

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT

Welsh Grand Committee

## AUTUMN BUDGET AS IT RELATES TO WALES

*Wednesday 7 February 2018*

*(Afternoon)*

---

### CONTENTS

**Autumn Budget as it relates to Wales**  
*Resumption of general debate.*

---

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the final version of the report should be clearly marked in a copy of the report—not telephoned—and must be received in the Editor’s Room, House of Commons,

**not later than**

**Sunday 11 February 2018**

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2018

*This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence, which is published at [www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/](http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/).*

**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chair:* † DAVID HANSON, ALBERT OWEN

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| † Andrew, Stuart ( <i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales</i> ) | Hart, Simon ( <i>Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire</i> ) (Con) |
| † Antoniazzi, Tonia ( <i>Gower</i> ) (Lab)                                   | Hoare, Simon ( <i>North Dorset</i> ) (Con)                           |
| Bebb, Guto ( <i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence</i> )     | Jones, Mr David ( <i>Clwyd West</i> ) (Con)                          |
| † Brennan, Kevin ( <i>Cardiff West</i> ) (Lab)                               | † Jones, Gerald ( <i>Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney</i> ) (Lab)          |
| Bryant, Chris ( <i>Rhondda</i> ) (Lab)                                       | † Jones, Susan Elan ( <i>Clwyd South</i> ) (Lab)                     |
| † Cairns, Alun ( <i>Secretary of State for Wales</i> )                       | Kinnock, Stephen ( <i>Aberavon</i> ) (Lab)                           |
| † Clwyd, Ann ( <i>Cynon Valley</i> ) (Lab)                                   | Lake, Ben ( <i>Ceredigion</i> ) (PC)                                 |
| † Crabb, Stephen ( <i>Preseli Pembrokeshire</i> ) (Con)                      | Lucas, Ian C. ( <i>Wrexham</i> ) (Lab)                               |
| † David, Wayne ( <i>Caerphilly</i> ) (Lab)                                   | † McMorris, Anna ( <i>Cardiff North</i> ) (Lab)                      |
| † Davies, Chris ( <i>Brecon and Radnorshire</i> ) (Con)                      | Moon, Mrs Madeleine ( <i>Bridgend</i> ) (Lab)                        |
| † Davies, David T. C. ( <i>Monmouth</i> ) (Con)                              | † Morden, Jessica ( <i>Newport East</i> ) (Lab)                      |
| † Davies, Geraint ( <i>Swansea West</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)                        | † Rees, Christina ( <i>Neath</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)                       |
| † Davies, Glyn ( <i>Montgomeryshire</i> ) (Con)                              | † Ruane, Chris ( <i>Vale of Clwyd</i> ) (Lab)                        |
| Doughty, Stephen ( <i>Cardiff South and Penarth</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)            | † Saville Roberts, Liz ( <i>Dwyfor Meirionnydd</i> ) (PC)            |
| Edwards, Jonathan ( <i>Carmarthen East and Dinefwr</i> ) (PC)                | Smith, Nick ( <i>Blaenau Gwent</i> ) (Lab)                           |
| † Elmore, Chris ( <i>Ogmore</i> ) (Lab)                                      | Smith, Owen ( <i>Pontypridd</i> ) (Lab)                              |
| Evans, Chris ( <i>Islwyn</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)                                   | Stevens, Jo ( <i>Cardiff Central</i> ) (Lab)                         |
| † Flynn, Paul ( <i>Newport West</i> ) (Lab)                                  | Tami, Mark ( <i>Alyn and Deeside</i> ) (Lab)                         |
| Griffith, Nia ( <i>Llanelli</i> ) (Lab)                                      | † Thomas-Symonds, Nick ( <i>Torfaen</i> ) (Lab)                      |
| † Harris, Carolyn ( <i>Swansea East</i> ) (Lab)                              | † Williams, Hywel ( <i>Arfon</i> ) (PC)                              |
|  | Kenneth Fox, Rebecca Davies <i>Committee Clerks</i>                  |
|  | † <b>attended the Committee</b>                                      |

## Welsh Grand Committee

Wednesday 7 February 2018

(Afternoon)

[DAVID HANSON *in the Chair*]

### Autumn Budget as it Relates to Wales

2 pm

*Question again proposed,*

That the Committee has considered the matter of the autumn Budget as it Relates to Wales.

**The Chair:** Before I call Susan Elan Jones, who was speaking before the break, I remind hon. Members who use the headphones that, when they take them off their heads, they should turn the volume down to avoid feedback on the sound system.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to speak when you are in the Chair, Mr Hanson.

Mae'n bleser mawr cael siarad gyda chi yn y Gadair, Mr Hanson.

Dros Gymru a Phrydain gyfan, mae gennym rai o'r gweision cyhoeddus gorau yn y byd, gan gynnwys y bobl sy'n dysgu yn ein hysgolion; y bobl sy'n gweithio yn ein hysbytai; ein diffoddwyr tân a'n heddlu; a'n lluoedd arfog. Mae ein gweision cyhoeddus yn gweithio tu hwnt i'r disgwyl i'n gwasanaethu ni bob dydd a nos. Yr ydym yn aml yn trafod ystadegau yn y lle hwn—mae hynny'n ddigon teg ac yn hanfodol—ond rwyf o'r farn hefyd bod angen inni gyflwyno prawf moesegol i'r gap cyflog ar gyfer gweithwyr sector cyhoeddus.

Yn ddiweddar, roedd nifer fawr o Aelodau Seneddol yn cymryd rhan mewn dadl am dâl ein lluoedd arfog. Gwnaed y pwynt nad oedd cynnydd yn y cyflog yn cyfateb i gost gynyddol tai ar gyfer personél y gwasanaethau arfog. Mynegodd llawer ohonom—yn drawsbleidiol—ein pryder ynglŷn â hyn. Dyna un enghraifft sy'n dangos fy mhryderon am ganlyniad rhewi cyflogau yn y sector cyhoeddus.

Mae Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam—nid cyngor Llafur, ond un sy'n cael ei redeg gan glymblaid o gynghorwyr Ceidwadol ac Annibynnol—yn dweud ar ei wefan ei fod wedi arbed tua £18 miliwn dros y tair blynedd diwethaf, ac rwy'n credu bydd yn rhaid dod o hyd i £13 miliwn arall dros y ddwy flynedd nesaf. Mae'r cyngor yn nodi ar ei wefan:

“Mae gennym lai o arian i'w wario bob blwyddyn”.

Felly cytunaf ag Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid, Mark Drakeford, a ddywedodd y bydd cyllideb lywodraethol Cymru yn parhau i fod 5% yn is mewn termau real yn 2019-20 nag yn 2010-11. Eto, wrth inni glywed am y pryderon mawr hyn, rydym yn rhoi £3 biliwn heibio i dalu am fethiant y Llywodraeth yn y trafodaethau Brexit. Wrth gwrs, 'dwi ddim yn sôn am y £39 miliwn am y “fargen”—mae'n ddrwg gen i ddefnyddio'r fath air yn y cyd-destun hwn. Doedd dim sôn am y fath beth ar fws enwog yr ymgyrch i adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd.

Beth am ddyled y Deyrnas Unedig? Yn ôl ffigyrau o'r Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol, mae dyled a oedd yn £358.6 biliwn ym mis Mai 1998 erbyn hyn yn £1,726.9 biliwn—swm syfrdanol. Dywedodd Dirprwy Lywodraethwr Banc Lloegr, Ben Broadbent:

“Mae twf cynhyrchiant wedi arafu ym mhob economi uwch, ond mae wedi bod yn fwy difrifol yn y wlad hon nag mewn gwledydd eraill.”

Dywedodd *The Daily Telegraph*—soniais am y *Guardian* bore yma, felly rwyf yn cyfeirio at y *Telegraph* prynhawn yma—fod

“twf cynhyrchiant wedi cwmpo”.

Soniodd y newyddiadurwr Tim Wallace yn y *Telegraph* am y 1860au, sef y degawd diwethaf cyn yr un yma i brofi twf incwm gwirioneddol negyddol. Dylai'r sefyllfa bresennol fod o gonsyrn mawr i bob un ohonom.

Er hynny, yn y bôn rwy'n credu mai pobl optimistaidd ydym ni yng ngogeldd Cymru, ac rydw i am orffen ar nodyn optimistaidd. Rwy'n croesawu unrhyw gyhoeddiad am fargen twf gogledd Cymru. Fel dywedais i, byddaf yn ei groesawu'n fwy pan fydd o'n dŵad, ond rydw i yn croesawu'r cyhoeddiad. Mae angen i ni wella'r seilwaith a gweithio'n drawsffiniol i wneud yr A5 a'r A483 yn well ac yn fwy diogel, ac mae angen buddsoddiad i sicrhau mynediad gwell i'n gorsafoedd rheilffyrdd, yn enwedig gorsaf Rhiwabon, yr orsaf ar gyfer traphont ddŵr Pontcysyllte, sy'n gwasanaethu poblogaeth fawr iawn, yn fy etholaeth it.

Mae'n her i bob un ohonom wneud y cytundeb twf yn reality, ac mae'n hollbwysig i ogledd Cymru, i bobl Cymru gyfan ac i'n cymdogion ar draws y ffin ein bod ni'n sicrhau bod y cytundeb twf yn gweithio ar gyfer ein cymunedau.

(*Translation*) *We have some of the best public servants in the world, including the people teaching in our schools and working in our hospitals, our firefighters, police officers, armed forces and others. They go above and beyond to serve us, day and night.*

*We often use statistics while speaking in this place, and that is understandable and, indeed, essential, but we also need to apply an ethical test to a pay cap for public sector workers. Recently, many MPs took part in a debate on pay in the armed forces. The point was made that the wage increase did not correspond with the rising cost of housing for service personnel, and many of us, on a cross-party basis, expressed concerns about that. That is one example of my concerns about what the pay freeze in the public sector can mean.*

*Wrexham County Borough Council, which is run not by Labour but by a coalition of Conservative and Independent councillors, talks on its website about how it has saved about £18 million during the past three years. I believe that it will have to find another £13 million over the next two years. The council says on its website that it has less money to spend annually. I therefore agreed with Mark Drakeford, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance in Wales, who drew attention to the fact that the Welsh Government's budget will still be 5% lower in real terms in 2019-20 than it was in 2010-11.*

*When we hear of these concerns, we acknowledge that we are now putting an additional £3 billion aside in case of failure in the Brexit discussions. Of course, I am not talking about the £39 billion that will be needed in the deal—I am not too happy to be using the word “deal” or “bargain” in this context. There was no warning of that on the leave campaign's famous bus,*

*What about the United Kingdom's debt? According to figures from the Office for National Statistics, the debt that was £358.6 billion in May 1998 is now £1,726.9 billion—a shocking figure.*

*The Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, Ben Broadbent, said that productivity growth has slowed across all the wealthy nations of the world, but it has been more severe in this country than in others. I mentioned The Guardian this morning, so this afternoon I will mention The Daily Telegraph. It said that productivity growth had decreased.*

*Tim Wallace, the journalist, talked about the 1860s in The Daily Telegraph, and said that that was the last decade until now that experienced real negative growth. The current situation should be a cause of great concern to all of us.*

*Essentially, however, I think that we in north Wales are an optimistic people and I will close my speech on an optimistic note. I welcome any announcement on the north Wales growth deal. As I say, I will be more welcoming when it comes, but I welcome the announcements that have been made. We need to improve infrastructure and we need cross-border working to make the A5 and the A483 safer and better, and we need investment to ensure better access to our train stations—particularly Ruabon station, the station for the Pontcysyllte aqueduct, which is very important for my constituency.*

*The challenge for all of us is to make the promise of the growth deal a reality. It is essential for north Wales—in fact, for the people of all of Wales, and our neighbours on the other side of the border—that we ensure that the growth deal works for our communities.*

2.6 pm

**Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): Diolch, Mr Hanson, am roi'r cyfle i mi gyfrannu i'r ddadl hanesyddol hon drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Dyma'r tro cyntaf i ni ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yma yn San Steffan—nid yw hyn wedi digwydd o'r blaen—a dyna pam mae'n ddadl hanesyddol.

Yn siarad yn bersonnol, mae'n arwyddocaol fy mod i'n gallu cyfrannu yn Gymraeg. Pan ges i fy ethol i Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru ym Mae Caerdydd yn 1999, doeddwn i ddim yn gallu siarad gair o Gymraeg. Ers hynny, rydw i wedi gwnuod fy ngorau i ddysgu'r iaith—iaith y nefoedd. Roedd bob un o'm hynafiaid yn siarad Cymraeg fel iaith gyntaf. Roedd fy rhieni yn siarad Cymraeg fel iaith gyntaf, ond wedi iddynt briodi symudasant i ran o Sir Drefaldwyn lle doedd neb yn siarad Cymraeg. Yn fwy arwyddocaol, roedd pobl yn gweld yr iaith fel iaith o fethiant—doedd neb ar y pryd eisiau siarad Cymraeg. Mae pethau wedi newid heddiw, ond mae lot o pobl wedi anghofio beth oedd y sefyllfa amser maith yn ôl.

Ni chlywais fy nhad na'm mam yn siarad Cymraeg o gwbl, felly ni allai fy mhump chwaer na fi siarad gair o Gymraeg. Nid oeddwn i'n medru gwneud tan i mi ddod yn Aelod o'r Cynulliad. Ar ôl cael fy ethol i'r Cynulliad, lle mae llawer o Gymraeg yn cael ei siarad, gan gynnwys yn y Siambr, penderfynais fy mod i am ddysgu'r iaith. Gallwch weld felly, Mr Hanson, pam mae'r ddadl hanesyddol hon mor bwysig i fi yn bersonnol, yn ogystal â bod yn hanesyddol o ran San Steffan.

Mae'r ddadl Uwch Bwyllgor Cymreig yma yn rhoi'r cyfle i ni ystyried y Gyllideb a beth mae'n olygu i Gymru. Yn fy mharn i—rwy'n gwybod na fydd pawb yn cytuno â hyn—mae wedi bod yn newyddion da iawn

i Gymru. Cynuddodd y Gyllideb yr arian ar gael i Lywodraeth Cymru wario ar wasanaethau cyhoeddus yng Nghymru. Cynuddodd y grym gwario gan £1.2 biliwn bob blwyddyn, sy'n arwyddocaol iawn. Roedd grym gwario wedi codi £1.2 biliwn bob blwyddyn, ac mae hynny'n arwyddocaol. Pan oeddwn yn Aelod yn y Cynulliad, roedd llawer o drafod am y fformiwla Barnett a'r Barnett floor hefyd. Galw am fwy o arian i Gymru, mwy o rym gwario.

Ar y pryd, roedd pobl yn gweld yr Athro Gerry Holtham fel arbenigwr a bob tro roeddem yn siarad am y Gyllideb yn y Cynulliad, roedd people yn dyfynnu'r Athro Holtham. Nawr, ar ôl cytuno fframwaith cyllid gyda Llywodraeth Cymru, mae'r Athro Holtham wedi disgrifio'r sefyllfa fel a very fair settlement. Mae pethau wedi symud ymlaen lot. Mae Llywodraeth Cymru hefyd wedi croesawu'r fframwaith cyllid. Maen nhw'n dweud nawr am long-term fair funding i Gymru. Mae hwn wedi digwydd o dan y Llywodraeth Geidwadol. Rwyf yn falch iawn i glywed pethau fel hyn.

Pwynt arall sydd yn bwysig i mi: yn y Gyllideb roedd y Canghellor yn sôn am gryfhau'r economi ymhob rhan o Gymru. Siaradodd am y Cardiff city deal, y Swansea city deal, am y north Wales growth deal, ac hefyd, am y tro cyntaf, siaradodd am mid Wales growth deal. Mae hyn yn bwysig dros ben; yn hynod o bwysig i mi. Mae'n rhy gynnar i wybod yn union beth mae mid Wales growth deal yn golygu. Mae'n bwysig iawn bod pobl leol yn y canolbarth yn rhoi syniadau. Dyma pam rwyf yn siarad gyda phobl yn sir Faldwyn a thu allan i sir Faldwyn hefyd, yn y canolbarth, a phob corff yn y lle, i gynnig syniadau.

Rwyf wedi bod yn siarad gyda'r Aelod dros Geredigion. Gobeithio byddwn yn gallu cymryd mantais o ymchwil amaethyddol ac amgylcheddol ym Mhrifysgol Aberystwyth a hefyd, gweithio gyda smallholdings ym Mhowys.

*(Translation). Thank you, Mr Hanson, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this historic debate through the medium of Welsh. It is the first time we have been able to use the Welsh language in Westminster. It has not happened before, which is why the debate is historic.*

*Personally speaking, it is significant for me, too, to be able to make my contribution in Welsh. When I was elected to the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff bay in 1999, I could not speak a word of Welsh. However, since then, I have done my very best to learn the language—the language of heaven. All of my ancestors were first-language Welsh speakers. My parents also spoke Welsh as a first language, but after getting married they moved to a part of Montgomeryshire where nobody spoke Welsh. More significantly, the Welsh language was seen as a failed language; nobody wanted to speak the Welsh language. Things have changed now, but many people have forgotten the situation of many years ago.*

*I did not hear my father or mother speak Welsh at all, so my five sisters and I could not speak a word of Welsh. I could not do so until I became an Assembly Member. Having been elected to the Assembly, where a great deal of Welsh is spoken, including in the Chamber, I decided that I needed to learn the Welsh language. So, as you can see, Mr Hanson, this historic debate is particularly important to me on a personal level, as well as being historic in terms of events in Westminster.*

*This Welsh Grand Committee debate gives us an opportunity to consider the Budget and its implications for Wales. In my view—I know that not everyone will agree—it has been very good news for Wales. The Budget*



[Glyn Davies]

*increased the funding available to the Welsh Government to spend on public services in Wales. The spending power increased by £12 billion, which is significant. When I was an Assembly Member there was a great deal of debate about the Barnett formula and the Barnett floor, too. There were demands for more funding and more spending powers for Wales.*

*At the time, Professor Gerry Holtham was seen as an expert on all of these issues, and every time we discussed the Budget in the National Assembly people would quote Professor Holtham. Now, having agreed a financial framework with the Welsh Government, Professor Holtham has described the situation as a very fair settlement, so things have moved on a great deal, and the Welsh Government have also welcomed the financial framework. They see it as long-term fair funding for Wales, and that has happened under a Conservative Government. I am particularly pleased to hear such comments.*

*The other point that is important to me is that in the Budget the Chancellor spoke about strengthening the economy in all parts of Wales. He spoke about the Cardiff city deal and the city deal in Swansea. He also talked about the north Wales growth deal and, for the first time, he mentioned a mid-Wales growth deal, which is hugely important for me. It is too early to know exactly what a mid-Wales growth deal will mean, but it is important that local people in mid-Wales bring their ideas forward. When I speak to people in my constituency and outside my constituency in mid-Wales, I will encourage everyone and all the organisations involved to bring forward their ideas, and hopefully we will be able to take advantage.*

*I have spoken to the hon. Member for Ceredigion. I hope we will be able to take full advantage of the environmental and agricultural research undertaken at Aberystwyth University and also work with the smallholdings in Powys.*

**Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC):** Mae yna lawer iawn o bobl yn y gogledd eisiau cymryd rhan yn y ddêl ar gyfer twf. Roeddwn mewn cyfarfod diweddar gyda'r brifysgol ym Mangor. Mae ganddynt syniadau da iawn ond fawr o syniad sut i ymgeisio. Mae'r manylion ar sut ddylai'r cynllun yma weithio yn brin iawn. Onid yw hynny'n neges i'r Llywodraeth y dysant ddarparu'r wybodaeth yma rwan am fod syniadau da allan yno yn barod i fynd?

*(Translation) A great many people in north Wales also want to take part in the growth deal. However, having had a recent meeting with Bangor University, where there are very good ideas, I know that it does not really know how to apply the details, which are scarce, of how the deal will work. That is a message for the Government that they should provide that information now, because there are good ideas out there ready to go.*

**Glyn Davies:** Fel ddywedais i, yn y canolbarth, mae'n amser cynnar iawn. Mae cyfrifoldeb arnom ni i gynnig syniadau. Rwyf yn credu bydd Ysgrifennydd Cymru yn barod i dderbyn syniadau. Mae'n gyfle i gryfhau'r economi yng ngogledd Cymru ac yn y canolbarth. Mae'n bwysig hefyd i gryfhau'r cysylltiadau trafniadaeth rhwng y canolbarth a chanolbarth Lloegr. Mae'n bwysig cysylltu gyda'r farchnad yng nghanolbarth Lloegr. Mae'r Newtown bypass yn agor eleni; mae hyn yn bwysig. Mae pont newydd yn symud ymlaen ym Machynlleth, dros y Dyfi.

Y cam nesaf yw cael ffordd newydd rhwng Trallwng a ffin Lloegr yn sir Amwythig. Mae'n bwysig cael cysylltiad rhwng y canolbarth a Lloegr. Mae'r farchnad yn bwysig i ni ac rwyf eisiau gweld y growth deal yn y canolbarth yn canolbwyntio ar hynny. Hefyd, wythnos nesaf, mae £7 miliwn yn mynd i fewn i'r rheilffordd rhwng y Drennewydd ac Aberystwyth. Mae lot yn digwydd. Mae cysylltiadau trafniadaeth yn bwysig iawn os ydym am weld y canolbarth yn symud ymlaen.

Mae prosiect Pumlumon yn bwysig hefyd. Dydy pobl ddim yn gwybod lot am y prosiect, ond y cynllun yw i dalu ffermwyr â dros 100,000 erw—rhaid i mi edrych i weld os ydw i'n dweud yr un peth yn Gymraeg—i stopio llifogydd yn Lloegr. Mae hyn yn bwysig iawn a bydd yn dda i ffermwyr yn y canolbarth. Bydd yn help mawr i arbed gwario miliynau i stopio llifogydd yn Lloegr. Mae growth deal yn y canolbarth yn beth da ar gyfer hyn. Mae camlas Mynwy yn bwysig, yn mynd dros y ffin, a gobeithio gall y buddsoddiad ynddo fod yn rhan o'r mid-Wales growth deal hefyd.

Rwyf wedi bod yn Aelod yn y Cynulliad ac yn Aelod yma yn San Steffan, ac rwy'n deall bod angen i'r ddwy Lywodraeth weithio gyda'i gilydd i gael yr elw mwyaf. Mae hyn yn digwydd a dyma pam rwy'n optimistig ac yn credu bydd hyn yn parhau trwy berthynas positif. Dwi ddim yn darllen beth sydd yn y cyfryngau. Mae'r ddwy Lywodraeth yn gweithio gyda'i gilydd ac mae hyn yn bwysig.

I orffen, rwyf eisiau mynd yn ôl at yr iaith Gymraeg a sut mae gwleidyddiaeth a materion cyhoeddus yn cael eu darlledu yng Nghymru. Dylai beth sy'n digwydd yng Nghymru—yn y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol—gael mwy o sylw yn y cyfryngau yng Nghymru. Rydym ni i gyd yma yn dibynnu ar ddarlledu yng Nghymru i gysylltu â phobl Cymru i ddweud wrthyn nhw beth rydym ni'n gwneud yma. Rwy'n dibynnu ar y BBC, S4C a ITV i wneud hyn.

Roedd yn grêt gweld Radio Cymru 2 yn dechrau mis diwethaf. Mae'n bwysig iawn i Gymru a dwi'n llongyfarch Betsan Powys ar ei gwaith. Heddiw, rwyf eisiau dweud fy mod yn siomedig ar ôl clywed bod "O'r Senedd" yn gorffen—mae pawb yn adnabod y rhaglen—a dydw i ddim yn gwybod beth sydd yn dod yn ei lle. Dydw i ddim yn meddwl mai rhaglen sy'n delio â gwleidyddiaeth sy'n dod yn ei lle. Rwyf hefyd yn cofio "CF99". Os rydym am gysylltu â phobl Cymru, mae rhaglenni fel "O'r Senedd" yn bwysig iawn i ni. Dydw i ddim eisiau gweld yn lle "O'r Senedd" rhyw fath o adloniant; rwyf eisiau gweld y cyfryngau yng Nghymru yn delio â gwleidyddiaeth yma yn San Steffan mewn ffordd ddifrifol. Yr unig ffordd rydym ni yn gallu cysylltu gyda'r bobl yng Nghymru yw trwy'r cyfryngau. Gobeithio, yn lle "O'r Senedd", bydd rhyw fath o raglen sy'n delio â'r pynciau pwysig i Gymru mewn ffordd ddifrifol.

*(Translation) As I said, in mid-Wales it is at a very early stage. There is a responsibility on all of us to bring forward ideas. I think the Secretary of State for Wales is willing to take on board these ideas, and that is where we are at the moment. I see an opportunity to strengthen the economy of north and mid-Wales. I also believe it is important to strengthen the transport links between mid-Wales and the midlands. It is hugely important that we can link up with the markets in the midlands. The Newtown bypass will open this year. That is important, and the new bridge over the Dyfi in Machynlleth is making progress.*

*The next step is to have a new road between Welshpool and the border with England in Shrewsbury. It is important to have those connections with England. The market is hugely important to us, and I want to see the growth deal in mid Wales focusing on that issue. Also, next week, £7 million will be invested in the railway between Newtown and Aberystwyth.*

*Also, next week, £7 million will be invested in the railway between Newtown and Aberystwyth. There is a great deal happening. Transport links are hugely important if mid-Wales is to make progress.*

*The Pumlumon project is also important. I do not know too much about it yet, but as I understand it the plan is to pay farmers—those with 100,000 acres, I think, but I will have to check that figure—to stop run-off from their land. That is hugely important. It will be positive for farmers in mid-Wales, and it will be of huge assistance in saving millions of pounds on flood prevention work in England. The mid-Wales growth deal is very positive. The Montgomery canal is also important, and I hope that investment in that is part of the mid-Wales growth deal, too.*

*Having been a Member of the Assembly and a Member here in Westminster, I have come to understand that the two Governments must work together if we are to achieve maximum benefit. I think that is happening, so I am optimistic. I think a positive relationship can develop between the Governments. I do not read about what is happening in the media. The Governments are working together, and that is hugely important.*

*To conclude, I want to move back to the issue of the Welsh language and how politics and public affairs are covered in Wales. What happens in Wales—and in the National Assembly—should get more coverage in the media in Wales. We are all reliant on broadcasters in Wales to connect with the people of Wales and inform them about what is happening here. That is hugely important. I think of the role of the BBC, S4C and ITV in delivering those messages.*

*It was wonderful to see Radio Cymru 2, a second Welsh-language radio channel, established last month. That is hugely important for Wales, and I congratulate Betsan Powys for the work that she has done. However, I was a little disappointed to hear that the S4C programme “O'r Senedd” is to cease broadcasting. I am not sure what is going to replace it, but I do not think that it will be a programme dealing with politics. I remember when “CF99” was on S4C. If we are to connect with the people of Wales, programmes such as “O'r Senedd” are hugely important. I raise that point because I do not want to see some sort of entertainment provided in place of “O'r Senedd”. I want to see the media in Wales cover politics here in Westminster and at the Assembly seriously. The only way that we can connect to the people of Wales is through the media. I hope that “O'r Senedd” will be replaced by some sort of programme that covers the important issues of the day for Wales.*

2.19 pm

**Hywel Williams:** Rwy'n falch eithriadol o'r cyfle yma i siarad yn y ddadl hanesyddol hon. Fel pawb arall, rwy'n falch iawn o'r diwedd i gael siarad Cymraeg yn y Tŷ hwn yn Llundain. Cefais y cyfle i siarad Cymraeg o'r blaen, pan aeth yr Uwch Bwyllgor i Wrecsam dro yn ôl, ond mae siarad yr iaith yn San Steffan yn gam arwyddocaol

pellach, wrth i'r awdurdodau yma yn Llundain ddygymod o'r diwedd â'r ffaith mai nid gwladwriaeth uniaith ydy'r Deyrnas Gyfunol.

Yn wir, yn gynyddol daw unieithrwydd cyhoeddus yn eithriad yng Nghymru, dwi'n credu. Heblaw am y dadleuon amlwg i mi fel unigolyn fod medru siarad Cymraeg, a hawl fy etholwyr i gael eu cynrychioli drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, mae elfen gref iawn o synnwyr cyffredin o blaid symud at sefyllfa lle mae cyfrwng ein trafodaethau ni yma yn adlewyrchu'r ffaith bod natur ieithyddol ein gwlad ni yn wahanol. Dylem adlewyrchu sut mae pethau yng Nghymru, ac mae medru siarad Cymraeg yn rhan o hynny.

Fy mwriad prynhawn yma ydy siarad yn fyr am gynigion y Canghellor ynghylch credyd cynhwysol, ac yn wir—bydd Aelodau Llywodraeth yn falch iawn i glywed hyn—i groesawu'r newidadau hynny, cyn belled ag y maent yn mynd. Tydi nhw ddim yn mynd hanner digon pell i mi a, fel llawer o bobl sy'n cymryd diddordeb yn y maes yma, buaswn yn licio gweld y newidiadau yn mynd yn bellach. Tydi'r newidiadau ddim yn mynd hanner digon pell i bobl a fydd yn hawlio'r fudd-dal yn y dyfodol, wrth i gredyd cynhwysol ddod i fewn. A tydi nhw ddim yn mynd hanner pell i mi fel rhywun sydd yn cynrychioli pobl ac yn pwyso ar yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau am welliannau a newidiau.

Mae'r pryderon am y drefn newydd eisioes yn ddigon clir. Ar 9 Hydref y llynedd, yn nghwestiynnau'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau, gofynnais i'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol, a oedd newydd gael ei benodi ar y pryd, pa gynnydd a wnaed wrth ddod â chredyd cynhwysol i fewn a lle oeddem ni arni hi. Bydd rhai Aelodau yn gwybod, wrth gwrs, bod peilot wedi cael ei redeg ers tro yn ardal Shotton a bod hynny'n cynrychioli tua 5% o'r boblogaeth sydd ar hyn o bryd yn medru hawlio credyd cynhwysol. Ateb yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol oedd bod y fudd-dal newydd yn dod i fwcwl yn unol â'r cynllun, ac rŷm ni'n gweld y cynllun hwnnw yn dod i fewn rwan.

Dywedais wedyn fod cryn gefnogaeth i egwyddorion credyd cynhwysol. Rwy'n credu bod yna gytundeb ar draws y Tŷ bod yr egwyddorion—sichrau incwm a sichrau bod pobl yn medru mynd i'r gwaith yn haws o lawer—yn dda iawn, ond yn ôl neb llai na Syr John Major, nodweddiad dwyn credyd cynhwysol i fewn hyd yn hyn yw

“gweithredu bler, anhegwch cymdeithasol a diffug trugaredd”.

Efallai bod ei eiriau gwreiddiol yn y Saesneg yn taro'n galetach:

“operationally messy, socially unfair and unforgiving”.

Gofynnais i'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol felly, fel cwestiwn atodol, i ohurio dwyn y cynllun i fewn yn ei gryswth. Os na fedrai wneud hynny, roedd yna gwpwl o bethau roeddwn i eisiau iddo eu gwneud, sef dileu'r cyfnod aros gan wythnos a thalu'r budd-dal pob pythefnos yn hytrach na phob mis. Bydd Aelodau yn gyfarwydd â'r problemau a all godi hefo trio cyllido am fis ar swm gymharol fach. Wrth gwrs, mi oedd yna gyfnod aros lle roedd pobl yn disgwyl am wythnos heb gael budd-dal.

Bydd Aelodau yn gyfarwydd â dadl y Bonheddwyr gwir anrhydeddus dros Chingford a Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), sef awdur y drefn yma. Dywedodd y dylai credyd cynhwysol adlewyrchu'r byd gwaith: mae rhan fwyaf o bobl yn cael eu talu'n fisol, felly dylai'r fudd-dal fod yn fisol hefyd er mwyn eu paratoi i fynd i swydd. Wrth gwrs, mae hyn yn anwybyddu'r ffaith fod



[Hywel Williams]

llawer yn debygol o fod ar gredyd cynhwysol am gyfnodau amhenodol—cyfnodau hir iawn—heb obaith am waith. Yn fwyaf sylfaenol, mae hyn yn anwybyddu anawsterau garw didoli symiau bach o incwm dros fis cyfan yn hytrach na dros wythnos neu pythefnos.

Dro yn ôl, rhedais surgery i gynghori pobl oedd yn gorfod ymdopi efo'r treth lloffydd—y taliad am lofft ychwanegol. Rhoddodd un ddynes restr o'i gwariant i mi. Roedd £1 ar waelod y rhestr. Gofynnais, “Be' 'di'r bunt yna?” Atebodd, “Wel, 'dwi'n gorfod cerdded lawr i'r dre i siopa, ac unwaith pob pythefnos, 'dwi ddim yn cerdded yn ôl, 'dwi'n mynd ar y bys.” Dyna beth oedd y bunt. Mae pobl ar arian wythnosol yn medru ymdopi yn rhyfeddol o fanwl hefo'r hyn o arian sydd ganddynt, yn bennaf wrth gwrs am nad oes gennyn nhw ddewis.

Ni chytunodd yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol i'm cais i ohirio cyflwyno'r budd-dal, ond dywedodd rhywbeth arwyddocaol: y byddid yn gwneud newidiadau pan ac os fydd angen, fesul tipyn. Roedd hynny'n rhywbeth reit bositif iddo ddweud: nad oedd popeth yn gwbl sefydlog, ac y gellir gwneud newidiadau. A dyma ni—mae rhai newidiadau yn y Gyllideb, er rhai bychain ac annigonol ydyn nhw. Er hynny, mae nhw i'w croesawu.

Felly beth yw'r newidiadau? Daw y cyfnod disgwyl am fudd-dal i lawr o chwech wythnos i bump—o 42 diwrnod i 35. Fel bydd rhai Aelodau yn gwybod, telir y budd-dal yn fisol, ond rhaid disgwyl pythefnos ychwanegol ar y dechrau. Mae hyn wedi achosi problemau sylweddol yn barod. Natur y chwech wythnos oedd: pedair wythnos i wirio'r incwm—gan fod pobl am gael eu talu yn fisol, rhaid cael manylion incwm am fis—wedyn wythnos i brosesu ac wythnos i ddisgwyl. Mae'r wythnos i ddisgwyl wedi mynd. Roedd y rhan fwyaf ohonom sydd yn cymryd diddordeb yn y maes yma yn gwybod nad oedd yr wythnos ddisgwyl yn golygu fawr o ddim byd yn ymarferol.

*(Translation) I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this historic debate. Like everyone else, I am also very pleased finally to be able to speak Welsh here in Westminster. I have had the opportunity to speak Welsh before, when the Grand Committee went to Wrexham a while ago, but being able to speak Welsh in Westminster is a further significant step forward, as the authorities here in London finally come to terms with the fact that the United Kingdom is not a monolingual state.*

*In fact, monolingualism in Wales will become the exception. Apart from the obvious arguments that stop me as a Welsh speaker being able to speak Welsh, it also restricts the ability of my constituents to be represented through the medium of Welsh. There is a strong common sense element in favour of moving to a position where the medium of our discussions here reflects the fact that the linguistic nature of our country is diverse. We should be reflecting the situation in Wales, and speaking Welsh should be a part of that.*

*My intention this afternoon is to speak briefly about the Chancellor's proposals on universal credit and—Government Members will be pleased to hear this—to welcome the proposed changes in so far as they go, although I would say that they do not go far enough. I think the same would be true of many people who take an interest in this area, who would like to see the changes go further. It is certainly not far enough for the people who will be claiming the benefit in the future, as universal*

*credit comes in. It does not go far enough for me, as someone who represents people and presses on the Department for Work and Pensions for improvements in this regard.*

*The concerns about the new system are clear enough. On 9 October last year, in DWP questions, I asked the then Secretary of State, who was new at the time, having just been appointed, what progress he had made in bringing in universal credit and where we had reached. As some hon. Members will know, a pilot had been run in the area of Shotton. That represented about 5% of the population who can now claim universal credit. The response of the Secretary of State was that the new benefit was about to come in as expected, and we see the scheme coming into force now.*

*I then said that there was quite a bit of support for the principle behind universal credit. I think that there is agreement across the House that the principle of universal credit is a very good one, ensuring that people have an income and can go into work much more easily. The agreement on universal credit is in place, but none other than Sir John Major said, with regard to this matter, that the way that universal credit had been brought in up until now was chaotic and showed a lack of mercy. It perhaps comes across better in his own words:*

*“operationally messy, socially unfair and unforgiving”.*

*I therefore asked, as my supplementary question, for the scheme to be postponed as a whole. If that were not possible there were a couple of things that I wished the Department to do: to bring the waiting period down a week and to pay the benefit every fortnight instead of every month. Hon. Members will be aware of the problems that may arise from trying to budget for a month on a comparatively small sum. Of course, there was a waiting period where people could wait for a week without receiving any benefits.*

*Members will be familiar, of course, with the argument of the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), who was the author of the system. He said that universal credit should reflect the working world: the majority of people are paid monthly, so the benefit should also be paid on a monthly basis, and that would prepare people for the world of work and getting a job. That ignores the fact that many people are likely to be on universal credit for periods that may not be defined, without any hope of getting work. More fundamentally, I believe that it ignores the difficulties of dealing with small sums over a month, rather than a week or a fortnight.*

*Some time ago, I ran a surgery to advise people who were dealing with the bedroom tax. A woman who came in with a list of expenditure that had £1 at the bottom. I asked, “What's that £1 for?” and she said, “Well, I have to walk down to town to shop. Once a fortnight, I don't walk back. I take the bus.” That is what it was for. People on a weekly budget cope remarkably well, mainly because they have no other choice.*

*The Secretary of State did not agree with my proposal to delay or postpone bringing the benefit in, but he said something significant: changes will be made when necessary, as necessary and step by step. It was positive of him to say that the benefit is not entirely set in stone and that changes can be made. Now there are welcome changes in the Budget, although they are quite small and insufficient.*

*Those changes reduce the waiting period from six weeks to five weeks—that is, from 42 days to 35. Some hon. Members will know that the benefit is paid monthly,*



*but that people have to wait an additional fortnight at the beginning, which has already caused significant problems. Those six weeks include four weeks to check income, because people are paid monthly so the details of their monthly income are needed, then a week for processing time and a week of waiting. That week of waiting has gone.*

*Most of us who take an interest in this subject know that that week of waiting meant very little and had no practical purpose.*

**David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): Mae'r Bonheddwr anrhydeddus yn gwneud pwynt pwysig, ond 'dwi'n siŵr ei fod yn gwybod bod unrhyw un gyda anawsterau ariannol yn gallu benthycio arian o'r Adran i sicrhau nad ydynt yn cael problemau. [*Ymyrraeth.*]

*(Translation) The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, but I am sure he is aware that anyone with financial problems can borrow money from the Department to ensure that those problems are overcome. [Interruption.]*

**Hywel Williams:** Mae'r Bonheddwr anrhydeddus yn gwneud pwynt da iawn, a byddaf yn sôn am hynny gyda hyn. Mae'n bosib cael taliad, ond fel dywedodd fy Nghyfaill anrhydeddus dros Dwyfor Meirionnydd o'i chadair, benthyciad yw hwnnw, nid taliad.

*(Translation) The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I will come to that in a moment, but I might as well say now that it is possible to have a payment beforehand, but that is a loan rather than a payment, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd said from a sedentary position.*

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): That change puts people into debt straightaway. The Government have not addressed the flaws in the system. The Trussell Trust says that in areas where universal credit has been rolled out for six months or more, there has been a 30% increase in people taking up food parcels. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those statistics lay bare the link between welfare reform and emergency help?

**Hywel Williams:** Mae'r Fonedduges anrhydeddus yn gwneud pwynt arbennig o dda. Mae'r Trussell Trust, a mudiadau eraill wrth gwrs, yn rhedeg banciau bwyd trwy Gymru gyfan, ac maen nhw wedi cynyddu'n sylweddol. Mae gennym ni rhai da iawn yng Nghaernarfon ac ym Mangor, a 'dwi wedi bod yna yn eu gweld nifer o weithiau. Gyda llaw, fy marn i am fanciau bwyd yw bod o'n dda i'w cael nhw, ond yn gywilydd bod gennym eu hangen. Fel dywedodd y Fonedduges anrhydeddus, mae cael benthyciad ar y dechrau yn golygu bod yna ddyled yn syth bin. Tydi hynny ddim yn safbwynt da i gychwyn gyrfa fel hawliwr credyd cynhwysol. Nes ymlaen, wna'i sôn am ymchwil sydd wedi cael ei wneud yn Sir Fflint ynglŷn â lle mae'r problemau efo credyd cynhwysol. Bydd hyn yn ddadlennol.

O'r hyn roeddwn i'n deall, prif bwrpas yr wythnos o ddisgwyl oedd arbed arian. Doedd dim pwrpas arall iddi. 'Dwi'n eithriadol o falch o weld y cyfnod yna yn mynd, ond gallasai'r Canghellor fod wedi gwneud llawer mwy, er enghraifft, torri'r cyfnod prosesu hefyd, fel bod rhywun yn cael yr arian mwy neu lai'n syth bin ar ddiwedd y pedair wythnos pan mae'r incwm wedi'i wirio.

Newid arall ydy, fel y sioniodd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Fynwy, y bydd taliad ymlaen llaw ar gael o dan rhai amgylchiadau o fewn pump diwrnod o wneud y cais.

Yn fuan iawn, bydd rhywun yn dod i sylweddoli efallai nad yw'r credyd cynhwysol ddim yn ddigon a bydd rhywun yn medru gwneud cais am bres ychwanegol. Gobeithio bydd pobl ddim yn mynd heb ddim. Ond er hynny, fel ddywedodd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Ddwyrain Casnewydd, mae hyn yn rhoi rhywun i fewn i ddyled. Y newid arall positif a gyhoeddodd y Canghellor oedd bod y cyfnod talu'n ôl yn 12 mis yn hytrach na chwech. Ond benthyciad ydy hwn. Newid bychan ond un i'w groesawu. A dyna ni yn y bôn, hyd y gwela i, o'r Gyllideb. Nid y cyfnod disgwyl ydy'r brif broblem efo credyd cynhwysol, na chwaith y taliadau ymlaen llaw.

Hoffwn siarad ychydig bach am y pethau y byddwn i a Phlaid Cymru yn hoffi gweld yn cael eu newid ynglŷn â'r budd-dal, fel rhyw rhestr siopa i'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol a'r Canghellor at y dyfodol. Mae credyd cynhwysol yn arbennig o bwysig i Gymru, gyda chynifer o bobl yn medru ei hawlio. Ac i fod yn blaen—waeth i ni fod yn blaen ddim—mae hynny am fod gennym ni gymaint o bobl sy'n dlawd ac ar gyflogau isel. Dyna pam rydym yn medru hawlio gymaint o'r arian yma ar gyfradd uwch na'r Alban a Lloegr.

Bydd y cyfanswm o bobl sy'n medru hawlio credyd cynhwysol yng Nghymru yn cynrychioli tua 400,000 o aelwydydd. Mae hyn yn gyfran enfawr o'r bobl sydd yn byw yn ein gwlad, yn arbennig o gofio mai cartrefi ac aelwydydd yw'r 400,000, ac mae'r teuluoedd sy'n byw yno—y plant a'r gŵr neu'r wraig—yn ychwanegol i hynny. Felly, bydd y nifer absoliwt o bobl fydd yn dibynnu i ryw raddau ar greddy cynhwysol yn sylweddol eto. Oherwydd hynny, byddai diwygio pellach o fudd eithriadol i ni yng Nghymru, yn arbennig o gofio fod pobl ar incymau is yn tueddi i wario'n lleol ac mae'r bunt sy'n cael ei gwario'n lleol yn mynd ymhellach o lawer yn yr economi lleol hefyd. Felly, nid mater absoliwt o gael incwm ychwanegol yw hyn, ond hefyd rhoi hwb i'r economi lleol.

*(Translation) The hon. Lady makes an exceptionally good point. The Trussell Trust and other organisations run food banks throughout Wales. The number of food banks has increased substantially—we have two very good ones in Caernarfon and Bangor, which I have visited many times. It is good to have them, but it is shameful that we need them. I will try to assist them. As the hon. Lady said, receiving a loan at the beginning means that debt is immediately accrued, which is not a great position for someone receiving benefits to start from.*

*The problems in Flintshire are illustrative of the problems with universal credit. From my understanding, the main purpose of the additional week of waiting was to save money, so I am glad that it has been removed. The Chancellor could have done much more, however, such as trying to cut down on the processing time so that people get the money almost immediately after the four weeks in which income has been checked.*

*The other proposed change is that the payment beforehand, which the hon. Member for Monmouth mentioned, will be available five days before. Very soon, people will come to see that universal credit may not be sufficient, and it will be possible to apply for further funding. I hope people will not lose out or go without anything as a result because, as the hon. Member for Newport East said, that can lead to debt. The other positive change that the Chancellor introduced was to make the repayment period 12 months, rather than six. I welcome that change, although it is very small. I do not think the waiting time or the advance payments are the biggest problem with universal credit.*

[Hywel Williams]

*I would like to talk about some of the things that I and Plaid Cymru would like to see in relation to the benefit—a sort of shopping list for the Secretary of State and the Chancellor to look at in the future. Universal credit is extremely important for Wales, because we have so many people who are poor and on low incomes, which is why we claim the benefit at a higher rate than England and Scotland.*

*About 400,000 households can claim universal credit in Wales, which is a huge number, particularly when we bear in mind that there are other members of those families, including children, so a huge number of people are to some extent dependent on universal credit. Further reform would be extremely beneficial for us in Wales, particularly bearing in mind that people on lower incomes tend to spend their money locally. A pound that is spent locally goes much further in the local economy. This is about not simply getting additional income, but boosting the local economy.*

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): I am following what the hon. Gentleman is saying very closely. Is he aware of a study commissioned by the University of Cambridge and University College London, which found that austerity killed 45,000 people between 2010 and 2014, and that a further 152,000 people will die because of austerity between 2018 and 2020? It describes austerity as economic murder. Does he agree that Wales is particularly vulnerable to the impact of that inhumane policy?

**The Chair:** Order. Before I call the hon. Member for Arfon, may I remind Members that, when they stand to speak or intervene, they must turn down the volume of their headsets? Otherwise, we all hear the noise that we are currently experiencing in our headsets.

**Hywel Williams:** Diolch i'r Aelod anrhydeddus dros Orllewin Abertawe am y pwynt hwnnw. Doeddwn i ddim yn ymwybodol o'r ymchwil arbennig yna. Rydym yn sôn fan hyn am bobl sydd reit ar ymyl y dibyn yn aml: pobl cyn agosed â phosib i fod mewn tloidi absoliwt, ynghyd â phobl sydd ar incymau isel sydd mewn gwaith ac yn ceisio mynd i fewn i'r gwaith. Mae'r ffigurau hynny'n frawychus.

Mae dipyn mwy o ymchwil yn dod i'r fei ynglŷn â hyn. Dwi wedi bod â diddordeb ynddo ers blynyddoedd lawer, yn bennaf oherwydd fy mod yn ymwybodol bod llawer o bobl yn fy etholaeth eisiau hawlio trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ond bod y ddarpariaeth ddim yna. Wnai sôn am hynny mewn munud. Mae fwy o ymchwil yn dod i'r fei rwan, gan gynnwys, Mr Hanson, o'ch ardal chi, gan Gyngor ar Bopeth Flintshire Citizens' Advice. Buaswn yn cymeradwyo'r adroddiad "Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service" i'r Aelodau anrhydeddus yn yr ystafell ac i unrhyw un sydd yn gwrando. Mae yna adroddiad misol—mae hwn o fis Hydref, mae un arall gen i fan hyn o fis Tachwedd y llynedd. Maen nhw'n cyhoeddi ffigurau a ffeithiau digon diddorol. Bydd yr Aelodau anrhydeddus yn cofio, wrth gwrs, fod credyd cynhwysol wedi cael ei redeg fel peilot yn Shotton, felly mae ganddynt ddeunydd crai ar gyfer eu hymchwil sydd ddim ar gael mewn llefydd eraill. Mae ffeithiau dadlennol

yno; roeddwn yn sbio arnynt rwan, tra'r oedd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Drefaldwyn yn siarad. Mae tri-chwarter y bobl a ddaeth atynt am gyngor yn ferched. Mae yna rhaniad gender eithaf sylweddol yn y fan yna.

Fel gwybodaeth i'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol a'i Gyfaill gwir anrhydeddus, y Canghellor, mae'r problemau oedd yn codi yn sir y Fflint yn codi allan o bethau fel camgymeriadau gan yr adran ei hun—roedd rheina'n frith; hawlio ar-lein yn broblemus yn arbennig i bobl heb sgiliau llythrennedd; gorfod disgwyl ar y ffôn yn ddiidwedd; budd-dal tai ddim ar gael ar amser neu ddim yn cael ei dalu o gwbl; a'r cyfnod aros yn wrthgymhelliad â phobl yn dweud na allent ddisgwyl am chwech wythnos i gael yr arian. Yn fwyaf arwyddocaol, i ddweud y gwir, mae rhan fwyaf y problemau'n codi o gwmpas y cais cyntaf, gyda phobl yn ceisio gwneud cais ac yn methu neu yn cael camgymeriadau wrth wneud.

Does dim gwybodaeth fan hyn, gyda llaw, ynglŷn â hawlio trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Roedd y peilot oedd yn cael ei rhedeg yn Shotton, lle nad oes cymaint o bobl yn siarad Cymraeg, ond dwi'n siwr y daw hyn i'r amlwg wrth i'r system gael ei weithredu trwy Gymru gyfan. Pan es i Shotton i weld y system gyfrifiadurol sydd ganddynt—mae hyn eto yn bwyt i'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol a'i gyfeillion yn y Cabinet—doedd y system ddim wedi ei chynllunio efo dwyieithrwydd yn y golwg. Hynny yw, system trwy gyfrwng y Saesneg a chais i foltio'r Gymraeg arni oedd bryd hynny o leiaf. Oherwydd hynny, roedd yna broblemau garw efo'r feddalwedd—does dim amheuaeth am hynny. Dwi yn ofni y gwelwn ni ragor o broblemau efo hynny. Buasai'n dda gweld y Llywodraeth yn gweithredu ymhellach na'r Canghellor y tro hwn.

Hoffwn orffen trwy nodi ychydig o newidiadau buddiol, fel rhyw rhestr siopa at y dyfodol, i'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol a'i Gyfaill gwir anrhydeddus, y Canghellor. Mae yna fân-doriadau wedi bod i gredyd cynhwysol yn barod ers iddo ddod i fewn. Mae yna ryw faint o dorri fan hyn a fan draw, rhyw dameidiau bach sydd yn mynd yn fwy ac, erbyn hyn, mae e'n £3 biliwn yn is o ran gwariant. Mae'n swm sylweddol iawn o ystyried bod y £3 biliwn yna, yn y bôn, yn dod o bocedi hawlwr sydd ar incwm digon isel i hawlio, digon isel fel mae. Fel canran o'r boblogaeth, maen nhw'n colli £3 biliwn. Hefyd, ar hyn o bryd, mae hawliwr yn colli 63c o bob punt ychwanegol o incwm. Felly, os ydy rhywun yn gweithio fymryn yn galetach a chael punt ychwanegol o incwm, maen nhw'n colli 63c o fudd-dal. Dyma'r tapr.

Pan nes i ddechrau cymryd diddordeb yn y maes hwn bron i 30 mlynedd yn ôl erbyn hyn, pan oedd y Social Security Act 1986 yn dod i fewn, bryd hynny roedd y tapr yn fwy na phunt am bunt. Bydd rhai Aelodau yn cofio hynny: rhywun yn ennill £1 ac yn colli £1.20 oherwydd daeth budd-dal tai i fewn. Diolch byth, mae e lawr i 63c yn y bunt rwan, yn hytrach na 65c yn lled-ddiweddard. Mae'n parhau i fod yn llawer rhy uchel yn fy marn i ac mae'n wrthgymhelliad sylweddol i weithio mwy ac ennill mwy. Rydym yn sôn o hyd yn y lle yma am waith fel ffordd allan o dlodi. Wel, dyma ni: gwrthgymhelliad pendant. Dwn i'm beth tasai'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol yn dweud pe tasen i'n cynnig trethi incwm uwch ar 63% yn hytrach na 40%. Mae'n wrthgymhelliad. Mae fel bod y ddadl gwrthgymhelliad yn gweithio pan yn sôn am bobl sy'n ennill llawer iawn o bres—peidio a threthi. Ond dydy o ddim yn gweithio efo pobl sydd ar ryw ychydig; mae eisiau gwneud yn siwr eu bod yn gweithio'n galetach felly peidiwch a rhoi



gormod yn eu pocedi. Dylid cymryd camau buan a sylweddol i leihau y tapr a medrwn ni edrych—gobeithio—ar y Canghellor i ystyried hynny.

O ran y rhestr yma, bydd rhai o'r Aelodau anrhydeddus yn gwybod bod gofal plant yn faich enfawr ar rieni pan maen nhw'n mynd yn ôl i waith. Mae gen i a fy ngwraig brofiad uniongyrchol diweddar o hyn. Diolch byth nad ydym ni'n hawlio credyd cynhwysol, oherwydd o dan y system yna mae'n rhaid talu am ofal plant ac yna hawlio yn ôl. Hynny yw, mae'n rhaid i rywun ffeindio'r pres i dalu efallai cannoedd—dros £1,000 efallai—am ofal plant llawn am ddau o blant, ac yna hawlio'r arian yn ôl. Mae hynna yn sicr yn rhoi pobl mewn dyled unwaith eto. Felly, byddai talu costau gofal plant ymlaen yn hytrach nag yn ôl yn newid bach na fyddai'n costio llawer i'r Llywodraeth. Mater o dalu'n gynt ydy o, nid mater o dalu'n ychwanegol. Cymeradwyaf hynny fel newid buddiol.

Yn olaf ar y rhestr mae'r lwfans gwaith, sy'n caniatáu i rhai pobl ennill rhywfaint—gallant ennill hyn a hyn—heb effeithio ar eu budd-dâl. Ers talwm, pan ddechreuais gymryd diddordeb yn y mater, roedd yn cael ei alw'n "therapeutic earnings". Dyna ydy'r pwynt: caniatáu i rywun fentro i'r gwaith ac ennill rhywfaint heb effeithio ar y fudd-dâl. Ar hyn o bryd, mae'r lwfans werth £397 y mis—bron £400—cyn i neb weld lleihau yn eu budd-dâl nhw. Ond cyn i'r newidadau ddod i fewn yn Ebrill 2016, roedd y ddarpariaeth yma ar gael nid yn unig i bobl anabl a rhieni, fel sy'n wir ar hyn o bryd, ond i bawb—roedd gan unrhywun y cymhelliad bach yna i fentro. Roedd rhai pobl yn medru ennill cymaint â £734 y mis, sydd bron dwyfaith cymaint, ond nid yw hynny ar gael bellach. Byddai codi uchafswm y lwfans gwaith a'i estyn yn ôl i bob unigolyn, gan roi iddynt y cymhelliad i fynd at waith, yn gam positif iawn, yn arbenning pan fod un aelod o gwpwl yn gweithio. Efallai byddai hynny yn rhoi cymhelliad i'r ail aelod o'r cwpwl fynd i'r gwaith hefyd.

Cyfeiriais ar y cychwyn at synnwyr cyffredin o ran yr iaith Gymraeg. Ers hynny, rwyf wedi cyfeirio at dim ond cyfran fach o'r hyn fyddai Plaid Cymru am newid o ran y drefn budd-daliadau. Mae yna lawer iawn mwy hoffem wneud, ond mae hynny tu hwnt i sgôp y ddaedl yma. Nid yn lleiaf, hoffem ddatganoli rhedeg y gyfundrefn a symud y cyfrifoldeb am nawdd cymdeithasol o ddydd i ddydd o'r lle yma i Gaerydd. Y rheswm dros hynny, wrth gwrs, yw ei fod yn ymarferol ac yn synnwyr cyffredin i roi datblygu'r economi, darparu addysg a hyfforddiant, gwasanaethu i bobl anabl, a phob math o bethau eraill, o dan yr un to â darparu incwm. Maent yn ffittio hefo'i gilydd yn dda iawn, ac mae hynny'n digwydd mewn rhannau eraill o'r Deyrnas Gyfunol. Cam cymharol syml—ac un gweinyddol yn y bôn—byddai symud y cyfrifoldeb am redeg y system o ddydd i ddydd o fan hyn i Gaerdydd. Ond, hyd at rŵan o leia, mae'n ymddangos bod yr enghraifft bach yma o synnwyr cyffredin y tu hwnt i ddirnadaeth y Llywodraeth yma ar hyn o bryd.

*(Translation) I thank the hon. Member for Swansea West for that point. I was not aware of that research. We are talking about people who are right at the edge and are close to absolute poverty, and about those who are working on low incomes or are seeking to enter the field of employment. Those figures are frankly terrifying.*

*Further research is emerging on this issue. I have had an interest in it for many years, mainly because many people in my constituency try to claim through the medium*

*of Welsh, and the provision is not available. I will talk about that issue later. More research is emerging, including from Citizens Advice Flintshire in your constituency, Mr Hanson. I commend its report entitled "Our local experience of Universal Credit Full Service" to hon. Members in the room and anyone who is listening. It is a monthly report. This is from October, and I have one available from last November. It publishes interesting figures and information. Hon. Members will remember that universal credit was run as a pilot in Shotton, so Citizens Advice Flintshire has material for its reports that is not available elsewhere. Some of the figures and information are very illuminating; Some of the figures and information are very illuminating; I was looking at them as the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire was speaking. Three quarters of those who came for advice were women, which suggests quite a substantial gender gap.*

*For the information of the Secretary of State and his right hon. Friend the Chancellor, let me briefly run through the problems in Flintshire, some of which arose because of mistakes by the Department. Claiming was problematic, particularly for people with literacy problems, who had to wait on the phone endlessly; housing benefit was not paid on time or not paid at all; and the waiting period was too long—many people could not wait six weeks for the money. Most significantly, most people's problems arose in their first application, when they tried to make a claim but failed or found difficulties.*

*No information is given about the right to claim through the medium of Welsh. The pilot scheme was in Shotton, where not so very many people speak Welsh, but I am sure that that problem will become more evident as the system is rolled out throughout Wales. When I went to Shotton to see the scheme in operation—this is a point for the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues—I could see that the computer system had not been designed with bilingualism in mind. It seemed that it worked through the medium of English and that Welsh was bolted on, so there were severe problems with the software—there is no doubt about that. I fear that we will see further problems. It would be good to see the Government taking action and going further than the Chancellor did.*

*May I conclude by noting some changes that would be beneficial? I have a shopping list for the Secretary of State and the Chancellor. Since the introduction of universal credit, there have been a few small cuts to it here and there, but they are becoming larger. Some £3 billion less is being spent—a significant sum, when we consider that essentially it comes out of the pockets of those who are on low enough incomes to be claimants. That segment of the population is losing £3 billion. Additionally, a claimant who works hard to receive a further £1 of income will lose 63p of benefit as a result of the taper.*

*I first took an interest in the subject more than 30 years ago when the Social Security Act 1986 was passed. The taper was more than 100% at the time: as hon. Members will remember, people would lose £1.20 in benefit for every extra £1 they earned, because of the introduction of housing benefit. That taper has recently gone down from 65p to 63p in the £1, but in my view it is still much too high, because it is a significant disincentive to earn more. We often talk about work as a way out of poverty, but the taper is a definite disincentive. I do not know what the*

[Hywel Williams]

*Secretary of State would say if I suggested taxing income at 63p rather than 40p in the £1; it seems that talking about disincentives works as an argument against taxing people who earn a great deal of money, but not as an argument against stopping people on lower incomes trying to earn more. I hope the Chancellor will reconsider the taper.*

*This is not the final point on my shopping list, but as some hon. Members will know, childcare is a large burden on parents when they return to work. My wife and I have direct recent experience of this. I am so very grateful that we do not claim universal credit, because under that system people have to pay for the childcare and then claim it back. People have to find perhaps over £1,000 for full-time childcare and then they can claim that money back. That will certainly put people into debt. Paying childcare costs forward, rather than claiming them back, would be a step forward. It would not cost much more to the Government; it is just a matter of paying more quickly rather than paying any additional sums. I would commend that as a beneficial change.*

*Finally on this shopping list is the work allowance, which allows some people to gain some money without having it affect their benefit. Some hon. Members will have interest in this, in terms of therapeutic earnings allowing someone to enter the workforce and then to earn a certain amount of money without it having an impact on the benefit. The allowance is £397—nearly £400—before anyone sees a reduction in their benefit, but before the changes in April 2016, this provision was available not only for disabled people and parents, as is the case currently, but everyone. Anyone could gain that incentive to step forward. Some people could earn as much as £734 a month, which is almost twice as much as now, but that is no longer available. Increasing the allowance would affect all individuals. It would incentivise them to get into work. It would be a very positive step, particularly when one half of a couple is working. It would give the second member of that couple an incentive to work as well.*

*I referred to common sense at the beginning, in terms of the Welsh language. Since then I have referred to only a small percentage of what Plaid Cymru would want to change in the benefits system. I could have said much more, but it is beyond the scope of this debate. However, not least is the devolution of funding the system: moving the responsibility for the day-to-day benefits system from here to Cardiff. That makes practical common sense, so that the economy can be developed, skills and training provided and services provided for disabled people. All those and other things can be done under the same roof as providing an income. All these things fit together very well. They are done in other parts of the United Kingdom. A simple, and basically an administrative, step would be to move the responsibility for running the system on a day-to-day basis from here to Cardiff. It is a small step, but it seems to be beyond this Government at present.*

**Several hon. Members** rose—

**The Chair:** Order. I have six hon. Members who wish to speak and I will be calling the Front-Bench spokespeople from 3.30 pm, so we have 45 minutes for six speakers, which is less than 10 minutes per person. I call Chris Davies.

2.43 pm

**Chris Davies** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): Diolch, Mr Hanson. I will keep within those 10 minutes. Given that the majority, if not all, of Government Members present have either started off or fully delivered their speeches in Welsh, I shall try to put my Labour colleagues at ease by speaking through the medium of English.

I am delighted to praise the autumn Budget and I am delighted to see its effect on my constituency. Brecon and Radnorshire has one of the lowest unemployment rates not just in Wales, but in the whole of Great Britain. That is because of the way in which we are delivering and looking after the economy in this country. It is a great boost. Many Opposition Members decry the low unemployment figures, but it is a massive boost for this country. We are very lucky indeed that we have so many people in work. The boost it gives to people in work and to families is immeasurable.

Much has been said already, so I will try to pick up a few points before I sit down. The tidal lagoon has been mentioned. As someone who represents a mid-Wales seat—I will come on to that—why I am I mentioning it? In the southern end of Brecon and Radnorshire in particular, jobs would be created, tourism would be helped and the economy would be boosted.

Many Opposition Members will remember that I led the Westminster Hall debate on Swansea's city of culture bid. I was asked to do it, and as a Swansea boy I was delighted to support Swansea in any which way I could. However, I am not prepared to see my constituents having to pay electricity bills that are twice or even three times the amount they pay at the moment. I want the tidal lagoon to go ahead, but we must ensure that the figures stack up. The Secretary of State made that clear earlier, as we have heard in all the debates. However political we want to be in this place, we owe a duty to our constituents to ensure that the figures add up.

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): The Government seem to lack commitment to invest in renewable energies and look after the air quality of Gower, Swansea and south Wales. As has been said, we still have no electrification to Swansea, and in my constituency there is a proposal to put in a gas power station, with potentially £100 million coming from central Government. That will not help provide clean air to my constituents, yet the Government are shirking on the tidal lagoon. Something must be wrong there.

**Chris Davies:** “Shirking” is an interesting choice of word. It would have been easy to give in and say, “The figures cannot be met and the lagoon cannot go ahead.” That is what a weaker Government would have done, but this Conservative Government have tried every which way possible and are still doing so to ensure that it happens. They are trying hard, and if it is possible we will succeed.

**David T. C. Davies:** Does my hon. Friend agree that if Carwyn Jones is serious about putting £200 million into the project, the Welsh Affairs Committee offers him an ideal platform to tell us all about it?

**Chris Davies:** I concur. Is it £200 million, or is it £2 million—do we really know what Carwyn Jones is offering? Do not forget that that is taxpayers' money,



not Welsh Assembly or Westminster Government money. He could come clean and say that, because this is a bill to the taxpayer, not to the Welsh Assembly or the Westminster Government. We must get it right.

**Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): Has the hon. Gentleman managed to read the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports on his Government's decision to build Hinkley Point? They say it will cost an extra £13 billion in public subsidy, which will be paid for by the poorest taxpayers. Is it not true that the cheapest electricity in Wales comes from the Dinorwig pumped-storage scheme in north Wales? There is huge potential for water power in Wales, which is being ignored by the Government in exchange for nuclear power stations, with one possibly in Wylfa to be built by a Japanese company because it cannot build them in Japan anymore.

**Chris Davies:** We have to be cautious about any audit report and investigate further. The hon. Gentleman will remember when Conservative Members of Parliament visited Newport to look at the possibility of a Newport lagoon. The Conservative Government have not only committed to trying to make it happen in Swansea but to make the whole lagoon structure work. We are trying to put the figures together. I will move on, because the tidal lagoon is a small part of what I have to say.

I am delighted that defence investment continues at 2% of GDP, and in Brecon and Radnorshire there is strong commitment to the Infantry Battle School, the training ground in Sennybridge, and Dering Lines. The military play an important part in Wales, and I am delighted that the Government continue to support them in every which way.

Let us not forget a small item we have missed in the Budget: £4.7 million has gone to refurbishing and modernising poppy factories. They may not be in Wales, but they supply poppies to Wales. For most people in this room and outside in Wales, that is the closest they get to remembering those who have lost their lives in battle. That is very important and an item that, sadly, has been overlooked, but it is in there to support our traditional elements.

We have heard much talk about agriculture. Over the past 12 months many farmers in my constituency have seen an increase in the price of lamb and beef on the hoof in the markets, as a result of the lower value of the pound. Many who voted for Brexit—the vast majority of them did so—are looking towards the future and the great expectations it holds. They are not frightened, but they are concerned—they do not know what is going to happen, but they are looking forward to the opportunities. I wish more politicians did that, instead of constantly criticising the Brexit process.

I am delighted that the Budget did not contain a tourism tax. Brecon and Radnorshire relies exceptionally heavily on tourism, as do the constituencies of many Members present, but the Labour and Liberal-run Welsh Government already seem to be talking about a tourism tax, which would decimate the tourism industry in this country. I hope that Opposition Members will tell their Welsh Assembly colleagues how devastating it would be and what a disastrous idea it is for Wales.

**Paul Flynn:** Quite right, too.

**Chris Davies:** I agree.

The mid-Wales growth deal has already been touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire. The one question that has never come out anyone's mouth in the Houses of Parliament, or even I think in the Welsh Assembly, is that of mid-Wales. Where does it start and where does it end? Where does south Wales start and stop? Where does mid-Wales start and stop? Where does north Wales start and stop?

As many Members know, my constituency is considered to be a mid-Wales seat, but the southern tip of my boundary is only 15 miles from Swansea bay. We have to think long and hard about where the mid-Wales growth deal will come in and where it will stop. What about constituencies such as that of the hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd? The southern part of her constituency could be part of a mid-Wales growth deal and would benefit from it. It is not just about Brecon, Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire and Ceredigion. The mid-Wales growth deal could be of great benefit to the majority of Wales, because the majority of Wales now seems to be mid-Wales.

I am delighted that the Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Jake Berry), who has responsibility for the northern powerhouse and local growth, has already visited Powys County Council to get the ball rolling. Before going on to do great things at the Ministry of Defence, the former Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb), also visited Powys County Council to ensure that it was starting to think about where to lead with the mid-Wales growth deal. The current Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales will visit shortly and lead the project forward, along with Lord Bourne from the House of Lords. The options are never-ending.

We have made it clear to local authorities that the mid-Wales growth deal will spread from east to west, across Offa's Dyke, because a lot of people in my constituency and in Montgomeryshire naturally cross that invisible border every day, whether to work or shop. Clearly, we have to tie everything in. I am delighted that the Chancellor mentioned the mid-Wales growth deal in the Budget. This is the first time we are seeing some real joined-up thinking from a Government. I praise the Conservative Government for starting the deal. It is a start and not a finish, but I am sure hon. Members will be disappointed to hear that it is the finish of my speech. I look forward to the mid-Wales growth deal.

2.54 pm

**Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): Gadewch i mi ddechrau trwy ddweud pa mor falch ydw i i gael y cyfle i siarad Cymraeg heddiw. Mae'n un o ieithoedd swyddogol y Deyrnas Unedig ac mae llawer o fy etholwyr yng Ngogledd Caerdydd yn ei siarad. Felly rwyf yn gobeithio y bydd fy nghyd-Aelodau a minnau yn cael siarad Cymraeg yn y brif Siambr hefyd cyn bo hir. Nawr byddaf yn troi at y Saesneg oherwydd dwi'n dal i ddysgu Cymraeg.

*(Translation) Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to have the opportunity to speak Welsh here today. It is one of the official languages of the United Kingdom, and many of my constituents speak the language. I hope*

[Anna McMorrin]

*therefore that hon. Members and I will have an opportunity to speak Welsh in the main Chamber before too long. I will now turn to English, because I am still learning Welsh.*

I am sure that my colleagues and the Secretary of State will join me in congratulating Jack Sargeant on an absolutely excellent win in the by-election in Alyn and Deeside yesterday, increasing Labour's majority after a brilliant campaign. He now joins our Welsh Labour colleagues in Cardiff Bay, representing his constituents and helping to deliver record levels of investment in our NHS, an extra £100 million in funding for schools, 20,000 more affordable homes and the best childcare offer for working parents in the United Kingdom.

That is in stark contrast to the Tories' shameful approach to our nation, with the Secretary of State for Wales constantly undermining the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government, and complaining that too much power has been "centralised" in Cardiff. It is obvious that that is an attempt to create divisions within Wales, to distract people from the fact that the Tories do not care about investment in Wales, consistently ignore recommendations from the Welsh Government and exclude Wales from Brexit negotiations.

The Secretary of State is just Westminster's representative in Wales, not Wales's representative in Westminster, and as a mouthpiece for the Tories in Westminster he continues to block policies that would allow Wales to create more jobs and lower energy costs, as well as undermining devolution at every opportunity. It is embarrassing how obvious he and his Government make their lack of respect for Wales as a devolved nation.

The Budgets presented by this UK Government have consistently punished Wales. The UK Government give in to the likes of the Democratic Unionist party to save their own jobs. And where was the Secretary of State for Wales when the DUP was given a billion pounds for Northern Ireland? Why did he not stand up for Wales? Why did he not demand more money? In fact, where is he now?

The Welsh budget has experienced year-on-year cuts as a result of the UK Government's ongoing policy of austerity. By 2022, when we will have had more than 10 years of Conservative rule—hopefully not—UK GDP is forecast to be £41 billion, or around 3%, lower than previously forecast. On this Westminster Government's watch, libraries, leisure centres and youth clubs are closing, because they have starved the Welsh Government and Welsh councils of money. Mental health services are being cut back, too. Since 2010, 25,000 local authority jobs in Wales have gone and the services that make our communities healthier and more liveable in are disappearing, because of lack of funding from Westminster. The austerity politics of this UK Government is killing our communities in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales tells us that all that must be the fault of the Welsh Government. However, the seven-year public sector pay cap of this Tory Government has reduced the wages of carers, school support staff, cleaners, highway maintenance staff and many more public sector workers by more than 20%. Since 2010, nurses have suffered a 14% pay cut in real terms and current estimates are that 3,000 nursing jobs in Wales are unfilled.

In my constituency of Cardiff North, where we have the highest number of public sector workers in Wales, I have spoken to nurses who have to resort to foodbanks, and to other public sector workers who are barely making ends meet. That is unacceptable, and we should not use Welsh Government funding to resolve an issue that should be put right at UK level. If Welsh Government funding is used, we would see millions of pounds being taken from frontline services and from the budget of NHS Wales, risking thousands of public sector jobs. It is absolutely essential that this UK Government provide the funding that Wales needs, and that they treat our public sector workers with fairness and equality.

Moving on, the effects of climate change and resource depletion mean that the old, tired ways of doing business are an insufficient response to the challenges we face today. Governments and businesses must come together to create new models of sustainable growth. That is happening in Wales, and it comes at a time when Welsh industries and businesses face the danger of a hard Tory Brexit. The best way to protect our nation is to retain full access to the European single market and a customs union.

In the same way that the availability of natural resources put Wales at the forefront of the first industrial revolution, driving the growth in what was then iron, coal, steel and manufacturing, our abundant natural resources can now drive the growth of a new and different economy, which will be rooted in the sustainable and intelligent use of those resources. That is in stark contrast to the shambolic direction of the Tories in England, who seem unable to give a steer on climate targets or long-term sustainable growth. The tidal lagoon has been discussed. It is shameful that the UK Government cannot come to a decision—Tory Ministers consistently undermine it, despite, as we have heard, investment from the Welsh Government.

In a competitive global marketplace, companies will invest where there are the best conditions to make long-term sustainable growth possible. The Welsh Government have recognised that and introduced a strong legislative framework that gives certainty beyond electoral cycles. In the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 the Welsh Labour Government have set out a far-reaching economic, environmental and social agenda. That strong ambition and drive can help Wales to become a world leader in green growth, providing a platform and location where companies that share those values can thrive. I am proud to have played a part in introducing the carrier bag charge seven years before it was introduced in England, as well as to have helped to develop a truly sustainable Wales.

It is clear that the next 20 years will see a period of massive technological change. Young peoples' voices will be critical to that process as the generation who will be at the heart of driving change over the next 20 years. The challenge now is to drive green growth widely and quickly, as we face the risks and opportunities of the 21st century. Successful markets need a strong clear vision and an effective regulatory regime. The UK Tory Government have neither. If they have any real ambition to lead on green growth they must do likewise, and put in place long-term statutory goals to reflect what we want now and in the future. They need to improve the position of business and prioritise investing in high-quality

sustainable infrastructure, such as the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, which will make Wales a far more attractive place to do business.

At the moment the UK Government and the Secretary of State for Wales are an embarrassment. They cannot take a decision on the tidal lagoon; there are U-turns on rail electrification investment; and they have failed to invest in energy efficiency or renewable energy, which would provide the vital economic and environmental infrastructure needed to boost growth and support the environment. Diolch yn fawr.

3.4 pm

**Paul Flynn:** Hoffwn ymddiheurio am fy absenoldeb y bore yma. Rwyf yn falch i fod yma. Roeddwn yn edrych ar hanes yr iaith Gymraeg yma a'r brwydrau dros y blynyddoedd. Rwy'n llongyfarch fy Nghyfaill anrhydeddus yr Aelod dros Dde Clwyd. Dim ond dwy flynedd yn ôl, pan oedd yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol dros Ddrafnidiaeth yn Arweinydd y Tŷ, dywedodd na.

Roedd fy nghwestiwn cyntaf fel aelod o'r Mainc Flaen yn 1988 am siarad Cymraeg yma. Cyfrinach fy ngyrfa yn y Tŷ yw bod pawb yn cytuno gyda phob gair rwy'n dweud 30 mlynedd ar ôl i mi ddweud e. Dyna sut mae pethau'n gweithio yn y Tŷ Cyffredin—rhaid aros am byth i bobl cytuno â chi.

Rwyf yn cytuno â phopeth sydd wedi'i ddweud am forlyn llanw Abertawe. Mae'n nonsens i'r Llywodraeth wrthod gweld posibiladau ffynhonell pŵer sydd yn rhydd inni ac sydd yn golchi arfordir Cymru ddwywaith y dydd; rydym yn gwybod pryd fydd hyn yn digwydd—yn wahanol i rai pwerau adnewyddadwy eraill. Mae'n lân, yn wyrdd a byddai'n rhoi ynni inni am genedlaethau.

I ddychwelyd at y Gymraeg, a'r peth pwysig sydd yn digwydd heddiw, rwy'n arbennig o falch ein bod ni heddiw yn rhoi urddas i'r Gymraeg ac yn dangos i'n plant fod gan yr iaith statws. Dylem fod yn falch o'r iaith. Roedd y Gymraeg yn iaith lenyddol, gyda rhyddiaith a barddoniaeth cyfoethog iawn, cyn genedigaeth yr iaith Saesneg. Dwy fil o flynyddoedd yn ôl, yng Nghaerleon yn fy etholaeth, roedd yn bosib gwranddo ar blant yn siarad dwy iaith. Intra muros—oddi fewn i'r waliau—roedd y plant yn siarad Lladin, ond ultra muros—tu allan i'r waliau—roeddynt yn siarad Cymraeg. Pa iaith sydd wedi ffynnu? 'Dwi ddim yn clywed llawer o Ladin yn cael ei siarad gan bobl a phlant Casnewydd. Dylem ymfalchïo yn beth sy'n digwydd yma: tipyn bach o ateb i'r sarhad ar yr iaith Gymraeg dros y blynyddoedd.

Does dim llawer o amser gen i, felly gad inni dalu teyrnged i'r iaith drwy gofio geiriau'r bardd am ei pharhad:

“Aros mae'r mynyddau mawr,  
Rhuo trostynt mae y gwynt;  
Clywir eto gyda'r wawr  
Gân bugeiliaid megis cynt.

Wedi oes dymhestlog hir  
Alun Mabon mwy nid yw,  
Ond mae'r heniaith yn y tir  
A'r alawon hen yn fyw.”

*(Translation) I apologise for being absent this morning, but I am pleased to be here. I was looking at the history of the Welsh language in this place and the battles that have taken place over the years. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South on this occasion; but just two years ago, when the Secretary of State for Transport was Leader of the House, he said no, we could not do it.*

*The first question I asked in 1988, when I was a Front-Bencher, was on using the Welsh language in this place. The secret of my career in the House is that everyone agrees with every word I say 30 years after I have said it. That is how things work in the Commons; you have to wait a very long time before people come round to agreeing with you.*

*I agree with everything that has been said on the Swansea bay tidal lagoon. It is a nonsense for the Government not to see the possibilities that exist there, with that renewable source of energy that is freely available to us. It washes over our shores in Wales twice a day, and we know with certainty when it will come, which is not the case with some other renewable sources. It is clean energy, green energy, and it will provide us with power for generations.*

*If I return to the Welsh language and the important events of today, I am particularly proud that this is giving dignity to the Welsh language, and showing our children that the language has status. We should be proud of the language. The Welsh language was a literary language with a rich history of poetry and prose before the English language was spoken. Some 2,000 years ago, in Caerleon in my constituency, it was possible to hear children speaking two languages. Intra muros, within the walls, they spoke Latin; extra muros, beyond the walls, they spoke Welsh. Which language has prospered since those days? I do not hear a huge amount of Latin spoken by the people of Newport at the moment.*

*We should take pride in the Welsh language and in what is happening here, because it goes some way to righting the injustices done to the Welsh language over many years. Although I do not have much time, I urge hon. Members to remember the words of the poet about the survival of the language:*

“The great mountains remain  
The wind roars across them  
The song of shepherds is heard again with the dawn, as before.  
After a tempestuous age  
Alun Mabon is no more  
But the old language is in the land  
And the old tunes live.”

3.8 pm

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): Diolch yn fawr, Mr Hanson. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

The recent Budget did very little for any part of the UK, but it did absolutely nothing for Wales. I will focus on two specific issues that could and should have benefited from this year's Budget. I will talk specifically about the 1950s women's pension scandal and a campaign very personal to me, the children's funeral campaign.

By now, many on these Benches know what I am going to say regarding the unfair and unjust treatment of 1950s women. Without the time to prepare and make the necessary alternative arrangements, many women born in the 1950s are left in financial despair. That is nothing new to the Government. We have been here before and, sadly, no doubt we will be here again. It is important to reiterate that a pension is not a benefit; it is an entitlement that those women have paid into. Many 1950s women—today I am specifically talking about Welsh 1950s women—are currently in work not because they want to be, but because they have to be.



[Carolyn Harris]

Almost 200,000 women in Wales are or will be dramatically affected by the changes to the state pension and more than 3,000 in my own constituency have been unfairly treated by these changes. Many of these women are desperate. They call my office every day and tell me they have had to sell their furniture and other belongings, and are relying on family, friends and, for some, even food banks just to exist.

The ability to work and the availability of jobs are not options for all women born in the 1950s who find themselves in this position. For some of these women, their jobs are physically demanding, and because of their health they can no longer do things they were able to do when they were younger. Therefore, many of these Welsh women are having to rely on the benefits system. Case-load data for unemployment benefits, such as jobseeker's allowance and universal credit, have significantly increased with the number of women over 60 who are accessing such benefits.

Many Welsh local authorities are stepping up to the plate and calling on the Government to make appropriate provision for these women. We know that local authorities such as Caerphilly, Neath, Port Talbot, Rhondda, Wrexham and my own in Swansea have all pledged support for a fair transitional payment for these women, and many more local authorities are working towards replicating that pledge.

We must be a voice for 1950s women and we must not give up, because, to this Government's dismay, the problem is not going away. I am proud to say that the Welsh Government give free bus passes to every individual aged 60 or over. That puts Welsh 1950s women at an advantage, in as much as they are able to travel freely. That is especially important if they are expected to travel to benefits offices or work-trial placements as a requirement of the unemployment benefit that they have to claim to survive. As this campaign goes on, so the Government's shame grows. Every debate that this Government hear is a missed opportunity to put this issue right. It is time the Government started listening to what these women say.

Now I turn to a very, very personal campaign: the children's funeral fund. Many will have heard me talk about this in the Chamber on a number of occasions, but it is so important to me that I need to talk about it again. I thank all those Members, some of whom are in this room, who, on a cross-party basis, signed a letter that I recently sent to the Prime Minister. For 14 months I have been asking the Government to show compassion, to ease the pressure on bereaved parents and to introduce a UK-wide children's funeral fund. For 14 months I have been stalled. I have had my hopes raised, only to be overlooked on Budget day, not once but twice.

Thankfully, last year, the Welsh Labour Government listened. They realised that for a relatively modest amount of money, they could make a considerable difference to bereaved parents in their hour of need. They established a children's funeral fund, meaning that across Wales, thanks to the additional support from many national and independent undertakers, parents can bury their children without the added worry of how they will afford it.

Sadly, every year about 10,000 parents are left devastated by the death of their child. I know from personal experience that the grief is indescribable. The idea of

putting a price on the funeral of your loved child is something that, undoubtedly, no one would ever want to consider, until they are forced to and face that bill.

Councils around the UK have made concessions and have also looked at scrapping the fees. As a result of my campaign, which I am very proud of, I am pleased to say that many have now scrapped their fees. For some councils, reduced budgets mean that it is just not an option. In the most extreme cases, the up-front costs of a funeral can be as high as £4,000. Even if every one of the 5,000 children who tragically die every year lived in an area that charged £4,000, the fund would still need to be only £10 million annually. We know that sum is a rarity. Most local authorities charge less than £1,000, so the amount that I am asking for is so far below £10 million that it is literally small change: it is not a big sum of money for the Treasury.

This campaign is supported across the House. I have met and I continue to meet Ministers to explain why this fund is so crucial to families, but nobody listens to me. Ministers need to follow Wales's example. I have seen at first hand the difference it makes.

Last summer, I visited a Co-op funeral director when a young couple came in who had just had stillborn twins. The funeral director did not charge them for the funeral. When I could tell them that the Welsh Government were not going to charge them either, their relief was palpable. They had lost their children and they could not lose anything else.

It is so important that the Government listen to what I am saying and that they follow the lead of the Welsh Government and make this happen. I cannot talk any more. Please, listen.

3.15 pm

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): Diolch yn fawr, Mr Hanson. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East for the passionate and compassionate way in which she has organised her campaign. I hope that the Government will take the time to listen to her campaign. It is a pleasure to speak in this historic Welsh Grand Committee and it is sad that it is only the second to be held in the two and a half years since I was elected to this place.

The Prime Minister and her UK Tory Government have slashed funding to Wales by more than £1 billion per annum, and have imposed a public sector pay cap that impacts on Welsh workers and those across the UK in our most vital public services. We have heard time and again that the Government have refused to invest in vital Welsh infrastructure projects such as the Swansea bay tidal lagoon and rail electrification. Unfortunately, the Chancellor did not use the opportunity of his autumn Budget to address those shortcomings and to invest in Welsh infrastructure, to end the Tories' failed austerity agenda or to lift the public sector pay cap. This Budget really felt like missed opportunities for Wales. It is clear that this Tory Government have proven time and again that they have little or no respect for Wales.

I would like to concentrate briefly on three areas, the first of which is the public sector pay cap. As the shadow Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Neath, touched on this morning, although the UK Government have made pay offers in excess of 1% for some sectors, the pay cap effectively remains in place for the vast majority of public sector workers. It is important



that the Government do not cherry-pick pay rises for some public sector workers in what could be seen as an attempt to divide. We need to see an end to the public sector pay cap, with a fully funded pay rise for all those working in our public services.

Local authorities have tried to help to ease the situation. The two local authorities serving my constituency, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Caerphilly County Borough Council, decided during the previous council term to become living wage employers, thus helping to mitigate the pay cap. Across Wales, the Welsh Government have indicated their support for our public sector workers and have repeatedly called on the UK Government to end the cap on public sector pay and to give workers across the UK a much-deserved, properly funded pay rise. The Welsh Government have stated:

“The UK Government must do the right thing and lift the pay cap right across the UK public sector as part of a wider strategy to end their damaging policy of austerity.”

There are suggestions that the Welsh Government could take more action, but if they did lift the public sector pay cap unilaterally, every 1% above it would take £110 million from frontline services. Clearly, that would threaten thousands of public sector jobs in Wales and is not a practical or sensible way forward. With huge cuts to the Welsh budget and local government funding in recent years, the Welsh Government are clearly unable to take further action without funding from the UK Government. It is therefore incumbent on the UK Government to take action, do the right thing and remove the pay cap across the UK. The Welsh Government have already committed to use any funding consequential they receive from the UK Government as a result of public sector pay rises more generally to raise the pay cap for public sector workers in Wales.

Secondly, I highlight the impact of the Tory Budget and the austerity agenda on keeping communities safe in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, across Wales and across the UK. The evidence is that the Tory Government are failing to keep our communities safe. That is apparent from new figures, which reveal that crime in the South Wales police and Gwent police force areas is increasing. The new crime figures show the highest annual rise in police-recorded crime since comparable records began in 2002.

Two thirds of my constituency is covered by South Wales police and the remaining third by Gwent police. In the South Wales police area, violent crime rose by 15%, sexual offences by 42% and total recorded crime by 11%. In the Gwent police area, violent crime rose by 20%, sexual offences by 31% and total recorded crime by 14%. At the same time, we know that the Tory cuts have sent police officer numbers nationwide to their lowest level in three decades. Since 2010, South Wales police have lost 257 officers, while Gwent police have lost 283. It is shameful that the public are now being forced to pay the price for the risk that the Tories took with community safety by slashing 21,000 police officers across England and Wales.

I and many other Members have built close relationships with our local forces—in my case, South Wales police and Gwent police—and have raised police cuts numerous times in parliamentary debates. I have had the privilege to spend a number of shifts with officers in both Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, seeing at first hand the officers’ dedication and the excellent work they are doing to keep our communities safe, despite their diminishing

resources. Our police officers are working extremely hard in very difficult circumstances. However, the Government must realise that cuts have consequences, and the latest figures certainly reveal that the Tories are failing in their duty to protect the public.

Finally, I raise the issue of jobs and public procurement. In the Budget and the Brexit negotiations, the Government constantly claim that they are working hard to protect jobs and the economy. However, in recent months, there has been much speculation about Ministry of Defence contracts for the new mechanised infantry vehicles—MIVs—being awarded to German firms on a single-source-contract basis. That is deeply concerning to me as the representative of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, where we have General Dynamics starting to assemble the new generation of armoured vehicles. General Dynamics has a long and proud history in south Wales, based for many years in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn. The additional base in Merthyr Tydfil demonstrates General Dynamics’ commitment to the area and to Wales.

I believe that General Dynamics is well placed to compete for those contracts, and should at the very least have the opportunity to compete in an open and transparent tender process. I hope that the Secretary of State will today confirm that the Wales Office is doing all it can to ensure that the MOD will give Welsh firms, including General Dynamics, the opportunity to bid for that work, to support and sustain hundreds of Welsh jobs. I hope he will have had the opportunity to have a discussion with his colleague, the hon. Member for Aberconwy, who was the previous Wales Minister before he went to his new role as the Minister with responsibility for defence procurement.

Finally, there are many other areas where the Government need to take stock and listen. Their austerity agenda is failing—it is failing Wales and it is failing the UK. If the Government are unwilling or unable to do what is necessary to improve the lives of our constituents, they need to move aside and make way for a Government who will.

**The Chair:** Until no later than 3.30 pm, I call Geraint Davies.

3.23 pm

**Geraint Davies:** Thank you, Mr Hanson. I will be brief, so I will speak in English. I say in passing that my mam-gu—my grandmother—had to wear the “Welsh Not”, which was introduced after the Blue Books. Children were required to pass on a “Welsh Not” to a child who spoke Welsh. They were beaten at the end of the day, and she was beaten at the end of every day because she was very religious and did not want to pass on the “Welsh Not”.

I thought I would also mention, on the centenary of women’s suffrage, an Emily—not Emily Davison or Emmeline Pankhurst, but Emily Phipps. She was one of the 17 women who stood 100 years ago, and she was in fact from the Swansea area. She hid in a cave in the Gower to avoid the census, as a protest.

**David T. C. Davies:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Geraint Davies:** I am very short on time, but I will give way.

**David T. C. Davies:** I just wanted to make the point that Blue Books were dreamt up by a radical who was a forerunner to a Labour party MP.

**The Chair:** I call Geraint Davies, on the Budget.

**Geraint Davies:** I certainly regret taking that intervention. On the Budget, the mammoth in the room is obviously Brexit. This Budget should have been preparing Wales for Brexit. Some 70% of our trade goes to the EU, and 25,000 jobs in Swansea bay depend on those exports. We wanted to see investment in infrastructure and skills to boost productivity to our most important market, but instead there has been a failure in rail investment, including the electrification of Swansea. There was no commitment on the Swansea metro that we asked for, either. I mentioned earlier that despite having 6% of the rail network, Wales gets only 1% to 2% of the overall investment.

People have mentioned the lagoon. At a time when 80% of fossil fuels cannot be exploited, if we are to avoid irreversible climate change it is plainly stupid not to invest at the start of a technology that could drive a future global export market. It is strange that the cost per unit of energy at Hinkley Point far exceeds the projected cost for the lagoon. The reason, of course, is Brexit; the Prime Minister needs to go out to China on bended knee, ignoring human rights and everything else, plead for a trade deal, and we are suffering the consequences.

On skills, the primary skills delivery system is the Welsh Assembly Government, but they have undergone cuts of some 5% in the last year alone—£900 million in cuts. That is delivering cuts on the doorstep of local schools, and Swansea is certainly suffering as a result of that.

I welcome the news on tolls. That tax on Welsh trade and industry has been going on for far too long. The fuel freeze should have been more sophisticated, to push us in a more sustainable direction for transport in terms of our air quality problems; there are 40,000 diesel deaths a year in Britain.

People have not talked about quantitative easing. Basically, quantitative easing lifts asset values so the rich get richer and the poor stay poor or get poorer. The value of property in Camden is now worth more than the value of all property in the whole of Wales.

On austerity, I mentioned earlier that a study done by University College London and the University of Cambridge attributed 40,000 deaths to austerity between 2010 and 2014, and 152,000 more are expected between 2015 and 2020. Until 2010, the death rate was falling by 0.7% a year; it is now rising by 0.8%. The International Monetary Fund has shown that greater inequality generates less growth. What we are doing in Britain is making the poor poorer to pay for the bankers' greed. In so doing, we are stifling growth. All that pay freezes, cuts to benefits and universal credit do is prevent people who would spend every penny they have to reflate the economy from doing so. They are becoming ill, and becoming liabilities to our social and health services. We are in a crisis. We must invest in a stronger, fairer future for Wales and Britain. That means investing in our skills, productivity and infrastructure, especially in Wales, which is the poorest part of western Europe, particularly the valleys and west Wales.

Finally, I will mention in passing some of the issues with universal credit. Although the Labour party has said that we should pause and look again, the reality is that the universal credit system pulls together through complicated computer systems—the Inland Revenue system, the local authority system and the jobcentre system—into an integrated system that is doomed to failure, as a way of delaying and reducing overall benefit costs and cutting corners, in the hope that the poorest, who are often the most vulnerable, can cope with their own meagre allowance and pay the rent themselves rather than being tempted to spend it on other things, even though they face delays and loans. This is a mean Government causing terrible damage to Wales, particularly its poorer communities. We need to think again and invest in the future and in productivity. We need a fairer, better Wales.

3.30 pm

**Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC):** Hoffwn gychwyn trwy ddathlu'r cyfle heddiw i dorri tir newydd a defnyddio'r Gymraeg fel iaith gyfartal yn un o Bwyllgorau agored Tŷr Cyffredin. Rwyf yn cymryd y cyfle hefyd i nodi blaengaredd yr hen Gyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor, a benderfynodd ym 1974 mai'r Gymraeg fyddai brif iaith weinyddol yr awdurdod. Ers 1996, y Gymraeg sydd hefyd wedi bod yn brif iaith weinyddol Cyngor Gwynedd, ac yn ei siambr mae'n arfer i siaradwyr Cymraeg ddefnyddio'r iaith bob amser pan yn annerch yn gyhoeddus, wrth areithio, wrth ateb cwestiynau ac wrth ymyrryd. Mae'r rheswm am hyn yn syml: er mwyn diogelu defnydd y Gymraeg yn erbyn y norm cyndeithasol o droi i'r Saesneg. Pan fydd siaradwr Cymraeg yn troi i'r Saesneg mewn amgylchedd dwyieithog, yn ddigon buan rydym yn profi bod y Gymraeg ddim yn cael ei defnyddio o gwbl. Nid mater o ddiffyg cwrtseisi i bobl di-Gymraeg ydy hyn, eithr mater o gynnal lle diogel i'r iaith mewn bywyd cyhoeddus.

Hoffwn hefyd estyn fy niolch a'm cefnogaeth i bob Aelod Seneddol—o'n i'n mynd i drial eu henwi nhw ond mae yna ormod i mi ddweud—a phob aelod o staff seneddol sy'n mynd ati i ddysgu Cymraeg. Daliwch ati, gwnewch gamgymeriadau, peidiwch â gwrandao ar y bobl hynny—ac ma' 'na ormod ohonyn nhw—sy'n uchafu cywirdeb dros bopeth. A mentrwch i siarad yn hytrach nag aros yn ddistaw. Dim ond trwy ddefnyddio iaith y mae hi'n byw.

Mae pawb sydd wedi defnyddio'r Gymraeg, yn ogystal â phawb sydd wedi defnyddio'r offer gwrandao ac, wrth gwrs, y cyfieithwyr yn y cefn yn arloeswyr un ac oll, gyda'n gilydd. Gan ein bod yn sôn bod y sefydliad hwn yn gwneud y defnydd gorau o dechnoleg, mae hyn y gyfle, pan fyddwn yn cael ein decantio, i gynllunio rwan i wreiddu caniatáu defnydd o ieithoedd heblaw Saesneg a Ffrangeg Normanaidd i'r dyfodol. Mae yna gyfle i wneud hyn pan fyddwn ni'n mynd o 'ma.

Wrth gyfeirio yn gyntaf oll at yr hyn ddywedodd yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol, nid yn annisgwyl yr oedd yn canmol rhinweddau Cyllideb yr hydref, yn unol â ac sy'n ddisgwylidig o'i swydd. Roedd yn ateb yn ôl y disgwyl i gwestiynau parthed diffyg trydaneiddio rhwng Caerdydd ac Abertawe a rheilffordd y Gogledd, a diffyg penderfyniad parthed morlyn Abertawe a'r morlynoedd potensial eraill. Cyfeiriodd at gynnydd Barnett—the Barnett uplift—ond nodwn fod y rhan fwyaf ar ffyrdd

benthyciadau. Siaradodd, fel eraill o'i blaid, am gydweithio trawssffiniol. Is-neges sydd i hyn, sef sut y gall Gymru helpu Lloegr.

Nid ein gorllewin ni—gorllewin Cymru—fydd prif fuddiolwr ei bwerdai gorllewinol ond gorllewin Lloegr, gyda briwsion yn unig i orllewin Cymru, dwi'n ofni. Dilynwyd yr arian. Yn dilyn degawd o deyrnasu Torïaidd yn San Steffan, mae Cymru yn parhau i fod yn un o wledydd tlotaf Ewrop. Mae cyflogau wythnosol, ar gyfartaledd, yn £393 yng Nghymru o'i gymharu â £434 yn Lloegr. Mae cynhyrchedd Cymru yn 80% o gynhyrchedd y Deyrnas Gyfunol, tra bod Llundain yn nes at 150%. Mater o gywilydd o hyd yw hwsmonaeth ei Lywodraeth dros economi Cymru.

Rwyf yn troi rwan at yr hyn ddywedodd yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol cysgodol, yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Gastell-Nedd. Soniodd am effaith Cyllideb yr hydref ar Lywodraeth Llafur yng Nghymru, gan amddiffyn methiant i wireddu addewid polisi maniffesto i godi cap cyflogau'r sector gyhoeddus—rhywbeth sydd yn rhydd i Lafur wneud yfory yng Nghymru, pe dymument. Roedd fy Nghyfaill anrhydeddus, yr Aelod dros Ddwyrain Caerfyrddin a Dinefwr yn siarad yn rymus am ragolygon economi Cymru, a'r cymysgiad tocsig o fuddsoddi mympwyol mewn is-adeiledd a cham-flaenoriaethu economi ac is-adeiledd rhanbarth de ddwyrain Lloegr—a goblygiadau hynny i Gymru. Roedd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Fynwy a Chadeirydd y Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig yn sôn yn briodol am waith y Pwyllgor ac hefyd am ei agweddau angerddol tuag at Brexit. Siaradodd yr Aelodau anrhydeddus dros Orllewin Caerdydd a thros Sir Drefaldwyn am ddarlledu yng Nghymru. Mae hyn yn bwysig, o wybod am yr ansicrwydd sy'n parhau dros ariannu S4C, a'r gyllideb sydd yn ein gwynebu mewn ychydig dros fis.

Soniodd yr Aelod gwir anrhydeddus dros Orllewin Clwyd—daeth hyn yn dipyn bach o dôn gron gan Aelodau eraill ei blaid—am gydweithio trawssffiniol. Mae 'na rybudd fan hyn am anghyfartaledd. Mae Cymru'n derbyn mwy na'i siar o garcharorion o Loegr yn y cawr-garchar yn Wrecsam. Mae'r nifer o garcharorion o Loegr sydd yn Nghymru wedi codi 76% ers mis Mawrth y llynedd.

Torrwyd araith yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Dde Clwyd yn ei hanner gyda'r rhaniad yn ein dadl heddiw. Siaradodd yn deimladwy am ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg ac effaith yr agenda llymder. Wrth gwrs, agenda llymder gyda'i wreiddiau yma yn San Steffan, ond sydd hefyd yn cael ei arall-gyfeirio gan Lywodraeth Cymru, ac effaith hynny ar wasanaethau lleol.

Roedd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Faldwyn yn siarad yn deimladwy am yr hanes o deuluoedd yn colli ac ennill y Gymraeg a goblygiadau statws iaith i benderfyniadau trosglwyddo iaith yn y teulu. Siaradodd fy Nghyfaill anrhydeddus dros Arfon am oblygiadau newidiadau i fudd-daliadau i Gymru, gan gynnig awgrymiadau sy'n cynnwys datganoli, gweinyddu'r gyfundrefn nawdd cymdeithasol i Gymru a'r her o ddylunio systemau technolegol-ddigidol sydd yn cynnig dewis iaith i'r defnyddiwr.

Roedd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Frycheiniog a Sir Faesyfed yn sôn am y niferoedd mewn gwaith yng Nghymru. Wnaeth hefyd gyfeirio at forlyn Abertawe, er mwyn nodi nad oes gan ei etholaeth yr un filltir o arfordir. Roedd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Ogledd

Caerdydd yn sôn am sut mae'r Llywodraeth yn tanseilio datganoli a rhoi taw ar lais Cymr—croeso i fyd Plaid Cymru.

Roeddwn yn falch iawn clywed yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Orllewin Casnewydd yn dyfynnu geiriau'r bardd Ceiriog yn yr Ystafell Bwyllgor hon. Roedd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Ddwyrain Abertawe yn sôn am sefyllfa merched WASPI ac rwyf yn ei chymeradwyo a'i llongyfarch am ei gwaith diflino gyda'i hymgyrchoedd. Soniodd yr Aelodau anrhydeddus dros Ferthyr Tudful a thros Gorllewin Abertawe am y cyfleoedd sydd wedi eu colli yn y Gyllideb diweddar.

Er mai testun y drafodaeth heddiw yw'r Gyllideb, y blaid wrth y drws, wrth gwrs, yw Brexit. Er gwaetha gwaharddiad achlysurol y Cadeirydd blaenorol—dwi'n siwr tase ni wedi bod yn sôn am Gaergybi bydde fe wedi bod yn wahanol—cyfeiriwyd at Brexit gan nifer o'r siaradwyr ac ymyrrwyr. Mi wn fod Uwch Bwyllgorau Cymreig yn bethau prin, ond hoffwn gymryd y cyfle i alw am Uwch Bwyllgor Cymreig ar amaeth yng Nghymru a Brexit. Emosiynau cymysg sydd gen i wrth wrando ar siaradwyr Llafur yn mynegi pryderon am effaith y cyflwr parhaol o ansicrwydd ar economi Cymru heddiw, ac am yr angen i barhau yn yr undeb tollau. Gwell iddyn nhw gyfeirio'u cri at eu plaid eu hunain.

Roedd cryn sôn am rinweddau bargeinion twf i'r de a'r gogledd ac i'r canolbarth, a galwodd yr Aelod anrhydeddus dros Orllewin Clwyd am hyrwyddo cydweithredu rhwng Cynghrair Mersi a'r Ddyfrdwy a gogledd Cymru. Dwi'n croesawu rôl arweinwyr cyngor ym margin twf gogledd Cymru ond yn annog y Llywodraeth i gymryd camau cadarnhaol i gynnal cydweithredu gyda'n cymdogion agosaf yn y gorllewin, sef Iwerddon a Gogledd Iwerddon. O lle dwi'n byw ym Mhen Llŷn, Dulyn yw'r brif ddinas agosaf—yn nes na Chaerdydd a llawer yn nes na Llundain.

Yn olaf, hoffwn bwyso ar yr Ysgrifennydd Gwladol i ddod â rhagor o wybodaeth i ni yng Nghymru am y gronfa ffyniant gyfrannol—neu "shared prosperity fund". Os byddwn yn gadael y polisi amaethyddol cyffredin a'r gronfa strategol Ewropeaidd, cronfa gymdeithasol Ewrop, o ble ddaw y gynhafiaeth a fu? Mae'r Undeb Ewropeaidd yn gweithredu egwyddor anrhydeddus o leddfu effeithiau anghyfartaledd. Does dim y ffasiwn draddodiad yma gan Lywodraeth San Steffan. Gofynnwn am ragor o wybodaeth am y gronfa ffyniant gyfrannol. Sut bydd ffyniant a thlodi yn cael eu diffinio, ac a ydy'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol yn gallu gwarantu y bydd cyllidebau'r dyfydd yn gwneud yn siwr na fydd Cymru'n colli'r un ddimai goch dan law'r Ceidwadwyr?

*(Translation) I want to start by celebrating the opportunity to break new ground today in using the Welsh language in a Committee of the House of Commons. I also take the opportunity to note the innovation of the old Dwyfor District Council that decided in 1974 that Welsh would be the main administrative language of the authority. Since 1996 Welsh has also been the main administrative language of Gwynedd Council, and in its chamber Welsh speakers tend to always use the Welsh language when speaking publicly, when making addresses, in responding to questions and in making interventions. The reason is simple: to safeguard the use of the Welsh language against the social norm of turning to English. When a Welsh speaker turns to English in a bilingual environment, all too soon the Welsh language is not used at all. It is not a matter*



[Liz Saville Roberts]

of a lack of courtesy to non-Welsh speakers. It is a matter of maintaining a safe place for the language in public life.

I also want to take this opportunity to extend my thanks and support to all Members of Parliament. I wanted to name them, but there are far too many. I encourage all members of parliamentary staff who are learning Welsh to persevere, to make mistakes, and not to listen to the people—there are too many of them—who put linguistic correctness above all else. They should take the chance to speak rather than remain silent. Only through the use of the language will the language live. Everyone who has used the interpretation equipment knows our interpreters at the back of the room are innovators. As we discuss the fact that this institution is making the best use of technology, and given the decant, we should plan now to allow for the use of languages other than English and Norman French in future. There is a real opportunity to do so when we leave this place.

On the Secretary of State's comments, he praised the Budget, as can be expected from one in his post. He responded to questions on the lack of electrification between Cardiff and Swansea and the north Wales main line, and on the absence of a decision on the Swansea bay tidal lagoon and other tidal lagoons. He referred to the Barnett uplift, but we note that most of that comes in the form of loans. Others from his party talked about cross-border working. The subliminal message in all this is how Wales can help England.

The western powerhouses will not be the west of Wales, but the west of England, with some crumbs from the table for the west of Wales. Let us follow the money. Following a decade of Tory rule in Westminster, Wales is still one of the poorest nations in Europe. Average weekly salaries in Wales are £393 compared with £434 in England. Productivity in Wales is 80% of the productivity of the UK, and London is closer to 150%. The Government's management of the Welsh economy is a matter of shame.

The hon. Member for Neath mentioned the impact of the autumn Budget on the Welsh Government in failing to deliver a manifesto pledge to lift the cap on public pay. A Labour Government could do that tomorrow in Wales if they so wished. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr spoke powerfully about the economic forecast for Wales and the toxic mix of ad hoc infrastructure investments, as well as the prioritising of expenditure in the south-east of England and the implications of that for Wales. The hon. Member for Monmouth, the Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee, spoke about the work of that Committee and about his passionate views on Brexit. The hon. Members for Cardiff West and for Montgomeryshire spoke about broadcasting in Wales. That is important given the uncertainty about the future of S4C, and decisions that we are expecting in just over a month.

The right hon. Member for Clwyd West mentioned the issue of cross-border working, which was repeated a number of times by members of his party. There is an issue of inequality for Wales. In the context of cross-border working, I would like to highlight the inequality that Wales takes more than its share of prisoners from England into the super prison in Wrexham, with the number of prisoners from England and Wales having risen by 76% since March last year.

The hon. Member for Clwyd South, whose speech was cut in half due to the break in our proceedings today, spoke very powerfully on the use of the Welsh language and on the austerity agenda. Of course, austerity in Wales has its roots here, but it is also being implemented by the Welsh Government, and that is having an impact on local authorities.

The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire spoke passionately about the stories of families who had lost and gained the Welsh language, and the implications of the language status in terms of decisions on language transfer within families. My hon. Friend the Member for Arfon talked about the implications of universal credit for Wales, making suggestions that include devolving the administration of welfare to Wales, and about the challenge of designing IT systems that provide a language choice for the service user.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire talked about the numbers in work in Wales. He also referred to the Swansea bay tidal lagoon, noting that his constituency has not a single mile of coastline. The hon. Member for Cardiff North mentioned how the Government are undermining devolution and silencing the voice of Wales—welcome to Plaid Cymru's world.

I was very pleased to hear the hon. Member for Newport West quote the words of the poet Ceiriog in the Committee Room. The hon. Member for Swansea East mentioned the Women Against State Pension Inequality Campaign, and I applaud and congratulate her for her tireless work on that. The hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and for Swansea West talked about the opportunities missed in the recent Budget.

Although the topic of today's discussion is the Budget, the wolf at the door is of course Brexit. Despite the occasional prohibition from this morning's Chair—if we had been talking about Holyhead I am sure it would have been different—Brexit was mentioned by a number of speakers. We know that Welsh Grand Committees are few and far between, but I would like to take this opportunity to call for a Welsh Grand Committee on agriculture in Wales and Brexit. I had mixed emotions listening to Labour Members talking about the impact of the ongoing uncertainties in the Welsh economy and of the need to remain in the customs union. They should refer their comments to their own party.

Mention was made of growth deals for north Wales, south Wales, and mid-Wales. The right hon. Member for Clwyd West talked about the promotion of co-operation between the Mersey Dee Alliance and north Wales. I welcome the role of councils in the north Wales deal, but I encourage the Government to take positive steps to maintain collaboration with our nearest neighbours in the west: Ireland and Northern Ireland. Where I live, in the Llŷn Peninsula, Dublin is the closest capital—closer than Cardiff and much closer than London.

Finally, I urge the Secretary of State to bring us further information on the shared prosperity fund. If we leave the common agricultural policy and the European structural fund, the European social fund, where will the maintenance and the support come from? The European Union implements an honourable principle of alleviating inequality. There is no such tradition here in the Westminster Government. I ask for further information about the fund. How will poverty be defined, and is the Secretary of State



able to guarantee that future Budgets will ensure that Wales does not lose a single penny at the hands of the Conservatives?

3.39 pm

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I am going to take the advice of the hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd and try the limited Welsh that I have learned in Welsh lessons here in Parliament over the past three months.

Mae'n bleser mawr i wasanaethu o dan eich cadeiryddiaeth heddiw, Mr Hanson. Mae'n ddiwrnod hanesyddol: y tro cyntaf i'r Gymraeg gael ei defnyddio yn y Welsh Grand. Llongyfarchiadau i bawb sydd wedi siarad yn Gymraeg heddiw—y rheiny sy'n siarad yn rhugl ac, yn arbennig, y rhai sy'n dysgu'r iaith! Rwyf yn talu teyrnged i Aelodau ar draws y Tŷ sydd wedi lobbio'n galed er mwyn siarad Cymraeg yma heddiw. Da iawn.

*(Translation) It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship today, Mr Hanson. It is a historic day: the first time that the Welsh language has been used in the Welsh Grand. I congratulate everyone who has spoken in Welsh today—those who are fluent speakers and particularly those who are learning the language! I pay tribute to Members from across the House who have lobbied very hard for the right to speak Welsh here today. Well done.*

There have been many varied and interesting speeches today. The hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr gave a great macro-economic picture of the economy and stated that the UK economy needs to be tilted away from London towards Wales and the north. I concur with that. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West spoke powerfully about the legacy of Rhodri Morgan for Wales and the Welsh language, and the importance of this historic day when we are able to speak in Welsh for the first time in the Welsh Grand here in Parliament.

The right hon. Member for Clwyd West spoke about the need for a rejuvenated north Wales economy. He urged that the dithering over the tidal lagoon is ended and progress is made, which again I completely concur with. As peace breaks out, I would also fully support him on his attitude towards the all-party group on the Mersey-Dee alliance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South spoke passionately about the importance of the Welsh language. She spoke in English in the hope of attracting the attention of leftie, liberal, lentil-eating journalists who support diversity and all minority languages in the world, except Welsh.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda raised the idea of apprenticeships for workers who will work on the refurbishment of the House of Commons, with apprentices drawn from around the UK. That is an excellent idea and we should expand on it to make sure that produce from around the United Kingdom is used when this House is rebuilt and refurbished. I put in a bid for Welsh slate for the roof.

The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire mentioned the historic decline in the Welsh language and the growth deal. The hon. Member for Arfon mentioned universal credit and the impact on the most vulnerable in society. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire said that everything is hunky-dory in Brecon and Radnorshire. He took a Lib Dem seat at the election in 2015, and like a Lib Dem, he was facing both ways on the tidal lagoon, so da iawn.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff North rightly made reference to Jack Sargeant's election victory and contrasted the Welsh Government's investment in Wales with the Tory Government cuts. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East is one of the greatest campaigners in the House, on the WASPI issue and on payment for children's funerals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport West, author of "Commons Knowledge", made reference to the tidal lagoon, which he fully supports. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney mentioned the pay cap, community safety and MOD contracts. Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea West berated the Government for their lack of clarity on Brexit.

Many wise words have been spoken today, and I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales will listen. In the short time that I have, I would like to concentrate on one or two issues. The first is Brexit. Our relationship with the EU and EU countries is not viewed through the lens of what is good for the UK, but what is good for the Tory party. Businesses, universities, unions and the public are begging for leadership and direction from the Government; all they are getting is infighting and political poison. On Brexit, Cabinet members and Members on the Front Bench are like rats in a sack. That is not good enough. We are less than 13 months away from leaving the EU. We want clarity.

Wales has received £9 billion in investment from Europe, match funded by the UK. What will we get after we have left the EU? Those questions need to be answered. Airbus, Toyota and Ford are asking for a soft Brexit. Will they get it? Our Welsh universities want to know what level of co-operation or isolation there will be when we leave. When will they be told? Our Welsh farmers are asking what will happen to Welsh lamb next year, 90% of which is exported to Europe. When will they be told? Our Welsh workers want to know what will happen to their hard-won freedoms and rights, secured through Europe. When will they be told? You may have noticed a theme there, Mr Hanson. Those are right and responsible questions raised by individuals, organisations and sectors. Again, we are only 13 months away. Like us, they want answers, and I urge the Secretary of State to provide them.

The Secretary of State made much of the increase in funding to Wales in the Budget, but his figures were demolished by the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, who rightly pointed out that much of the increase was in the form of loans that have to be paid back. She pointed out that the smoke and mirrors of those announcements cannot obscure the fact that, by 2020, the Welsh budget will be £1.1 billion less than it was in 2010. Let me put that in a historical perspective. When I came to Parliament in 1997, the Welsh block grant was £6.5 billion. By 2010, when Labour left office, it was £15 billion—it had doubled. Over the 10-year period between 2010 and 2020, the Welsh block grant will have decreased by £1.1 billion.

Several speakers spoke about the missed opportunity in the Budget to end austerity. The Government have tried austerity for eight years—it is the only tool in their box—and it has not worked. All we have had is cuts, cuts and more cuts. Other economies have tried a mixture of prudent cuts and sensible, targeted investment. That worked in the 1930s in America under Roosevelt, who

[Chris Ruane]

was elected four times. It worked under Obama, and it worked in France and Germany. We need to pump-prime our economy. We are eight years on, and our wages are lower than they were 10 years ago. What little growth that exists is channelled into the hands of the rich, who have seen massive increases to their salaries, benefits and bonuses. Targeted pump-priming in Wales could have included the electrification of the rail line to Swansea and Holyhead, and tidal lagoons in four areas around Wales. Those are lost opportunities.

The Secretary of State made much in his introduction of the £600 uplift in the national living wage, which was announced in the Budget. Let us put that in perspective, in terms of the cuts experienced by the vast majority of workers since 2010. It is plain to see that the cuts are aimed at the most vulnerable in our society: 80% have fallen on the backs of women. Is it any wonder that data I uncovered last week reveals that 20% of local authorities have witnessed a decrease in female life expectancy since 2010—this on the anniversary of women's suffrage. Wages have been frozen in the public sector for years. Teachers are £5,000 worse off now than they were 10 years ago. The cruellest cuts have fallen on the poorest, the disabled, the unemployed and the dying, who have been hit with benefit freezes, the bedroom tax, botched universal credit and a public sector pay cap. It is not just about the cuts; many of those groups have been demonised by the Government. The Government have promoted zero-hours contracts, the gig economy and in-work poverty. Indeed, 66% of those in poverty are actually working. There was nothing for those groups in the Budget.

Those are the statistics. Let me give hon. Members the stories. Don Lane, a DPD courier—self-employed in the gig economy—was fined £150 for attending a medical examination for his diabetes. He later collapsed and died of the disease. That may not have happened in Wales, but every single one of us, regardless of our party, knows of cases like that in our constituencies.

In 2016, Darren Taylor of Connah's Quay applied for personal independence payments after his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. The Department for Work and Pensions refused. In January 2017, he reapplied. Despite the fact that the pain his wife was going through left her largely confined to the house, the DWP said that she was not ill enough to qualify for an enhanced rate. The family appealed the decision, but before receiving a tribunal date Belinda Taylor died aged just 44, leaving four children. Three months after she died, the award was made to the family. That is the reality of the Budget that was passed by the Government. It hits the poorest in our communities. I ask the Minister to think again and to take the message back from all these good people on both sides of the Committee that austerity is not working.

3.50 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew):** Mae wedi bod yn bleser gwasanaethu o dan eich cadeiryddiaeth, Mr Hanson. Hoffwn ddiolch hefyd i fy Nghyfaill gwir anrhydeddus, Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru am ei ddatganiad agoriadol a'i gyfraniad allweddol, ac hefyd i'n Hysgrifenyddion Seneddol Preifat, fy Nghyfeillion anrhydeddus yr Aelodau dros Sir Drefaldwyn a dros Brycheiniog a Sir Faesyfed.

Rydw i newydd orffen fy mis cyntaf fel Is-Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru ac rydw i'n croesawu'r cyfle i ddathlu'r garreg filltir hon trwy gloi trafodaeth ddiddorol yr Uwch Bwyllgor Cymreig. Hoffwn ddiolch i'r Aelodau anrhydeddus am gymryd rhan yn y drafodaeth hon. Mae'n amlwg i mi ein bod ni i gyd am gael y gorau i Gymru. Rydym ni i gyd am weld Cymru fwy llewyrchus ac, yn anad dim, rydym ni i gyd am weld Cymru sy'n addas ar gyfer y dyfodol.

Gan mai dyma'r tro cyntaf i fusnes seneddol gael ei gynnal yn Gymraeg, rydw i am barchu'r Uwch Bwyllgor Cymreig a thraddodi cymaint o fy araith â phosib yn Gymraeg. Fodd bynnag, gan fy mod i'n ymgyfarwyddo o'r newydd â'r iaith hyfryd hon, dydw i ddim yn teimlo'n ddigon hyderus i draddodi'r araith gyfan yn Gymraeg. Gobeithio y bydd yr Aelodau anrhydeddus yn deall os byddai'n troi i ymateb yn Saesneg.

*(Translation) It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hanson. I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for his opening statement and key contribution to this fascinating debate. I also thank our Parliamentary Private Secretaries, my hon. Friends the Members for Montgomeryshire and for Brecon and Radnorshire.*

*I have completed my first month as the Under-Secretary of State for Wales and I welcome the opportunity to celebrate that milestone by closing our interesting discussions in the Welsh Grand Committee. I thank hon. Members present for taking part. It is clear that we all want the best for Wales. We all want to see a more flourishing and prosperous Wales and, above all, a Wales that is fit for the future.*

*As this is the first time that parliamentary business has been undertaken through the medium of Welsh, I want to respect the Welsh Grand Committee by giving as much of my speech as possible in Welsh. However, as I am currently reacquainting myself with this wonderful language, I do not feel confident enough to deliver my whole speech in Welsh. I hope hon. Members will understand if I break off and respond in English.*

I grew up in Anglesey, as hon. Members know, and I learned Welsh as a second language—my family do not speak Welsh. I am slightly concerned because—I must confess—I stood for the old Gwynedd County Council in the 1990s. I was not successful.

**Chris Ruane:** Which party?

**Stuart Andrew:** The Conservative party.

I translated my leaflet into Welsh because I thought it was important to have it in both languages. I had it checked by Councillor Goronwy Parry, who was a Conservative councillor in Anglesey, and much to my surprise, he said that most of it was all right. At the last minute, however, I thought I would be clever and put a slogan on the front that said, "A local man for local needs". Knowing that the word for need is "angen", I thought I had my Welsh correct, but I put, "Dyn lleol am angau lleol". Hon. Members will know that that means, "A local man for local death". That is why I will stick to English for the rest of my speech, if I may.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales touched on some remarkable points in his opening statement and I want to convey how significant they are for Wales. With my roots firmly in Anglesey, I welcome

the north Wales growth deal and I am delighted that formal negotiations have begun. I look forward to working with local partners to ensure that we agree on a deal that is right for the whole of north Wales.

The Budget delivers for Wales through a range of commitments, such as the fair funding settlement for the Welsh Government, a city or growth deal to cover all parts of Wales, an increase in rail infrastructure investment, further work on sector deals and the development of cross-border opportunities.

We have shown that Wales is open for business. There has been a positive response to the planned abolition of the tolls, and I am looking forward to that building new links between the south of England and the south of Wales. The Budget not only helps to shape Wales but helps every individual by saving them money by abolishing tolls and freezing fuel duty and by providing them with extra funds by increasing the personal allowance and the national living wage.

References have been made to two people who I, too, want to comment on. When my Welsh was much better, I used to spar with Rhodri Morgan on Welsh-language politics shows. He was always a most courteous man, and very kind to a very young person. I will also offer my congratulations to Jack Sargeant on his election last night; I wish him well in the job that he is doing.

I want to touch on the economy. We have heard mention of the north Wales growth deal, and the tributes and compliments paid to Ken Skates. I am yet to meet him, but I plan to do so. I have written to him to say that I am keen to meet him to see how we can work together to progress the north Wales growth deal. It is important and I look forward to that constructive engagement and co-operation. I have already met the leaders of the north Wales growth deal, Councillor Aaron Shotton and Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn. We had a very constructive meeting and I look forward to working with them in the future.

I am acutely aware, and hon. Members have mentioned, that we must ensure that the growth deal is as beneficial to north-west Wales as it is to north-east Wales. As someone who grew up in Anglesey but then moved and lived in Wrexham, I can see the qualities of both those areas, and I look forward to working with them. Equally, we must get on with the mid-Wales growth deal. I look forward to working with hon. Members so that we can build on the successes of the Cardiff and Swansea deals and maximise opportunities presented by the toll changes.

We talk about the corridors of power in this Parliament, but I hope that north, mid and south Wales will become the true corridors of power for England and Wales. A big part of that will be improving connectivity, particularly broadband, and I am acutely aware of the need for us to

spread that out further. It is good news that 95% of premises in Wales are connected, but we have to do more for rural areas in particular.

I want to talk about universal credit, which a number of Members have raised. It is important that we recognise that the benefits system was in need of some major changes. The hon. Member for Arfon talked about that very sensibly. We have to make sure that people do not get themselves trapped on benefits. I do not mean that in the sense of some political language that people may use. Genuinely, it cannot be right that somebody who works a minute over 16 hours is in danger of losing all their benefit. That is the idea behind this. In the Budget, we listened to the concerns people raised and we brought about changes to make it a better system. As far as I am concerned, as we roll this out we should continue to learn lessons from the people we work with, and we will continue to do so. It is important to recognise that unemployment has come down in Wales by 73,000 since 2010. We have brought in a national living wage, and the personal allowance is helping 61,000 Welsh workers out of tax altogether. We should celebrate that. Those figures relate to 2017-18 and compare favourably with just two years ago.

I now want to come to the points raised by the hon. Member for Swansea East about child burial fees. I spent most of my life before coming here working in the children's hospice movement, and I am acutely aware of the really difficult time that parents go through when they lose a child. I have not been blessed with the fortune of being a father myself, but I have seen the real difficulties that families go through. While cross-Government work is looking at the support that can be offered to bereaved parents, by simplifying the payments and so on, on a personal level I would like to meet her to see what I can do going forward.

I am conscious that I have about a minute left. I will finish by saying that, yes, there has been talk about austerity and about the payments for Wales, but let us not forget why we are in this position in the first place. *[Interruption.]* I have 30 seconds—I had better shut up! I thank all hon. Members for their contributions. I look forward to having many more debates with them in the future, when I hope my Welsh will be much improved and I can speak even more.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Committee has considered the matter of the Autumn Budget as it relates to Wales.

4 pm

*Committee adjourned.*



