families spend 31% of their income on housing, because people coming to my surgery spend 110% of their income on it. They work but are completely dependent on housing benefit to pay their rent. As for the people at the top, in 1997 they spent 13% of their income on their house, whereas today they spend 8%.

In 1997 the value of homes in relation to the income of their owners was in a ratio of 3.5:1, meaning that people could expect to buy a house worth 3.5 times their income. Today the ratio is 9.5:1. That is impossible to achieve, so we throw families with young children into the unregulated and uncontrolled private rented sector, where they have not only the monthly fear about whether they can clear their rent, but the knowledge that they can be evicted simply with a court order. The number of families I meet who have children—often disabled children—and who move house up to three times a year, and the thousands of children currently in poor temporary accommodation in the capital, paid for out of our taxes, is a ticking time bomb for social mobility. I hope that the Minister will discuss housing in his response.

3.29 pm

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate with you in the Chair, Mr Pritchard. I congratulate the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing the debate, and on her thorough speech. She had ample support from this well-populated Chamber.

I want to mention a couple of speeches, including, obviously, that of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock), who has just taken over as the Scottish National party spokesperson on fair work and employment. She made a good speech about the situation in Scotland. The hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) discussed his past as a teacher

and previous initiatives. He is right: social mobility is about more than education. In many ways we need to address the reasons for children turning up at school in an impoverished state. That is something that will be important. It is not just a matter of education, although that is a driver for improving social mobility. We need also to consider why some children arrive at school like that. At the end of the day, that comes down to money in people's pockets, and we need to address it quickly.

The "State of the Nation 2016" report highlights the devastating reality about social mobility in the UK:

"The rungs on the social mobility ladder are growing further apart."

That is having an effect on an entire generation of young people. In fact, the Social Mobility Commission highlighted the fact that 35% of those aged between 18 and 24 in the UK believe that social mobility is getting worse. We live in a society where those from less advantaged backgrounds find it harder and harder to advance their social position in the UK. We therefore cannot afford to ignore their plight and watch the gap widen further.

The Young Women's Trust, already quoted, has shown that in the UK more than half of

"young people said they feel worried for the future".

That includes those who are transitioning from full-time education to work, and those who are suffering as a result of poor vocational routes. The report from the trust continues:

"As a result, young people are struggling to make ends meet, unable to move away from home or forced to live in insecure accommodation, skipping meals so they can feed their children and turning to food banks."

The UK Government should be absolutely appalled by such realities.

The Social Mobility Commission's analysis of the lack of mobility in the UK focuses on various life stages in which progress has or has not been made: no life stage has received a green rating; two are amber, "Early Years" and "Schools"; and two are red, "Young People" and "Working Lives". That furthers the emphasis that should be placed on progressing the position of young people in society, and increasing incomes for all groups rather than just some.

The House of Commons Library blog notes that young people—those in their 20s in particular—have seen their average incomes slump, thereby linking the challenges faced by the younger generation to the lack of productivity in our economy. Children are told that work is the best route to greater success, but how can that motivate them when so many see their parents struggling day in, day out for low wages, with the worst wage growth in 200 years, according to the Resolution Foundation, uncertain job security and reductions in the tax credits that were designed to help them?

In Scotland, we have seen greater efforts to increase social mobility through free tuition fees, increased investment in education—in early years in particular, and £750 million invested in closing the attainment gap—and commitments from the Scottish Government to increase early learning and childcare entitlement to 1,140 hours per year by 2020. Those initiatives all aim to give every child the best start in life, regardless of their wealth or social background. The importance of free tuition fees remains prevalent and a key investment

[Neil Gray]

in the future of our young people. No child should be thwarted of an education through a fear of debt created by the harsh tuition fees imposed on students in the rest of the UK. We are therefore doing what we can in Scotland within the devolved framework.

It is time for the UK Government to step up to the mark, using the full suite of their powers. To do so, they should examine the UK's position in comparison with other countries around the world. A report by the Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality highlights the fact that social mobility in countries such as Denmark, Norway and Finland is far greater than that experienced in the UK. Instead, we are likened to and ranked lower than the US. *The Economist* has detailed issues with social mobility in the US by linking them to education. Many elite universities seek to find talent from all backgrounds, but the middle class are still left with huge debts to repay merely because they want the most desirable jobs, most of which require a university degree. The ways of US education further the Stanford Centre's analysis that

"the American Dream is evidently more likely to be found on the other side of the Atlantic, indeed most notably in Denmark".

Looking to the practices of Scandinavian countries and learning from their efforts would ensure that a more proactive approach is taken to increase social mobility across society, rather than having it focused on the privileged few. Denmark in particular invests largely in its education, thereby allowing the cognitive skills of low-income children to benefit. It is time to invest in our services and our people to allow the best outcomes for people from all backgrounds to flourish. Right now, too many are being stymied by this UK Government's policies.

3.33 pm

**Mike Kane** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) on securing this debate. It follows a debate in the main Chamber that she, the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) and the then Member for Sheffield, Hallam secured from the Backbench Business Committee in the previous Parliament.

The Government's Social Mobility Commission report, "State of the Nation", told us the scale of the challenge we face to improve social mobility in Britain. The report told us in no uncertain terms:

"Britain has a deep social mobility problem... We identify four fundamental barriers that are holding back a whole tranche of low and middle income families and communities in England: an unfair education system, a two-tier labour market, an imbalanced economy, and an unaffordable housing market."

That was also referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh).

The report presented the Government with a number of proposals on parenting and early years, schools, post-16 education, jobs and housing, yet there is no evidence that they have yet listened fully to those proposals, let alone made them policy. Will the Minister tell us which of the recommendations his Department will take forward as policy? For example, on early years, the report calls for the Government to:

"Set a clear objective for early years services that by 2025 every child is school-ready at five and the child development gap has been closed, with a new strategy to increase the availability of high-quality childcare to low-income families."

I welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton), who talked in particular about early years.

The Minister's Department has made no indication that it will adopt such plans. In fact, its policies will do quite the opposite. Will the Minister tell us why, instead of directing resources towards those who need it most, his Department will spend around £1 billion a year on a policy of so-called tax-free childcare, which will be of greatest benefit to those who have £10,000 to spend on childcare? Will the Minister tell us which low-income families he knows who have £10,000 to spend, or will this be another ditched policy?

Will the Minister tell us why the eligibility criteria for the 30 hours of free childcare will actually mean that tens of thousands of low-income families are not eligible for the extra childcare? I am sure he is growing tired of being reminded of promises in the 2015 manifesto that are being broken, but the manifesto pledge was clear, promising that his party would

"give working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds 30 hours of free childcare a week."

**Mr Goodwill:** On manifesto pledges, will the hon. Gentleman clarify the situation on student debt? On Sunday, we seemed to get a different message from the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), from the one we heard during the general election?

**Mike Kane:** First and foremost, that was not in our manifesto. In this country, we have about £80 billion of student debt stored up, and the Department has already estimated that we will not get a third of that back. We already have the most indebted students on the planet, and at some stage the Government will have to tackle that scenario.

The Opposition know the immense importance of intervention in the early years to improve the life chances of children in Britain. That is why Labour opened more than 3,000 Sure Start centres, and increased education spending every year that we were in government. In this week's spirit of new-found bipartisanship, will the Minister follow our example and support the most disadvantaged children, as we did in the previous Labour Government?

I will briefly address a number of recommendations. First and foremost, I remind the Minister that his own Social Mobility Commission took a clear view on his party's flagship grammar schools policy going into the election. The commission said that grammar schools would not work. Eventually, however, the electorate sunk the policy, and that was sneaked out in a written statement while the Secretary of State and the Front-Bench team were on the Floor of the House of Commons.

Before the election, we heard a great deal about a White Paper. Will the Minister confirm whether we will be getting an education White Paper in this Parliament? Will he also confirm whether the £500,000 of funding pledged for new grammar schools will now start being put back into the general schools budget, which is under severe pressure, as we all know?

We have reached a point at which school budgets are facing real-terms cuts for the first time in 20 years. The National Audit Office has told us that there will be an 8% cut in per pupil education spending over the course of this Parliament. That will not help social mobility and is flagrantly breaking another clear 2015 manifesto commitment that the funding following a child into schools will be protected. I can see that from the Minister's own education authority of North Yorkshire, including his fine constituency of Scarborough and Whitby. He pointed out to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central how many children were in better schools, but £28.5 million is being taken out of schools in North Yorkshire between now and 2021.

Will the Minister therefore do what the Prime Minister failed to do when asked about that and explain why the Government are breaking another manifesto pledge? Cuts to school budgets will make it impossible to deliver on many of the Social Mobility Commission's recommendations, shift resources towards areas that most need them, close the attainment gap and support teachers. Teachers continue to leave the profession in record numbers. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central cited statistics that show that a quarter of trained teachers have gone since 2011. I am a former teacher myself—brilliant colleagues in Trafford, where I worked for many years, are leaving the profession because of the real-terms pay cuts over the years, the increasing pressures on school budgets, and class sizes, which are increasing more and more.

The Government have failed to give even a basic response to the recommendations of their own Social Mobility Commission. I wish that they would do so. I praise my hon. Friends the Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders), for Mitcham and Morden and for Gedling (Vernon Coaker), and the hon. Members for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) and for Airdrie and Shotts (Neil Gray), for their contributions. The University of Oxford recently published a report about food bank use, in which the Bishop of Durham, the Right Rev. Paul Butler, wrote:

"This report highlights the need for all of us to refocus our efforts on ensuring that every child is able to reach their full potential regardless of their background."

All Members should make that their motto when talking about this issue.

3.41 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Robert Goodwill):** I certainly agree with the very last thing that the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike Kane) said; it seems to me that the entire House could be united around that comment by the Bishop of Durham. I thank the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) for securing the debate; I am pleased to have an early opportunity to discuss this issue. I will leave a couple of minutes for her to sum up at the end, if she would like to.

Education is fundamental to breaking the link between a person's background and where they get to in life. It is our primary tool for opening up opportunity and giving people a chance to go as far as their talents and ambitions will take them. The Prime Minister has talked about areas in which we can work together, and I hope that this is one of those. The hon. Member for Gedling

(Vernon Coaker) was possibly a little churlish; I was really only trying to correct one or two facts that might have helped the hon. Lady to develop her arguments.

I am grateful to the Social Mobility Commission for setting out its views in its recent "Time for change" report, and I add my personal thanks to Alan Milburn. We welcome the report and recognise its conclusion that life chances are too often determined not by someone's efforts and talents but by where they come from, who their parents are and what school they attend.

At the start of this year, the Secretary of State set out three priorities for social mobility. They were tackling geographic disadvantage; investing in long-term capacity in the education system, and ensuring that that system really prepares young people and adults for career success. Before I explain how we are delivering against those priorities, I should emphasise that we are driving opportunity through everything we do. For instance, there are now 1.8 million more pupils in good or outstanding schools than there were in 2010, including—dare I say it—11,043 more in Conservative-controlled North Yorkshire, where 73,096 children are in good or outstanding schools.

**Mike Kane:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Goodwill:** I will regret it, but I give way.

**Mike Kane:** The Minister mentioned—it was a Minister's "microphone moment"—1.8 million pupils. May I point out that those exact pupils were identified in 2010 by a Labour Government as being in coasting schools? The resources were put in, and this Government picked the low-hanging fruit. The Government say that more pupils are taught in good schools, but if that is so, why are our programme for international student assessment scores going down in international comparison?

**Mr Goodwill:** I disagree. As some of the primary school results that recently came out show, we are making real progress, certainly in key subjects such as maths and English. I am sure that we all welcome the tremendous impact that that will have on young people's life chances.

**Rishi Sunak:** I could not resist intervening, as my hon. Friend mentioned North Yorkshire schools. As a North Yorkshire MP, he will be aware that the current funding formula disadvantages pupils in North Yorkshire to the tune of hundreds of pounds relative to similar pupils in other areas around the country. Will he urge the Secretary of State to continue her work to correct that unfairness in the funding formula and find a positive solution for students in his constituency, in my constituency and across the country?

**Mr Goodwill:** My hon. Friend makes a valid point. When I was first elected, I visited a school in one of the most deprived areas of my constituency. The head, who had come from another part of the country, said, "If we were in the middle of Rotherham, Bradford or Hull, we would be getting about 30% more money because of the school funding formula." People in North Yorkshire certainly look forward to that being addressed.

As well as increasing school quality, we are strengthening the teaching profession, opening up access to higher education, transforming technical education, delivering 3 million apprenticeship places and investing in careers education. Beyond that progress, the Department is

[Mr Goodwill]

delivering against its social mobility priorities in several specific ways. We are tackling geographic disadvantage by focusing efforts on supporting specific areas that face the greatest challenges and have the fewest opportunities. We are investing £72 million in 12 opportunity areas—social mobility “cold spots” where the Department is working with a range of local partners to break the link between a person’s background and their destination. Those areas face some of the most entrenched challenges, as described in the Social Mobility Commission’s index last year.

Our approach goes beyond what the Department for Education and central Government can do alone; it extends to local authorities, schools, academy sponsors, local and national businesses, local enterprise partnerships, further education colleges, universities and the voluntary sector. Through that process, we will not just build opportunity now but lay the foundations for future generations. I was in Oldham on Thursday, and I was particularly impressed by the ambition and motivation in that opportunity area. Indeed, I am no stranger to some of the challenges in such areas—one of them is in my constituency. Hon. Members will note that that opportunity area had already been designated when I took on my current role.

Tackling geographic disadvantage is important, but so is investing in the long-term capacity of the education system. We are absolutely clear that some of the biggest improvements in social mobility can be achieved by deploying high-quality teaching. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Manchester Central said in her opening remarks, we have more teachers in our schools than ever before. There are now more than 457,000 teachers in state-funded schools throughout England, which is 15,500 more than in 2010.

**Lucy Powell:** I know that I will have a moment to sum up at the end, but just for the record, although we may have more teachers than ever before, there are also many more pupils than ever before. In relative terms, there is a chronic teacher supply issue.

**Mark Pritchard (in the Chair):** Order. Just for the record, there is no guarantee that the hon. Lady will have time at the end. The Minister might wish to give her two minutes to wind up, but it is entirely in his gift.

**Mr Goodwill:** I indicated that I was happy to give the hon. Lady a couple of minutes to get her own back on me if she needs to, Mr Pritchard.

More than 14,000 former teachers came back to the classroom in 2016, which is the last year we have data for. That is an 8% increase since 2011. Although having more teachers is important for everyone, it is also essential to focus on how we support the learning of the most disadvantaged children if we are to improve social mobility. We continue to provide the pupil premium, which is worth around £2.5 billion this year, but we want to ensure that that funding actually benefits the most disadvantaged, so we are also investing £137 million through the Education Endowment Foundation to expand the evidence base for what works for disadvantaged pupils.

**Neil Gray:** I made the point, which was supported by the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker) from his experience of teaching and of previous initiatives, that we will see proper social mobility only if we understand and tackle the reasons why children arrive at school impoverished. Does the Minister agree that that is one of the fundamental ways we will change the social mobility crisis in this country?

**Mr Goodwill:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. That is why the work of the Education Endowment Foundation is so important in determining what early interventions actually work in improving the home learning environment for the many children who, as we have heard, arrive at school without knowing how to hold a knife and fork and, in some cases, not even potty-trained.

We are focusing on geographic inequality and we are building capacity. Our third priority is to ensure that the system prepares young people and adults for career success and encourages them to aim high. As was mentioned, we are taking steps to improve careers education and guidance for all ages. We are investing more than £70 million this year to support young people and adults to access high-quality careers provision. The Careers & Enterprise Company will ensure that every secondary school in each opportunity area has an enterprise adviser and delivers four encounters with the world of work for every young person. That will focus the whole education community in areas of the country where social mobility is lowest. We have also developed and expanded traineeships for under-25s, which give young people the skills and experience needed to progress to apprenticeships or sustainable employment.

We are delivering against our commitment to social mobility, but of course more must be done. We know that too often a child’s life chances are determined by where he or she comes from, and we understand that not everybody can access the opportunities available to them. In the early years, we must continue to work to ensure that all children are school-ready by the age of five. In schools, we must ensure that all children benefit from a rigorous academic curriculum and excellent teachers.

Beyond school, we must ensure that young people have the opportunity to pursue whatever route they choose. We must therefore continue to reform technical education to ensure that people have the skills they need to succeed in the world of work, and we must continue to provide the opportunity for disadvantaged young people to go to top-performing universities.

I am well aware of the point raised in the debate about UTCs taking children at the age of 14. Some children do not want to leave their friends at secondary school, and sometimes schools actively discourage children from leaving to go a UTC, even if the abilities and aspirations of that child would be best served in a UTC. We have a successful UTC in my constituency, working with local employers who are keen to have people leaving the UTC job-ready. Indeed, many see apprenticeships as the fast route into employment without the debt and problems that a university education can bring.

Throughout and after education, we must ensure that we equip young people with a high-quality careers advice offer so that every person can make an informed decision on their future. However, despite its pivotal

role, education alone cannot transform social mobility. Improving social mobility requires support from all parts of society, including Government, employers and civic society. Success has the potential to benefit society hugely, as we heard in the debate. Work by Boston Consulting Group and the Sutton Trust suggests that greater levels of social mobility could add £14 billion a year to GDP by 2030 and £140 billion by 2050. That is why we are building much wider collaboration.

On 21 June, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke at the launch of the social mobility employer index. Employers naturally want the best talent, and the best employers are already taking steps to ensure that they draw their new recruits from a wider pool. That can include engaging young people in schools, introducing recruitment practices that prioritise potential, creating new routes to progression and promotion, and opening up alternative ways in through apprenticeships. The index showcases great work, including from Government and other public sector employers, and we hope that even more firms will sign up next year.

The Government are making significant progress on social mobility. Let me turn briefly to issues raised during the debate before I leave time for the hon. Member for Manchester Central. I congratulate and welcome my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton). I endorse the comments he made in his contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson) made some thoughtful suggestions from experience, and he raised the point I made about UTCs.

The hon. Member for Manchester Central talked about maintained nurseries, which have a vital role. They are often in some of our most deprived areas—there is one in my constituency that does brilliant work—and because of the qualifications of the staff, it is more expensive to deliver such provision. Only about 1% of children attend that type of school, but in many ways they are the most needy children. She asked about how much extra we provided. Average funding has increased from £5.09 an hour to £5.39 an hour, and supplementary funding of £55 million a year has been made available for those schools until 2019-20. We listened to concerns and have responded.

The vexed issue of grammar schools was raised during the debate. As the hon. Lady may have noticed, there is no education Bill in the Queen's speech, so the ban on opening new grammar schools will remain in place. We were encouraged by the number of selective schools that came forward voluntarily to improve their admissions arrangements in response to the "Schools that work for everyone" consultation. We will continue to work with

our partners in the sector to ensure that more children from low-income backgrounds can go to grammar schools.

Points were raised about the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers—which, I have to say, has been virtually eliminated in grammar schools. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates in selective schools is 1.7 percentage points, compared with eight percentage points in all schools. However, I reassure the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike Kane) that I am no grammar school fundamentalist myself.

I am enormously grateful to the hon. Member for Manchester Central for the support she has given to this agenda today. She raised important concerns, and I hope she is happy that those concerns are at the forefront of our work. Social mobility is vital. We know that education plays a fundamental role in that, and we will continue to build on what we are already doing by working closely with employers and other partners. The benefits to be gained by the agenda are significant, and the more society as a whole can support it, the better.

3.55 pm

**Lucy Powell:** I thank the Minister for his wind-up speech and for allowing me a short moment to thank those who have spoken in the debate. There have been some really thoughtful speeches and much agreement across the Chamber. I hope that that spirit can continue in these debates.

As ever, there were fantastic and important speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker), from my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on social mobility, and from my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh), who raised some important points. I could also agree with almost the entire speeches of the hon. Members for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) and for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson). I thank them for their contributions.

The turnout for the debate shows that there is a huge appetite to get cross-party agreement on these issues. I hope that that continues over the coming months, and that social mobility becomes part of a national mission we can all get behind so that we can really create the equal and fair society we all aspire to.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Government policies on social mobility.

## Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

3.58 pm

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the future of the Worcester Acute NHS Trust.

It is a great pleasure to be here under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter, a cause of deep concern and worry for the people of Redditch and the surrounding area.

As this is a day on which health is being discussed in this place, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) for her tireless work on behalf of the victims of the contaminated blood scandal. I have a constituent in Redditch who has contacted me, even in my first few weeks of serving as a Member of Parliament, and I know that they and other victims will welcome the inquiry announced today.

The Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust caters for a population of between 420,000 and 800,000 people. Referrals from GP practices outside of Worcestershire currently make up 13% of the trust's market share. That clearly shows that the trust is under immense pressure to provide care to a huge number of widely dispersed people.

I will focus on the Alexandra Hospital in my constituency of Redditch. It serves approximately 200,000 people, is the county's centre for urology services, and has eight operating theatres, MRI and CT scanners and cancer unit status. It may appear on paper that the hospital is well resourced. However, the Care Quality Commission's most recent report, published in June this year, rated the Alex and the trust overall as inadequate, which is clearly a highly distressing situation. As a result, the trust is in special measures until further review, a status it has remained in since its initial inspection in November 2015.

Despite that status, I welcome that the trust is rated as good overall for its care. Feedback from patients, their families and friends is exceptionally positive in terms of their being treated with kindness, dignity and respect. My constituents in Redditch have often told me of their great personal experiences at the Alex.

**Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. As a fellow Worcestershire MP, I agree wholeheartedly with her comments. While there are many concerns about our local hospitals, not a week goes by in which I do not get letters and calls from people saying how positive their experiences at them were. While a lot of things need to change, we should also recognise the hard work and dedication of many of the staff, who provide excellent service much of the time.

**Rachel Maclean:** I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend's remarks. I am grateful to the Minister for his generosity in giving up his time to attend today, but I have some key questions for him. While a number of factors led to the trust being in this situation—the

debate does not have the scope to allow me to describe them all—what is important to my constituents is what the Department and other responsible bodies are doing to plan for the future. We want the trust to come out of special measures as quickly as possible.

A related but somewhat separate issue is the consultation on the future of acute hospital services in Worcestershire. The review of services in the trust began in January 2012 when clinicians across Worcestershire raised concerns about whether they could safely deliver services due staff shortages. Those shortages meant that services had to be concentrated and centralised, owing to the provision being too small at each of the Worcestershire hospitals. Initial temporary emergency changes—births, complex emergency surgery, in-patient children's services, emergency surgery on children and emergency gynaecology moved from the Alex to the Worcestershire Royal Hospital—have now become permanent. Those changes will be the subject of the consultation proposals put to the board of the three Worcestershire clinical commissioning groups for approval tomorrow.

As hon. Members will understand, those two wide-ranging issues when taken together have been highly emotive for my constituents, as well as for Members for the rest of Worcestershire. The "Save the Alex" campaign in my constituency has gained huge community support, and I have nothing but respect for the dedication and commitment of those campaigners, led by Neal Stote and many others, who have campaigned extremely hard for more than 11 years. They have kept the Alex at the forefront of public debate in our area, and I look forward to working closely with them in future in the best interests of the people of Redditch and the whole community.

In their proposals, the CCGs told us that there are not enough staff or local demand to maintain services at the Alex. I understand that the Worcestershire Royal is a busy, modern hospital with an interesting caseload that is attractive to consultants and specialist neonatal nurses who want to develop their skills. I have also learned that the Meadow Birth Centre at Worcestershire Royal is fantastic. Since the transfer of maternity services, emergency C-section rates have dropped from 32.6% to less than 25%, meaning fewer expectant mums being rushed down corridors and more relaxed births. Having given birth four times myself, and having been a National Childbirth Trust worker, I am somewhat of an expert on birth, and I know that local women are fortunate to have access to that wonderful care.

I accept that the Worcestershire Royal provides the safest and best care for the women of Redditch and their babies, but we cannot ignore the fact that Worcestershire is a rural county and that Redditch has a very low level of car ownership. In fact, it is one of the lowest in the country, with one in five Redditch households having no access to a vehicle. Not owning a car or driving will be a cause of great stress in times of emergency, and for those who want to visit loved ones who have just given birth in Worcester, it will present difficulties if travelling with young children in tow. Additionally, I have heard from my constituents that, when they arrive at Worcestershire Royal, the facilities are sometimes not quite set up for their needs.

During the general election campaign, and now as a newly elected MP, I have talked to thousands of local people who have brought up the Alex time and again—I

have received numerous messages, emails, phone calls and comments on my Facebook and Twitter channels on this topic. Hon. Members will be able to imagine that, at every door I knocked on, the constituent said, "Let me tell you what the number one issue in Redditch is." I already knew the answer: the Alex.

One young mum broke down in tears during my visit. She said that she had moved to Redditch specifically for the Alex, and had given birth to her first son there—a young lad who was now four. She suffers from a condition that means she is at high risk when in labour, needing almost immediate access to maternity services or her life would be at risk. She is therefore unwilling to fall pregnant again, even though she would like a second child. I find that situation tragic. While I have reassured her that our West Midlands Ambulance Service is the best in the country and would be able to transport her safely if needed, I would be grateful for confirmation from my hon. Friend the Minister that conditions such as hers have been taken into account in the clinical decision-making process.

Another problem that people raise with me is the rate of growth of Redditch as a town—it grew by more than 7% between 2001 and 2011. There must be something in the water in Redditch, because in 2012 there were 18,800 children, which is more than 22% of Redditch's total population. It is a young and growing town with a lot of young people and children. On top of that, there are plans for new houses in areas such as Webheath. People are naturally worried that services at both the Alex and the Worcestershire Royal will not be able to cope in future, so I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister confirms that he has considered the projected rise in the population when making decisions on commissioning services in Redditch, which serve the populations of both Redditch and Worcester.

Specifically, will the Minister tell me at what level of population, and births-per-head in the population, he would review maternity service provision in an area? I have also questioned the Secretary of State on that point. Will the Minister commit to call for a review when the population reaches that level? Can he also give examples of comparable areas in the country that have successfully transferred maternity services to a neighbouring town or area, so that the people of Redditch do not get the sense that they are being unfairly singled out? My constituents would particularly like to know why services were centralised in Worcester instead of Redditch, and whether that process was carried out fairly and with all due process.

Another extremely worrying fact is the winter pressures faced in Worcester. The BBC reported in January 2017 that three patients died at Worcestershire Royal over the winter period after waiting on trollies for lengthy periods, which has been quoted back to me many times by residents. I heard, and continue to hear, many stories of people waiting on trollies in corridors for lengthy periods and in dirty conditions. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Worcestershire (Nigel Huddleston) in recognising the dedication of our NHS staff—the hard-working doctors and nurses doing their absolute best in such conditions—but the root cause of this problem lies not with them, but with a failure of leadership that goes back some time. That is not good enough. I call on my hon. Friend the Minister to provide much-needed assurances that robust and effective plans are in place to provide much better care for next winter.

As I previously alluded to, transport to Worcester is of huge concern to my constituents—my hon. Friend the Minister will find it challenging to drive between Worcester and Redditch on the M5 if he is unlucky enough to be stuck in traffic. What assurances can he give me that, if an ambulance providing transport in the event of an emergency transfer from Redditch to Worcester is unlucky enough to be held up in traffic, it will be able to care for a critically ill patient, baby, child or mum in labour? That is a priority for me and my constituents.

Although I am delighted that there is a free shuttle bus from the Alex to the Worcester Royal, I would like the Minister to join me in calling on the responsible authorities to ensure the sustainability and extension of that service. It could then serve more areas by making more stops over the diverse area that our county covers, as well as being more flexible and publishing its services more effectively. A lot of people in Redditch do not know about that valuable service, as I saw for myself when I knocked on doors in the election campaign.

The Minister will understand that one of the most difficult and emotive subjects is the treatment of critically ill children. Given the removal of accident and emergency care services for under-16s at Redditch, can he confirm that the new urgent care centre proposed for Redditch will be staffed 24 hours a day? What type of conditions will be treated there, and which cases will need to be transferred to Worcester? Can he confirm that, if children need to be treated in the urgent care centre, there will be enough fully trained staff to treat children, given that they are mainly serving an adult A&E population? Can he give any idea of the timescale for opening that urgent care centre?

One key problem identified by the CQC was leadership. I am very pleased that the trust has a new permanent leadership team, including a new chairman and a new chief executive. My Worcestershire colleagues—my hon. Friends the Members for Mid Worcestershire, for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), for Wyre Forest (Mark Garnier) and for Worcester (Mr Walker), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid)—and I will meet regularly with the trust's new chief executive, Michelle McKay, whom I have already met.

I welcome the reaffirmed commitments that the Minister of State, Department of Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne) and the Secretary of State made to me of a £29 million investment in the Worcester and Alex Hospital sites, if the business case is approved this week by the CCG board. I would be most grateful to have more detail on what that will involve, when we will see it and what benefits it will deliver to Redditch.

What conversations has the Minister had with, and what support has he given to, the trust's leadership team to ensure that the new chief executive can swiftly transition the trust out of special measures? Specifically, can he confirm what conversations his Department has had on the critical issue of staff morale? Low staff morale has in the past led to high staff attrition at the Alex, as I heard at first hand during the election campaign from a number of former and current staff members at the Alex. That has a knock-on effect on service delivery. I know from my experience of running a business that if staff are not happy and do not feel valued, it is impossible to achieve a good outcome in an organisation, no matter how much investment and resources are put into it.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I thank my hon. Friend for giving way again. Does she agree that low morale and any hospital being in special measures has a knock-on effect on recruitment, because people are a bit more reluctant to start or pursue their careers in those hospitals? The challenges that that brings need to be addressed.

**Rachel Maclean:** My hon. Friend touches on the key point of recruitment, which my colleagues and I, and himself, have raised with the new trust leadership. The trust has brought forward some interesting and exciting measures to address that, such as a new Facebook recruitment video. We look forward to seeing how that progresses and delivers more staff into this much-needed trust.

I am extremely grateful for the Minister's interest in this matter and for being granted the time to discuss it. I am especially grateful for the commitment shown during the general election campaign by his colleague the Minister of State, who visited me in Redditch. I call on him to lay to rest the pernicious rumour circulating in Redditch that our hospital is at risk of further downgrades or even closure. I am aware, as are some of my constituents, of the Naylor report, which contains in its numerous pages—they are too numerous to mention—proposals for selling unused NHS land to build affordable housing for NHS workers. That seems to me to be an eminently sensible suggestion, given the shortage of affordable housing in our country and the need for affordable homes for our public sector workers.

Some of my constituents have found suggestions in the report's pages—suggestions that I have not personally been able to find, despite assiduous reading over a number of hours, which I can confirm is a great insomnia cure, should the Minister be interested—that the Alex Hospital might be sold off for building land. I would be grateful for his confirmation that no suggestion is hidden in the small print of the report or elsewhere in any Government document that the Alex Hospital faces that fate.

As the Minister has been so generous in attending this debate, I would like him to go further by guaranteeing my constituents that Redditch will have a hospital that serves its population and is fit for the size of the town both now and in the future. Thank you, Mr Hollobone, for allowing me time to make my points. I look forward to hearing from the Minister.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** It was a pleasure, and I congratulate the hon. Lady on her address. I call the Minister.

4.15 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Steve Brine):** Thank you very much, Mr Hollobone. First, I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean); the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne), who is responsible for hospitals, is on the Front Bench in the main Chamber taking part in the important debate on contaminated blood, to which she rightly referred. He has sent me in his place, so I hope I will do.

I will attempt to answer many, if not all, of the questions that my hon. Friend asked in the 15 minutes or so that I have. I congratulate her on securing the debate and on her recent election. I knew her predecessor well, and as she graciously said in her maiden speech,

she is some act to follow. She is a lovely person and I hope that she is doing well—I am sure that my hon. Friend is in touch with her.

Most of all, I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way she has tackled this issue in the short time she has been here and brought what she said on the campaign trail into the House of Commons and its various Committees—hitting the ground running would be an understatement. That is exactly why the people of Redditch placed their trust in her, and she is already a credit to them. I was in the House for her maiden speech, so I heard her refer to these issues and to the Alex in great detail. It reminded me of someone not so far from where I am standing now, who came to this House seven years ago and said that the future of Winchester's hospital would be his priority. I have tried to stick to that, as I am sure she will to hers. I have not seen a family quite so proud as hers, sitting up top to watch her make her maiden speech. I think her children and partner were there, and it was great to see.

I understand that my hon. Friend is deeply concerned about the performance of local health services at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, which has been in special measures since December 2015. On her first key question, I can reassure my hon. Friend and her constituents that Ministers keep a very—I emphasise "very"—close watch on performance at this trust and all trusts through the role of the chief inspector of hospitals, Sir Mike Richards. The Secretary of State put that in place, and it has made an enormous difference. My hon. Friend will know that, as she was able to join the Minister of State on his recent visit to the Alexandra Hospital during the campaign.

The recent CQC inspection report is clearly of great concern to my hon. Friend and to us, but I understand that the Minister of State was reassured to meet the trust's new chief executive twice since her arrival from Australia at the end of March. She now has a substantive team in place for the first time in many years, and we know from experience that strengthening the leadership team is a significant step towards taking any trust out of special measures.

NHS Improvement has taken active steps to help drive improvement at the trust. That includes bringing in Birmingham Children's Hospital, South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust to help address key areas of weakness and provide strategic, mentoring and practical support. An improvement director is also in place. That is the very least we expect, and I am pleased to report that it is happening.

Let me turn now to winter pressures. The Department has agreed to Worcestershire Acute NHS Trust's bid for £920,000 of capital funding for primary care streaming in A&E. That funding is intended to ensure that the trust has appropriate facilities in place for this winter, and I strongly encourage the trust to spend the funding as quickly as possible, within the constraints of good governance, so that it is ready for when the weather turns.

That capital investment is one part of the urgent and emergency care plan being implemented across the NHS this year to recover A&E performance during 2017-18. The intention of the national plan is to redirect patient activity to primary and community care through GP streaming, GP weekend and evening appointments, and

supported discharge and re-ablement in people's homes. Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust will benefit from these efforts to improve performance on delayed transfers of care—DTC is one of the acronyms I have had to get to grips with in the past three years—as will other trusts.

Let me set the review of acute services, which my hon. Friend rightly mentioned, in the context of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire sustainability and transformation partnership. This represents a landmark attempt to address long-standing challenges to the provision of emergency care across the county, and to ensure sustainable A&E services and all other health services, because—we do not say this often enough—we are one NHS for the long-term future. The review of acute services has been incorporated within the STP, which is right. A draft was published in November 2016 and public consultation ran between January and March 2017. I will briefly outline the proposals.

The revised model would see 95% of patients experiencing no change in the way they access services in Worcestershire and all three of the county's acute hospitals remaining open. Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust would also retain its two A&E departments at Worcester and Redditch and the minor injuries unit at Kidderminster. Worcestershire Royal Hospital would become a specialist centre to support emergency and complex care, and the Alex in Redditch would provide more planned care.

Under NHS England's proposals, both A&E departments, at the Alex and at Worcestershire Royal, would remain open 24 hours a day. However, due to the transfer of in-patient children's beds, the A&E at the Alex would be for adults only. Both the Alexandra and Worcestershire Royal Hospitals would have new 24-hour co-located urgent care centres, which would treat adults and children with minor and moderate illnesses and injuries.

I must emphasise that no decision has yet been made regarding these proposals. As my hon. Friend said, the governing bodies of the three Worcestershire clinical commissioning groups will hold a meeting in public tomorrow, when they will each consider the decision-making business case and then make a decision on the recommendations. Depending on the outcome of that meeting—I have a funny feeling my hon. Friend will attend—the next step would be for the trust to go to NHS Improvement for approval of its outline business case. If successful, the next stage would be to commence procurement for the work and to take forward implementation of the clinical model. Suffice it to say, it would of course have to have clinical support in line with the five tests that we and NHS England have now set out for any service change.

I am encouraged to learn that the trust is progressing its plans for a £29 million investment in improved facilities at Worcester and Redditch Hospitals, in addition to the almost £1 million awarded following the Budget to improve patient streaming for those attending A&E. It is proposed that this money should be used to improve the operating theatres at the Alex so that the hospital can be developed into a centre of excellence for planned surgery, to develop a women's centre at the Alex, to increase the number of beds at Worcestershire Royal, to provide a new children's outpatient department at the Alex, to improve endoscopy facilities at the Alex and to improve the ever-thorny problem of car parking at

Worcestershire Royal. I believe that the Worcester and Redditch are strong contenders for that proposed new investment funding, and my hon. Friend has made an extremely strong case for her constituency.

Let me touch on the Naylor report, which my hon. Friend mentioned—I have quite a lot of reading at the moment, but I will take seriously her advice about the insomnia cure that it provides. I assure her that I am not aware of any plans to dispose of the Alexandra Hospital. It does not propose closing any specific hospitals; it merely refers to where space and land can be released while continuing to deliver services. As my hon. Friend knows, the Naylor review was independent. Its report was prepared for the Department of Health and published in March 2017. As she would expect, my hon. Friend the Minister of State is considering its recommendations carefully and will respond fully in due course on behalf of the Government.

My hon. Friend rightly mentioned staff recruitment and retention, so I will touch on the problems that the trust has faced in recruiting staff, especially at senior levels, and its resulting reliance on interim and agency staff. The trust has a new chief executive and leadership team in place. We have found from the experience of many other hospitals that have been in special measures that low morale and high levels of attrition are usually never about staff commitment; they are about getting the right leadership in place, which is why I place such emphasis on the new chief executive and her team. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saw outstanding commitment from the trust's staff when he visited the Alex and the Royal last month.

Let me turn to my hon. Friend's concern about maternity services, which always touch the heart strings more than other hospital services. I of course recognise the strength of feeling in Redditch and, in particular, the concern about travel times to Worcestershire Royal. All hospital births in Worcestershire were moved on a temporary emergency basis from the Alex to the Worcestershire Royal in 2015 due to staff shortages. The safety of patients must rightly be our prime concern and I understand that the trust ran extensive recruitment campaigns for additional staff before this temporary decision was made. Worcestershire's maternity services form part of the review of acute services, which must be right.

The CCGs' published decision-making business case makes it clear that Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust must review the scheduling of its outpatient appointments and operations to take account of patients' travel needs and individual circumstances, and that the CCGs and the trust should work together with community transport providers in Worcestershire to provide an enhanced transport service between the Alex and the Worcestershire Royal. Decisions regarding those proposals are expected to be made by the governing bodies of the three CCGs at tomorrow's meeting. I encourage my hon. Friend—I do not think I need to encourage her too much—to support the CCGs to agree a plan at that meeting.

Engagement with staff and local people must continue to influence and refine plans at every stage of the process. That is a key principle in the local reconfiguration of services, and it is dead right that the process is guided by those who best know and understand the local area, which of course includes the clinical support I mentioned.

[*Steve Brine*]

In conclusion, I totally appreciate the concerns that my hon. Friend has set out so eloquently today, and I commend her once again for her work in such a short time in the House on local healthcare issues affecting her constituents and her own family, as she said in her maiden speech. I encourage her and her constituents to maintain an open dialogue with the local NHS, which they are doing, and I assure her that Ministers will continue to monitor the trust's performance very closely.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## **Leaving the EU: Disabled People's Services**

4.28 pm

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered consultation with disabled people on the effect on their services of the UK leaving the EU.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship, Mr Hollobone. I start by thanking Disability Rights UK for its support while I was preparing for today's debate and for the excellent work that it continues to do on the impact of Brexit on disabled groups.

The Brexit debate in Parliament has to date focused largely on trade, access to markets and business objectives. Little has been said about the type of society we wish to be after Brexit, and even less about the impact of Brexit on groups in society such as disabled people and on their daily services and human rights. Today's debate in Parliament is therefore important, because it highlights our need to consult widely and to think tangentially about Brexit. Fundamentally, Brexit is not just about markets and money; it is about people. To work for everyone in our society, Brexit must therefore be inclusive. For disabled people, Brexit must have equality legislation and vision placed at its heart.

Disabled people make up one in five of the UK population. That is a significant sector of our population that will be affected by the legislative changes flowing from the UK's decision to leave the EU. It is therefore incumbent on the UK Government to consult disabled people and their organisations on post-Brexit Britain. How extensive is the consultation likely to be and what should be the remit for a consultation with disabled people on Brexit? We are concerned about the very real potential for Brexit to have a significant impact on the ability of disabled people to live and work independently and with dignity in our communities.

Many of the rights that are upheld for those living with a disability have their foundation in European Union law. Examples include the 2000 employment equality directive, which requires member states to prohibit disability discrimination in employment; the 2006 air passenger rights regulation, along with similar regulations on rail, ship and coach travel, which require disabled people to be given assistance when travelling in the EU and European economic area; and the 2004 medicinal products for human use directive, which requires the packaging of all medicinal products to include Braille labelling to make them accessible to disabled people. Indeed, the groundbreaking European Accessibility Act is currently being negotiated at EU level. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has said that it will benefit disabled people by providing common rules on accessibility in relation to computers, ATMs, ticketing machines and banking services. In the last few years, there has been a really strong set of initiatives from the EU, with accessibility very much part of the EU strategy, which impacts on the UK in a host of areas.

We ask ourselves what will happen to the financial support—the millions of pounds—that the EU provides from the European social fund to support a range of schemes and support for those living with a disability. Will successive United Kingdom Governments continue that important support? Will they set out how they will

do so? Will they guarantee continued support for disability services post Brexit to disability rights groups and organisations, which currently benefit from that funding?

Understandable concerns have been raised about the settlement criteria proposed by the UK Government. It is alarming that disabled people from other EU countries might be disadvantaged when it comes to establishing a right to permanent residence in the UK. If the criteria are to be employment based, what of disabled people with fluctuating conditions, who may require breaks from employment? Consultation on settled status must be carried out with disability groups to ensure that disabled people are not excluded from settled status purely by virtue of their condition.

The impact of Brexit on NHS and social care staffing levels is a great concern. Adequate access to health and social care is vital for many disabled people, but with all the new implications that Brexit brings for EU citizens in terms of gaining work permits for the UK, and with EU workers perhaps deciding to leave the UK because of those conditions, there will be inevitable and undue strain on services. Recent reports show that, post Brexit, the UK may be a much less attractive proposition for EU workers, particularly skilled workers, and that healthcare could be one of the hardest hit areas, with a staggering 84% of workers in that sector from EU countries saying that they will leave the UK. For Scotland, that is also worrying, because according to the most recent figures, 5.8% of the health and medical workforce are non-UK but EU passport holders, and experts tell us that losing EU workers will have a significant impact on our NHS workforce.

How will disabled people be able to access the care packages and support and NHS treatment that they need in the light of the potential exodus? Many EU nationals are already considering leaving the UK. Will the Minister tell us what plans are in place to deal with the potential shortfall in staff, and address the extremely important concerns about the criteria?

Many disability rights groups across the UK have expressed concerns about the level of support and, some would say, the lack of understanding and compassion shown to those living with a disability, who have suffered as a result of UK Government policy, such as the cutting of the employment and support allowance work-related activity group component by £30 a week and the tightening of eligibility for personal independence payments. Those measures have pushed more disabled people into poverty and potential social isolation. Concerns about what life in the UK will look like post Brexit for people with a disability must be taken extremely seriously. Given those recent events, it is understandable that many disabled people are beginning to feel quite alarmed. The implications of Brexit and the potential impact on disabled people, which we will hear about today from many hon. Members, need to be addressed urgently by the Minister and the UK Government.

I was today given a briefing from the Guide Dogs association on the effect on disabled people of the UK leaving the EU. It makes key points to which I would like the Minister to respond. It states:

“The UK’s withdrawal from the European Union has the potential to have a serious impact on the safety, mobility and independence of people with sight loss, by placing at risk two key areas:

- Disability awareness training for bus drivers
- The audibility of electric and hybrid vehicles”.

Will the Minister respond to those points? I understand that EU regulation 181/2011 is due to come into effect in 2018 and requires all bus drivers to undertake disability awareness training. That regulation was due to come into force in 2013, but the Government used a derogation to delay its introduction. Guide Dogs says:

“We are now concerned that the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union may mean mandatory training will either not be brought into effect, or later translated into UK regulations once the UK has left the EU.”

Training for bus drivers is badly needed. It ensures that drivers are aware of the needs of passengers with sight loss and respond appropriately. In a 2014 survey, only 14% of respondents said that a bus driver always responded appropriately to their needs as a disabled passenger. To tackle social isolation and people’s very important need for independence and mobility, those issues must be addressed.

The concerns expressed today are very real. We need commitments from the Minister and the UK Government that the rights of those living with a disability will not be diminished or eroded over time. We need to know that the financial support for disabled people that is in place from our EU membership will continue; that those from other EU countries will not face discrimination if they choose to seek settled status; and how the Minister will address the seemingly inevitable shortfall in those who provide support and care for the disabled in our communities and NHS. Recruiting and retaining workers in the social care sector is already challenging, but Brexit could precipitate a shortfall that becomes a crisis.

I ask the Minister to ensure that, as the Brexit negotiations unfold, the rights and needs of those living with a disability are central to discussions and negotiations. Post-Brexit considerations may seem of most significance to trade, but they are also of fundamental significance to people, and ultimately to the inclusiveness and the nature of our society for those with a disability.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** I see no Back Benchers standing, so we will go straight on to the speeches by the Front-Bench Members. I take it that you are the Scottish National party Front-Bench spokesperson, Mr Linden. Normally there is a limit of five minutes for the SNP, five minutes for Her Majesty’s Opposition and 10 minutes for the Minister, but I think we can be far more liberal—with a small “I”—this afternoon. You cannot speak for as long as you like, but you can speak for longer than five minutes.

4.39 pm

**David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP):** Thank you very much, Mr Hollobone. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship and to see the generosity once again of Kettering, which I know you are proud to represent in this Parliament.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) for bringing this important debate to the Chamber. There are a number of issues and policies that have been forgotten about in the heat of the Brexit campaign. It is only now, as we start to work through what the British people have delivered, that we as legislators begin to see the job on our hands. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that she has done, particularly with the all-party parliamentary group for disability.

[David Linden]

I have a number of points that I want to make, but my fundamental approach is that Brexit could have a hugely detrimental impact on the ability of disabled people to live and work independently and with dignity in the UK. The UK Government need to reassure us that disability rights groups will be consulted on decisions every step of the way. The main themes I want to touch on from the outset are that EU law has played a vital role in upholding the rights of disabled people across the EU; that the EU also supports, both financially and through co-operation, initiatives across the EU to support disabled people in member states; that concerns are now starting to be raised about the possible impact of the UK Government's proposals for settlement criteria given the often fluctuating conditions of disabled people; and that disability groups have stressed the impact that a fall in the number of NHS staff as a result of Brexit will have, particularly on social care. I visited Greenfield Park care home in Carntyne in my constituency just two weeks ago, and that point came up and was well made. The UK Government must ensure that disability rights groups are consulted fully on any potential impact of Brexit on services that those groups use.

My hon. Friend touched on the European Accessibility Act, which is currently being negotiated. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has said that it will benefit disabled people by providing common rules on accessibility in relation to computers and operating systems, ATMs, ticketing and check-in machines, as my hon. Friend mentioned. The proposed Act would require domestic provisions to allow consumers and interest groups to take action under national law. It would require authorities within member states to have the power to restrict, prohibit or recall offending products and services. Manufacturers would be required to produce information relating to complaints, compliance and product recall. When we consider the effort that has been put in, it really does ring true, and I hope that the Minister understands just how serious this is. In giving evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee, Anna Lawson, Director of the Centre for Disability Studies at the University of Leeds, said:

"In terms of accessibility, in the last few years there has been a really strong set of initiatives from the EU. Accessibility is very much part of the EU disability strategy. It is embedded in a whole raft of legislation and policies, which impact on the UK in areas such as transport, procurement, social funds and websites. There is a new one coming in on public websites."

There is real cause to look at the support that the EU provides financially and through co-operation initiatives to support disabled people in member states. Disability organisations such as the Papworth Trust have said that the EU provides millions from the European social fund to support a range of schemes for disabled people such as work experience, wage subsidies and support for the self-employed. At this stage, in extending a hand of friendship across the House, I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who held an excellent event recently for Mencap on how we get disabled people into work. I know the Minister was present at that, and I hope that it will be factored in to these strategies as well.

I want to talk briefly about my hon. Friend's concerns about settlement, because concerns are now starting to be raised about the impact of Brexit. Disability Rights

UK interviews have highlighted that disabled people from other EU countries might well experience disability-related disadvantages when it comes to establishing a right to permanent residence in the UK. The UK Government have published a document on the rights of EU citizens living in the UK. It suggests that EU nationals will apply for a new settled status, but does not provide further fulfilment criteria. I hope that the Minister will touch on that.

I am mindful of time and do not want to detain the House much longer, but there are two other points that I want to raise. The UK Government must ensure that disability rights groups are consulted fully on any potential impact of Brexit on services that they use. This Government need to realise that decisions they make on Brexit will have a very significant impact on disabled people, whether they are about social care, establishing the right to residence, or a loss of vital funding. We know that the last Parliament demonstrated a staggering contempt for disabled people who are on low incomes, with legislation cutting the ESA WRAG component by £30 a week as well as tightening the eligibility for PIP.

As we embark on what will be the most challenging time for us as legislators in this country, we need to have the rights of disabled people first and foremost and front and centre. I hope that the Government will do that.

4.45 pm

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship once again, Mr Hollobone. Can I start by congratulating the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron)—I hope I have pronounced that correctly—on securing this timely debate? I also thank the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) for contributing this afternoon.

During the referendum campaign relatively little was said about the impact that exiting the EU would have on disabled people, their rights and their services. With some notable exceptions, not a great deal more has been heard since. That is a big mission. It is crucial that this issue receives the attention it deserves, not only because Brexit is ultimately about people—the outcome of the negotiations will impact on every aspect of our national life and everyone living in this country—but because the outcome of the most difficult and complicated negotiations that this country has undertaken since the second world war could have serious implications for the more than 10 million disabled people in the UK and their families. That is why the Opposition have consistently called on the Government to ensure that the priorities of disabled people are at the heart of their approach to the Brexit negotiations.

Indeed, the fact that Brexit will affect disabled people in specific ways is precisely why we sought to amend the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill to ensure that the Government considered the impact of withdrawal on protected characteristics—including disability—by means of detailed equality impact assessments. Sadly, they used the majority they enjoyed at the time to vote down that amendment. Now that the article 50 negotiations are formally under way, it is more important than ever that the Government make it clear, to an extent that they have not done to date, that

the voices of disabled people are being heard and that their interests will be championed throughout the Brexit debate.

The comprehensive Disability Rights UK consultation and manifesto clearly sets out the range of concerns felt by disabled people in relation to Brexit. There is far more in that report than I can hope to cover in the short time available to me, but I want to touch on a couple of the main issues that both the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman have raised, and put a series of questions to the Minister that add to theirs. They both spoke passionately about their concerns for the future of disability rights once the UK has left the EU. I know that the repeal Bill will not be published until Thursday, and the Minister will be limited in what she can say, but can she give some sense of how the Government intend to consult with disabled people and disability rights groups when it comes to converting EU disability law into UK law, particularly in terms of corrections undertaken by means of secondary legislation? What means of redress does she envisage being available to disabled people to enforce their rights once we have left the EU? Can she confirm whether the Government's intention is to keep pace with any positive developments in EU disability law that occur after our exit? The European Accessibility Act, which is making its way through the European legislature, is a case in point.

Both the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman mentioned funding. Brexit clearly jeopardises the funding provided by the EU to disabled people's organisations and to projects that directly benefit disabled people. Will funding be honoured for such projects signed before or after the autumn statement of last year, financed either under the social fund element of EU structural and investment funds or by means of the European regional development fund? Will the Minister offer some clarity about the funding prospects for these projects after 2020?

Both hon. Members touched on the potential impact of Brexit on our health and social care system. There is particular concern among disabled people that a sharp reduction in the number of EEA/EU personal assistants and carers could have a detrimental impact on independent living. Where that sort of support is reduced, disabled people could be forced to choose between residential care and living at home with inadequate support. We do not want to see either outcome.

Can the Minister clarify whether her Department, the Department of Health or the Department for Exiting the European Union have undertaken any assessment of the impact of exiting the EU on the health and social care workforce on whom disabled people rely? Will that impact assessment and that issue be taken fully into account during the drafting of the forthcoming Immigration Bill?

We have touched on the impact that exiting the EU will have on the rights of UK citizens abroad and EU nationals living here at home. It has the potential to become a serious concern and challenge for the Government, because many EEA/EU citizens either act as full-time carers for family members who are UK nationals or live here of their own accord but are unable to attain permanent residence because the Home Office does not consider them to be working persons exercising their treaty rights. The Government's recent offer to UK nationals made no mention of disabled people or their carers, so there are understandable concerns that

those individuals will not qualify for settled status. What assurances can the Minister give about safeguarding the position of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU, so that disabled people and their carers will not face unequal treatment?

To conclude, disabled people are worried about the risks that Brexit poses to their hard-won rights and the services that they value. I look forward to hearing from the Minister about those issues and others of concern not only to disabled people but to the disability rights groups, such as Disability Rights UK, that advocate on their behalf.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** I am sorry, but the Minister will have to tear up half her speech, because she has only 36 minutes of time available. Would she be kind enough to conclude her remarks no later than 5.27, to allow Dr Cameron three minutes for a winding-up speech?

4.51 pm

**The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Penny Mordaunt):** I think I can manage that, Mr Hollobone. I thank the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) for securing this important and helpful debate. I put on record my thanks, and those of the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union and his Ministers, to Disability Rights UK for the welcome and helpful work that it has done on the manifesto. I also thank the other Members who have contributed to this discussion.

I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady that this is not just about markets and money. I say that not just as a politician or an avid leave campaigner. I have gone the length and breadth of the country, and I know the public think that Brexit is more than markets and money. They voted to leave or remain for a variety of reasons: for this country's potential to have a positive effect in developing nations, which could have huge benefits for the disabled community overseas; for all sorts of societal reasons; for the primacy of international humanitarian law; for skills training in the UK; and for lots of other reasons, including additional funding for our public services.

As we talk about Brexit in this place and consider what we need to do as we exit the EU and how to maximise and lever all the opportunities that will come with it, we must talk about a broad range of issues that matter to the public, of whom disabled people form a large cohort. In research done by the Papworth Trust last year, a randomly sampled survey showed that 54% of disabled people voted to leave. Clearly, the community has clear ideas about what it wants us to secure and protect as we exit the EU.

**Dr Cameron:** I thank the Minister for referring to that important piece of research. My understanding of the Papworth Trust's research is that many disabled people voted to leave based on the consideration that additional funding might come to the NHS, and therefore to their care. Does she not think that that shows how important it is that we recognise the needs and care of disabled people in our Brexit negotiations?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I agree completely, and I will address the issues that the hon. Lady and other Members have raised during this debate.

[*Penny Mordaunt*]

Members have spoken about services and about strengthening rights and supporting disabled people to reach their full potential, whether through employment or by other means, and play their full part in society. The decision to leave the EU does not change those priorities. Government officials are comprehensively considering the impact of the transition on disabled people.

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Many disability activists—including Muscular Dystrophy UK's Trailblazers, a group of young disabled campaigners tackling social equality issues affecting young disabled people, such as access to transport, higher education, employment and social and leisure opportunities—are concerned about the potential impact of leaving the EU on their human rights and ability to live independently. They want to know whether the Minister will guarantee whether all rights for disabled people contained in EU directives will be incorporated into the repeal Bill.

**Penny Mordaunt**: Yes, certainly. I will come to the detail in a moment, but absolutely. The repeal Bill, contrary to what its name might suggest, is about transferring those rights into UK law.

As we have a little time, let me give an example of the direction that we want to take. A muscular dystrophy trailblazer—in fact, the muscular dystrophy trailblazer of the year, a fantastic young woman called Lauren who is a fashion student—inspired some changes that we have made recently to the Motability scheme. She got a fantastic work opportunity overseas that she felt she could not take because of the admin that she would have to do on returning to secure her Motability car. We have changed the rules for that scheme to enable anyone who has an opportunity to live overseas for a long period—a sabbatical, a work experience opportunity, romance or whatever—to do so without being prevented by our admin. We listen to disability organisations extremely carefully. As young people like her seize greater opportunities through more global trade and business relationships, we should ensure that admin in our Departments keeps pace with them rather than being an obstacle.

My Department, the Office for Disability Issues and other Departments are supporting DExEU in its aims. As negotiations about our future relationship with the EU progress, the Government will ensure that any impact on disabled people is taken into account. As part of its work to uphold rights and equalities, DExEU's stakeholder engagement team is working with civil society groups and disability organisations and their members to consider the broad range of those issues in detail. DExEU officials have already met a number of organisations, including Mencap and the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group, and some of their membership.

Officials are also developing plans for further engagement across the sector, including meetings with the Disability Charities Consortium, with which DExEU is currently liaising to ensure that officials and Ministers are hearing the sector's concerns. There will also be direct engagement with other groups run by and representing disabled people. DExEU Ministers are keen to hear from any disabled people or disability groups who want to draw their attention to any aspect of the matter.

**David Linden**: I get the impression from the Minister that the Government are in listening mode. May I therefore extend an invitation to her, and indeed to DExEU Ministers and officials, to come to Glasgow for a meeting with the Glasgow Disability Alliance, which has done excellent work with its manifesto to get these issues on the agenda?

**Penny Mordaunt**: I would certainly be happy to do that. I am always happy to visit, although it may have to be during the recess. The Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), has responsibility in this area and responsibility for Scotland. I am sure there will be opportunities to talk to him directly.

Throughout the negotiations, Ministers and officials are holding meetings with the business community and others about a variety of issues. I know from my own sense check of DExEU that the materials that may be needed to support those meetings, such as documents in accessible formats, are in good order.

DExEU's engagement with stakeholders will ensure that our commitment to equalities through the transition remains steadfast. Indeed, we hope to use the EU exit as a potential opportunity to create standards that are higher than the EU's in many areas—I know that the Disability Charities Consortium is particularly keen on looking at such opportunities. To support this work, DExEU will share with colleagues in other Departments, including me in the Office for Disability Issues, the insight gained from its stakeholder engagement on this and other matters. Brexit is a cross-cutting issue, and the Government are co-ordinating work to ensure continuity for everyone in this country in the wake of the legislative transfer. In our relationship with the EU, the UK has been a leader on many equality issues. I hope we will continue to hold that leadership role even outside the EU.

Let me address some concerns mentioned by the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow. Our standards on rail vehicle accessibility for disabled people were used as the model for EU-wide standards. That is just one example. On bus driver training, which she mentioned, the EU regulation came into force on 1 March 2013 and training has to be put in place within five years. As she will know, the Department for Transport has been doing an awful lot to ensure not just that the right legislation is in place, but that bus drivers are trained and that the standards of customer service that people enjoy on public transport are maintained. My Department is supporting that work. One of our disability sector champions, Jane Cole, is promoting good practice on disability awareness training—I place my thanks to her on the record.

I hope we maintain our leadership role. The UK has some of the strongest equalities legislation in the world, including the Equality Act 2010, which enshrines equality in domestic law. A huge focus of my Department is on ensuring that that law is enforced, because we cannot rely on people having to sue organisations to enforce it. We have some new opportunities to achieve that, particularly by utilising technology. That is one way in which the Office for Disability Issues can support this agenda.

The hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook) raised the ESF. For projects signed off after the autumn statement, which will continue after we leave the EU, funding will be honoured by the

Treasury. We expect those projects to provide value for money and to be in line with our domestic priorities. We want leaving the EU to mean that we can take our own decisions and set for ourselves the policy objectives that were previously targeted to gain EU funding. The Government will continue to consult stakeholders to review EU funding schemes in the round and ensure that any ongoing funding commitments best serve the UK's national interests.

**Dr Cameron:** Has there been any discussion of whether the funding that was received from the EU will be matched in the long term?

**Penny Mordaunt:** For projects that are already ongoing, the funding will continue. That will be honoured by the Treasury. In a way, the European social fund is the easiest issue to grapple with, but a large focus of DExEU's work is on other issues. Future projects that meet the objectives of the Government of the day and that offer good value for money will be funded by the Treasury. New as well as continuing projects will be dealt with in that way. However, we are well aware that the UK's third sector has mapped the fact that it relies on funding from all sorts of other sources than the European social fund. DExEU and the Equality and Diversity Forum have a project that is looking at how to ensure that the sector will not suffer, and that leaving the EU will not be detrimental to the funding that goes into those projects.

My office is looking across all areas at how to enable the third sector to derive a greater income. Understandably, we have cracked down on all sorts of fundraising—chugging and so forth—that the sector has done over many years and that the public are concerned about. However, these organisations provide amazing services to some incredibly vulnerable people. We have to enable them to continue to provide those services and, ideally, extend their reach. In every aspect of our work, we are actively doing more work in partnership with the sector and more co-funding, enabling those organisations to derive a larger income for the services and support that they provide. That is a particularly important project that does not get a lot of airtime, whereas understandably the social fund does.

On freedom of movement, there are opportunities for disabled people. It has been too easy to neglect not just the vocational and skills training that people need, but things like independent living support that we know people need in order to thrive and undertake meaningful activity and work. The negotiations on freedom of movement as we leave the EU will force us, and will force business, to look at our labour market strategy. There are some opportunities to be seized as we leave the EU.

The hon. Members for Greenwich and Woolwich and for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow focused on healthcare and social care, which are obviously incredibly important. I point them to the manifesto, which paid particular attention to EU nationals working in our NHS and the priority we wish to give them. I also underline the work on social care that is going on across Government. Understandably, the media have focused on social care for older people, but we are also looking at social care for those of working age, who do not get a lot of press attention. My office is heavily involved—hon. Members will see more of that in the near future.

The hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich made a point about the Home Office. As in the preceding debate, hon. Members will have to make do with the Minister in the Chamber, but DExEU is the co-ordinating Department. However, I am sure that I can commission either DExEU or the Home Office to answer in detail on visa applications and support requirements for people who wish to come here.

With regard to my own Department, I will point to what we have done for other groups. One of the first things that I did was to amend the rules on the past presence test for refugee children who had a disability. I felt that, if we were taking refugees and they had particular needs, we should meet them. I point to that as evidence that we are very aware of our responsibilities and I undertake to ensure that either the Home Office or DExEU update the hon. Members for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow, and for Greenwich and Woolwich, on the specific points about visas.

In the time that I have left, I will just touch on some other points. It is important to put on the record as well that we are going through a process of examination by the United Nations regarding the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. That also affords us some opportunities, and I am undertaking a piece of work in my Department to consider how we can use the principles set out in the convention to enshrine them in the heart of the work of every Government Department. As I say, that convention affords us some opportunities, and that work will be a very encouraging and positive exercise.

We have other considerable opportunities as a result of leaving the EU. I am hotfooting it from Westminster Hall over the road to launch a paper with Localis on a sector deal in the industrial strategy on disability. There are some tremendous opportunities that join up all the agendas that hon. Members have spoken about today on employment, our ambitions on international development and all sorts of things, and on harnessing the tremendous innovation, the science, and the research and development that goes on in the UK, whether it be in assistive technology, design or all the things that we showcase at the global disability innovation hub not far from where we are today. We have tremendous opportunities that not only play into growth, jobs, markets and money but do so much more.

**Dr Cameron:** I thank the Minister for being generous in giving way once again. Will she meet the all-party group on disability to discuss its recent inquiry report, "Ahead of the arc", which examines some of the important issues that she has referred to, including industrial strategy and why disability rights and employment for people who are disabled should be at its core?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I am always happy to meet that group and I await an invitation.

In closing, I thank hon. Members for their contributions today. I hope that, as legislation is introduced and as negotiations progress, we can continue to keep the issues of specific interest to disabled people high on the agenda. I am very encouraged by what DExEU has done to date and by its plans for the future, and I encourage disabled people and their organisations to engage with the process. Only then will we get a Brexit that we can be proud of. I thank the hon. Lady for playing her part in that today.

5.14 pm

**Dr Cameron:** I thank hon. Members for taking part in the debate today, and I thank those on the Front Benches for their thorough responses. As we have heard, research indicates that many disabled people voted for Brexit. That shows that we cannot let disabled people down—we must honour promises that have been given. Many disabled people voted for Brexit believing that it would enhance the future provision of their services, so we must uphold their rights, their support, their services and their opportunities. We must ensure that those

things are maintained, prioritised and continued; that we in the UK are always ahead of the curve when it comes to disability rights and never fall behind it; and that all funding is maintained.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered consultation with disabled people on the effect on their services of the UK leaving the EU.

5.16 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*



# Written Statements

Tuesday 11 July 2017

## CABINET OFFICE

### Members' Correspondence

**The First Secretary of State and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Damian Green):** I am today publishing a report on the performance of Departments and Agencies on handling correspondence from Members and Peers during the calendar year 2016. Details are set out in the attachment below. Correspondence statistics for 2015 can be found on 21 July 2016, Volume 613 (HCWS118).

Departmental figures are based on substantive replies unless otherwise indicated. The footnotes to the table provide general background information on how the figures have been compiled.

Attachments can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-07-11/HCWS35/>

Correspondence Table 2016 (Correspondence Table 2016.doc)

[HCWS35]

## TREASURY

### ECOFIN: 11 July 2017

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):** A meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) will be held in Brussels on 11 July 2017. The UK will be represented by Sir Tim Barrow, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the European Union. European Finance Ministers will discuss the following items:

#### *Early morning session*

The Eurogroup President will brief Ministers on the outcomes of the 10 July meeting of the Eurogroup, and Ministers will discuss the current economic situation.

#### *Current financial service legislative proposals*

The Council presidency will provide an update on current legislative proposals in the field of financial services.

#### *Mandatory disclosure rules*

The Commission will give a presentation on the proposal for a Council directive amending directive regarding the mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation in relation to reportable cross-border arrangements.

#### *Presentation of the work programme of the Estonian presidency*

The new Estonian presidency of the Council of the European Union will present its work programme for the next six-month period. The Council will exchange views on the work programme.

#### *Commission mid-term review of the capital markets union action plan*

The Council will be asked to endorse Council conclusions on the mid-term review of the capital markets union action plan.

#### *Non-performing loans*

ECOFIN will hold an exchange of views on policy responses to the non-performing loans situation. The Council will also be asked to endorse Council conclusions.

[HCWS36]

## DEFENCE

### Chemical Weapons Convention

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mark Lancaster):** My right hon. Friend the Minister of State in the House of Lords (The Earl Howe) has made the following written statement:

The Defence Minister for the House of Lords, Lord Howe: The UK's chemical protection programme is designed to protect against the use of chemical weapons. Such a programme is permitted by the chemical weapons convention, with which the United Kingdom are fully compliant. Under the terms of the convention, we are required to provide information annually to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In accordance with the Government's commitment to openness, I am placing a copy of the summary that has been provided to the Organisation outlining the UK's chemical protection programme in 2016 in the Library of the House.

[HCWS37]

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Northern Ireland Finances

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire):** In my statement to the House on 3 July, I made it clear that the UK Government will always uphold their ultimate responsibilities for political stability and good governance in Northern Ireland. With that in mind, I have been keeping under review the financial situation in Northern Ireland absent an Executive. Having reflected on the situation, and following further advice from the head of the Northern Ireland civil service, I have concluded that it will be necessary for me to provide additional clarity ahead of the summer recess to support Northern Ireland permanent secretaries in addressing financial pressures and maintaining public services. Following the public holidays in Northern Ireland this week, I therefore, intend to lay a further written statement before the House next week with adjusted indicative budget positions and departmental allocations. This will take account of the Barnett consequentials arising from the spring Budget, and funding as may be available from budget transfers and updated forecasts.

[HCWS38]



# Petition

*Tuesday 11 July 2017*

## PRESENTED PETITION

*Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor*

### **Children with Special Educational Needs**

*The petition of Alan and Karen Entwistle,*

Declares that the petitioners are the parents of a son who is visually impaired and has learning difficulties because of prematurity and has been diagnosed as autistic by Great Ormond Street hospital; further declares that the petitioners have had difficulties getting the local education authority (Lancashire) to work with them and recognise that they as parents have a uniquely good understanding of the needs of their son; declares that the continual legal disputes with the local authority

have now cost the family over 80,000 and depleted all their savings; further declares that the local authority decided to prosecute the family (on the anniversary of their eldest son's death) for not sending their son to a school that they believed would be harmful to him; further declares that they were unable to fund legal advice to defend themselves, but did manage to get pro bono support as a consequence of this were found that they had no case to answer.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons Education Select Committee investigate the use of legislation relating to absence from school by local authorities to punish parents who disagree with the local authority as to what is best for their children and to propose changes in legislation so that local authorities are required to work with parents rather than simply use the criminal law to impose their will on families.

And the petitioner remains, etc.—*[Presented by Julie Cooper.]*

[P002044]



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**not later than  
Tuesday 18 July 2017**

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