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

**PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Monday 4 June 2018**

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# HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

## MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT HON. THERESA MAY, MP, JUNE 2017)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP  
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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—The Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Liam Fox, MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt Hon. Damian Hinds, MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Chris Grayling, MP  
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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP  
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis, MP

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Sam Gyimah, MP (Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation) §

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Guto Bebb, MP

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Lord Ashton of Hyde

Michael Ellis, MP

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 Nadhim Zahawi, MP

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 David Rutley, MP §  
 Lord Gardiner of Kimble

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 Suella Braverman, MP

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 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister for the Commonwealth and the UN)  
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 Harriett Baldwin, MP (Minister for Africa) §

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 Caroline Dinenage, MP (Minister for Care)

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 The Rt Hon. Ben Wallace, MP (Minister for Security and Economic Crime)  
 The Rt Hon. Nick Hurd, MP (Minister for Policing and the Fire Service)  
 Baroness Williams of Trafford (Minister for Countering Extremism and Minister for Equalities)

## PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—

Victoria Atkins, MP

**Housing, Communities and Local Government—**

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MINISTER OF STATE—Dominic Raab, MP (Minister for Housing)

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 Heather Wheeler, MP  
 Rishi Sunak, MP  
 Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth §  
 Nigel Adams, MP §

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## MINISTERS OF STATE—

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 Harriett Baldwin, MP §  
 The Rt Hon. Lord Bates

**International Trade—**

SECRETARY OF STATE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Liam Fox, MP

**MINISTERS OF STATE—**

The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP (Minister for Trade Policy)  
Baroness Fairhead (Minister for Trade and Export Promotion)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Graham Stuart, MP

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Lucy Frazer, QC, MP

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Lord Duncan of Springbank §

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PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Lord Duncan of Springbank §

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PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

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Baroness Sugg, CBE §  
Nusrat Ghani, MP §

**Treasury—**

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt Hon. Theresa May, MP

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Rebecca Harris, MP  
David Rutley, MP §  
Nigel Adams, MP §

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Nusrat Ghani, MP §  
Mike Freer, MP  
Jo Churchill, MP  
Amanda Milling, MP  
Stuart Andrew, MP §  
Kelly Tolhurst, MP  
Wendy Morton, MP  
Mims Davies, MP

**UK Export Finance—**

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 MINISTER FOR TRADE AND EXPORT PROMOTION—Baroness Fairhead

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 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—  
 Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth §  
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 Sarah Newton, MP (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work)  
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§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

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 REPRESENTING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—The Rt Hon. Tom Brake, MP  
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 DEFENCE: CLERKS—Mark Etherton, Adam Evans  
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 EDUCATION: CLERKS—Richard Ward, Katya Cassidy  
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 HOME AFFAIRS: CLERK—Phil Jones  
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 REGULATORY REFORM: CLERK—Chris Shaw  
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 PROCEDURAL PUBLISHING OPERATIONS MANAGER—Stuart Miller  
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CLINICAL NURSE ADVISER—Sarah Dow

PRACTICE NURSES—Karen St Cyr, Sally Nightingale

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PERSONAL ASSISTANT—Brigitte Onyskiw

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HEAD OF PEOPLE CAPABILITY—Amy Baxter

TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO MANAGER—John Thursfield

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE BUSINESS MANAGER—Karen Guthrie

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 BUSINESS SUPPORT MANAGER—Heather Pike  
 OUTREACH MANAGER—Daniel Gallacher  
 EDUCATION CENTRE OPERATIONS MANAGER—Phillip Johnson  
 CAMPAIGNS MANAGER—Michelle Budge  
 OUTREACH MANAGER—Alasdair Mackenzie  
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# THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND  
[WHICH OPENED 13 JUNE 2017]

SIXTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF  
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 642

SEVENTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 2017-2019

### House of Commons

*Monday 4 June 2018*

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

#### PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### Oral Answers to Questions

#### HOME DEPARTMENT

*The Secretary of State was asked—*  
**Refugee Family Reunion**

1. **Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): If he will take steps to expand the scope of the refugee family reunion rules. [905642]

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** The Government's approach to refugee family reunion has provided a safe and legal route for more than 25,000 partners and children of those granted protection here in the last five years. We are listening carefully to calls to expand family reunion. We are monitoring the progress of two private Members' Bills and are actively in discussion with non-governmental organisations.

**Jo Stevens:** While adults can sponsor their relatives, under UK rules separated children have no family reunion rights—not even to bring their parents to the UK. Every other country in the EU allows children to sponsor at least their closest relatives. When will the UK do the same?

**Sajid Javid:** I understand the concerns of the hon. Lady, who is right to raise this important matter. As I said a moment ago, we want to look at the private Members' Bills and see what more we can do. On her

specific issue about children, there is a concern that if we allow children to sponsor adults, whether their parents or others, that might cause harm, in that people might be incentivised to push children forward and put them through danger. I hope she understands that we need to consider such things carefully.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con): Is it not critical that we help people at home rather than incentivising people to trust people traffickers and so support their illegal activities?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. He will know that the Government do a lot—more than any other European Government—to support refugees in conflict zones. With regards to Syria, for example, the British Government have so far allocated more than £2 billion.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Home Secretary says he wants to consider the private Members' Bills, so is it not about time the Government brought forward a money resolution so that the Bill in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil), the Refugees (Family Reunion) (No. 2) Bill, can make progress and we can debate the Government's amendments?

**Sajid Javid:** As I have said, this is an important and sensitive issue and we want to consider it carefully, but that means it should not be rushed. We should take the correct time necessary to consider the Bills.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): We have two Syrian families living in Taunton Deane. The local community has gone all out to look after them, particularly a charity called Christian Help and Action for Refugees in Somerset and Rev. Rod Corke from St Mary Magdalene Church, who is leaving us soon to go to Malvern—a great loss. Will the Home Secretary join me in congratulating all those who have given up so much time to look after these needy people?

**Sajid Javid:** I absolutely join my hon. Friend in commending the work of her local community in helping refugees, particularly the group CHARIS. It shows the importance of community sponsorship, which is something we want to look at more closely.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): The importance of family life ought to unite both sides of the House, but the current rules break up families, as many of us see in our own constituency case loads week after week. The rules are inhumane and in breach of the right to a family life under article 8 of the European convention on human rights. It is also unfortunate that legal aid for some of these applications, which was previously available, was removed under the coalition in 2013. Labour has pledged in government to end the breaking up of families under these rules. Surely the Home Secretary should move faster to review his current family reunion rules.

**Sajid Javid:** I say to the right hon. Lady that 25,000 people have been reunited over the last five years—5,000 a year; I hope she would agree that that is not an insignificant number. She says the current rules are inhumane. It is worth reminding her that they were introduced in 2007 by the previous Labour Government. Perhaps she should reflect on that. She talks about legal aid. As she will know, legal aid is under review by the Ministry of Justice and is something we are looking at carefully.

### Domestic Violence and Abuse

2. **Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): What the timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals on domestic violence and abuse. [905643]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** The Government's wide-ranging consultation on domestic abuse closed last Thursday. We are analysing more than 3,200 responses received from survivors of domestic abuse, frontline professionals, experts from the domestic abuse sector and academics. I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond. As announced in the Queen's Speech, the Government remain committed to bringing forward a draft Bill this Session.

**Bambos Charalambous:** The previous Chancellor announced that domestic violence services would be among the beneficiaries of the tampon tax and would receive an additional dedicated £10 million a year, but this amount remains inadequate for services already hard hit by successive cuts since 2010. Will the Government set out a long-term funding strategy for domestic violence and rape crisis services?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman; I know he has taken an interest in this matter. The Government have committed £20 million specifically to domestic abuse accommodation. It is supporting 80 areas, creating 2,200 new bed spaces and supporting 19,000 victims of domestic abuse. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is also conducting an audit of services. Between that audit and the consultation responses, we will ensure that we have a service that supports victims of domestic abuse.

**Mr Speaker:** Congratulating him on his knighthood, I call the right hon. Member for Bexleyheath and Crayford (Sir David Evennett).

**Sir David Evennett** (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse will recognise that it is not just physical, but can take many different forms—psychological, sexual, economic and emotional—all of which should be considered?

**Victoria Atkins:** I echo your congratulations to my right hon. Friend, Mr Speaker. I can give him the confirmation for which he has asked. The purpose of the Bill is to include in legislation, for the first time, a cross-governmental definition of domestic abuse. We know that it is not confined to physical violence but can take many forms, and we want the law to reflect that.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): I look forward to the introduction of the Bill, and, as the Minister knows, I also look forward to working on it on a cross-party basis. However, may I press her further? Is she aware of a report published by Professor Sylvia Walby in 2009, which, I think, updates earlier research and draws attention to the economic as well as the moral and emotional case for tackling domestic violence earlier and better?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady, who always brings her outside expertise to the House when she speaks of such matters. It does not feel right to talk about the economic effects of domestic abuse, because the emotional and psychological impacts are of course far greater, but there is an economic side as well. We look forward very much to working on the Bill with the hon. Lady and others.

### Policing: Protests

3. **Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): What guidance his Department provides to police forces on the policing of protests. [905644]

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** The Home Office monitors protest threats, but the management of protests is an operational and independent matter for the police so no Home Office guidance or briefings have been issued.

**Huw Merriman:** Does the Minister agree that protest groups whose core aim is to disrupt legitimate business, such as meat production, should pay towards the cost of policing? Surely it cannot be right either for there to be too few police covering the protests, or for there to be fewer police elsewhere because those who are covering the protests cannot police the rest of the community.

**Mr Hurd:** I understand the point that my hon. Friend is making, and I understand how distressing it must be for a legitimate business to be on the receiving end of a campaign of disruption. I am sure that, as a good democrat, my hon. Friend would not want to do anything to undermine the principle of peaceful protest. When that crosses the line into harassment or threats to public safety, we have recourse to the Public Order Act 1986 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Ealing's police have been dealing with one protest for 23 years outside our local Marie Stopes clinic. The aim of the protest is to prevent women from accessing healthcare. Although our council has now introduced a public spaces protection order, this is a national problem that requires a national solution. Will the Minister respond to the letter that 160 of us—including the Father of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), and three Select Committee Chairs—wrote to him asking for his predecessor's review to be published, and will he opt for our proposed solution of buffer zones? That would be an easy win for him at an early stage in his already successful career.

**Mr Hurd:** The hon. Lady and I have debated this matter in Westminster Hall, and we both know that there is a balance to be struck between the right to protest and ensuring that protests do not cross the line into harassment and intimidation. As she says, her local council has introduced a public spaces protection order, and we need to see how that goes. As for the review that she mentioned, it was entered into in good faith and it is ongoing.

#### Settled Status

4. **Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the new process for non-UK EU citizens resident in the UK to apply for settled status. [R] [905645]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** The application process for resident EU citizens and their family members to obtain that status in the UK after we leave the EU will be straightforward, streamlined and user-friendly, and there will be a dedicated customer contact centre to help people through the process. The majority of applicants will need to meet only three criteria: they will have to prove their identity, prove that they are resident in the UK, and prove that they do not pose a serious criminal or security threat.

**Kate Green:** According to the Migration Observatory, 64,000 non-Irish EU nationals in the UK have never used the internet, and 250,000 have reported language-related difficulties in accessing or keeping work. What capacity will the Home Office have to deal with the many thousands of applicants who will not be able to apply online?

**Caroline Nokes:** It is crucial that, in addition to our assisted digital application process, we will have dedicated support—lines to help people through the process. But I am very conscious that there will be people with language difficulties; that has been raised with us by some of the user groups, and we are looking to see how we can assist them as well.

**James Gray** (North Wiltshire) (Con): I greatly welcome the Minister's announcement that the process will be smooth and easy to follow, but agree with the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) that a very large number of otherwise extremely sophisticated people in this country do not know that it will be as easy as my hon. Friend describes. By what mechanism will she get the message out to all these people that they are welcome here, that the process will be easy, and, crucially,

that the cost of applying for residency will be no more than the current cost for a British citizen of applying for a passport?

**Caroline Nokes:** We have been very clear from the outset that the cost of the scheme will be no more than the cost of applying for a British passport, and indeed for those who already have permanent residency there will be no cost at all. It is crucial that we continue to work with our user groups, and as we roll the scheme forward we will be providing more information, including through our dedicated email service that we are sending out to people. But we do have an important communication job to make sure people know how to apply and when the scheme opens.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Efforts to involve community groups and public services such as libraries in facilitating settled status applications seem almost non-existent. I learned from Scottish Government colleagues last week that in Scotland the UK Government have made only cursory contact with just two libraries. Can the Minister tell us what further engagement is planned with community groups and public services?

**Caroline Nokes:** The Home Office continues to engage with people, businesses and organisations across the UK. We are seeking a deal that works for the entire UK and it is very important that we make sure that user groups in Scotland, including organisations such as Citizens Advice, have the necessary resources and understanding of how this system is going to work. We are rolling forward an engagement programme from this point onwards, and I am looking forward to making further announcements in due course.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does the Minister agree that the fact that 3 million or 3.5 million EU citizens wish to remain in the UK after we leave the EU is a huge vote of confidence in post-Brexit Britain's future? Does she wish that all colleagues in this House had as much confidence as those EU citizens who wish to remain in the UK after we leave?

**Caroline Nokes:** My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. There are more EU citizens living and working here now than there were at the time of the referendum, and we want to make sure that it is very clear to them that they are welcome. We welcome the contributions they make to both our communities and our economy, and we are working to make sure that the streamlined process is as easy as possible.

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): EU citizens are worried that they might be subjected to the same treatment as the Windrush generation; we have seen similarly cruel treatment of highly skilled migrants deported because of minor tax errors. What system is the Minister putting in place to ensure that, when the settled status system is up and running, issues can be picked up internally without the need for a media storm and extensive pressure from the Opposition?

**Caroline Nokes:** Of course, it is crucial that the settled status scheme gives people a digital confirmation of their right to live, work and rent property in the UK, and we are absolutely committed to doing that.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the issue of people with minor tax discrepancies. It is important to reflect that there have been several instances where those minor discrepancies have run into tens of thousands of pounds, and it is crucial that we pick up any discrepancies between what people are declaring as their income for immigration purposes and their income for tax purposes. We want to make sure that we collect the amount of tax that is owing.

### Sexual Exploitation of Vulnerable Children

5. **Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): What steps he is taking to tackle the sexual exploitation of vulnerable children. [905646]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** The Government attach the highest priority to tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse, declaring it a national threat and investing significantly in law enforcement capacity to transform the police response. Last year's "Tackling child sexual exploitation" progress report announced a £40 million package of measures to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation, and to crack down on offenders.

**Lucy Allan:** I thank the Minister for her response. Child sexual exploitation victims often struggle to get justice. What steps will she take to ensure that the police identify grooming and child sexual exploitation, and that they do not mistake those serious crimes for consensual sex?

**Victoria Atkins:** I know that my hon. Friend is pursuing this campaign with great vigour. We have provided £1.9 million to the College of Policing to develop a training package for first responders to vulnerable people. The package teaches the importance of applying professional judgment when identifying signs of issues such as grooming, and police guidance makes it clear that sexual grooming and sexual communication with a child are offences in their own right.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Minister also acknowledge that the grooming of children can lead to young people over the age of 16 being raped, whether or not so-called consent is given, as the manipulation has already been sustained while the young person was under 16? Will she look into changing the law in this area so that prosecutions can be brought?

**Victoria Atkins:** Every case has to be judged on its own facts, but I would hope that any police investigation—and, indeed, any prosecution—would reflect any history of grooming when the case came before a judge and jury. If the hon. Lady wishes to refer a particular case to me, I will of course be delighted to review it.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Does my hon. Friend understand the level of public unease surrounding Tommy Robinson?

**Victoria Atkins:** I do. I cannot comment on a specific individual, but we are clear that child exploitation is illegal and that it must be, and will be, tackled by the police and the criminal justice system.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): The Minister might be aware that I have raised with her colleague, the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, the fact that if the child protection information sharing project were able to keep details of vulnerable mothers-to-be as well as of children, Poppi Worthington would have been known to social services before she died. Has the Minister had time to consider this shortcoming, and will she put it right?

**Victoria Atkins:** I would be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss that important point. We are clear that there needs to be better information sharing between the various agencies involved, to prevent very sad cases such as the one that he has raised.

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): We all acknowledge that child sexual exploitation can often be a consequence of county lines, but the limited awareness of the signs of it means that vulnerable children are often left to the mercy of their abusers. To improve identification, the emergency services need more support. What training and support are the Government providing to help them better recognise child victims of county lines exploitation?

**Victoria Atkins:** As the hon. Lady knows, county lines is a policing priority. It is a major element of our serious violence strategy, precisely because we recognise the harm that it can cause not only through acts of violence among gang members but in the wider community. That is precisely why we have contributed £3.5 million towards a national co-ordination centre to help to spread the message and the intelligence about county lines among police forces.

### Knife Crime

6. **Gareth Johnson** (Dartford) (Con): What steps he is taking to tackle knife crime. [905647]

8. **Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): What steps he is taking to tackle knife crime. [905649]

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** The Government have published a serious violence strategy that sets out a range of actions to tackle knife crime, including a national media campaign, continuing support for police action under Operation Sceptre, an offensive weapons Bill and a new round of the Community Fund.

**Gareth Johnson:** Does the Secretary of State agree that we need a multi-faceted approach to tackling knife crime? It is essential that we not only disrupt but educate those people who are likely to offend, but it is also important that we retain a high likelihood of imprisonment for anyone who refuses to stop carrying a knife.

**Sajid Javid:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Offenders need to know that if they commit serious crimes, a prison cell awaits them. That is a huge deterrent, and it is also very much a part of the serious violence strategy.

**Mr Francois:** Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in the prevalence of knife crime in Essex over the past year. Some of it is associated with county lines drugs operations moving out into Essex from the capital.

What action is the Home Secretary's Department taking, in association with the Essex police, to fight this menace on our streets?

**Sajid Javid:** I know that the police in Essex taking this issue seriously. Among the actions that they are taking, one thing I would encourage them to do more of is to apply to the Community Fund and to focus a bit more on early intervention, which I know they are interested in and have done successfully before. They have received funding for such projects before, and I would encourage them to seek it again.

**Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): We know that prevention lies at the heart of much of the knife crime issue, but there are things that can be done now. The former Home Secretary, who is here today, told the Home Affairs Committee that she would look at using more criminal behaviour orders for people who have been convicted of knife crime to stop them from going on social media to get the attention that they crave. Will the Home Secretary look at that issue?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Lady is right that much more can be done that does not require legislation, meaning it can be done more quickly. She talked about criminal behaviour orders. We are looking at that very issue and seeing whether their use can be expanded.

**Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary match the £2 million that the West Midlands police and crime commissioner has managed to scrape together to tackle gangs and knife and violent crime with early intervention schemes, mediation programmes and other initiatives? Will he meet me and a cross-party delegation of MPs from the region to discuss how we can work together to tackle the issue?

**Sajid Javid:** I commend the work that is being done locally by West Midlands police to fight violent crime, particularly knife crime, and I am sure that the funds that it has put to use will make a difference. I would be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman and other local Members of Parliament to discuss the matter further.

15. [905656] **Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): With 44 fatal stabbings in London this year alone, does my right hon. Friend not accept that even the BME community would now welcome a tougher stance on stop and search—[*Interruption.*] Initially, the BME community argued against it and that is why I used the word “even”. Therefore, does my right hon. Friend think that it is time to provide different guidance to the police on when stop and search is appropriate?

**Sajid Javid:** Perhaps my hon. Friend listened to or heard about the speech I gave to the Police Federation just last week, when I said that the police should be examining all the powers that they currently have, including stop and search. Whenever they think that it is appropriate, they should not hesitate to use it because that will help all communities.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I am sure that we are all as one in wishing to tackle knife crime, but it is the framework of law either side of the Scottish border that interests me. In Scotland,

16 to 18-year-olds can purchase kitchen knives, yet it is a short drive from Coldstream in Scotland to Alnwick in England. Should we not harmonise the laws on either side of the border to tackle knife crime?

**Sajid Javid:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Devolution means that it makes sense to co-operate on many important issues, and this is one of them. We hope that the new offensive weapons Bill will be supported by the Scottish Government and that they will take similar action.

### Police Numbers

7. **Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): What steps he is taking to increase police numbers. [905648]

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** It is for police and crime commissioners and chief constables to decide the size of their workforces. We are helping the police to respond to changing demand with a £460 million increase in overall funding in 2018-19, including through the council tax precept, and many PCCs are using that cash for extra recruitment.

**Mr Robertson:** I thank the Home Secretary for that response. Tackling terrorism is obviously extremely important, but the more immediate concern for people each and every day comes from crimes such as burglary and antisocial behaviour. Is he confident that police forces such as Gloucestershire's will have sufficient officers to follow up complaints about those crimes and see them through right to the end?

**Sajid Javid:** I reassure my hon. Friend that we are helping the police to respond to the changing demand that he mentions with the extra £460 million overall. Many PCCs have made a commitment to increase frontline policing. Gloucestershire has received a £3.6 million increase this year and I am sure that that will help. In addition, I will prioritise more police resources in the next spending review.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): The Metropolitan police estimates that police officers in London alone are owed 200,000 rest days. How many are owed across the country as a whole?

**Sajid Javid:** The Metropolitan police does a fantastic job and its officers are incredibly dedicated. Over the past few weeks that I have been in this role I have had the opportunity to meet many of them. We must ensure that they have the resources they need. That is why the Metropolitan police received a record increase in the recent financial settlement, which has been welcomed.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): The Policing Minister is sitting next to the Home Secretary and will be able to brief him on the crisis in police funding in Lincolnshire. He will tell the Home Secretary that we are one of the bottom three authorities in the entire country for funding, so what is the Home Secretary going to do to try to resolve this matter? It would take relatively little and relatively few steps, and it would be cost-effective to ensure that we were fairly funded in Lincolnshire to help to resolve rural crime.

**Sajid Javid:** For a moment I thought I was back in Housing, Communities and Local Government questions, as that sounds like a question about local government funding in Lincolnshire. My hon. Friend makes an important point. There is an increase of more than £3 million for local policing in Lincolnshire in the latest settlement, but this is an important issue that I wish to look at much more closely as we get to the spending review.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): The Home Secretary has twice talked about police resources on “The Andrew Marr Show” since he took office, first on 8 April, when he said that police cuts have had no effect on crime, and then this weekend, when he said that, as a priority, he wants to secure extra funding for the police. For the avoidance of doubt, is the Home Office’s new line that the police do need high budgets? If so, how much and when?

**Sajid Javid:** What I recognise is that, for a number of reasons, there has been an increase in recorded crime and certain types of crime, such as cyber-crime, and there has been more reporting of past sexual offences and of domestic crime. We are encouraging that and we want to see it reported. We have to make sure resources match that demand, which is why the increase this year is very welcome. As we get to the spending review, we have to make sure that we have the right amount of resources for the long term.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Police resources would go further if those they do arrest and who are subsequently convicted were to serve their time in jail in full, thus reducing reoffending rates. Does the Home Secretary agree?

**Sajid Javid:** Where I agree with my hon. Friend is that it is important that people who are sentenced serve the appropriate amount of time. I am aware of the issues he raises, and I would welcome discussing them with him further.

**Mr Stephen Hepburn** (Jarrow) (Lab): Since the Tories came to power, the number of police in the Northumbria policing area has been cut by 27%. During the same time, violent crime has gone up 177%. Is it just the general public who notice the link between those figures, or has the Secretary of State noticed it, too?

**Sajid Javid:** Perhaps it is worth my reminding the hon. Gentleman that at the last election he stood on a manifesto that wanted to cut police funding by 5% to 10%, whereas this Government have protected it. If his correlation were correct—if it were correct—crime would have gone up even more had Labour been in office.

### Fire Services: Workforce

9. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking in response to fire services’ ageing workforces. [905650]

12. **Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking in response to fire services’ ageing workforces. [905653]

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** The statutory fire and rescue national framework includes principles that all services should follow to ensure that firefighters remain fit and fully supported to remain on operational duties and in employment.

**Liz Twist:** Fire and rescue services attended 574,659 incidents in the year to June 2017, an increase on the previous year. Has the Minister made any effort to ensure that the falling number of firefighters and fire stations are not overstretched?

**Mr Hurd:** Yes, because we believe the fire system has the resources it needs to do the job against a backdrop of falling demand for statutory fire services. Of course, the system is sitting on over £600 million of reserves, which have grown by over £0.25 billion since 2011.

**Grahame Morris:** The ageing work profile among our firefighters is partially a result of changes to the firefighters’ pension scheme. What assessment has the Minister made of the number of redeployment opportunities for firefighters who are compelled to work to the age of 60?

**Mr Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. The average age of our firefighters is 42, and we have more than 1,000 firefighters who are over 56, which makes it extremely important that fire authorities do not just assess fitness but help firefighters to maintain and develop their fitness and give firefighters all the necessary support and protection when there is a problem so they can continue in their operational duties. That is set out in the statutory fire and rescue national framework, and it will be the subject of independent inspection when independent inspection starts this year.

**Mr Speaker:** With ingenuity, the hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes) will detect that his question is not unadjacent, and if he wishes to put it now, he can.

21. [905662] **Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. May I ask my right hon. Friend what work his Department can do to support the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, as he seeks greater collaboration between the police and fire services in the west midlands?

**Mr Hurd:** I assure my hon. Friend that I speak regularly to Andy Street. The Government are determined to honour the second devolution deal, including with proposals to help to bring police and fire services under the Mayor, as we have done in London and Manchester. I assure my hon. Friend that we are absolutely committed to working with both Andy Street and the police and crime commissioner to make sure that that happens by 2020.

**Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): As a result of this Government’s cut to funding, along with no recruitment drive, we have seen both a reduction in the number of firefighters and an increasingly ageing workforce. How do the Government plan to address the rising age of firefighters? Will the Minister please give us some specific examples?

**Mr Hurd:** I already have. Through the statutory national framework, every fire authority is required not just to assess firefighter fitness, but to help to develop and maintain it, giving assurances about support if problems

arise, so that every firefighter, whatever their age, is given the maximum possible opportunity to continue to support their service and remain on operational duties. That is set out in the statutory framework.

### Illegal Migrants: Employment

10. **Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that illegal migrants cannot work in the UK. [905651]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes)**: Employers have had a duty to prevent illegal working since 1997. In 2016, we introduced tougher sanctions on rogue employers and made illegal working a criminal offence, so that wages can be seized as proceeds of crime. We have recently introduced additional safeguards to protect legal migrants seeking employment who do not have the necessary documentation to establish their lawful immigration status.

**Damien Moore**: I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to reducing illegal immigration. Does she agree that the best way to deter illegal migrants from looking for work in the UK is by preventing their entering the country with stringent checks at air and sea ports?

**Caroline Nokes**: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. All passengers arriving in the UK at passport control are checked against watch lists on arrival at the border. The majority of those people are checked against our systems before they even travel, through the collection of advance passenger information. Between April 2010 and March 2018, we refused entry to 138,992 people, including more than 18,000 in the year to March 2018.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Those seeking asylum in the UK are currently banned from working and, as a result, they are forced to live in penury and are denied the right to contribute their skills to our society. Does the Minister agree that this system is lacking in both compassion and common sense? Will she reform it?

**Caroline Nokes**: Our asylum system provides accommodation and funding for those who are here during the process of their asylum claim. The hon. Gentleman makes an important point: we must continue to make sure that the UK has one of the most humane asylum systems in the world. We are working very hard to make sure we do that.

### Cyber-attacks

11. **Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on tackling cyber-attacks. [905652]

**The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace)**: The Government recognise that cyber is a tier 1 risk to the UK's economic and national security. The Home Secretary and I hold regular discussions with ministerial colleagues, the National Security Council, GCHQ and other Government Departments, both to tackle the overall threat and in response to specific incidents.

**Mr Dhesi**: With respect to cyber-attacks, what steps have the Minister and the Home Secretary taken to ensure that the major media and social media companies are more vigilant in their approach to cyber-crime and how that connects with what the Government are doing?

**Mr Wallace**: Through both the Joint Fraud Taskforce and broader cyber-security meetings in the Home Office, we work with the industry to produce a common cyber aware campaign, to make sure that everyone is reading from the same hymn sheet and advice is consistent across government. We also work hand in hand with the National Cyber Security Centre to make sure that advice is given both to small businesses and the charitable sector, so that they are not made vulnerable. By investing £1.9 billion in the national cyber-capability programme, we can invest in the capability to see this off.

**Mr Robert Goodwill** (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the personnel at GCHQ Scarborough, which is known locally as "Wireless station"? Together with their colleagues in Cheltenham, they work day and night to keep us safe from cyber-attacks and cyber-crime.

**Mr Wallace**: The workforce at GCHQ do a tremendous job of keeping us safe from our enemies, and have done since all the way back to GCHQ's history in Bletchley Park. I was delighted that some new GCHQ jobs were recently announced in my region, the north-west, which shows that it is not just a Cheltenham-based organisation, with sites in Yorkshire, Cornwall and now Manchester.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): The Security Minister indicated on the radio this morning that counter-terror intelligence will now be shared with local organisations, including the police and local councils. Will he explain how the cyber-security of that data will be guaranteed at a local level and what training will be given to those who handle it? Crucially, will he confirm that additional resources will be given to every organisation that is asked to store it?

**Mr Wallace**: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's question. We are sharing the information more widely in three pilot schemes that will be funded by the Home Office, so the funding will be met by central Government. The first three pilots are going to be based in Birmingham, Manchester and London. Of course, local authorities, social services and mainstream county police forces deal with sensitive information every day, and that is already subject to data protection rules and appropriate levels of security. We will continue to advise them on that, and the information that we share will of course be declassified before they get it.

### Domestic Violence

13. **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): What steps he is taking to tackle domestic violence. [905654]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins)**: The Government have introduced a new offence of coercive or controlling behaviour, rolled out new tools such as domestic violence protection orders, and committed £100 million to support victims of violence against women and girls, including a

£17 million service transformation fund that supports 41 areas to promote early intervention and prevention. We are of course working towards the introduction of a draft Bill before the end of this Session.

**Fiona Bruce:** Does the Minister support the concept of family hubs in local communities, which would mean that, if a relationship were under strain, people would have somewhere to go at an early stage? That might prevent the escalation to violence.

**Victoria Atkins:** I thank my hon. Friend for her important work on supporting children and families. The Government are committed to early intervention in and the prevention of domestic abuse. We already fund schemes—such as Women’s Aid’s Ask Me scheme—that create safe spaces in communities so that victims can disclose. Following the closing of our domestic abuse consultation last week, we are considering all options on doing more.

**Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab):** Will the Minister please strengthen the domestic violence services in North Yorkshire, where the Tory council has closed its refuge, meaning that victims flood over into Labour Durham and put our refugees under unacceptable pressure?

**Victoria Atkins:** I am concerned to hear that accusation. If the hon. Lady feels that local commissioners are not meeting their obligations, will she please write to me so that I can look into the matter?

#### Leaving the EU: Seasonal Workers

14. **Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con):** What steps his Department is taking to ensure that the hospitality and tourism sector can continue to access seasonal workers from the EEA after the UK leaves the EU. [905655]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** The Government are considering a range of options for the future immigration system. We will make decisions based on evidence and engagement. We have asked the independent Migration Advisory Committee to advise on the economic and social impact of the UK’s exit from the EU and on how the UK’s immigration system should be aligned with a modern industrial strategy.

**Steve Double:** The tourism and hospitality sector’s No. 1 concern is post-Brexit access to the labour force. Many seasonal workers will not qualify for settled status under the current framework because of the seasonal nature of their work. Will the Minister consider some sort of seasonal workers scheme for the hospitality sector, along the same lines as a seasonal agricultural workers scheme?

**Caroline Nokes:** I recognise the importance of tourism in my hon. Friend’s constituency and his work in the all-party group on the visitor economy. Seasonal workers make an important contribution to the tourism and hospitality sector, and it is a sector that we wish to see thrive. Any EU citizen who is currently in the UK will be able to benefit from the settlement scheme that we are establishing. For the longer term, we have asked the

independent Migration Advisory Committee to advise us; I am sure that it will be mindful of my hon. Friend’s points.

**Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab):** Along with the hospitality industry, the agricultural industry is crying out for help on migrant workers. Will the Government confirm that they will reinstate the seasonal agricultural workers scheme and allow it to reflect the needs in different areas, such as my county of East Lothian?

**Caroline Nokes:** The hon. Gentleman has identified farming and my hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double) asked about tourism, but a number of other sectors are affected, including fisheries, which has been raised with me recently. It is crucial that we take the advice of the Migration Advisory Committee and that we have evidence-based policy making. I reassure the hon. Gentleman and other Members that I am looking into this issue very closely indeed.

#### Counter-extremism

16. **Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con):** What steps he is taking to tackle extremism. [905657]

18. **Dame Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con):** What steps he is taking to tackle extremism. [905659]

22. **Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con):** What steps he is taking to tackle extremism. [905663]

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** The 2015 counter-extremism strategy committed the Government for the first time to tackling the non-terrorist harm that extremism causes. Since 2015, supported by civil society groups, we have taken steps to protect public institutions from the threat of extremism.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:** In the light of the Parsons Green attack, which was committed by a refugee who had been fostered in my constituency, what steps is my right hon. Friend taking directly to make sure that the public feel safe when going about their daily business?

**Sajid Javid:** I can tell my hon. Friend that the new counter-terrorism strategy introduced today touches on counter-extremism as well, and some lessons were learned from the Parsons Green attack. If he would like to learn more about that, I am happy to meet him.

**Dame Caroline Spelman:** After the bombing in Manchester, my constituency experienced a sudden sharp loss of police resources in favour of the city of Birmingham, so I welcome the £450 million extra to be spent on combating terrorism. Does the Home Secretary agree that programmes such as the Church Urban Fund’s Near Neighbours scheme are also needed to tackle the underlying causes of extremism and to help strengthen social cohesion?

**Sajid Javid:** I agree very much with my right hon. Friend. She will know that I am a big fan of the Near Neighbours scheme. Since 2011 the Government have committed more than £11 million to it, and there is a

further £2.6 million agreed for the next two years. There may also be support available from the Government's "Building a Stronger Britain Together" campaign.

**Adam Holloway:** My constituents will be absolutely aghast at the thought of people from organisations such as ISIS returning here. What steps can the Government take to prevent people from such organisations causing harm to our population?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend's constituents are right to be aghast at that, and I fully understand that feeling. This is a Europe-wide issue, and I have already discussed it with some of my counterparts in Europe. We are making sure that individuals who return from conflict zones such as Syria are properly investigated and potentially prosecuted by police, and that if they do come back and live here we have proper restrictions in place.

**Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):** Will the Home Secretary please delegate a Minister to meet me about an issue on which it is crucial that work is done sensitively, because errors can occur? I refer to a constituent whose home was mistakenly broken into by terror police. He has been unable to return to work, and his neighbours all believe that he is a terrorist. Will the Home Secretary please delegate a Minister to meet me to sort that out as soon as possible?

**Sajid Javid:** It sounds like a very important issue, and I will make sure that that is done.

### Forensic Testing

17. **Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of trends in waiting times for forensic test results in criminal cases. [905658]

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** Waiting times for forensic test results differ between police forces depending on the types of tests required and the different arrangements that each police force has in place to deliver its forensic services.

**Ruth George:** My local police force in Derbyshire tells me that, since the closure of one of the private forensic testing companies, it now takes more than six months for forensic tests in criminal cases to come back. That is obviously far in excess of the pre-charge bail conditions that it can put on people, and is seriously hampering it in its abilities to arrest and detain offenders.

**Mr Hurd:** I assume that that data is true, and I share the hon. Lady's concern about it. Our overall perception is that the majority of forensic services are currently being delivered faster, more reliably and to higher quality standards than in the past, but the system has had to absorb a couple of quite significant shocks recently, which is why I am conducting a review with stakeholders into the future effectiveness of the forensic market.

### Immigration

23. **Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con):** What steps he is taking to implement a fair, effective and sustainable immigration system. [905664]

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** We will continue building and managing an immigration system that meets the economic and social needs of the UK, and I will set out further plans in due course. I am committed to a fair and humane system, and we are reviewing the operational assurance regime across the borders, immigration and citizenship system to ensure that it is effective and reflects best practice.

**Craig Tracey:** In recent months we have seen a squeeze on doctors' ability to come to this country to fill vital roles in our NHS. What steps are the Government taking to ensure that we can access the skills that are needed while ensuring that our immigration system becomes sustainable?

**Caroline Nokes:** We keep the tier 2 cap under close review. Priority is given to doctors working in shortage specialisms, as determined by the Migration Advisory Committee, and no one has ever been refused for any of those posts. We have taken steps to boost training places for nurses and doctors, and a record number of undergraduates will begin medical training by 2020, with 1,500 new places.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Mr Speaker:** Order. As I seek to squeeze in the penultimate question, I am sceptical as to how enormously helpful it is for a vast array of colleagues suddenly to display an interest, but how can I turn down the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper)?

**Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Home Affairs Committee recommended in February that the Government look again at the tier 2 system, because doctors were already being turned away. *The BMJ* is now reporting that 1,500 doctors have been turned away even though they had job offers in the national health service. In the Home Affairs Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee, and across the House, there is a strong desire for us to make sure that we get the doctors we need. The Home Office said in response to our recommendations that it was simply going to wait until the publication of the MAC report in October. That is too late. I urge the Government to change the system now to ensure that we can get in the doctors we need.

**Caroline Nokes:** I thank the right hon. Lady for her question, and I welcome the comments that various Select Committees have made on this issue. I have absolutely no doubt that she heard the Home Secretary's comments yesterday, and I reassure her that we are looking at the matter closely.

### Modern Slavery

24. **Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op):** What steps his Department is taking to tackle modern slavery. [905665]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** The Government remain committed to stamping out the despicable crime

of modern slavery. We have strengthened the operational law enforcement response and introduced world-leading requirements for businesses to report on slavery in their supply chains, and we are now transforming the support that we provide to victims.

**Gareth Snell:** Kevin Hyland, the independent anti-slavery commissioner, stated in his resignation letter that he had too often felt that his independence was subject to the discretion of the Home Office, rather than being on a statutory basis. What will the Minister do to ensure that the next commissioner is given the independence that he needs for his role to be flexible?

**Victoria Atkins:** May I record our thanks to Mr Hyland for the invaluable work that he did as the commissioner? The whole point of the role of the commissioner is that it is independent, so we very much look forward to filling the position with a similarly robust and independent person in due course.

### Topical Questions

T1. [905667] **Mr Robert Goodwill** (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** Yesterday we marked a year since the appalling attack at London Bridge and Borough Market, and less than two weeks ago we remembered those lost at Manchester Arena. Those sobering occasions remind us that the first duty of the Government, and my highest priority as Home Secretary, is to protect the public. Therefore, I today launch the Government's new counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, following the comprehensive review of our counter-terrorism approach announced by the Prime Minister a year ago. The strategy sets out how the Government will continue to tackle the serious and evolving threat from terrorism.

**Mr Goodwill:** Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that an increased ability for MI5 and other public bodies to share information will not only deliver a more effective and joined-up response to the fast-changing nature of potential terrorism, but will also come with the right safeguards to protect the use of that information?

**Sajid Javid:** I can give my right hon. Friend that assurance. One of the lessons learned from the 2017 attacks was that MI5 could share some of its information on a wider basis—not just with counter-terrorism police, but perhaps with elements of local government and neighbourhood police. That will happen in the pilots to which the Minister for Security and Economic Crime referred earlier. I assure my right hon. Friend that the information will be declassified and that there will be certain safeguards in place.

**Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Denzel Darku is a student nurse and a tireless volunteer who carried the baton for Scotland at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. He dreams of a career in NHS Scotland, but faces deportation on a technicality, through no fault of his own. My colleagues in the Scottish Government have already written to the Secretary of State about this young man's case, but they have not

had a reply. Will the Secretary of State meet me to discuss this young man, who only wants to stay in Scotland to serve the national health service?

**Sajid Javid:** I am pleased that the hon. and learned Lady has raised that case, because it was also raised with me last week by the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Ruth Davidson, who is also very concerned about it and has asked me to look into it. The hon. and learned Lady might know that there is an appeal going on with regard to Mr Darku, and I should not say too much about that. However, I am very sympathetic about the situation, and there will be no enforcement action while the review takes place.

T3. [905669] **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Do Ministers agree that more needs to be done to help women who want to exit prostitution to do so?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point, and I also thank the all-party parliamentary group on prostitution and the global sex trade for its report. I know that my hon. Friend is a member of that group. The Government are committed to tackling the harm and exploitation that can be associated with prostitution. Those who want to leave should have every opportunity to do so. We have provided more than £2 million to organisations supporting prostitutes and sex workers, and we are now funding a study to look into the scale and nature of prostitution.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): With reference to the earlier questions on how the cap on tier 2 visas is depriving the NHS of much-needed doctors, the visa cap is damaging the NHS at a time when it is already facing a doctor shortage of 10,000 and an overall staff shortage of more than 100,000. The Home Office is turning away doctors the NHS needs because it is unable to breach the cap. Ministers have referred to briefings in the press in the past few days, but does the Secretary of State appreciate that the NHS needs him to come forward as a matter of urgency and say that he is prepared to review the workings of the cap to allow us to recruit those doctors?

**Sajid Javid:** It is right that we control immigration and try to bring it down to sustainable levels in the long term, but it is also correct that we let in the skills that we need, whether for our health service or our businesses. This is an important issue, and as we heard earlier, Select Committees have written to me and I am looking at the issue very carefully.

T8. [905674] **John Penrose** (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): On 6 April the USA announced tough sanctions against 24 Russian Government officials and oligarchs, including Oleg Deripaska, whose company floated here in London last year. When will we publish an equivalent British sanctions list on people whose presence and dirty money are not welcome on our shores?

**The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace):** I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work he has done on this issue as the Government's anti-corruption tsar. Like him, I was incredibly interested in the sanctions list that the United States published. He

will be aware that the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 has gone through this House. There are further opportunities to strengthen the regime with, I hope, a Bill coming forward from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy with regard to designations. We will be exploring that issue. It is important to note that the United Kingdom has recently been at the forefront of driving out dirty Russian money—or indeed other dirty money. It is important that we tackle this issue head on.

T2. [905668] **Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): The Home Secretary said yesterday that he is open to looking again at the inclusion of international students in net migration targets. He will know that there is strong support for that move on both sides of the House. Will he therefore meet me and other officers of the all-party parliamentary group on international students, prior to the publication of the Migration Advisory Committee review that his predecessor so wisely commissioned?

**Sajid Javid:** First, it is worth reminding the House that there is no cap on the number of students who can come into the country. I know that the hon. Gentleman knows that, but it is not well known more widely. I do think that this issue is important, and that is why I have committed to take a look at it in due course.

T10. [905676] **Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): The people of Morley and Outwood want to see more police officers on the streets. What are the Government doing to recruit more police officers, particularly in West Yorkshire?

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** We have taken steps that have led to an additional £460 million of taxpayers' money going into the police system, including another £9.9 million for West Yorkshire, where the police and crime commissioner has said that he will use it to recruit more than 140 police officers and staff—and that is on top of an increase in 2016. I am sure that my hon. Friend will do a great job in holding him to account to make sure that those additional resources are used to the benefit of her constituents.

T4. [905670] **Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab): A few weeks ago, the Government's chief inspector of borders and immigration said of the right to rent policy that it

“is yet to demonstrate its worth as a tool to encourage immigration compliance”,

that

“the Home Office has failed to coordinate, maximise or even measure...its use”,

and that

“externally it is doing little to address stakeholders' concerns.”

Is it not time to listen to the wide range of concerns about this failing policy? What is the Secretary of State going to do to review it?

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** The right to rent is an important component of the Government's policies to make sure that those who are living here illegally do not find it easy to access the services and facilities that those who are here legally

access. It is really important that we draw a clear distinction between legal and illegal immigration. The Government are determined to make sure that we implement our policies in an effective but humane way.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): I was humbled to take part in the Firefighters Memorial Day commemorations in Corby a few weeks ago. Will my right hon. Friend join me in commending our brilliant and brave firefighters in Northamptonshire for all they do?

**Mr Hurd:** I am certainly happy to commend firefighters not just in Northamptonshire but across the country, who do an incredibly difficult and demanding job within a service that this country can rightly be very proud of.

T5. [905671] **Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): The Home Office revoked some 40,000 visas from students of the test of English for international communication following the BBC “Panorama” investigation of 2014, and it is estimated that 4,000 to 7,000 of those students were wrongly accused. The Home Secretary gave my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) an undertaking that he would look at that. Can he update the House and explain whether his Department will have an urgent helpline for those affected and hold a review of the matter?

**Caroline Nokes:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. We regard the action that the Home Office has taken in response to information received from the Educational Testing Service as proportionate. However, we are reviewing the position of those who remain in the UK.

**Amber Rudd** (Hastings and Rye) (Con): While I welcome the Home Secretary's comments about ensuring non-EU migration for the NHS, may I ask him to also bear in mind the needs of the private sector and ensure that any solution he finds does not merely put more pressure on the tier 2 visa cap? We must ensure that our private sector businesses get the highly experienced, skilled labour that they need.

**Sajid Javid:** It is an honour to take a question from my right hon. Friend, and I can give her that assurance. She is absolutely right; we have to make sure we have the skills that we need for both our public sector and our private sector.

T6. [905672] **Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I am sure the Home Secretary will join me in sending condolences following the appalling incident in my constituency last week at a car meet, when a so-called drifting car crashed into spectators, killing one and grievously injuring six others. Will he work with me and colleagues around the country to look at how we may need to strengthen the enforcement mechanisms available to the police and local authorities so that we can curb the spread of those events and stop them being displaced elsewhere?

**Sajid Javid:** Of course I join the hon. Lady in what she has said, and my thoughts are with all those affected. She is right to raise that issue, and this is a good opportunity to look at it more closely. I will happily discuss it with her.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): Further to the comments on the tier 2 application route and the effect on the NHS—it is working against the best interests of patients—will the Home Secretary consider the impact on areas outside London, the costs to NHS staff of making applications and the cost of their failure, in monetary terms and for patients? Will he also look at the effect on scientists and researchers?

**Sajid Javid:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. I thank her for the letter that she sent on behalf of the Health and Social Care Committee, in which she made some other excellent points, and I assure her that I am looking at it carefully.

T9. [905675] **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Secretary of State look carefully at policing numbers, particularly in relation to the growth of gang culture in our country, which is linked to knife crime? The police cannot cope without the resources to tackle gangs.

**Sajid Javid:** Yes.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): I thank the Home Secretary for looking again at the impact of the tier 2 visa cap on doctors. Will he also look at the impact on trainee doctors such as my constituent, who has completed most of his GP specialist training on a spouse visa but, due to a marriage breakdown, now needs a tier 2 visa?

**Caroline Nokes:** I thank my hon. Friend for her question. She makes a really important point. I am conscious that it is not only about NHS trusts seeking to bring in doctors from overseas; there are also a number in training and at university who are seeking to gain employment opportunities here. She will have heard the comments of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Some Iraqi Kurds who applied for asylum in the UK in Saddam's time did so under false names because they were terrified of what would happen to them if they were sent back. It appears that some of them, having been granted asylum, are now having their British passports withdrawn simply because they have told the Home Office what their real name is. Does the Home Secretary think that that is fair?

**Sajid Javid:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for raising that. I was not aware of it, so I am pleased that he has brought it to my attention. I would love to hear more, and perhaps he could meet me to see what we can do.

**Kirstene Hair** (Angus) (Con): As my right hon. Friend will be aware, soft fruit farmers in Angus and across the United Kingdom are gearing up for a busy season. What assurances can he provide to those farmers that

they will be able to access the workforce they require, and can he give a timescale for when that will be delivered?

**Caroline Nokes:** My hon. Friend has been consistent in making a very strong case for supporting the Scottish strawberry and, indeed, raspberry. I am conscious that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary visited her constituency recently and listened to some of her constituents' views, and we are looking at the issue of seasonal workers very closely.

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Several Members have raised the fact that more than 1,500 doctors have been turned away in the past five months because of the tier 2 visa cap being reached. That crude approach, in which points are now gained only with a qualifying salary of £60,000 instead of £30,000, means that many areas of the UK and almost all public services are excluded; a doctor's salary cannot simply be doubled. When will this be changed?

**Caroline Nokes:** The hon. Lady will have heard an earlier answer, which stated clearly that nobody on a shortage occupation list has been turned away. Both I and the Home Secretary are very conscious of the points that have been made repeatedly this afternoon. We know that there is a real challenge in the NHS accessing trained doctors. The Department of Health and Social Care is doing excellent work to make sure that we increase the number of training places in the UK, but the calls are being heard.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary agree that the current shopfront advertisements of Lush are clearly anti-police, are in very poor taste and should be withdrawn?

**Sajid Javid:** People can have legitimate concerns about the so-called spy cops issue, and that is why there is an inquiry, but I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I do not think that Lush should be tarring all police officers with the same bath bomb.

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): Is the Home Secretary aware of the increasing farce besetting Border Force recruitment in Northern Ireland, and will he meet us to consider how best and most fairly we can have exactly the same conditions for Northern Ireland applicants as those that apply in the rest of the United Kingdom?

**Caroline Nokes:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that he and others have raised this with me. We have looked very carefully at recruitment processes in Northern Ireland to make sure that there is absolutely no bias, taking into account the Equality and Human Rights Commission's comments.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but we must move on.

## Personal Independence Payments

3.37 pm

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will make a statement on the withdrawal of her appeals in relation to personal independence payment claimants with chronic conditions, and what further action she will be taking.

**The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Ms Esther McVey)**: I am absolutely committed to ensuring that disabled people and people with health conditions get the right support they need. PIP is a modern, personalised benefit that assesses claimants on needs, not conditions. It continues to be a better benefit than its predecessor, disability living allowance, for claimants with chronic conditions. Under DLA, only 16% of claimants with diabetes received the top rate, whereas under PIP 29% receive the top rate.

I carefully considered these historical cases and decided no longer to continue with the appeals in order to provide certainty to the claimants. Since withdrawing the appeals, I have provided instructions to operational colleagues to put these claims in payment urgently. These claimants will receive any backdated moneys owed, and should receive their first payment within the coming days.

These cases were decided prior to the March 2017 amending regulations—the Social Security (Personal Independence Payment) (Amendment) Regulations 2017—in which the Government clarified our policy for managing therapy under PIP daily living activity 3. These regulations are not affected by our decision to withdraw these appeals.

**Debbie Abrahams**: Thank you for granting this urgent question, Mr Speaker.

The announcement during the recess that, for the second time this year, the Secretary of State has withdrawn appeals, this time on daily living activity 3 of the PIP assessment—the component on managing therapy or monitoring health conditions—raises serious questions. I would therefore be grateful to the Secretary of State if she told me now how many people she estimates have been incorrectly assessed on the PIP daily living activity 3 descriptor who have either been denied support or have had reduced support.

Will the Department be undertaking a review of past claims relating to this descriptor to identify other claimants who may have been underpaid or denied support? If so, when will the process start and be completed? I am grateful to the Secretary of State for her reassurance that it will take days. Will additional staff be recruited to undertake this process? What assessment has the Department made of the average award to which claimants will be entitled, and when will the payments be backdated to? Will there be an appeal process for PIP claimants who are not contacted by the Department who believe that they should receive back payments? What assessment has she made of the administrative and legal costs to her Department and the public purse?

Given the Secretary of State's concession in these test cases, does she accept that the changes made in the March 2017 PIP regulations regarding activity 3 are

illegal? Given also that there is a review of 1.6 million PIP cases to identify the estimated 220,000 people who have been underpaid with regard to the mobility activity component, will the Secretary of State tell the House how many of the 1.6 million PIP claims have been reviewed to date and when the exercise will be completed? How many of the estimated 220,000 people affected have received back payments to date?

With a record of 69% of PIP decisions being overturned on appeal, it is clear that the assessment process is not fit for purpose. The recent report by the Select Committee on Work and Pensions on the process said that the assessments caused unnecessary stress and anxiety for thousands of people who have been denied support unfairly, as well as wasting public money by sending many decisions back to the courts. When will the Secretary of State get a grip on PIP, and will she immediately stop the reassessment of disabled people with progressive conditions?

**Ms McVey**: Today's urgent question was specifically about the cases of AN and JM, on which I have given a decision. For the purposes of clarity, it was not to continue with the court case. Any other issues that the hon. Lady raised are separate, and the question of whether we move on and do other things is not for discussion today. There is a further case under way, and I am sure Mr Speaker would agree that it would be incorrect for me to discuss an ongoing legal case, so I cannot do so. However, for the claimants on whose claims this urgent question was granted, I have, for the sake of clarity, withdrawn the appeal.

We are talking separately about the mobility issue, on which I have given regular updates to the House. We have been working with stakeholders to create new guidance, and we have consulted claimants and stakeholders. We seem to be on schedule for the first payment to go out to them at the start of the summer.

**Anna Soubry** (Broxtowe) (Con): As the Secretary of State knows, I have written to her about a number of complaints that I have received from constituents about PIP. While it may not be completely on point with the question asked by the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams), I would respectfully say to the Secretary of State that my concern is not about PIP, which is a very good benefit, but about Capita in my area and the assessments. I have a constituent with a severe brain injury, who is receiving DLA and other benefits. He was assessed for PIP and got a zero. He then went through the process and, rightly so, got the full amount. I would be happy to discuss that with my right hon. Friend or my hon. Friend the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, but we need to look at the assessments.

**Ms McVey**: I will of course meet my right hon. Friend to discuss this. Over 3 million people have gone for PIP assessments, and while there have been appeals by 9% of them, 4% of those have been overturned. The vast majority of people are receiving awards, and under PIP rather than DLA far more people are receiving higher awards. Under this Government, from 2010 right the way through to 2022, more money will go to disabled people in need than under DLA in 2010. As I said, I am more than happy to meet my right hon. Friend.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I call Marsha De Cordova. [*Interruption.*] Ah, there has been a change of personnel. I was advised that it would be the hon. Member for Battersea. Never mind, I call Margaret Greenwood.

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) on securing this urgent question. I was disappointed to hear the Secretary of State be so dismissive of concerns that have been expressed by Members right across the House. For the second time this year, the Secretary of State has been forced to acknowledge that her Department has made a serious error in assessing claims for personal independence payments. The previous error resulted in potentially 220,000 people being underpaid PIP, causing misery that could and should have been avoided. The Secretary of State now admits a second error, this time relating to activity 3 of the daily living component, “Managing therapy or monitoring a health condition”. The Department has again got the law wrong on interpreting PIP descriptors, leading to perhaps thousands of disabled people not getting the crucial support that they need.

In January, when the DWP last admitted that there had been an error, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) asked the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work a series of questions that should have been answered but still have not been. If anyone is to have confidence in the Department, the Secretary of State must now answer our questions.

How quickly will the Department be able to identify claimants? Will the Secretary of State publish her criteria for reviewing cases? Will she include the cases that did not originally score sufficient points? Exactly how many claimants have been wrongly assessed for PIP? What assessment has she made of the administrative cost to her Department of undertaking yet another complex exercise? Given that this is the second error in the Department’s interpretation of its own guidance to come to light in six months, what reason do disabled people have to believe that her Department is fit for purpose?

**Ms McVey:** This is a brand new benefit that, for the first time, looks not just at people with physical disabilities, but fundamentally at all the disabilities people have—cognitive, sensory, health and mental health conditions—and supports more people than DLA ever did.

Nobody was forced to come here to explain why I did not appeal the mobility case. I made a decision by myself, which I thought was true and in keeping with how PIP was designed, and I made sure that we did not seek leave to appeal that.

There was a period of uncertainty for the five months between the court case and when the new regulations came into play. I agreed that in the cases of AN and JM, they should not be living in uncertainty. I believe that in both instances, I have done the right thing in not seeking leave to appeal.

I appreciate that the Opposition do not like to hear the fact that we have, I would say, made a positive move by not seeking to appeal and by supporting these extra people. No one would believe it from the screams from

the Opposition Benches, but what I have decided to do and what this Government have decided to do is to support disabled people as best we can and to provide this new benefit, which is a personalised, forward-looking benefit, which was not the case with DLA.

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): How many claimants will be affected by this decision, which I welcome? Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House that it will in no way impact on her sterling efforts to ensure that more disabled people find their way into work?

**Ms McVey:** My hon. Friend raises several questions about helping disabled people into work. Over the last three years, we have helped more than 600,000 people into work. People will know that PIP is a benefit for those in work and those out of work, and we have helped another 200,000 people in work through PIP. This is what we are about: supporting disabled people who are in work and out of work, and bringing in a more tailored and personalised benefit. What I will say is that if something has gone wrong and if something is not right, we will correct it to make sure that people get the payments they deserve.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The credibility of this Department lies in tatters. The Secretary of State celebrates the fact that the Government are not appealing this decision, but the fact remains that they had to be dragged through the courts in the first place to be proven wrong.

I have some questions for the Secretary of State. Will she commit to ensuring that the money for the back payments does not come out of existing DWP budgets? When will the first payments be made and will they be fully backdated, so that nobody loses out? Why are decision makers making decisions as if the High Court case never happened? I have constituency cases in which people are being assessed under unlawful criteria and then forced into the appeals process, all of which delays payments to which they are fully entitled and means that they are living in poverty. When will new guidance be issued to Jobcentre Plus staff and claimants, because there is so much confusion out there that nobody is aware of what they are entitled to?

This Department is in no fit state to be undertaking the biggest shake-up of social security this country has ever seen. It is incompetent and failing the most vulnerable in our society, and the Secretary of State must do something about it.

**Ms McVey:** I reiterate that under PIP we are supporting more people than before and giving them a higher rate than they ever got before. If the hon. Lady is questioning whether money is being handed out to people who need it now, I ask her to consider how many fewer people were getting that support under DLA, the previous disability benefit. On the mobility component, in respect of which I rightly did not seek leave to appeal, we are supporting an extra 200,000 people—I take it that both sides of the House agree I should be helping an extra 200,000 people. That is what we are doing. That is what we are aiming to do. I think I said earlier that the first payments would be made at the start of the summer; I meant at the end of the summer. As I said, in respect of

the specific cases that gave rise to the urgent question, those concerned will get their first payment in the coming days.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): How much money was spent on disability payments in 2010, how much is being spent today, how much will be spent in 2020, and when will the Secretary of State introduce recordings of PIP assessments?

**Ms McVey:** I can tell my hon. Friend that the expenditure has continued to go up and will go up every year until 2022; it has increased from 2010. For PIP, DLA and attendance allowance alone, expenditure is £5.4 billion higher than it was in 2010. There will be future announcements on the continuous improvements for PIP, but I can say now that we want to introduce video recording—that is key—and when we do we will start with pilots to make sure it is right. We want a modern benefit that looks after and reaches out to disabled people and gives them the money they should be getting.

**Sir Vince Cable** (Twickenham) (LD): The Secretary of State has acknowledged that the new benefits are available for a wider range of conditions, including neurological conditions and mental illness. What steps is she taking to ensure that the assessors are fully competent to make these judgments on the wider range of conditions?

**Ms McVey:** We provide consistent training and updating and have mental health champions in place. Of course we constantly review what we do and constantly support our assessors; that is what is needed going forward.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): It is important to put the urgent question and the comments from the Opposition in context. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government are spending more than £50 billion on supporting sick and disabled people, and that we spend more in this country on supporting disabled people than any other country in the G7, barring Germany?

**Ms McVey:** As ever, my hon. Friend is correct. We are spending more than £50 billion, and are proud to do so, to support disabled people who need it. This Conservative Government are supporting more people and giving them the higher rate they need, and we will continue to do that.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): But the Secretary of State has been dragged to the House by an urgent question to talk about her decision not to pursue the appeal in these cases concerning activity 3 of the daily living component. She has very cooly failed completely to answer the question of how many people her decision affects. We know that 165 million people receive the component—[*Interruption.*] I mean 1.65 million—it is still a lot. Will she now answer: how many people are affected directly by the decision she took in the recess to withdraw the appeal, when will these people get the right amount of money and when will they be assured that they have not been illegally underpaid?

**Ms McVey:** The urgent question was about two cases in particular. This is about those two cases: it is about two people who were affected, and who will receive their money immediately. We are assessing the position, but that is what the urgent question was about. If

Members want to talk about matters outside the scope of the urgent question, that will be for a different occasion and a different day.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she is considering simplifying the PIP assessment forms to make the process of applying for the benefit less stressful for people?

**Ms McVey:** That is correct. As we work with stakeholders, including people with disabilities, we seek to make the process smoother, easier and more beneficial for people in need, and that is exactly what we will be doing.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): This is not the only PIP case that the Government have lost. On 21 December 2017, the High Court ruled that PIP changes made earlier in the year had been “blatantly discriminatory” against people with mental health conditions, and “cannot be objectively justified”. However, six months later, there is still no confirmed timetable for the full implementation of the High Court’s judgment and the delivery of back payments to the people affected. Will the Secretary of State tell us today—six months on—when that High Court ruling will be implemented?

**Ms McVey:** I have answered that question several times today. As I have said, we have been preparing new guidance and consulting stakeholders on what is best for that guidance and how to work through it. As I have also said, the first payments will be made at the end of the summer. As the hon. Lady will appreciate, having to assess such a number of people will take—and has taken—a bit of time, but the process has been thorough and correct.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): It is interesting to hear criticism of the decision not to carry on fighting with lawyers. It seems that some people would have preferred the Secretary of State to carry on and appeal against the ruling, wasting money on further legal challenge. Will she reassure me, however, that she is considering the recording of the PIP assessment process to provide quality assurance, and to ensure that the points raised by this case are taken up in future assessments?

**Ms McVey:** My hon. Friend is right. As I said earlier, more than 3 million assessments have been carried out, 9% have been appealed against and 4% have been overturned, so it is clear that the vast majority are right. However, we want to ensure as far as we can that all of them are right. If that means recording assessments—and I personally would prefer video recording—that is what we should do, so that everyone can have confidence in what is going on.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for her statement. PIP applicants who are wards of court because, owing to brain injuries, they are unable to make any decisions for themselves must nevertheless go through the application process and are subject to house visits, although, according to the court, they cannot be allowed to make any financial or personal decisions. Is it not time that such people did not have to go through a process that clearly disadvantages them and causes considerable trauma and angst?

**Ms McVey:** We have a clear process for people who are vulnerable and need extra support during the process. If the hon. Gentleman is thinking of a specific case that he would like to raise with me, I ask him please to do so, so that we can establish what happened in that instance.

**Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that not only are more people able to claim PIP than were able to claim DLA, but satisfaction has risen, as has been proved by satisfaction surveys?

**Ms McVey:** My hon. Friend has made a very good point. Satisfaction levels have risen and the number of people receiving this benefit has risen, as has the number of people receiving the highest amount—not that anyone would know that from what we are hearing from Opposition Members.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Perhaps the Secretary of State can also explain why brave service personnel suffering from chronic conditions, including PTSD, are being denied access to their PIP entitlements. I have been contacted by a litany of constituents in recent weeks and others supported by the Welsh Veterans Partnership, including my constituent Justin Smith, whose medical discharge documents have been refused by the DWP, while others have been unable to get through on phone lines or are being refused home visits, against DWP guidance. Can the Secretary of State explain what is going on in her Department?

**Ms McVey:** I want to follow up the specific instances the hon. Gentleman raises, as that does not sound right at all and I would not want that to be the case. I therefore ask the hon. Gentleman to bring those cases forward so that we can look into them immediately.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): Is there a formal review process in place for assessments that can be responsive to any trends or issues that might arise?

**Ms McVey:** My hon. Friend raises the good point of how we can make the assessments better: how can we make sure they are consistent and the best we can possibly do? We are constantly reassessing them and trying to make the service even better, whether through videos to help people, improved guidance for GPs and healthcare professionals, improved communications, or special software so that people with disabilities can read about the service. Those are the sort of constant improvements we are carrying out, and we will continue to do that so as to make sure we have the best system possible.

**Stephen Lloyd** (Eastbourne) (LD): Mr Justice Mostyn in his ruling on Motability, which the Government also accepted, said of the 2017 regulations:

“The wish to save nearly £1 billion at the expense of those with mental health impairments is not a reasonable foundation for passing this measure.”

The Secretary of State has made a welcome second U-turn, so do the Government recognise that not cutting corporation tax might have been a fairer and more honourable way of balancing the books?

**Ms McVey:** We have not saved any money; let me make that point clear now. We spend more money on PIP, and will continue to do so to 2022—more money every year from 2010 than we ever spent on DLA. If I

can dispel the myth that anybody is saving any money through moving from DLA to PIP, that will be the best thing I can do today. This Conservative Government will be spending more on disabled people through PIP from 2010 through to 2022.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State’s announcement today because I do not believe that fighting these cases in court is in the long-term benefit of anyone in this country, so I congratulate her on that. Clearly any of these PIP assessments can be incredibly stressful for our constituents and the system must react when mistakes have been made or situations are difficult. But anecdotally what I am hearing, especially from people with degenerative diseases like MS, is that the PIP system is working better than DLA. Many statistics have been bandied around today, but one statistic is that 30% rather than 15% are now getting the top level of benefit, and that is making a real difference to many individual lives. Can my right hon. Friend confirm today whether the number of assessment appeals is going up or down and whether the percentage of those being accepted as against those being rejected is going up or down?

**Ms McVey:** I have already given the numbers, which show that we are getting the vast majority right: 9% are appealing and 4% are being overturned. This brand new benefit is a personal and modern benefit, and we are adjusting it so that it meets the needs of a 21st century benefit. That is what we are seeking to do. So for the first time we are looking at mental health conditions and exploring the extra support we can give there. This Government, across all Departments, are spending £11 billion more on mental health, so under PIP 66% are getting the higher daily living rate, whereas the figure for that under DLA would have been 22%.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): The Secretary of State has failed to say how many people can expect their PIP to be restored as a consequence of this appeal; she said that it will be the two people involved in the two cases mentioned. Will she undertake to come back and make a statement to this House when she has had a chance to research that and tell us which of our constituents can expect to have their PIP reinstated and how many are involved?

**Ms McVey:** If I did not say it clearly enough at the start, this was an urgent question granted specifically on two cases. There is another case going through the court at the moment, which would be sub judice and I would not be allowed to speak about it at the Dispatch Box—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Speaker:** Order.

**Ms McVey:** So today, we are discussing those two specific cases and that is what I am talking about. I appreciate that there is a lot of noise from Opposition Members, but they obviously do not understand what sub judice means—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The Government are a party to the case, and I am advised that, strictly speaking, the case is not sub judice—[*Interruption.*] Order. There seems to be a lot of noise and all sorts of naysaying and

unattractive chuntering from a sedentary position. If the Secretary of State wished to go beyond the narrow terms of the urgent question, especially in view of the fact that its wording refers to “further action” by the Government, the Chair would not wish to stand in her way. It is a matter for her to judge. However, there is no need for this cacophony from a sedentary position. It is really rather unseemly, and I feel sure that it will now cease.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I call the good doctor: Doctor Philippa Whitford.

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Speaker. As has been mentioned, it is six months since the Government agreed to change the position of people suffering from mental health issues not being awarded mobility support. I too have several veterans suffering from PTSD, including one particularly tragic case of a young man who was involved in two explosions on his patrol, where he was covered in blood, diesel and body parts. He has had to sell his car, but he cannot face getting on a bus because the stench of diesel brings on flashbacks. His application for mobility support was turned down. When will the Government bring in the changes and the new guidance so that people can get a fair assessment?

**Ms McVey:** I appreciate the personal story that the hon. Lady has just told me. We are gradually getting in touch with all the people who might have been affected by the fact that I decided not to appeal so that the claimants could be supported, and her constituent will be contacted in due course. We have been working through the guidance, and the first set of people will be getting paid by late summer. To follow up on the point that Mr Speaker raised, I took legal advice before I came into the Chamber today about what I could say about an ongoing legal position. The advice was that I should not be talking about an ongoing legal case, but obviously when we get that decision through, I will either be back here with a statement or making a written statement to explain what is going on.

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): PIP is of course a valuable benefit payment, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government are working to ensure that a further 1 million disabled people end up in work?

**Ms McVey:** My hon. Friend is correct. That is what we are looking to do, and in the last couple of years we have helped 600,000 disabled people into work. We have given extra support through PIP, because that can be an in-work or an out-of-work benefit, and we are also helping through Access to Work. This is about enabling people so that they can live as full a life as possible in society. That is what this Conservative Government are about.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): I chair two all-party parliamentary groups: on motor neurone disease and on Parkinson’s. Research conducted by the groups, in conjunction with the charities, on the transition from DLA to PIP has shown that 25% of people with motor neurone disease—a progressive, degenerative, life-ending condition—had a reduction when transitioning to PIP.

It also showed that 25% of those with Parkinson’s lost some or all of their benefit, but that 70% of those people had it returned on appeal. How can the Secretary of State say that the system is working when this disaster is being faced by very ill people?

**Ms McVey:** As I have said throughout, we look to get things right first time, but we have processes in place. If things are not right, there is a reconsideration process, and if that is not right, there is an appeal process. Cases are usually turned around because people bring in extra medical information, and more people are getting the higher rate than ever before. The hon. Lady is quite right, however, that we need to be able to give people the support that they need.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Gentleman can assure me that he was here at the start of the exchanges, it would be a great pleasure to hear from him.

**Sir Peter Bottomley:** I was here 10 minutes before questions finished.

**Mr Speaker:** Excellent. I look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman.

**Sir Peter Bottomley:** It is good that my right hon. Friend can be answering for two individual claimants and that she has given the background about the increase in disability spending. May I also say, “Thank you,” for saying that we can refer to individual cases? I have a victim of the infected blood scandal who is being asked to attend an assessment, but I do not think that an ordinary PIP assessor will actually understand what that person has been through for the past 20 or 30 years. Some such things need to be dealt with far more sympathetically and appropriately.

**Ms McVey:** We must ensure that we understand the individual circumstances and the extra support that people need. That will come through this modern benefit, which really does acknowledge a wider cohort of disabilities than ever before. That is what we are trying to get right.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): I have spoken to countless constituents who are completely petrified by the PIP process, which causes debilitating stress and anxiety that, in some cases, compounds the effects of their existing condition. When will the Secretary of State go back to the drawing board and come up with a benefit that represents a more humane method of supporting those who need it the most?

**Ms McVey:** Through the extra guidance, the videos and the support that a companion who accompanies the individual can offer, we need to ensure that individuals do not think that the assessment will be scary or petrifying. We have to calm their nerves to ensure that they go for an assessment to get the money that they need. We have to set about making the environment something that they want to go through. Opposition Members do not always help their constituents, because what they sometimes say in the Chamber spreads unnecessary fear.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I may have studied for my law degree a long time ago, but I certainly remember that a case is no longer ongoing when an appeal is withdrawn by one of the parties.

Would the Secretary of State like to explain why so many victims of the contaminated blood scandal who received DLA for life are now being refused the support that they so badly need under PIP?

**Ms McVey:** Just to clarify, I am talking about two specific cases today. Another case is ongoing, but we will not be talking about that because we are waiting for the decision. They are all linked together, but that is the difference between that case and the other two.

We must ensure that the right people are getting the support that they need, and more people are getting that support. We have a reconsideration process and an appeals process for anybody who wants to query why they are not getting support.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): On Friday, a constituent told me that when they received their PIP assessment it did not reflect the truth of the conversation that they had had with the assessor. That happens too often to be just coincidence. What is the Department doing to get proper quality assurance in place, so that we do not have constituents coming forward with the same tale again and again?

**Ms McVey:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. We must have faith in the conversations and assessments, which is why I have looked forward to having them videoed to ensure that we see, hear and know what is going on. If the process is videoed, people will get an honest appraisal of what went on and, equally, we might see a more suitable conversation between the assessor and the individual.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): On Friday a constituent came to my surgery. It was quite obvious, and he explained to me, that he struggles to function due to a combination of excruciating pain in his shoulders and the severe and heavy pain medication he is on, yet he got zero points for mobility and lost his appeal. Hopefully there is a chink of light at the end of the tunnel for him, but what comfort does the Secretary of State think he will get from her standing and bragging that the Government have not appealed, that more money is being spent and that more people missed out on DLA, because that is not helping my constituent?

**Ms McVey:** I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman thinks that anybody was bragging. It is known as just putting the facts on the record after people have sometimes

sought to provide misinformation or incorrect facts, merely by stating that more people are getting the higher benefits and more people are getting PIP than were getting DLA. That really needs to be heard so that we dispel any myths from the Opposition.

**Neil Coyle** (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): The Secretary of State suggests that PIP is more generous than DLA. Can she confirm that the Department's analysis shows that, once it is fully rolled out, PIP will support 500,000 fewer disabled people than DLA? Can she confirm that, six months after the Government admitted that a previous mistake on assessments affected 220,000 disabled people, not one of those disabled people is receiving the full benefit to which they are lawfully entitled?

**Ms McVey:** What we can say is that the reality is that more people are getting PIP than are getting DLA.

**Ruth George** (High Peak) (Lab): Why does it take the DWP to be staring down the barrel of losing a case in court for it to admit that it is unfairly and illegally penalising disabled people? What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that no further cases have to progress this far, with all the consequent suffering and expense to the taxpayer?

**Ms McVey:** It was in my first couple of days in this job as Secretary of State that I sought not to appeal the court case. There was no staring down a barrel and no waiting for me; I did it within a couple of days. Why? Because I think we have to live up to what PIP was meant to be and to the people it was meant to support.

When these two court cases were brought to my attention, which was only a couple of weeks ago, I did exactly the same thing. I will look at the cases when they are brought to me, and I will make sure that this Government do the right thing to support the right people the vast majority of the time.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): Following on from those assertions, is the Secretary of State actually telling Parliament that her decision in these cases was not influenced in any way by any legal advice she may have had on the likelihood of losing had the cases gone the full course?

**Ms McVey:** What I have said is that I saw it on day one, pretty much, of coming into this job. I looked at what I deemed was the correct thing to do, knowing how PIP was brought about, and I made what I felt was the right decision.

## US Steel and Aluminium Tariffs

4.18 pm

**The Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on the United States's imposition of steel and aluminium import tariffs.

On Thursday 31 May, President Trump announced that the United States would impose tariffs of 25% on steel imports and a 10% tariff on aluminium imports from the European Union. Canada and Mexico, with which the United States is renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, will be subject to the same tariffs. Although Argentina, Brazil and South Korea have avoided tariffs, those countries agreed to lower exports to the US. The indications are that US imports from those countries will be restricted, in some instances involving quarterly quotas.

For products within the scope of these tariffs, in 2017 the US accounted for 7% of UK steel exports and 3% of UK aluminium exports. Put another way, the UK accounted for 1% of US steel imports and 0.1% of US aluminium imports by tonnage, at a value of £360 million and £29 million respectively.

We are deeply disappointed that the United States has taken this unjustified decision, particularly on grounds of national security. We share a strong defence and security co-operation relationship. As close allies in NATO, permanent members of the UN Security Council and nuclear powers, close co-operation between the UK and US is vital to international peace and security, and other EU states are also key players in transatlantic security co-operation.

As I said the previous time I addressed the House on this issue, these unilateral trade measures have weak foundations indeed in international law, and they are not consistent with the US Department of Defence's own judgment in an investigation that was conducted on the basis of national security. We believe that the EU should have been permanently and fully exempted from the unjustified measures on steel and aluminium. We will continue to make this case at the highest level, in concert with the EU. Our priorities now are to defend the rules-based international trading system, which supports growth, consumers and industry; to ensure that this does not escalate and risk further undermining world trade; and, most importantly, to protect the interests of British industry.

The use of national defence as the rationale for this action threatens to create a worrying global precedent. We are clear that these unjustified additional tariffs could harm consumers, hold back growth and, ultimately, damage industry by driving up the price of inputs and production, and diminish global competitiveness. We remain of the view that issues of global overcapacity in the steel market are best solved through international collaboration, not unilateral action. The UK has worked hard to address the issue of overcapacity. The Prime Minister called for a forum of G20 members to tackle this issue, and the UK will continue to work within the rules-based international trade system to tackle this problem through the G20 steel forum.

However, as the US has decided to impose these tariffs, which will damage the steel and aluminium industries in Europe, we must respond. As a member of

the European Union, we will continue to work with the European Commission and member states on the EU response. That is focused on three areas. First, the European Commission is preparing to introduce immediate duties on the US, ahead of a World Trade Organisation dispute. Following a unanimous decision by member states, the EU notified the WTO of a potential list of product lines on 18 May and could trigger tariffs on this list from 20 June. The Commission is required to seek member state approval a second time in order for any of the countermeasures to come into effect. Specific timings are yet to be determined by the Commission.

Secondly, the EU can apply safeguard measures to protect the steel and aluminium industries from being damaged by an influx of imports to the EU caused by the displacing effect of US tariffs. The EU is finalising an ongoing investigation launched on 26 March into potential EU-level safeguard measures to protect its own steel market from trade diversion resulting from US measures. Provisional measures could be adopted as early as mid-July. The EU has also introduced surveillance of aluminium imports to determine whether an aluminium safeguard investigation is justified. We will support any safeguard measures required to deal with steel diversion as a result of these tariffs.

Thirdly, the EU can pursue a dispute at the WTO, and it filed such a dispute, challenging US steel and aluminium tariffs, last Friday. It is right to seek to defend our domestic industries from both the direct and indirect impacts of these US tariffs. The response must be measured and proportionate, and it is important that the United Kingdom and the EU work within the boundaries of the rules-based international trading system. Since the President asked the Department of Commerce to launch the investigations into the national security impact of steel and aluminium imports last April, the Government have made clear on repeated occasions to the Administration the potentially damaging impact of tariffs on the UK and EU steel and aluminium industries. The Prime Minister has also raised her concerns with President Trump. I have spoken on multiple occasions to the Commerce Secretary and US trade representative about the investigation, to the director general of the WTO, Roberto Azevêdo, to the EU Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, as well as to my colleagues in member states. The Government have worked closely with the EU as part of our unified response. In addition, I assure the House that we have been in regular contact with the UK's steel and aluminium industries throughout, and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has convened a steel council, which will take place shortly. I have been in touch with UK Steel throughout, most recently at a meeting in Westminster earlier today.

We remain committed to robustly defending and protecting the UK's steel and aluminium industries and their employees. The Government will continue to press the US for an EU-wide exemption from these unjustified tariffs. In parallel, UK suppliers will want to encourage their US customers to seek product exemptions via the process that is being overseen by the US Department of Commerce. Tomorrow morning, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will host a meeting with the industry to share information and advice on the product-exemptions process.

[Dr Liam Fox]

UK firms without a presence in the US cannot apply directly for a product exemption, which means that UK firms will need to work with their products' end users in the US to apply for a product exemption and to gather the relevant data and justification for such an exemption. The Government will support applications made on the behalf of UK industry with representations to the Department of Commerce to process applications for product exemptions as promptly as possible. My Department published an information note on the procedure on gov.uk on Friday.

The Government are committed to free and fair trade, and to the international rules that underpin both. We will seek to promote and protect those rules alongside the interests of British industry. I commend this statement to the House.

4.26 pm

**Barry Gardiner** (Brent North) (Lab): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement and for his telephone call yesterday afternoon. He is a very courteous man, but no amount of courtesy can hide the fact that he and his party have a record of failure when it comes to defending our steel industry.

When China began dumping its over-production into the European market back in 2015, it was the Secretary of State's Government who opposed the European Union taking stronger defence measures and who precipitated a crisis for producers in the UK that led to the loss of companies such as SSI and of 1,700 jobs at Redcar. That was not some civil service mistake, but ministerial ideology. That ideology has been confirmed by the Government's refusal to accept the amendments that Labour tabled to both the customs Bill and the Trade Bill precisely to strengthen the trade defence measures that we could take against such illegal action.

Last week, the Secretary of State's initial response was to say that he did "not rule out" countervailing measures with our European partners. Did "not rule out" such measures? He should have been demanding them. On the departmental website it says begrudgingly that while we are members of the EU we "must abide by EU trade decisions".

That hardly sounds like a full-throated and co-ordinated position with our EU trade partners—and no wonder: when the EU recently voted to modernise the trade defence measures available to protect our industries, our Government were one of only two to vote against them. It is no use the Secretary of State saying that the Opposition voted against the Trade Bill and the customs Bill and that that would have left us with no Trade Remedies Authority. We voted against those Bills precisely because they were so weak and ineffective on this matter, and he knows it.

Some 34,000 UK jobs in our steel industry and 3,500 more in the aluminium industry are at risk because President Trump is imposing protectionist tariffs that the rest of the world believes are illegal under WTO rules. We saw him use the same protectionist policies to attack Bombardier in Northern Ireland. This time, he has based the policy on a fundamental lie. He is pretending that the tariffs fall under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act 1962 and are necessary for the national

security of the United States. They are not. The lie is to try to avoid the perfectly correct response that the EU is now making in taking this as a dispute to the WTO, because the WTO is naturally reluctant to rule on what is and what is not member states' national security.

All our steel producers want is a fair and level playing field on which to compete. They and we acknowledge that there is a real issue of global overcapacity, which brought our industry to crisis point three years ago and threatens to do so again now. That is why there are three issues on which we need absolute clarity from the Secretary of State. First, will the UK give the consent required to trigger the countervailing measures and enable them to come into effect on 20 June? The implication of the statement is that the Secretary of State will, but I ask him to leave no doubt. Secondly, the greatest threat to jobs is perhaps not directly from the loss of trade into the USA as a result of tariffs—the USA only accounts for 7% of our steel and 3% of our aluminium exports. The real danger is from the products diverted from other countries which can no longer export into the US being dumped here. When I first read the statement, I believed that the Secretary of State had made a commitment to agree to strong safeguarding measures to protect against such an influx surge. On careful reading, however, it appears that he may have given himself a get-out clause. He talks of supporting

"any safeguard measures required to deal with steel diversion".

Can he confirm that he will support maximal measures to defend the immediate interests of our steel industry as well as any future trade defence measures that go beyond the lesser duty rule?

Thirdly, the Secretary of State mentioned that the EU filed a dispute at the World Trade Organisation on Friday. Strangely, he did not say that he welcomed that move. He knows that President Trump wishes to undermine the WTO and would prefer to do his trade deals on a bilateral basis using America's economic might to obtain concessions. Can he confirm that, once outside of the EU, it would be his intention for the UK to continue with a WTO dispute against the US and that he is not minded to succumb to bully-boy tactics for fear of offending the President before a future trade agreement?

We do not want a trade war; most rational people believe that there are no winners in such a war. Only President Trump has said that he believes that he can win one. The UK and the EU must stand up to this behaviour and restore the integrity of the rules-based system. I therefore welcome the upcoming G7 summit and the opportunity that it provides the Prime Minister to press the case with President Trump. Will the Secretary of State assure the House that, however diplomatically embarrassing it may be for Canada as the host country, the UK will insist that this matter be given a high priority on the formal agenda and not relegated to the sidelines? The Prime Minister must persuade other leaders to respond to the fundamental problem of global oversupply as well as the unjustified action of the United States. The 37,500 workers in the UK whose jobs depend on these industries will expect her not to fail them.

**Dr Fox:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is right that there is an issue of global overcapacity and that, as I have said, that must be tackled on a multilateral basis because it cannot be effectively tackled on a

bilateral basis with the use of tariffs. That will not be a successful way of dealing with it. What it has resulted in is a great deal of energy being spent on blue on blue activity, rather than on dealing with the issue at source. However, he is wrong about the support to the steel industry. As of 8 November 2017, the Government have, for example, paid more than £207 million in compensation to the steel sector as an energy-intensive manufacturer.

The hon. Gentleman is also wrong about the Opposition's vote against the Trade Bill. They voted against not the provisions of a Trade Remedies Authority, but the setting up of a Trade Remedies Authority, which would have meant that we had no defence whatsoever. He is wrong about another matter, too. The American President was not involved in the Bombardier dispute. That was a commercial dispute brought by Boeing and nothing to do with the US Administration. However, the hon. Gentleman is right on the precedent of national security. The problem with using national security, as has been done in this case through the section 232 mechanism, is twofold: first, if the United States were successful, it would set a precedent for others to do the same and to use national security as a pretext for protectionism; and, secondly, it leads the WTO into the realms of having to determine what is, and what is not, acceptable as a definition of national security. That is something that the WTO has always shied away from.

When it comes to the countermeasures, we will still want to see what the measures themselves are. Specifically, we have been talking to the Irish Government about the issue of bourbon being on the list because of the potential implications for the Scotch whisky industry and the Irish whiskey industry. We will want to continue those discussions with the Commission.

I made it very clear that we will have whatever safeguards are required. I do welcome the WTO dispute. If we are talking about the need for an international rules-based system, it is the appropriate mechanism for us to show our displeasure and that is the correct route for us to go down. Once we have left the European Union, I hope that we will have no problems with a UK exemption.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): Will the President of the Board of Trade confirm that we are obliged not to seek an exemption for ourselves because of the duty of sincere co-operation, and that we can therefore can only do things with the EU? Does he share my concern that tit-for-tat retaliation is not in our interests and may make a trade war worse? The lesson of trade history is that protectionism is worst for the country that imposes it, and going tit for tat is therefore not in the national interest.

**Dr Fox:** My hon. Friend, as usual, raises interesting points. He is completely correct that a tit-for-tat dispute will help nobody. The United States has already seen an increase in the domestic price for steel. That means that input prices in the US are likely to rise, its output prices will ultimately rise and it will become less competitive, which is not an answer to its current trade predicament. When it comes to the position of the United Kingdom, had we been given an exemption by the US, we would still have been required to carry forward any countermeasures proposed and implemented by the European Union, but if we had implemented countermeasures

without any measures actually having been applied to the United Kingdom, we would have been in breach of WTO law. It is a Catch-22.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): In spite of what the International Trade Secretary says, so much for the special relationship and the special treatment that the Government were seeking from President Trump. Coming hard on the heels of the weekend's report that the Government are preparing for a Brexit armageddon, the chickens are truly coming home to roost for Brexiteers, who have had years to prepare for their big moment. But this has an impact on all of us, and the Scottish Government were left to secure steelworks in Lanarkshire. Will the Secretary of State tell us what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government and the industry in Scotland? His statement shows just how important the European Union is in these matters. Does it not make more sense to remain close to those who are closest to us economically and politically in Europe, and stay part of the customs union?

**Dr Fox:** The answer to the hon. Gentleman's last question is no. The Minister for Trade Policy has been in touch with the Scottish Government in the past few days to discuss the wider impacts on the industry. I have made it very clear that we regard this as a UK-wide issue. The UK Government will take whatever measures are required, including safeguarding, to protect the whole UK steel industry.

**Mr Philip Dunne** (Ludlow) (Con): First, I applaud the Secretary of State for focusing in his statement on how unfortunate it is that the United States has used national security as its excuse for this tariff measure. It is particularly ironic given a number of US-UK treaties under which specialist steel products are made available to the United States specifically to assist in its national security. May I encourage him to look at securing a product exemption for those products as soon as possible?

Secondly, as the Secretary of State and his colleagues are aware, Bridgnorth Aluminium in my constituency is one of the largest aluminium manufacturers in this country; 20% of its exports go to the United States, as it provides a product that is not manufactured there. The United States is hurting itself with this measure. The company not only fears that the increase in price due to the tariffs on that product will have an impact on demand, but is particularly concerned about the displacement factor from incoming Chinese imports.

**Dr Fox:** My hon. Friend, who knows a great deal about this subject from his time as a Defence Minister, is absolutely right. We will be looking at the displacement issue very closely to see whether safeguards are required for aluminium as well as steel. He is right about Bridgnorth in his constituency, which exported £21 million of products to the US in 2017. The irony is that the only potential competitor in that particular market is Alcoa in Warrick, Indiana, which has shown little, if any, interest in it. This situation can only lead to damage to US customers at the other end.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): As Chair of the International Trade Committee, may I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary of State for his courteous phone call to me at the end of last week

[Angus Brendan MacNeil]

outlining the situation that he found himself in? These tariffs stem from the very weird belief of the US President that if the US has a deficit with anyone, it is a result of unfair trading. Given that just about any two sets of nations find themselves in surplus or deficit with each other at times, there would be global trade chaos if the rest of the world were to follow his example of what the Secretary of State calls unjustified decision making. Meanwhile, how confident is the Secretary of State that the UK can legally take safeguarding trade defence measures if it finds itself out of the EU in March 2019, and that a trade remedies authority will be in place? My Committee has concerns about that, as I am sure he knows.

**Dr Fox:** I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. He is right that we have to have the TRA up and running. As he knows, we have now advertised for the most senior appointments and agreed its setting in Reading.

On the wider economic issue, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. It is impossible, in an open and free trading system, that all economies will be in balance with one another. Surpluses and deficits are part of the allocation of resources that happens inside a free market. Were we all to aim for a trade policy where everybody was in balance, it would not be a free trading system. Apart from anything else, consumers would soon feel the detrimental effects of such a system.

**John Howell (Henley) (Con):** Picking up on that point, will not a system of retaliatory tariffs hurt consumers more than anything else, and will it not be ordinary workers who suffer? Is the Secretary of State as concerned about that as I am?

**Dr Fox:** As my hon. Friend knows from being a trade envoy to Nigeria, it will not just be those in developed countries who feel the effects if this has a slowdown impact on the global economy. If we have tariffs, countermeasures and then measures against the countermeasures, it is very easy to see how the situation could ramp up into a global trading disaster. We need to try, in the time ahead, to get the United States Government to change their mind—to listen to the voices coming from American business and the American Congress about the damage that may ultimately be caused inside the American domestic economy.

**Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab):** I would be really interested to know what arguments the Secretary of State thinks are going to work with the Americans. Last time there was a trade war like this, some 200,000 jobs were lost in the United States. What efforts is he already making to identify and analyse the impact on the US economy? It seems to me that that is the biggest argument we can use.

**Dr Fox:** The right hon. Lady is absolutely correct that if we are to get a change in US Government policy, the most effective pressure will come from US business and the US Congress. I was very heartened to hear Chairman Brady of the Committee on Ways and Means making exactly these points yesterday—if American input prices rise, output prices will rise, and that is likely to hinder,

not help, the problem with the American trade deficit. I hope that our colleagues in Congress will listen to the views being expressed clearly on both sides of the House and make those points accordingly.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):** When there was a sharp exchange on trade between China and the US recently, it was resolved surprisingly quickly. Does my right hon. Friend see that there are possibilities for a similarly swift resolution to this? If there are not, how confident is he that our voice in the EU will be able to prevent the EU from taking strong retaliatory measures and getting into the spiral of trade wars that he has described?

**Dr Fox:** The EU's measures are designed to be proportionate and legal so that we can make the case that we have responded to what we believe to be legally dubious moves in a properly legal way, through the rules-based system. That is the appropriate way to go. I do not believe that the EU tariffs are escalatory, and it would be hugely unfortunate if further moves in that direction were made by either the United States or Europe.

**Anna Turley (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op):** In 2002, similar retaliatory action was organised by the EU and had quite a profound effect on getting the US to drop the tariffs. Does the Secretary of State therefore wholeheartedly support the action that the EU is taking, and also the route through the World Trade Organisation?

**Dr Fox:** The potential countermeasures that the European Commission is setting out fall into two groups in their timing, and it is entirely possible that all or a smaller number of those measures could be put in place. I hope that the flexibility that is being shown in both the timing and the scope of their application lets the United States understand that the European Union is keen to have an agreement. It is keen not to rush into countermeasures, but to give the American Administration time to have second thoughts, which I think would be beneficial to all.

**Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con):** I think everyone will welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has come to the House at the earliest opportunity to make a statement. The European Union is justifiably outraged by the imposition of tariffs, but if we were to leave the European Union without a deal, why on earth would the EU want to impose tariffs on us?

**Dr Fox:** I know that opinions on Brexit are very strong, but with all due respect, we cannot see every global economic issue through the prism of Brexit. This action has been taken against what we believe to be WTO rules. It affects the European Union as much as it affects Canada and Mexico, which have economies of a very different size, and it is because of unilateral action taken by the United States. It therefore requires a proportionate response by all the countries affected, through the WTO mechanism. We have to show that we, at least, show respect for that rules-based system.

**John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab):** I cannot believe what I am hearing. It is a good job that steelworkers and steel communities have not waved the white flag when they

have been called upon repeatedly to defend our shared values with the US over the past 100 years. We cannot give in to this. The only language that Trump understands is people fighting back. It is about time that this country fought back. We can do it. Trump likes golf—let us bring in some tariffs on golf course owners in Scotland immediately and stand up for our steel communities and steelworkers, instead of this rubbish about not being able to do anything about it. We should fight him.

**Dr Fox:** There are two interesting points to make on that tirade of nonsense. First, we do not have the legal authority in the United Kingdom on our own, because the European Union is responsible for this issue on our behalf. When we leave the European Union we will have greater freedom, but I say to the hon. Gentleman in all seriousness that escalation is not what we require. We need a proportionate response, made calmly, giving the United States time to reflect and change its mind. This is about getting the right result, not the right rhetoric.

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:** Put him in the bunker!

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil) is chuntering from a sedentary position about putting something in a bunker. I am not going to comment on that. It is not for me to pronounce on the merits or demerits of the matter, but I simply say, with due affection to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann), that it is always interesting to hear from him on the golfing situation, and we have done so today.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): How realistic was it to have expected a concession on steel notwithstanding our having publicly announced our intent to undermine US security policy and trade policy on Iran?

**Dr Fox:** I do not think that those issues are remotely related. It has been clear from the presidential election campaign onwards that the President has concerns about the US steel industry and global overcapacity. We do not disagree with the analysis of the problem; we disagree with the remedy being applied.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Secretary of State not worry that future generations will look back on him and the group of people who pulled us out of Europe as the real villains of the piece? Is it not a fact that the promise that we would give up the market of 600 million people in Europe but get a massive market in North America has proven to be false? Will he remember that this country deserves to be in Europe, fighting united for Europe?

**Dr Fox:** It was not me, nor any other Member of the House, who decided to pull Britain out of the European Union; it was the people of Britain, in a democratic referendum. I will send the hon. Gentleman a dictionary, and he can tell me which of the words “binary”, “referendum” and “democracy” he does not understand.

**Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): As my right hon. Friend has flagged, the use of national security reasons by the United States is particularly problematic, as history is littered with examples of how nations use it

with a very wide definition. What work can be done with the WTO to get a better definition of what national security actually encompasses?

**Dr Fox:** My hon. Friend raises an important point. In fact, the WTO has always shied away from this territory because of the implications it could have, even potentially for the integrity of the WTO itself. It is better that we find a better way to deal with the oversupply in the steel market and that no one tries to use the national security route as a remedy, because as I said, if the United States were to be successful in using it, what would stop other countries doing exactly the same on protectionist measures when it suited them?

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Is not the gist of the International Trade Secretary’s position that the US is behaving outrageously—with illegal, protectionist tariffs—so he is working with our EU partners to build a strong, sensible response with the collective weight of the EU, yet he also wants to rip up the customs and trade deal with the countries that agree with us in exchange for a future, potential trade deal with a country that clearly does not agree with us? When he said last year:

“I want the UK and USA together to lead the world as shining beacons of open trade”,

was that a complete and utter fantasy?

**Dr Fox:** The United States has long been at the forefront of leading global free trade, including in setting up the WTO itself. That is why we find it so disappointing that the current Administration should take this particular route and try this particular remedy for the problem. The right hon. Lady will notice that being a member of the European Union has no more protected us from these tariffs than Mexico or Canada.

**Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): The UK produces some very high-value steels, some of which cannot be sourced in the US. What more can we do to promote British manufacturing overseas?

**Dr Fox:** My hon. Friend makes a very interesting point. Not only do we send some very high-end steel to the United States, but some of it is steel that the United States itself does not manufacture. For end users in the United States, that will actually increase the price of a product they do not manufacture domestically, which cannot have anything other than adverse economic consequences. That is why it is very important, as I have said, that the voices of US industry and of those in Congress make their views very clear about the potential damage that this will pose, as Chairman Brady has said, to American families and jobs.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): The imposition of US tariffs is rash, probably illegal and certainly self-defeating. Is the Secretary of State still confident that the UK can get a better deal with a protectionist United States after the UK has left the EU than we could with the European Union? Does he agree with me that if the US continues to act like a rogue state, we may reach a point where it needs to be suspended from the G7?

**Dr Fox:** Even for a member of his party, for the right hon. Gentleman to refer to the United States as a “rogue state” gives us pause for thought. With this particular measure, we think the US has behaved in a way that has a very poor basis in law and does not have any justification in national security. However, treating the United States in the way he suggests would be quite wrong, and it does a great deal to explain why his party has such a small representation in this House.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade mentioned in his statement that the industry will gather at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy tomorrow morning. What form of support will BEIS be offering UK companies, especially those that do not have a US presence, in order to secure exemptions for their products?

**Dr Fox:** My right hon. Friend the Business Secretary felt it would be of the greatest benefit to those in the industry to have them in and to have experts, including legal experts, talk them through the product exemption system. The product exemption system does not require a presidential agreement; it occurs at the level of the Department of Commerce. Knowing how the system works and being able to access it efficiently is of prime importance.

**Stephen Kinnoek** (Aberavon) (Lab): As has already been said, when President Bush introduced similar tariffs in 2002, it led to the loss of 200,000 American jobs through the steel supply chain. What steps is the Secretary of State specifically taking to influence Congressmen and women from the states that will be most affected this time, because that surely is the point of leverage through to the White House? Will he come to speak directly to the all-party group on steel and metal related industries to explain those steps in detail?

**Dr Fox:** I would be happy to do so. I was in the United States and visited a number of our congressional colleagues just two weeks ago. It is worth pointing out that there are 142,000 steel workers in the United States, but there are 6.5 million workers who depend on steel as part of their business, so either reductions in supply or increases in cost are likely to have a domestic effect. Again, I hope our colleagues in Congress will see—I urge all Members of the House with links to either party in Congress to use those links to point this out—that history repeating itself would indeed be tragic for everybody concerned.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): At present, half of UK steel exports are sent to the EU. In the light of the US decision to impose tariffs, it is highly likely that the steel industry in the UK will become more reliant on the European Union. Will the Secretary of State make representations to Cabinet to agree that Britain should remain within a customs union? If he will not do so, why not? It is the best way to protect steel industry jobs, including in Port Talbot—many members of the workforce live in my constituency.

**Dr Fox:** No, I will not do that. I believe that a customs union gives us greater trading relationships with some at the expense of greater trading relationships with others. As the International Monetary Fund has pointed out, 95% of global growth in the next 10 to

15 years will be outside continental Europe, so to tie ourselves into a customs model with the slowest growing part of the global economy would be very unwise.

**Ruth Smeeth** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): What is the Secretary of State doing to ensure that this attack on our steel sector will not lead to retaliatory attacks on ceramics?

**Dr Fox:** The hon. Lady makes a useful point that reflects the one made by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin) about using national security as a pretext. If that were a successful exercise, there would be nothing to stop other sectors being involved or, indeed, to stop other countries doing exactly the same thing, which is why, at the risk of repeating myself, we must try to have common sense prevail before there is any escalation, which could be very damaging to economies on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Everyone knows that you have to stand up to bullies, not roll over and have your tummy tickled. I am really pleased that the Secretary of State is making it clear that he will support the leadership of the European Union on this matter so that robust and proper action is taken, as it was in 2002, which led to the US backing down. Will he talk to his colleagues across Government so that we can use this moment to introduce a steel sector deal to show confidence in the steel industry in the UK?

**Dr Fox:** The Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Richard Harrington), will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. Again, I make the point that we have set out a reasonable and proportionate response. There is no point escalating rhetoric; there is no point escalating the terms of this dispute. We should use the time available before the imposition of countermeasures to go back to the United States and say, “You still have time to think again, to stop history repeating itself or to stop economic effects that can only be detrimental in the United States and beyond.”

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Following the tariffs on steel and aluminium, it is reported that the US Secretary of Commerce is now looking at the car industry, again on national security grounds. What analysis has the Department undertaken of what other sectors may fall victim to President Trump’s protectionist strategy?

**Dr Fox:** It is very difficult to say. Again, we contend that the mechanism itself is flawed. It is hard to see how an Aston Martin could be a threat to US national security, even if fully James-Bonded.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State stop talking as if President Trump is amenable to reasonable arguments? This is a deliberate attack on multilateral institutions and the international liberal order. It is evident from the proposal reported in the *Financial Times* this morning that the American Administration do not even want to appoint judges to the World Trade Organisation court, so will the Secretary of State support urgent EU retaliatory measures?

**Dr Fox:** I do not believe that it is an attack on the international order. That is far too hyperbolic. It is a response to an understandable concern about the over-production of global steel and the effect that that can have in the United States, including on US steelworkers, but made in an inappropriate way. We believe that the best approach is on a multilateral basis, through the G20 steel forum, but if the United States insists on applying these measures we will apply countermeasures. We believe that the rule of international law must be upheld.

**Gareth Snell** (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State's words so far have not given me comfort and I am sure that the ceramics workers in my Stoke-on-Trent constituency will have similar concerns. Countermeasures and potential retaliatory countermeasures from the US would do untold damage to the ceramics industry. One way in which the Secretary of State could help domestically to fortify and strengthen the industry would be to talk to his Cabinet colleagues about bringing forward the ceramics sector deal and giving some certainty to an industry that really has had enough.

**Dr Fox:** There are two things that we can do. We can help to define and identify new markets for top-end UK ceramics to guarantee the prosperity and jobs in the sector. We can also make sure that we have a trade remedies authority of our own that is able to guarantee the measures that are needed. Of course, the hon. Gentleman voted against the establishment of exactly that.

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): It is steelworkers who are on the frontline in terms of the risk from the direct and indirect impacts of the tariffs. Will the Secretary of State outline what discussions he has had with their trade unions to address their concerns?

**Dr Fox:** We have had discussions across the whole steel industry. However, the hon. Gentleman is not exactly right. He is correct that steelworkers will be on the frontline, but they would not be the only ones affected. The problem is that there will be knock-on effects across the whole economy. As countermeasures are applied, more sectors will become involved as a consequence of the dispute. Therefore, it is in the interests not just of the steel industry, although it clearly is at the forefront of this battle, but of all our industries and all our consumers that we bring an end to what could otherwise be a very tragic episode in global trade.

## Rail Timetabling

5.1 pm

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):** I am pleased to take the earliest opportunity to update the House on the recent difficulties around the timetable changes, in particular on some GTR and Northern routes.

I want to be absolutely clear: passengers on these franchises are facing totally unsatisfactory levels of service. It is my and my Department's No. 1 priority to make sure that the industry restores reliability for passengers to an acceptable level as soon as possible. I assure the passengers affected that I share their frustration about what has happened, and that I am sorry that this has taken place.

The timetable change was intended to deliver the benefits to passengers of major investments in the rail network, meaning new trains, including all trains on the Northern and TransPennine Express networks, being either new or refurbished; the great north rail project infrastructure upgrades worth well over £1 billion, such as those at the Ordsall Chord and Liverpool Lime Street; and in the south-east, through the Thameslink programme, new trains and improved stations, including London Bridge and Blackfriars.

The huge growth in passenger numbers in recent years demanded expanded routes, services and extra seats, but this timetable change has resulted instead in unacceptable disruption for the passengers who rely on these services. The most important thing right now is to get things back to a position of stability for those passengers, but it is also vital to understand what has happened and why we are in the situation we are in today. The circumstances of the failures are different on the Northern and GTR networks.

The investigations that are being carried out right now are providing more information about what has gone wrong, but it is worth being clear that the industry remained of the view until the last moment that it would be able to deliver the changes. That is the bit that everyone will find hard to understand and it is why there has to be a proper investigation into what has taken place.

On Northern, which is co-managed through the Rail North Partnership by Transport for the North and my Department, early analysis shows that the key issue was that Network Rail did not deliver infrastructure upgrades in time, in particular the Bolton electrification scheme, with damaging consequences. This forced plans to be changed at a very late stage, requiring a complete overhaul of logistics and crew planning. The early analysis also shows that on GTR's Thameslink and Great Northern routes, the industry timetable developed by Network Rail was very late to be finalised. That meant that train operators did not have enough time to plan crew schedules or complete crew training, affecting a range of other complex issues that impact on the service on what is already a highly congested network.

It is also clear to me that both Northern and GTR were not sufficiently prepared to manage a timetable change of this scale. GTR did not have enough drivers with the route knowledge required to operate the new timetable. Neither Northern nor GTR had a clear fall-back plan.

[Chris Grayling]

In GTR's case, the process of introducing the new timetable has been overseen for the past two years by an industry readiness board, comprising some of the most senior people in the industry, which told me it had been given no information to suggest the new timetable should not be implemented as planned, albeit with some likely early issues as it bedded down. This body was set up specifically to ensure that all parts of the rail network—Network Rail, GTR, other train operators—were ready to implement these major timetable changes. It should have been clear to it that some key parties were not ready. It did not raise this risk.

The Department received advice from the Thameslink readiness board that, while there were challenges delivering the May 2018 timetable—namely, the logistics of moving fleet and staff—a three-week transition period would allow for minimal disruption. My officials were assured that the other mitigations in place were sufficient and reasonable. Indeed, as few as three weeks before the timetable was to be implemented, GTR itself assured me personally that it was ready to implement the changes. Clearly this was wrong, and that is totally unacceptable.

The rail industry has collectively failed to deliver for the passengers it serves. It is right that the industry has apologised for the situation we are currently in and that we learn the lessons for the future, but right now the focus should be on restoring the reliability of its service to passengers. This morning, I met again with chief executives of Network Rail, GTR and Northern—the latest in a series of meetings that I and my Department have been holding with these organisations—and the rail Minister has today been to Network Rail's control centre at its Milton Keynes headquarters. We have made it clear to them all that the current services are still not good enough. I have also demanded that Network Rail and the train operator work more collaboratively across the industry to resolve the situation, where necessary by using resources from other train operators to support the recovery effort. Officials in my Department are working around the clock to oversee this process. We have strengthened resources in both the Department and Rail North Partnership, which oversees the Northern franchise, to hold the industry to account for improving services.

I would like to be able to tell the House that there is an easy solution or that the Department could simply step in and make the problems passengers are facing go away—if there were a way of doing so, I would do it without a moment's hesitation—but ultimately the solution can only be delivered by the rail industry. These problems can only be fixed by Network Rail and the train operators methodically working through the timetable and re-planning train paths and driver resourcing to deliver a more reliable service. It is for such reasons that I am committed to unifying the operations of track and trains, where appropriate, to ensure that we do not encounter such problems in the future.

Northern Rail has agreed an action plan with Rail North Partnership that is focused on improving driver rostering so as to get more trains running as quickly as possible; rapidly increasing driver training on new routes; providing for additional contingency drivers and management presence at key locations in Manchester; and putting extra peak services into the timetable along

the Bolton corridor. Work on this action plan has been under way for some time. They have also published temporary timetables that will be more deliverable and will give passengers much more confidence in the reliability of their service. This will mean removing certain services from the new expanded timetable while still ensuring an improvement in the total number of services run by Northern compared with before the timetable change. Alternative arrangements will be made for passengers negatively impacted by the changes. I believe that this temporary measure is necessary to stabilise the service and enable improvements to be introduced gradually.

On GTR, there are more services running on a day-to-day basis today than before the timetable change, while Southern and Gatwick Express services are performing well on some routes but not all. GTR is not currently able, however, to deliver all planned services on Thameslink and Great Northern routes. In order to give passengers more confidence, it is removing services in advance from its timetable rather than on the day and reducing weekend services to pre-May levels. These measures will be in place until a full re-planning of driver resourcing has been completed.

I would like to make it clear that, while I expect to see stable timetables restored on both networks in the coming days, I expect the full May timetable and all the extra trains to be introduced in stages over the coming months to ensure it can be delivered properly this time. Once the full service is operating on GTR, 24 Thameslink trains will run through central London every hour, and by next year, 80 more stations will have direct services to central London stations such as Farringdon, City Thameslink and Blackfriars. There will also be 115 new trains and more than 1,000 new carriages providing faster, more frequent and more reliable journeys for passengers.

On Northern, the great north rail project, an investment of well over £1 billion in the region's rail network, will enable by 2020 faster and more comfortable journeys as well as new direct services across the north and beyond. By 2020, the train operators, Northern and TransPennine Express, will deliver room for 40,000 extra passengers, and more than 2,000 extra services a week.

That, however, is the future. What matters now is restoring a stable service for passengers today. I completely understand their anger about the level of disruption that the timetable change has caused in recent weeks. There must, of course, be a special compensation scheme for passengers on affected routes on both GTR and Northern. In the case of Northern, the scheme will be subject to agreement with the board of Transport for the North, although I doubt that the board will have a problem with it. The purpose of the scheme, which will be introduced and funded by the industry, will be to ensure that regular rail customers receive appropriate redress for the disruption that they have experienced. The industry will set out more details of the eligibility requirements, and of how season ticket holders can claim, but I think it is very important for passengers—particularly in the north, where disruption has been protracted—to be given entitlements similar to those conferred by last year's Southern passenger compensation scheme. Commuters in the north are as important as commuters in the south, and they should receive comparable support.

It is clear to me that, aside from Network Rail's late finalisation of the timetable, GTR and Northern were not sufficiently prepared to manage a timetable change

of this scale, so today I am also announcing that work has begun to set up an inquiry into the May timetable implementation. It will be carried out by the independent Office of Rail and Road, and chaired by Professor Stephen Glaister. It is necessary to have a full inquiry, and Professor Glaister will lead one. The inquiry will consider why the system as a whole failed to produce and implement an effective timetable. Its findings will be shared as early as possible with me and with the rail industry, so that lessons can be learnt in advance of future major timetable changes. The final report will be published by the Office of Rail Regulation by the end of the year, but I want to see initial responses much sooner than that.

In parallel with the inquiry, my Department will assess whether GTR and Northern met their contractual obligations in the planning and delivery of the timetable change. It will consider whether the issues could have been reasonably foreseen and different action taken to prevent the high levels of disruption that passengers are experiencing.

In GTR's case, the assessment will cover whether the operator had sufficient resources and skills to deliver the new timetable and whether drivers could have been trained in a faster and more effective way, and will examine the contingency and risk management arrangements currently in place. If it is found that GTR is materially in breach of its contractual obligations, I will take appropriate enforcement action against it. That will include using the full force of the franchise agreement and my powers under the Railways Act 2005, and consideration of how such a failure affects GTR's eligibility to hold a franchise bidding passport. In the case of Northern, my Department will assess the operator's planning, risk assessment and resilience in preparing for the May timetable change. Bearing in mind Network Rail's failure to deliver infrastructure on time, we will hold the operator to the terms of its contractual obligations.

I will not be afraid to take enforcement action when it is necessary, but it is right to go through the process of the inquiry and to understand where fault truly lies. I will not hold back from taking appropriate action if the review finds that there has been negligent behaviour.

Given the importance that Members throughout the House ascribe to these issues, I have arranged for both Northern and GTR to come to the House this week to discuss with colleagues any specific issues that they wish to raise with the operators. I am also meeting Members on both sides of the House today to discuss the issues with them. I am incredibly frustrated that what should have been an improvement in services for passengers has turned into significant disruption, and I am sorry about the levels of disruption that passengers are experiencing. I am also sorry for the staff members who have been caught at the sharp end of these changes.

There clearly have been major failures that have led to the situation that we are in today. I am clear about the fact that the industry must and will be held to account for this, but my immediate priority is to ensure that we improve train services to an acceptable level as quickly as possible, and that will remain my priority.

5.14 pm

**Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): I am grateful for advance sight of the Secretary of State's statement—for once. Here we go again, with yet another chapter in the never-ending story of our troubled railways. Not only

have train timetables been turned upside down, but the Transport Secretary seems to have run into his own timetabling problems in meetings with Members today.

It is said that Henry Kissinger once asked who he should call if he wanted to speak to Europe. The answer was not clear. Similarly, I would ask who I should call if I want to speak to the UK rail industry. Therein lies the heart of today's problem and the whole rail debate more generally: no one will take responsibility for Great Britain's rail industry. But, amid all the clamour, recriminations and buck-passing that characterise discussions about rail there is one person who is ultimately responsible: the Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling). But he blames Network Rail for the timetabling failures. Yes, Network Rail has not delivered, but he seems to forget that, as a company limited by guarantee, Network Rail has one member: the Secretary of State for Transport—him. He is the man in charge—allegedly. The right hon. Gentleman might want to blame Network Rail, but it is he who has failed in his responsibility to oversee it; the buck stops with him. What is more, the right hon. Gentleman has burnt his bridges with the leadership of Network Rail, which can only have damaged his oversight of this process. Is not this a terrible failure of him and his role atop the system?

The Northern Rail and Thameslink contracts were awarded by the right hon. Gentleman's Department to private operators. It is the job of his Department to ensure that the companies fulfil their contracts. Arriva and GTR have had years to prepare for these timetable changes; neither have trained enough drivers to deliver the timetable changes, yet the Department has failed to hold the companies to account. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that it is within the franchise agreement for Arriva to report directly to him on progress in recruiting and training drivers? Does not the buck, once again, stop with him?

GTR even had its own readiness board to implement the timetable changes, except that it was not ready; we could not make this up. Chris Gibb's report on Southern exactly a year ago highlighted the issue of driver numbers as a major operational issue within rail. Why did the Secretary of State not take the report as an alert to review the availability of the train drivers who were needed across the country and do something about it? He says the Office of Rail Regulation will report on the failings by the end of the year, but, with the new timetable due in December, this will be too late. What confidence can we have that it will not be another shambles? Is not the reality that this Secretary of State has been asleep at the wheel and this is just the latest episode in a series of rail management failures on his watch?

The right hon. Gentleman is determined to cling on to the micromanagement of the railway when it suits him, but he will quickly point the finger of blame when things go wrong. He cannot have it both ways. The Secretary of State says he is sorry for the disruption passengers are facing. That is not good enough; he should apologise to passengers for his failures that have put their jobs at risks and played havoc with their family life.

The travelling public and the rail industry have no faith in this Transport Secretary to fix this situation. Were the Prime Minister not so enfeebled, she would

[Andy McDonald]

sack him. If he had any concept of responsibility, he would resign. The Transport Secretary should do the right thing and step aside.

**Chris Grayling:** I was rather expecting the hon. Gentleman to say that, and I respond simply by saying that it is my job to make sure that the problem is fixed, and that is what I intend to do. But the Opposition cannot have it both ways: half the time the hon. Gentleman is saying to me that the Government should run the railways, but when something goes wrong he says that it is the Government's fault that we are not running the railways properly. They cannot have it both ways.

There are two specific points. On what we are going to do about the timetable in December, I have been very clear in the letter I sent to all colleagues last week that we are not going to do a major change of this kind again in the way that has happened in the last couple of months; it must be done in a more measured and careful way. We are already doing work now on how that timetable change should happen—how it should be modified—and the incoming chief executive of Network Rail, Andrew Haines, who I think will bring enormous experience to this, is the person who was responsible 10 years ago for the very successful timetable change on South Western. I have great confidence that as he comes into the organisation in the coming months, he will be able to put in place a plan for timetable change both at the end of this year and in the future that works better for passengers, who are the most important people in all of this.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me why we did not pay more attention to Chris Gibb's report last year. Actually, we did. We appointed Chris Gibb chairman of the industry readiness board. Chris is one of the most experienced and respected figures in the rail industry, but that board still did not gather the scale of the problem that lay ahead when it last reported to me in May. Lessons have to be learned by the people on that board. We have to make sure that this cannot happen again, and everyone in the rail industry—and everyone in my Department, including me—is working to ensure that that happens.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): Our constituents who are passengers, and our constituents who work on the railways, want to get this solved, and the best thing to do is to give backing to those in the industry and to the Secretary of State to ensure that that happens.

Anticipating an article by Nigel Harris in *Rail* magazine, I would suggest that those who have power need to be accountable and those who are accountable need to have power.

Anyone who has no expertise should take advice from those who can make things better. That requires getting everyone—unions, managers and knowledgeable passengers—together to see how best we can get out of the hole we are in at the moment.

It is too bad, and it has been too bad for too long.

**Chris Grayling:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend; I think that the railways are going to have to change significantly as a result of what has happened. However, I say to those who are saying that we should

sack the franchisees that simply sacking the people who are working today will not solve the problem, because I do not have some other group of people down the corridor who are able to take over. We have to make sure that everyone has all the necessary support from across the industry to deliver solutions for passengers and get back to stability as quickly as possible. I absolutely accept what my hon. Friend says.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Another week, another rail shambles. When will the Secretary of State admit that the rail franchise system is broken and do something to fix it properly? It was really disappointing to hear that travellers who were forced to get rail replacement buses at short notice were sometimes turned away because the buses were full or simply did not turn up. That is even more ironic considering that Arriva also operates overlapping bus groups. That just highlights the farce that is going on at the moment.

We know that late-running Network Rail projects reduced the time available for train operators to plan the new schedules, but what assessment has the Secretary of State made of his Department's culpability in this, with regard to Network Rail? Despite assurances that all was well, it is now clear that there was no possibility of the timetables being capable of being operated in full from day one. Why did no one in the train operating companies, Network Rail or the Department for Transport ask for a postponement of the new timetable roll-out?

The Secretary of State has said that he will take the strongest enforcement action against GTR if it has broken its franchise agreement. Will that action be stronger than that taken against Virgin Trains East Coast, which has been allowed to walk away owing the Department for Transport billions of pounds?

What is the Secretary of State's exact timeframe for resolving these timetable issues? He has mentioned putting in additional resources. What additional resources will be put in from his Department? What is he doing to ensure that the driver shortage is not met by poaching drivers from other franchises, which could have an impact on services elsewhere? On the question of compensation, what will he do to ensure that the rail industry does not recover the costs of compensation from other fare-paying passengers?

The Secretary of State continually highlights Network Rail failings, but when will he accept that he has responsibility and culpability for Network Rail and fall on his own sword? An apology is not good enough.

**Chris Grayling:** As I have said, the key issue now is to sort out the problems. The hon. Gentleman asked about failings in my Department and elsewhere. I have asked Stephen Glaister to look at everything that has happened and to report back publicly so that we can know exactly what has gone wrong and particularly so that we can ensure that it cannot happen again. The hon. Gentleman asked about resources. My Department is deploying extra people on this, as is the industry. For example, GTR has borrowed drivers from freight operators to try to deal with some of the shortages on its rosters. On the question of compensation costs, my view is that they should be paid by the people who are responsible.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): GTR has told me that these delays are going to carry on until mid-July. Does the Secretary of State agree that that is

utterly unacceptable? Will he ensure that Network Rail and GTR fix these problems in a matter of days, not weeks?

**Chris Grayling:** I share my right hon. Friend's frustration. The most important thing is to end the situation in which we have mass cancellations and people cannot plan their journeys. The important thing now is to reintroduce the services that were supposed to be part of the May timetable step by step, so that we do not end up having the same problem all over again. First, we have to ensure that we have a dependable service that people know will be there when they turn up. Secondly, we need to move back, in a responsible, phased way, to the expanded timetable with the thousands of new trains that should have been there on 20 May.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): Train operators and Network Rail have undoubtedly failed dismally, but the Department for Transport signed off GTR's unworkable timetable proposals in the face of Network Rail opposition, delayed the decision to agree a phased introduction of the new Thameslink timetable, rejected Chris Gibb's recommendation of a longer eight-phase implementation, required a reduction in spending on train planning by 2019 despite the biggest timetable change in more than a decade, and failed to spot that driver shortages and training needs would undermine the main timetable. Why has the Secretary of State, both in his letter to MPs and again today, failed to take any responsibility for his Department's role in the shambles endured by passengers up and down the country?

**Chris Grayling:** I fully expect Stephen Glaister's review to look at all the players in this, including my Department. The industry readiness board set up by my Department to assess the process of introducing the new Thameslink timetable recommended in May that the timetable could go ahead. When experts are called in for advice and they advise us to do something it is generally a good idea to listen to them.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): At Letchworth station this morning, I spoke to passengers who have suffered great delays and many cancellations, children going to school whose train had been cancelled—one of them in tears—and workers who have been told, "You can't keep on being late like this." Is it not time that Govia Thameslink Railway actually produced the timetable, the service and the reliability of information that those people—my constituents—deserve? What is going to be done to encourage it to get on with this and provide that service quickly?

**Chris Grayling:** The No. 1 priority is to restore a reliable timetable, and I have been clear that GTR has an urgent duty to do so. There is unquestionably a large question mark over its future, but it needs to sort the problem out as quickly as possible to have any chance of surviving in the rail industry.

**Mr Gavin Shaker** (Luton South) (Lab/Co-op): I have been in this House for the best part of a decade and I have never seen such a complacent performance from a Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box. He needs to understand that he is in deep trouble over this. The situation will go on for months and months, and the

underlying issues behind the timetable changes and why they have gone wrong land squarely with his Department. Does he agree that his unwillingness to accept any responsibility undermines his efforts to put things right?

**Chris Grayling:** This is simply about everyone in the industry and my Department working to ensure that we have a stable timetable for passengers. That is the most important priority right now.

**Sir Michael Fallon** (Sevenoaks) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that two villages in my constituency, Eynsford and Shoreham, are now virtually cut off? Commuters cannot get up to London, and their children cannot get down to school in Sevenoaks. Will he use the authority of his office to persuade Southeastern to stop at least one or two of its peak-hour fast services during the current disruption to give those two villages a chance of normal life?

**Chris Grayling:** Absolutely. I have already asked my office to action work to try to find a rapid solution to the problems at those two stations.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): The Secretary of State knows that every single train on the Lakes line is to be cancelled over the next two weeks, and at least 11 trains have been cancelled on the Furness line so far today. He is clearly not immediately planning to remove the franchise from either line, as he should, and he mentioned neither in his statement. Will he clarify now that, if Arriva Northern asks for an extension to this outrageous two-week suspension, he will refuse such a request? Will he also commit to funding an ambitious marketing campaign to relaunch the lines and boost our local economy in the light of the colossal reputational damage that they are now suffering?

**Chris Grayling:** I discussed that very issue with members of Rail North's board last week. I am profoundly unhappy about this. I have indicated to Arriva that I am not prepared to accept more than the current two weeks and that it should use that two-week period to do engineering work, which will be necessary over the coming months, so that we are not wasting time when a bus service is in place. I have been clear to Arriva that doing this over the long term is simply unacceptable and that it has to get the trains back very quickly.

**Sir Nicholas Soames** (Mid Sussex) (Con): I make a respectful suggestion to my right hon. Friend, which is that the rail industry readiness board should be taken quietly outside and disposed of. Is he aware that the rail service to East Grinstead, in which he has always taken an interest, has finally fallen over completely, that trains from Haywards Heath, Wivelsfield and Burgess Hill are shorter and more overcrowded, that people's private lives are being destroyed and that this whole thing is an absolute disaster that must be put right?

**Chris Grayling:** I completely agree with my right hon. Friend, and I have communicated that to the company concerned.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): Last week 49 trains were cancelled in my constituency, particularly at Bramley train station, meaning that passengers were late for work,

[Rachel Reeves]

for college and for other appointments. Frankly, passengers have lost faith in the Secretary of State. Is it not about time he stepped aside and allowed someone who can fix this problem to do the job?

**Chris Grayling:** This problem needs to be fixed as quickly as possible. I respectfully remind the Opposition that a private rail company is involved. Opposition Members keep telling me that we should nationalise it and have the Government running the trains, so they cannot have it both ways.

**Iain Stewart** (Milton Keynes South) (Con): Enormous investment has gone into the Thameslink programme, with a new fleet of rolling stock and a state-of-the-art digital signalling system. Can the Secretary of State assure me that these new systems are working as planned and that the cause of the problem is not a technical failing?

**Chris Grayling:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The real frustration is that this is a consequence of major investment programmes and the delivery at the end of those programmes has gone wrong. The thing I find most frustrating about all this, and I absolutely feel for every single passenger who has waited for a cancelled train in the past week—I get the train every day, and I am as fed up with this as everyone else—is that this is the consequence of a change that resulted from a massive investment programme in the railways. We should now be seeing the fruit of that investment programme. We are not yet seeing it, and we have to make sure that we see it pretty quickly.

**Kelvin Hopkins** (Luton North) (Ind): I have thousands of constituents who commute daily from Leagrave and Luton stations and who are suffering from recent service failures—I have a sheaf of their complaints in my hand. Is it not the reality that GTR has consistently sought to squeeze more passengers on to too few trains and has employed insufficient drivers in the interest of profits, at the expense of passengers? When are the Government going to accept the grotesque failure of private franchising?

**Chris Grayling:** I absolutely understand the pressures on the hon. Gentleman's line. Part of the objective of this upgrade is to deliver longer trains and more trains, and it is a huge frustration to me that that has not happened. We have to make sure it happens as quickly as possible.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): What estimate has been made of the cost to the industry and of the potential impact on the various companies involved?

**Chris Grayling:** It is too early to work through that. I am more focused at the moment on getting services back to normal. The companies will undoubtedly bear a cost from this but, as far as I am concerned, the most important thing is making sure that services are back to normal and that passengers are compensated, and the companies will have to meet the cost of that.

**Chuka Umunna** (Streatham) (Lab): The Thameslink service in my constituency from Streatham to London Blackfriars had 37 trains cancelled last Friday, and over 160 trains were cancelled over the course of last week.

Every time the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box—like the GTR managers—he blames everyone but himself. He has been in situ for two years. Are not my constituents entitled to think that this is just an utterly pointless Transport Secretary, because nothing ever changes under his watch?

**Chris Grayling:** I seem to remember that when I took over there were real problems with Southern metro services at other stations in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Those problems have now been improved and sorted, and those services are running very well—not across the whole Southern network, but across the Southern metro network. We now need to sort this problem out.

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): I have spoken to the Secretary of State over many weeks and months about the train issues in my constituency of Hitchin and Harpenden. I know the inquiry he has announced will look into culpability on this matter, but how much more evidence do we need that the senior management of Network Rail and GTR are incompetent, incapable and inept? How long can they go on?

**Chris Grayling:** We need to establish who is directly responsible for the decision making that has been got wrong here, establish the truth through the Glaister review and then take appropriate action—and we will.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): My constituents, and the people in Yorkshire and the north, love their railway system, but they want it to be a good system that is safe and secure and that runs on time, to get them to work and to see their family. Does the Secretary of State realise just how much misery has been caused to so many families over these past weeks? I am not the most radical or left-wing member of my party, but even I believe that the system of privatisation has not worked and will never work, and that it is time we had a public service railway system in our country.

**Chris Grayling:** Of course I understand the frustration that the hon. Gentleman experiences. The irony is that these timetable problems have resulted from a planned expansion in services for his constituents and others across the north. It was designed to deliver thousands of extra train services for people across the north of England. It has not worked today and it must work soon.

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): My constituents at Garforth, Micklefield and Woodlesford stations are agog at how bad the trains have got, and I lay the blame for a lot of this at the door of Network Rail, not the Secretary of State. There have been plenty of opportunities and plenty of promises made over decades; I was using this train line 20 years ago, and it was rubbish then and it is rubbish now. What can he do to ensure that Network Rail gets a grip of the situation and delivers on the promises it makes?

**Chris Grayling:** What we have to see is the completion of the investment programme, the delivery of the new trains and, above all, the sorting out of the timetable. Every train in the north of England is being replaced with either a brand new train or a completely refurbished one. The new trains are due to start arriving later this year.

We have big investments taking place. The transpennine rail upgrade, at £3 billion, is the largest investment; it is part of the next rail infrastructure investment programme. It is just hugely frustrating that what has been done so far has yet to deliver the improvements it should to passengers and has actually made things worse. That must stop, and stop quickly.

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): My constituents have already faced three years of disruption and continual delays at the hands of GTR, Southern and Southeastern, and the chaos from the new timetable is making things worse. The impact of that chaos is more than simply inconvenience; it is taking its toll on relationships, family life and employment, and we have the heart-rending sight of students unable to get to important exams on time. The Secretary of State previously refused, for entirely political reasons, to pass control of suburban rail services in south London to Transport for London. Will he now accept that my constituents deserve their rail services to be run by an organisation that will put passengers ahead of profit, and hand them to TfL to run?

**Chris Grayling:** The only thing I would point out, respectfully, to the hon. Lady is that she has just called for the transfer of rail services from Southeastern to Arriva, which runs Northern, while other people are telling me that Arriva is not capable of running Northern. That is the reality of what she is arguing for.

**Crispin Blunt** (Reigate) (Con): I do not envy my right hon. Friend and neighbour in making this statement today, but I know that he understands the position of Redhill and Epsom only too well, because he has been to visit Redhill station and see the infrastructure improvements that he is putting in place. However, my constituents were promised an improved service in 2014, after the London Bridge investment and for the new timetable in 2018, but even if the timetable was working properly they would have a worse service than they were promised four years ago. They have the privilege of paying the “Redhill hump” for being just outside the London zoning. My right hon. Friend and his Department are part of the industry, because they get the fare income generated under the GTR franchise, so will he please look at being part of the industry and not just dumping the issue of compensation entirely? Will he rapidly ask the rail Minister to bring forward plans to deal with the Redhill hump? Redhill services have had more cancellations than those anywhere else.

**Chris Grayling:** I say to Members on both sides of the Chamber that some places have undoubtedly been inappropriately disadvantaged by the timetable change. The rail Minister and I are happy to sit down in person with colleagues who represent those places to talk through how we can address those issues in future timetable changes. That offer is open to Members from all parties. We have seen a large number of colleagues today to talk about more short-term issues, and we are happy to have similar conversations as we plan for further timetable changes.

**Kate Hollern** (Blackburn) (Lab): When the Northern franchise was awarded to Arriva, the previous Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin), said:

“We promised passengers a world class rail service that would make the Northern Powerhouse a reality—and I’m delighted”.

He also said that the new operator would “bring the Northern Powerhouse to life.”

Such promises would be laughable, except that they are tragic, because my constituents cannot get into Manchester for their jobs, cannot get to hospital appointments and cannot return home to pick up their children from childcare places. Why will the Minister not take responsibility, stop passing the buck and fix this now?

**Chris Grayling:** I would be delighted to fix it now. It is worth reminding the House that the Northern franchise is a partnership between my Department, Transport for the North and the Northern leaders. It was designed by all of us to deliver precisely the improvements that the hon. Lady describes. It is a huge frustration to me, and I suspect to everyone in the north, that that has not happened, and I assure her that I will do everything that I can. I trust that through the Rail North partnership we will deliver the improvements that have been promised and that her constituents deserve.

**Ms Nadine Dorries** (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): My constituents pay one of the highest prices for season tickets, out of taxed income. For more than 13 years, I have been complaining on their behalf as they have encountered one crisis after another, including under the previous Government for the first five of those 13 years. This is another crisis with which my constituents have had to deal. Will the Secretary of State please use his good offices to tell Thameslink to stop cancelling, with little or no notice, stops at Flitwick and Harlington and continuing the service on to Bedford, where people are stranded and find it very difficult to get home? Will he also insist that once trains are running normally, the compensation scheme is not inadequate and does not mean one month’s free rail use, but is more like six months’ free rail use on people’s season tickets? I welcome the Secretary of State’s statement that 24 trains an hour will be running soon, but when? We need them as soon as possible.

**Chris Grayling:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend, and I will make sure that an appropriate compensation package is in place. First and foremost, we have to make sure that there is a service on which people can rely. The thing that I think is currently most frustrating people is not being sure whether the train is going to turn up when they go to the station to catch it. The most important thing right now is for both Northern and GTR to deliver a service on which passengers can depend, so that they know that when a train is due it is actually going to turn up.

**Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): The Secretary of State has said that he and his Department were asking questions of the industry readiness board, the operators and Network Rail, and that they did not provide him with information that there was going to be such a disaster. In the interests of transparency, would he be prepared to publish any recorded letters, memos or emails that show that his Department was asking the right questions at the right time, so that we can see what answers he and his Department were given?

**Chris Grayling:** I am prepared to be completely transparent over this. I have instructed Stephen Glaister to go through everything, including the conversations with my Department, and that it should be made public.

[Chris Grayling]

I have no doubt that the Transport Committee will do the same. I am aware of nothing that I would want to be kept hidden. I want everybody to understand what has gone wrong and I want lessons to be learned. The most important thing is that we make sure that this can never happen again. That is my No. 1 priority.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): My constituents have suffered in exactly the same way as those of many Members. Frankly, they were misled when they were told that there would be an improved service after London Bridge was sorted, because there has not been and will not be, even when the timetable works as it should. More to the point, my right hon. Friend says that these are consequences of change, and I understand that, but is not the whole point of competent management that people are supposed to anticipate and deal with consequences? When Network Rail puts out a statement saying that

“we are looking at understanding the root cause”,

it sounds as if it is running a seminar rather than a railway. Will my right hon. Friend get rid of these incompetents, now?

**Chris Grayling:** I assure my hon. Friend that I am sufficiently angry at what has happened that anyone who has found to be negligent in this matter should not carry on in the job they are doing now. It is simply not acceptable to have a situation in which people are in operational control of something and completely fail to deliver. The whole point of setting up an independent review is to understand exactly what has gone wrong so that lessons can be learned.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Two months before the changes, back in March, I asked the Secretary of State in a written question what steps he and his Department had taken to ensure that there was both adequate track capacity and adequate train numbers to support the proposed rail timetable change in the north-west, because my constituents knew then that there would be a problem. A junior Minister told me in a reply that it was the responsibility of the train operating company to support the proposed timetable changes—nothing to do with his Department. I have constituents who are standing in sweltering heat for five hours, some of whom are fasting for Ramadan—and that is if they can get a train at all. It is an absolute disgrace. What will the Secretary of State do to make it right today?

**Chris Grayling:** The answer to the hon. Lady's question is that a temporary timetable is being put in place on Northern that should stabilise the timetable this week, and then, step by step, it will start to put back in place the extra services that were promised post May.

**Chris Philp** (Croydon South) (Con): For at least three years now, my constituents have on occasion been unable to get to work, unable to reach hospital appointments and unable to get home in the evening to see loved ones. GTR has presided over an incompetent railway network for far too long. Can the Secretary of State confirm that if the Glaister report finds that GTR has been negligent in the handling of this timetable introduction, which

has certainly been a fiasco, and that if GTR fails urgently to take the steps required to fix it, the measures he is contemplating will include removing its franchise?

**Chris Grayling:** I have been absolutely clear that, if GTR is found to be negligent, I will use the powers that I have under the Railways Act 1993 and under the contractual arrangements to deal with this.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): There could not be a greater contrast between the millions of pounds of new investment in our railways being introduced by the Welsh Labour Government and the shambles over which the Secretary of State presides. Can he explain what on earth is going on at Great Western Railway? There have been repeated cancellations, delays, trains that are understaffed with no catering services, and trains breaking down. I have spoken to Great Western Railway, to Network Rail and to Hitachi. Hitachi tells me that the Department for Transport did not give a long enough period for testing the trains, and Great Western tells me that it sold off a load of its own trains to Scotland before the new ones were ready. Will he get a grip on that situation?

**Chris Grayling:** The Great Western modernisation is delivering new trains and a faster service, and by the end of this year it will deliver an improved timetable. There have been teething problems with the introduction of the new trains, but anyone who has travelled on the new trains in which this Government are investing on the Great Western route will say that they are a step in the right direction.

**Dr Matthew Offord** (Hendon) (Con): This really is an appalling situation that we should have seen coming down the line given the history of the train operating companies. I have emails from my constituents that complain about a lack of communication from Govia Thameslink. They say that the refund procedures are lengthy and difficult to navigate and that the timetable implementation has simply not worked. Will the Secretary of State give serious consideration to introducing a short deadline to ensure that GTR in particular brings the service up to an acceptable standard, or finding another train provider that will do so?

**Chris Grayling:** I am very clear that I expect GTR to deliver an improvement to the current situation as a matter of real urgency. If it does not do so, it will lack the credibility to continue as operator.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): What a mess! How would the Secretary of State respond to my constituent who contacted my office this morning to say that he has already had to use a significant portion of his annual leave allocation because he has arrived at work hours late every single day over the past couple of weeks? Given the debacle that we have seen on the trains recently, with not just this situation but the delayed electrification and the problems on the east coast main line, does the Secretary of State believe that he has the competence to sort this out?

**Chris Grayling:** What I would say to the hon. Lady's constituent is that I am very, very sorry and that we will have a compensation scheme. Somebody has to sort this out, and that is what I am going to do.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): I am sure that I speak on behalf of thousands of commuters in Sussex when I say that this must be the end of the line for the GTR franchise. We were constantly assured that the driver shortage had been addressed, but now we are told that the problem is the wrong type of drivers on the line. Will the Secretary of State assure me that the compensation scheme will be a realistic one, that it will be paid for not by his Department this time but by the train operators, and that, within six months maximum of the Glaister review reporting, he will be in a position to take back that franchise?

**Chris Grayling:** The people responsible for this have to pay the cost. In terms of the report, I will be absolutely clear that if I need to take action, I will be ready to take action.

**Bill Esterson** (Sefton Central) (Lab): Before the timetable changed, Members across the House warned about the problem. On a number of occasions, I have warned about the problems for people travelling from Southport to Manchester. It seems that anyone who knew anything about railways—especially the travelling public—warned Ministers about the shortage of drivers, the delays and the engineering works. Given all the warnings, why did the Secretary of State not delay the implementation of the new timetable? Frankly, given the chaos, why is he still in his job?

**Chris Grayling:** One of the things I want the Glaister report to do is identify why the train companies did not tell us that there was a sufficient problem to delay or halt the introduction of the timetable.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): What my constituent commuters and, indeed, I—as a passenger—want to know is, why does Govia Thameslink have such a lack of planning and future foresight? There are to be major engineering works on the London to Brighton main line in October this year and February next year. What assurances can I have for my constituents travelling from Three Bridges, Crawley, Ifield and Gatwick Airport stations that proper planning will be in place to ensure that those engineering works, which are welcome, do not cause undue disruption?

**Chris Grayling:** I will ensure that the rail Minister sits down with my hon. Friend and has a conversation with all those involved to make sure that those works are not an issue. As he knows, there has been necessary investment to sort out problems on the Brighton main line, but we cannot have the works causing inappropriate levels of disruption. There will inevitably be some disruption, because engineering works cannot be done without it, but we have to ensure that they are done in the right way.

**Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): To describe my constituents as incandescent would be an absolute understatement. Colleagues across the House have described the impact this fiasco has had on families and individuals. I have listened carefully to the Secretary of State and he seems to have been reassured by the information he has received, but he does not seem to have tested that information to assure himself and his Department that the information was correct. If that is so, how can we be sure that he has tested and is assured of his potential solutions?

**Chris Grayling:** I simply say that we have teams of people whose job it is to assure this. They did not see this situation coming; nor did the train operators. The Glaister review is necessary because this should not have been able to happen.

**Heidi Allen** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): If GTR is telling the Secretary of State that things are getting better in my constituency of South Cambridgeshire, it is not being truthful to him. The experience of my constituents—and, indeed, my experience of travelling in today—is that things are getting worse. Network Rail may hold the lion's share of the responsibility, but the operators have a role to play too. Why on earth did they not flag at minus three weeks that that period of time was not going to be long enough? The operators clearly told the Secretary of State that everything was fine, but last week they told me that it was not and that three weeks would never have been long enough, so which one of us are they lying to?

I ask the Secretary of State for two actions. First, he says that the emergency timetable that has been implemented today would take us back to pre-May levels. It is not doing so at all; it is actually worse. By the end of this week, can we please aim to have the pre-May timetable back in place? Secondly, we have heard about compensation for Northern passengers being akin to that of Southern last year. I have to tell the Secretary of State that the GTR performance up and down the line in my constituency is as bad, and we should be considered for the same levels of compensation.

**Chris Grayling:** I will certainly take on board my hon. Friend's points. I hope and expect, and am insisting, that we see stabilisation during the course of this week. What matters is that people know which trains are going to run, and that they know a train will be there when they turn up. That is the most important priority, certainly on her line.

**Mrs Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Many of my constituents are furious that they cannot get to work owing to driver shortages and mass cancellations in the timetable in what is supposed to be a situation of planned improvements. How much worse does it have to get before the Secretary of State will consider removing the franchise?

**Chris Grayling:** Of course the future of both franchises is a genuine issue, but I honestly think that the most important thing right now is to solve the problem. Sacking the people who are working to solve the problem would probably not get us anywhere. As to what will happen a few months' time, when we have seen the Glaister report—that is a very different question.

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): Northern Rail has changed or reduced the already limited rush hour services between Congleton and Manchester to such an extent that my constituents say that they are having to face the pressured M6 and M56 commute by car, and that this timetabling change may even breach Northern's service level agreement. Will the Secretary of State take up with Northern Rail this wholly inadequate rail service for a growing town, and will he require improvement?

**Chris Grayling:** As I said a moment ago, the rail Minister and I are happy to talk to individual colleagues on both sides of the House to look at places where there

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are issues of this kind. There are rolling timetable changes each year. If we can look at cases where a town has genuinely been disadvantaged, we can see what we can do to sort that out.

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): Bedford rail users who lost their peak time East Midlands Trains service are still facing the misery of cancellations and delays. Trains are leaving St Pancras half full and are whizzing past Bedford, while my constituents have been forced on to dangerously overcrowded Thameslink trains. This is absolutely ridiculous. Will the Secretary of State stop making excuses and reinstate the Bedford EMT service today?

**Chris Grayling:** I have already asked the industry to look at whether it can restore some of the East Midlands Trains services to ease the pressure on Bedford in the interim period, while this disruption is happening. It seems a logical thing to do, given that the train paths are not being occupied by Thameslink at the moment.

**Paul Scully** (Sutton and Cheam) (Con): This was supposed to be the light at the end of the tunnel, but that is actually a train coming fast the other way. Commuters do not want to play the blame game. They just want their trains to work now. The short-term view of sacking a franchisee overnight would really just mean the same people running the same lines with differently spray-painted trains. I want us to look back and find out how nobody, but nobody, thought to postpone the process, but we should also look to the future: will the Secretary of State tell us how many lifelines GTR needs before we realise that it should have no place on the UK's rail network?

**Chris Grayling:** I am very clear that once we know the full culpability for this situation, the appropriate action will be taken if it needs to be taken.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): The more the Secretary of State has described this afternoon some of the reasons why this disaster occurred—lack of preparation and lack of time—the more commuters and others on Northern and TransPennine, who have suffered so much misery, will wonder why the introduction of the new timetable was not cancelled, rather than their trains. It is quite clear that the Secretary of State had no idea what was going on. The question that he has not answered today is, why?

**Chris Grayling:** As I said, in the case of GTR I had the chief executive in my office three weeks before saying that it would be fine. In the case of the teams running the Northern branch, they indicated to my Department that it would be a difficult start, but not on anything like this scale. I have set up the independent inquiry into what has gone wrong because I am not alone in this. When I talk to other people—on the independent assurance panel and the board set up to oversee the introduction of the timetable, the Rail North team and other people on the Rail North board, and the chair of Transport for the North—it seems that nobody was expecting this. That is completely unacceptable. We need to understand why it has happened and ensure that it can never happen again.

**Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): My constituents have suffered huge delays, cancelled services and unacceptable travel uncertainty. What reassurances will the Secretary of State give Northern commuters that they will quickly have a functioning service and that pre-existing timetable gaps locally will also be addressed?

**Chris Grayling:** I have been very clear with the companies, as has the Rail North Partnership, that they need to get back to a position of stability. I expect that to mean that they will be running slightly more trains overall across the network than they were prior to 20 May, and that they will move over the next few weeks to reintroduce services in order to get back up to the expanded level that was supposed to exist. If there are individual issues, as I know there are in my hon. Friend's constituency, the rail Minister and I will happily sit down and look at how we can address them as we move towards future timetable changes.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): On Saturday, two of my constituents, both in their 70s, were unfortunate enough to find themselves on the 23:03 Northern service from Leeds to Brighouse—the culmination of what they called a tortuous journey due to timetable chaos. They described the crammed Northern train as “filthy, a cheap product that has been neglected and flogged to death”. Does the Secretary of State agree with the Mayor of Manchester that Northern rail is now in the last chance saloon? Can he tell the House when he will stop passing the buck and take full responsibility for this chaos?

**Chris Grayling:** Both Northern rail and GTR have a whole lot of questions to answer and they are in the last chance saloon, so the hon. Lady is absolutely right. On the comments that her constituents rightly make about the trains, it is time for all those trains to be replaced, and over the coming months they are going to be.

**Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): The announcement of an inquiry and compensation is of course welcome. Leaving aside the atrocious implementation of the new Northern timetable, will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State bang heads together to sort out the morning peak-time 45-minute gap in services that is affecting my constituents so badly?

**Chris Grayling:** We will do that. I will ask the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Joseph Johnson), to sit down with my hon. Friend and go through this to make sure that we address some of the timetable anomalies that inevitably come out of a big change like this, which are not just short-term issues but actually structural issues in the timetable.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): Yes, of course the timetable changes have been a total fiasco, but does the Secretary of State not understand that people in Furness in Cumbria have been begging him for months to get to grips with this appalling situation? Before Northern took on the full franchise, there were 103 cancellations in a year on the Furness line. Last year, there were 212. Then, in the financial year that has just finished, there were 517—and that was before the timetable changes. Will he stop treating my constituents as though they have got the fag end of what is a pretty horrendous deal right across the country and take this situation seriously, starting tonight?

**Chris Grayling:** I and my Department have taken the situation seriously for a long time. With regard to lines like the Furness line, this is why we are investing in new trains to provide a better service. The Cumbrian Coast line has to put up with knackered old trains that should have been sent to the scrapyards years ago. It is finally going to get new trains in the coming months, and they are long overdue.

**Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement and his commitment to investigate what has gone wrong and to take appropriate action as soon as possible. Does he believe that part of the answer to ensuring that this situation never happens again is combining the operation of track and train under one operator?

**Chris Grayling:** Bringing track and train back together is part of the solution for the railways. I am absolutely sure that the railways are going to have to change quite a lot as a result of what has gone on, which has been completely unacceptable. Their ways of working have got to change. We are going to need a reshaped approach for the future.

**Thelma Walker** (Colne Valley) (Lab): Disabled passengers in my constituency have been told that they will not be able to catch certain trains as TransPennine has rolled out old stock to try to fix the broken timetables and reduce delays. Does the Transport Secretary agree that this is discrimination and unacceptable? Will he intervene to tell TransPennine that it must make sure that each train is compliant with disability legislation?

**Chris Grayling:** It is the duty of all train companies to ensure that that happens. The rolling programme of train replacement means that all trains will be disability-compliant. Every train in the north is being replaced with either a brand new train or a refurbished, as-new train. I will continue to make the point to all train operators—as will the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani), who is responsible for accessibility—that they have to make a priority of this.

**Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): My right hon. Friend has already visited my constituency and seen the level of frustration and concern about the timetabling. Will he continue to engage positively with me and with rail passengers' groups so that we get the best possible service for Southport rail users?

**Chris Grayling:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. We need to work together to make sure that we get some services back to Piccadilly, which I know is very important to so many of his constituents. He and I will work together on that.

**Stephen Twigg** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Secretary of State recognise the very deep anger among Northern Rail passengers in Liverpool and elsewhere about what has happened? Let me press him on the issue of compensation. He says that there will be a special compensation scheme. In the past week, constituents have been in touch who have had only partial compensation because they hold a Merseytravel Trio ticket and Northern will not compensate them for that part of the journey. Surely appropriate redress must mean full compensation for every passenger.

**Chris Grayling:** That is a very serious point, and I am happy to make sure that it is dealt with. There were some similar issues with Southern in relation to Oyster card holders. We need to make sure that the travellers who should be entitled to compensation do get that compensation. That is why we are not rushing into announcing details of the scheme right now: we are going to make it right.

**Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): For over six months, my constituents have been using bus services during electrification of the Blackpool to Preston railway line. The current chaos therefore comes at the worst possible time when people were looking forward to a good service, and they are absolutely gutted. Can the Secretary of State assure me that they will be able to enjoy the multi-million pound investment that has gone in? When will he put the full force of his weight behind Northern Rail to make sure that it fixes this problem now? Can my constituents look forward to getting the railway that they had hoped for?

**Chris Grayling:** My hon. Friend puts his finger on the frustrations. On his line, the disruption has been a result of long overdue investment in improvements for the future and a commitment to railways in the north. It is a tragedy that the electrification delay has had such disastrous effects for timetabling across the whole area. We need to sort out these problems in the short term. We need to get the electrification of his route up and running as quickly as possible so that all the improvements that were planned actually happen.

**Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): For four years, GTR has failed to run services efficiently and provide sufficient drivers. So before the Secretary of State walks the plank, will he do two things? First, will he confirm that any compensation that is going to be paid will be based on the timetable that the company should have been running, or indeed better than that? Secondly, will he consider reversing a U-turn that he performed some months ago? He had proposed handing over the services in suburban London to the Mayor of London when the Foreign Secretary was the Mayor, and then changed his mind when Sadiq Khan became Mayor. Will he reconsider that decision?

**Chris Grayling:** I never took that decision in the first place. It is my view that services running outside London should not be controlled by an elected representative inside London. The approach that we have taken in the north, the west midlands and elsewhere, and have offered in London, is one of partnership so that we get involvement from both sides. That is the right way to do it. With regard to handing over services to the Mayor, London Overground is a franchise run by Arriva, the same company that runs Northern, so I am at a loss as to why people think that that is a magic solution for the future.

**Maria Caulfield** (Lewes) (Con): Do we really need a review before action is taken? People who commute from Lewes, Polegate, Seaford, Newhaven and many more stations have had to endure not just the timetable changes, but 18 months of strike action and 18 months of misery while the London Bridge works were happening, and we now have fewer trains than ever before. When trains do run, they sometimes do not stop, as happened

[*Maria Caulfield*]

in Lewes and Polegate today, and when they do stop, passengers cannot get on because of short formations, with trains going down from 12 carriages to four today. The only question my constituents have is, “When is Southern Rail going to lose its franchise?” If I can be helpful to the Secretary of State, the answer should be “Now.”

**Chris Grayling:** The important thing to do is to make sure that these problems are sorted out. It may be that at the end of this there is a franchise change, but I want to do anything like that in the right way, in the right timeframe, and in a way that is justifiable. I have to fulfil contractual commitments. I have to look at where culpability lies. We need to go through that process first. In the meantime, having short-formation trains on Southern, which otherwise is performing pretty well, is completely unacceptable, and it needs to fix that straight away.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Having heard the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) chuntering from a sedentary position, perhaps we can now hear him on his feet.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

If someone conspired to break into my garage and steal or immobilise my car, they would face the full force of the law. The Secretary of State’s Department has conspired with the railway companies in an incompetent manner to change the timetables, and despite repeated warnings from the Opposition, the companies went ahead with it. When will they face the full force of having their franchises stripped from them, or when will he be brave enough to face up to this and resign?

**Chris Grayling:** I have mentioned to the House the industry bodies that we have put in place. It is only a week since Labour was demanding that the railways were run by rail professionals—actually, they are. Those rail professionals have been overseeing this process, they got it wrong, and that is why we are having the inquiry.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): I have to thank the Secretary of State, because he has tried to accommodate me three times today. I think we should have some brevity in the House, because parties of all colours have the same problems. The reality is that this is a mess. We have to get a realistic timetable in order and make sure that when these train companies cancel—I saw it today at Lancaster station, when Northern cancelled on the commuters that I was standing on the platform with—they have alternative transport already in place. I ask the Secretary of State to sort these companies out, but in a measured way, because I realise the pressures he is under, and I am mature enough to realise the contractual obligations that he has to consider.

**Chris Grayling:** This is the important thing. It is easy being the Labour party, demanding this and demanding that, but we have to do what needs to be done in the right way, focusing first on getting a stable timetable, then identifying what has gone wrong and the culpability, and then taking appropriate action. That is what we will do.

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): The new timetable came into effect today, but my constituents have the same old problems. Despite axing 165 services, more than 60 trains had been cancelled by 8.30 am. All the while, rail fares have risen by 32%, and the promised electrification has been scrapped. Can the Secretary of State tell me when my constituents can expect compensation and improved services, and what personal responsibility he takes for the chaotic mismanagement of this country’s rail network?

**Chris Grayling:** The Labour party keeps saying that it wants the Government to run the railways. We do not at the moment. The temporary Northern timetable has been put in place this week. Some adjustment of rosters is taking place right now. I hope and believe that by the middle of the week, we will return to a point of stability, with a lower level of cancellations than today and tomorrow and getting back to a reasonably dependable timetable within a day or two. That is what I am expecting, that is what we have been promised, and that is what we will be demanding of Northern Rail.

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

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** What a delicious choice: my former constituency chairman, the hon. Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), and an Arsenal fan behind him, most of whose family live in my constituency. I do not want to be unkind to Horsham, but it has got to be Huw Merriman.

**Huw Merriman:** Thank you, Mr Speaker—I’m always your man.

In the two years that the Secretary of State for Transport has been in post and I have sat on the Transport Committee, he has always been very honest, open and direct about the need for change. For any project management exercise to fail to get the sign-off from Network Rail and for it to find out only three weeks before, by which time it is too late to turn the oil tanker around, has got to be a spectacular failure. Who was the project manager and penholder for this exercise?

**Chris Grayling:** That is a very interesting question. My view is that the Network Rail timetabling process has gone badly wrong, and I cannot understand why GTR did not raise the alarm. I have asked Professor Glaister to go through all this because I want to understand exactly where the accountability should lie and be able to take appropriate action.

**Liz McInnes** (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): Northern Rail has cancelled so many trains that an app has sprung up called “Northern Fail”, to help commuters in the so-called northern powerhouse make even the most basic of journeys. What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that these commuters, who have forked out for childcare, taxis, hire cars and hotels, are adequately and fully compensated?

**Chris Grayling:** I am very clear that we have to provide a compensation scheme of the kind that was delivered to Southern passengers after the huge disruption they experienced a year ago. I am very clear that that is what will happen.

**Jeremy Quin:** To reassure you, Mr Speaker, an hour's wait is sadly not unusual for Horsham right now. I wish we were getting back to a far more regular service. Significant investment has been put into our line, which was meant to result in a far better service for our commuters. I welcome an independent inquiry to find out what on earth has gone wrong, but in the meantime, can we at least ensure that where there are fewer, busier trains, they are not short-form, so that people can get on them?

**Chris Grayling:** That has to be dealt with, and we will communicate that to GTR. If there are fewer trains running, they should be not short-form trains.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State told the House that sorting out the timetable chaos was his Department's No. 1 priority. That is a phrase he has used before about Dawlish and the resilience work in the far south-west, which was apparently his No. 1 priority. What is his No. 1 priority, and will Northern and GTR passengers have to wait the years that passengers in the far south-west have had to wait for action on Dawlish?

**Chris Grayling:** The work on Dawlish has already started, as the hon. Gentleman knows. In terms of the infrastructure period that is about to start, delivering that work is, in my view, the most important capital project in the country. The most important priority on my desk now is self-evidently to get this sorted.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): My constituents are also experiencing their share of misery. The hon. Member for Lewes (Maria Caulfield) said that trains serving her constituency had four carriages, but most of the trains serving mine only have two carriages to begin with, so they are already overcrowded even before any cancellations. It is clearly a failure of planning and co-ordination and a lack of integration. Will the Secretary of State or his successor give an assurance to the travelling public that a similar fiasco will not occur with the next timetable changes in December?

**Chris Grayling:** We are working extremely hard to make sure that this does not happen again. We have to deal with the short-term problem. We also have to make sure that this is not repeated with the December timetable change or future timetable changes. Where major investment leads to a major change in services, we cannot have a situation where that causes chaos on the network again.

**Judith Cummins** (Bradford South) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State understand the real human cost of this fiasco and the fact that every disrupted journey represents chaos for our constituents and losses for our businesses? He talked in his statement of major failures and holding the industry to account, but when will he take responsibility and hold himself to account over his repeated and major failures?

**Chris Grayling:** My job is to do everything I can to make sure that the industry gets itself back on the straight and narrow, and that is what I will do.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): We have been going for an hour and fifteen minutes now, and the Secretary of State has failed to take any responsibility for the current chaos on our rail system.

George Osborne wrote in *The Times* today about better economic advantages for the Humber area if we have faster train journeys, which I am sure the Secretary of State agrees with. However, with the new TransPennine Express timetable, the early indications are that most journeys across the Pennines are taking 15 to 20 minutes longer. Does he take any responsibility for that? How does it fit with the Government's plan for the northern powerhouse and improving connectivity between east and west by speeding those journeys up?

**Chris Grayling:** What we are delivering is this: starting next spring, the £3 billion upgrade to the transpennine railway will make a huge difference to journeys; the TransPennine franchise is bringing in brand new intercity express trains in the coming months; and of course, Humberside will also benefit from the huge investment taking place in new trains on the east coast main line.

**Yvonne Fovargue** (Makerfield) (Lab): My constituents have been suffering outdated Pacer trains, overcrowding and cancellations for years, and the recent timetabling chaos and the removal of the transpennine service just exacerbated that. A promise of a better service by 2020 is just not good enough. My constituents need to get to work now, and no compensation will make up for the written warnings and even the job loss that one person has told me about. Will the Secretary of State at least consider insisting that TransPennine reinstates the stop at Wigan until he can sort out the Northern chaos?

**Chris Grayling:** The hon. Lady and I are meeting later, so I will happily talk through that with her.

**Jonathan Reynolds** (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): Northern's new emergency timetable takes 165 services out of the timetable. It has been running for the first day today. A further 40 trains have been cancelled and punctuality is running at under 50%. Those figures were correct as I came into the Chamber at 5 o'clock, so they do not include the evening peak. The one question the Secretary of State has not answered so far is this: who in the Department for Transport gave approval for this timetable change to go ahead?

**Chris Grayling:** Timetable changes are not approved by the Department for Transport. These are matters for the different parts of the rail industry; they are the ones who take those decisions.

**Julie Cooper** (Burnley) (Lab): The new timetable implemented by Northern Rail on 20 May has brought chaos and misery to Burnley rail users, with 22 trains cancelled on one single day and over 50% of the trains from Burnley Manchester Road station being delayed or cancelled altogether every single day. I have been listening to the Secretary of State answering questions for over an hour. Maybe I missed this, but I still do not understand why these timetable changes were permitted to go ahead when it was known that infrastructure works were incomplete and there was a shortage of train drivers. I would be grateful if he could cast some light on that. Most importantly, could he tell my constituents when they can expect the restoration of a reliable service? The interim timetable that started today has not improved things one little bit.

**Chris Grayling:** My understanding is that there is a need to align train crew rosters with the new timetable. That will take another 48 hours, but I am assured by Northern that the new timetable introduced this week should, as the week goes by, restore stability to that network. That is certainly—absolutely 100%—my expectation. It is essential for the hon. Lady's constituents and that has to be delivered.

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) *rose*—

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** People lower down the alphabet should not suffer discrimination. I call Kate Green.

**Kate Green:** These are not recent problems. They predate the introduction of the new timetable. They predate the delay in the infrastructure improvements, and I have been talking to the Secretary of State, in this Chamber and in private meetings, for month after month about the problems my constituents are experiencing. He says that he took advice from industry experts, and of course he should, but why did he not also take advice and ask questions based on the information coming from Members of this House and on the information from the travelling public that has been all over social media for months? What questions did he ask these industry experts?

**Chris Grayling:** The whole point about the new timetable—it has clearly not worked and it must work—is actually to deliver a more reliable service through reshaping timetables in a way that means there is less congestion and more services can be run for passengers. This has clearly not worked at all. This timetable was put in place for the best possible reasons and it has so far delivered the worst possible outcomes. That must change.

**Debbie Abrahams:** I first contacted the Transport Secretary back in November to raise concerns about the proposed timetable and, unfortunately, he completely ignored my concerns. Today's interim timetable has brought even more havoc to my constituents who use Greenfield station, with five—up to now—trains being cancelled. What immediate action is he going to take to resolve some of the issues not just about timetabling, but about capacity? Will he ensure that, this time, passengers are involved?

**Chris Grayling:** Of course, the reality is that the most important thing, as I have set out, is that Northern Rail needs to deliver this week, as it has promised, a more stable timetable and something that people can rely on. Step by step, it then needs to put back in place the additional services that were supposed to deliver better options for the hon. Lady's constituents and others. That clearly has not happened and I deeply regret that. It is unconscionable, and infuriating to all of us in government, that the things that were supposed to deliver a better outcome for everyone have not done so. We will not be anything other than relentless in pushing the rail industry to ensure that those benefits are delivered. They should be there now. They are not. It is worse than it should be. That has to change and it has to change quickly.

## Nuclear Power

6.23 pm

**The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the proposed Wylfa Newydd nuclear power plant.

Britain was the world's first civil nuclear nation. Nuclear energy has powered homes and businesses in this country for over 60 years and currently provides about 20% of our electricity needs with low-carbon, secure and reliable baseload power. Nuclear has an important role to play in the UK's energy future as we transition to the low-carbon economy. However, we have always been clear that no technology will be pursued at any price: new nuclear must provide value for money for consumers and taxpayers.

In 2016, we agreed to support the first new nuclear power station in a generation at Hinkley Point C in Somerset. Developers have set out proposals for a further five plants to come online over the next few decades. As I said at the time the contract for Hinkley Point C was agreed, the Government expect future nuclear projects to provide lower-cost electricity than Hinkley Point C.

The next project in this pipeline is the proposed Wylfa Newydd power station, based at Anglesey in north Wales. The project developers, Horizon Nuclear Power, which is owned by the Japanese company Hitachi, has developed proposals to build two reactors with a combined capacity of 2.9 GW. Hitachi's reactor design has been deployed on time and on budget in Japan, and last December, having satisfied our strict safety standards, it completed the generic design assessment process run by the UK's independent nuclear regulators. Horizon submitted its application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate last Friday.

I am pleased to confirm today that Hitachi and the UK Government have decided to enter into negotiations in relation to the proposed Wylfa Newydd project. This is an important next step for the project, although no decision has yet been taken to proceed and the successful conclusion of these negotiations will of course be subject to full Government, regulatory and other approvals—including, but not limited to, value for money, due diligence and state aid requirements.

A key focus of discussions with Hitachi has been, and will continue to be, achieving lower-cost electricity for consumers. Both the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee have recommended that the Government consider variations from the Hinkley Point C financing model in order to reduce costs to consumers. In line with the NAO and PAC's clear findings and recommendations, for this project the Government will be considering direct investment alongside Hitachi, Japanese Government agencies and other parties. Our partnership on this project will serve as a further example of civil nuclear collaboration between the UK and Japan, building on the memorandum of co-operation that was signed with that country in 2016.

The UK is likely to need significant new nuclear capacity to meet our carbon reduction commitments at least cost, particularly as we electrify more of our transport and heating, so alongside entering negotiations in relation to Wylfa Newydd, the Government will continue to engage with the other developers in the UK new nuclear market on their proposals for further projects.

This currently includes EDF over its plans for a follow-on EPR project at Sizewell C, CGN—China General Nuclear Power Corporation—over its proposals for an HPR1000 reactor at Bradwell, and Toshiba regarding the future of the NuGen project at Moorside, as well as Hitachi over potential further ABWR units at Wylfa and Oldbury.

It remains the Government's objective in the longer term that new nuclear projects, like other energy infrastructure, should be financed by the private sector. Alongside our discussions with developers, we will be reviewing the viability of a regulated asset base model as a sustainable funding model, based on private finance for future projects beyond Wylfa, that could deliver the Government's objectives of value for money, fiscal responsibility and decarbonisation.

Support for nuclear is reiterated in the nuclear sector deal that we will publish with the sector shortly. That deal, which the Government have developed in close partnership with the nuclear sector, will include ambitious proposals to drive down costs across the sector, including by reducing the cost of construction in new build and by investing in innovation in advanced nuclear technologies.

If the Wylfa project were to go forward following this period of negotiation, it would provide about 6% of our current electricity needs until nearly the end of the century, while supporting thousands of jobs, particularly in Wales, during its construction and operation. The actions this Government have taken will support a long-term pipeline for new nuclear projects in this country, and will provide the visibility needed to enable the industry to invest in skills, including through the National College for Nuclear, and UK supply chain capabilities across the country. I will continue to keep the House informed during the negotiations, and I commend this statement to the House.

6.28 pm

**Rebecca Long Bailey** (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): There is cross-party consensus that new nuclear will continue to play a vital role in the UK's energy mix, and I am therefore pleased to hear that progress has been made, after some uncertainty, on the Wylfa nuclear plant. Given the well-documented failings of the Hinkley Point C deal, however, I am deeply concerned by the way in which the financing has been or will be negotiated—namely, the lack of transparency and parliamentary scrutiny thus far.

On 15 May, I wrote to the Secretary of State requesting information about the negotiations and I am yet to receive a response. Until the last few days, we have had to piece together snippets of information from the Japanese press, and titbits from energy and environmental groups. We have finally heard today that a deal will be negotiated with Hitachi, which media reports suggest will include a guaranteed strike price, loan guarantees and an equity stake in the project in exchange for direct Government investment.

I must say that this is a surprising shift from the Government's ideological position against Government investment in new energy infrastructure, and I wonder whether the shift applies to other renewable technologies, for which support has been repeatedly cut by this Government. I suspect not. I must sound a note of caution. Without sufficient detail and transparency, the House is unable to determine the risks and benefits borne by consumers and taxpayers in the proposed deal.

Last year, the National Audit Office concluded on the Hinkley Point C deal that the Department had “not sufficiently considered the costs and risks of its deal for consumers.”

The NAO made a series of recommendations, including mechanisms for reviewing value for money and the affordability of the deal; making it clear who is accountable for oversight and governance; ensuring that the cost and timing implications of alternatives are shown clearly; and developing a plan to realise the benefit across local economies and supply chains. Last year, I asked the Government to adopt those recommendations. So will the Secretary of State say whether he has done so and, if not, why not? However, if the Government have done so, will he publish all relevant documentation showing that each recommendation has been followed in relation to Wylfa or, indeed, confirm that they will be followed if they have not been processed yet?

Negotiations between the Government and Hitachi thus far appear to have been conducted behind closed doors. Will the Secretary of State say whether the House will be given time to scrutinise the proposed deal outline, or is this simply a done deal? If so, have any binding commitments been made or, for example, have any preliminary heads of terms or memorandums of understanding been issued? The NAO stated that

“making commitments to investors can limit flexibilities to react to a change in circumstances.”

The implications of that need to be understood and communicated clearly to decision makers. It is important to ensure that the cost and timing implications of alternative funding arrangements are shown clearly—again, that is advocated by the NAO. If such alternatives have been, or will be, examined, can the Secretary of State provide the House with details today?

I move on to safety issues. It has been widely reported in the press that Hitachi is seeking to “reduce or eliminate” its financial responsibility for accidents. Will the Secretary of State say whether that is true? If so, where will such liability lie and what safety impact assessments have or will be carried out from construction and operation through to decommissioning? Indeed, on the issue of decommissioning, will he explain who will bear that liability and how much the cost is likely to be?

Despite the good news for Wylfa, subject to the queries that I have outlined, it appears that further down the Welsh coast the news is not so good for renewables generation. Media speculation suggests an impending negative decision on the much-anticipated Swansea tidal lagoon project after years of planning and campaigning by Tidal Lagoon Power, the Welsh Government, environmental groups and MPs across the House. If that is true, it is outrageous. To assume that Swansea is somewhat redundant, given the plan for investment in Wylfa, is very short-sighted.

I understand that Tidal Lagoon Power has offered to negotiate further, but has not received a response from the Government. Under the plans, there would be a zero-carbon power plant producing energy for over 100,000 homes, creating thousands of jobs across Britain; turbines built in a wall in the sea that harness the power of the tides, so that we can turn the kettle on in the morning; world-leading infrastructure built in Britain using British steel to last more than a century; and the potential to export our expertise and products across

[Rebecca Long Bailey]

the globe. An ambitious, decisive and forward-thinking Government would jump at a project like that, just as they have done with Wylfa. Well, perhaps not. Recently, someone joked to me that the desk of the Secretary of State was where good ideas went to die. I hope that that is not the case with the Swansea tidal lagoon, and I implore the Secretary of State one last time to stop messing about, and to sit down with the company and the Welsh Government to develop a deal urgently.

**Greg Clark:** I am disappointed that the hon. Lady did not continue in the spirit in which she opened her contribution. This is an important moment, and we are beginning a negotiation on a project that will supply energy to this country for the next 60 years, until towards the end of the century, which will create jobs and reduce our carbon emissions. She said that her party supported the proposal and that there was cross-party consensus—one could be forgiven for missing that in her tone—and it is important to establish that, because it is evident that any 60-year project will take place over the life of successive Governments. This country has given nuclear investors confidence over time that there is a strong commitment to such major infrastructure projects, so I hope that she will back the commitments that she and her party made in their manifesto last year to support new nuclear and recognise the considerable opportunities, as she put it, for nuclear power internationally and domestically.

The hon. Lady asked about the financing model. She urged me in a letter to reflect on the recommendations of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee to explore alternative financing models that can reduce the price of the electricity that is generated. That is exactly what I have set out—I have followed the recommendations of the NAO and the PAC. We are entering a negotiation—I think somewhere in her remarks there was a welcome for that—but the essence of doing so is that a deal has not been agreed. We need to explore that, and it is subject to the very tests that she set out and that the NAO and the PAC observed are required, including on value for money.

On safety, the hon. Lady should be reassured—there are many hon. Members who are familiar with the nuclear industry in this country—that the safety standards operated through our independent nuclear inspectorate are the highest in the world, and that the generic design assessment is the most exacting in the world. We always abide by the rulings and requirements of the independent regulators so that we can have full confidence in the safety of this important industry.

Finally, the hon. Lady mentioned other potential investments, including the proposal for renewable power in Swansea. She knows—we have had exchanges about it across the Dispatch Boxes—that I believe in a diversity of energy supply, but we need to make sure that value for money is offered for taxpayers and bill payers. A rigorous assessment is required and, as I have done today, I will update the House when the process is concluded.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): How will the Government ensure, if they have a stake in the proposed investment, that when it comes to buying power they are fair between that investment and other people in the market?

**Greg Clark:** My right hon. Friend takes a great interest in this issue. When I made my statement on Hinkley he advised that we should consider using the Government's balance sheet in that way, and we will consider that as part of the discussions. As for the contracts that are entered into, one of the requirements of the state aid regime is that any contracts have to be on a non-discriminatory basis, which will guide the letting of any such contract.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for early sight of his statement but, to be truthful, it did not tell us any more than we have been able to glean from the media today. I find the Government's nuclear obsession mind-boggling. When Hinkley was first proposed all those years ago it was on the basis that it had to be commissioned by December 2017 or there would be a risk of the lights going out. All these years later, it will not be generating at full capacity until something like 2030, which seems to undermine the need for new nuclear.

Hinkley is shocking value for money, with a 35-year megawatt-hour strike price of £92.50, whereas recent offshore auctions have returned bids of £57.50 per megawatt-hour over a 15-year period. That is the real cost benchmark that the Government should use. Considering that the National Audit Office concluded that it would be impossible to know for decades whether building Hinkley represented good value for money for UK taxpayers, it is utterly incredible that we are diving headlong into another costly venture. The Secretary of State has said that he wants to do a sector deal, but we do not know what value for money that will provide. It has been reported that the strike price for the new power station will be something like £15 per megawatt-hour cheaper than at Hinkley, but how much of that cost reduction is due to the billions of pounds of direct investment from the taxpayer?

Given the company's questionable track record on safety, will the Government confirm that Hitachi will be financially liable in the event of any accidents? Given the unprecedented level of taxpayer investment, how will the Government demonstrate that they have met the Public Accounts Committee's demand for a full value for money assessment before they finally sign off the deal, and how will Parliament be able to scrutinise that? When will we know the level of the financial commitments?

If the Secretary of State is so willing to commit taxpayers' money directly for stakes in projects, will he consider paying for national grid upgrades to further facilitate the deployment of renewables, instead of tagging such upgrades on to the costs of renewable projects? As bad as the Government's obsession with nuclear is, this is also about their attacks on renewable investment. When will they have a coherent energy policy and proper investment in future technologies rather than a technology that has had its day?

**Greg Clark:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. On statements to the House, I think all Members would recognise that I have come to the House at the earliest possible opportunity. It was today that the decision was taken to enter into negotiations. Members will know that I always keep the House updated and always will.

It is a bit rich of the hon. Gentleman to complain that new nuclear power will come online later in the 2020s, given that he and his colleagues have resisted the

replacement of our nuclear fleet, which we have known needs to be replaced for all this time. It is an act of responsibility on the part of this Government that we are planning ahead for the replacement of the 20% of our electricity that is currently generated from nuclear power. It is important for consumers in Scotland and in the rest of the United Kingdom that we do that.

The hon. Gentleman criticised what he regarded as the value for money of the Hinkley project. He will have heard me say at the time that that represents the highest price we will pay for new nuclear. I expect future new nuclear power stations to come in at a lower price. I have made it explicit today that that is a requirement of the negotiation. However, this is the beginning of a formal period of negotiation.

The recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office have shaped the approach we are taking. The value for money test has to be met, and at all the key milestones I will ensure that Parliament has the opportunity to scrutinise the progress of the negotiations.

**Sir Michael Fallon** (Sevenoaks) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this welcome announcement and the lower strike price that is being targeted underline the importance, if we want to keep costs falling, of securing continuity in the nuclear programme, so that the supply chain and the skills academy can look beyond Wylfa to Sizewell C, Oldbury, Bradwell and Moorside?

**Greg Clark:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. He contributed with distinction as an Energy Minister and therefore recognises that if we are to achieve not only the full cost benefits but the industrial and employment benefits, it is necessary to show that we have a pipeline that is being delivered in a steady and orderly way. If we do that, as we have done with offshore wind, in which he was instrumental, we can establish an industry that not only supplies to UK consumers at a lower cost but offers a big export opportunity.

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab): A thriving nuclear sector depends on the ability to move nuclear materials around safely and securely. At the moment, we do that via our membership of Euratom. What assurances has the Secretary of State been able to give Hitachi about our future relationship with Euratom, about nuclear co-operation agreements with other nuclear states and about the ability of the Office for Nuclear Regulation to recruit the safety inspectors we need?

**Greg Clark:** The hon. Lady will know from her involvement in the scrutiny of the Nuclear Safeguards Bill that we have made very good progress both on the proposed agreements with other nuclear countries and on our intended association with Euratom. I regard this as an area in which it is clearly in everyone's interest to have the greatest possible continuity of the existing arrangements. That is no secret; it is known to any partner and any investor, including Hitachi.

**Stephen Crabb** (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. He will know that the Wylfa Newydd project will be the largest construction project in Wales for more than a generation, so what discussions is he having with the Welsh Government to

ensure that we maximise the opportunities for the Welsh supply chain, which will be the backbone of delivering this important project in Anglesey?

**Greg Clark:** Of course, the opportunities for Wales follow from exactly the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon) made. The knowledge of the investment that will be made there provides great opportunities for people in north Wales and beyond to develop the skills that will be in high demand and to ensure that the engineering companies and other suppliers can gear up for this important work. Before I came to the House today I discussed the matter with the First Minister, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales spoke to Ken Skates, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport. We will work closely together to ensure that across Wales and, indeed, the United Kingdom, these opportunities result in real jobs and prosperity for the people of Wales and the UK.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): The Secretary of State knows that there have been two major revolutions in electricity since Hinkley Point C was initially agreed to: a dramatic cost reduction for large-scale renewable power and huge advances in storage technology. Given that renewables and battery storage will soon offer cheaper and more flexible security of supply than nuclear, where are those two historic shifts in electricity technology in his decision today?

**Greg Clark:** The right hon. Gentleman makes the very important point that we have seen progress in renewables and that we are seeing progress in storage. Today, nuclear provides just over 20% of the electricity we consume and wind provides 5.5%. My view is that we should have diversity in our energy supply—the wind will not supply all our needs every day. His point about storage technology is correct and he knows from the industrial strategy that we are investing in its development, but it is not at the stage where it can offer the reliable baseload power that nuclear, which supplies 20% of the UK's electricity, offers now. That is a very important part of the mix.

**Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): Horizon Nuclear Power employs 350 people in my constituency, and I visited Hitachi in Tokyo fairly recently, so I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement today. Does he agree that the fault over the past 30 years has been the failure of successive Governments to replace the existing nuclear power stations? I urge him to press ahead with these projects for the very reasons that he has given, of security of supply and the reduction of emissions.

**Greg Clark:** I agree with my hon. Friend. It is not a positive reflection on previous Governments that, knowing that this important contribution of more than 20% of our power supply was coming to the end of its life in the decade ahead, no plans were made to replace it. The fact that we now have a pipeline of nuclear power plants will provide confidence that that source of energy will be maintained and, as we have discussed, provide important economic opportunities for people to enjoy successful careers and prosperity in that industry.

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Môn) (Lab): The Secretary of State's statement on Wylfa Newydd is good news for my constituency, good news for north Wales, and good

[Albert Owen]

news for the UK nuclear industry and wider industry. If we are serious about tackling climate change, we need to be serious about new nuclear and get on with it as quickly as possible. My constituents will welcome this announcement, but they will want assurances that the skills agenda is going ahead and that local people can have the quality jobs that previous generations in my constituency have had for over 40 years. I invite the Secretary of State to come to talk to training providers, local government and the Welsh Government so we can get this agenda up and running.

**Greg Clark:** I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome. He knows very well the potential of the development for his constituents and those beyond. I had the pleasure, during the Anglesey Day he hosted, to meet many of the companies that would benefit. It is the case, I think, that some young people already working on the site have been to Japan for training purposes, deepening their skills and broadening their horizons. They will be very important engineers of the future in the UK. I am delighted that, subject to the success of the negotiations, this opportunity will be available for them.

**Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, particularly with the electrification of more of our transport and heating, new nuclear is an essential part of providing the right energy load—including Hinkley Point C, adjacent to my constituency, with all the spin-offs it will bring—to meet our Government's highly commendable carbon reduction commitments at least cost?

**Greg Clark:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I agree with her that nuclear should be a part of our energy mix. To be resilient, we should have a diverse energy mix. It is important that the cost of any project should be acceptable and affordable for bill payers as well as taxpayers. That will be an important principle in the negotiations, but if we are successful in that, it will make the contribution my hon. Friend describes.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): May I put it on the record that there is not cross-party consensus on nuclear power? My question is about renewables. Investment in renewables is at an all-time low. Funding streams for clean energy are at their lowest level since 2008, despite solar and wind being the cheapest form of new electricity generation. I want to ask the Secretary of State again how he can justify this multimillion deal to prop up an outdated and hugely costly technology. The chief executive of National Grid himself has said that baseload is an outdated concept because the cost of batteries will come down very quickly and that technology will be much cheaper than new nuclear by the time it comes on board. Renewables are much cheaper and safer, and they are ready now. Why does he not choose them?

**Greg Clark:** The hon. Lady has, as she describes, a fundamental disagreement: she does not see any benefit from nuclear to the resilience and supply of our electricity. That has long been her view, but I am surprised that she would talk down our country's achievements on renewables. She should know that as a result of decisions taken by

this Government and our predecessor, we are now the leading nation in the world for the deployment of offshore wind. Taking a strategic approach and investing in the future with a pipeline, just as we propose for new nuclear, has resulted in jobs being created around the towns and cities, in particular the coastal towns, of this country. I would have thought she would recognise and welcome that.

**Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree it is important to maintain not just diversity of supply but diversity of suppliers within the nuclear industry? Will he therefore welcome the progress made in the construction of unit 3 of the Fangchenggang power station in China, which is the reference plant for the proposed HPR1000 reactor at Bradwell-on-Sea? Will he reaffirm his support for that project, subject to the generic design assessment and regulatory approvals?

**Greg Clark:** I agree with my right hon. Friend that having a diversity of energy sources is important, but so is having some degree of competition between suppliers. That is why I referred in my statement to the pipeline that is in prospect. On the GDA process, we of course welcome progress through that. For each of these projects, it is foundational that the safety case is demonstrated. It is important that they should meet that, but it is also important that they demonstrate that they offer value for money for both the taxpayer and the bill payer. In each of these cases, negotiations will focus on that as well as on other aspects.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): Is not a key part of lowering the strike price for Wylfa that the Government are now proposing a direct stake in the project? If that is the case with the Japanese firm Hitachi and the Japanese Government, surely the Secretary of State will offer the same deal to Toshiba for NuGen in Moorside, which will sustain up to 20,000 Cumbrian jobs.

**Greg Clark:** I recognise the support for the nuclear industry that the hon. Gentleman espouses. This is a statement about a very good development in a particular negotiation. He refers to the project at Moorside. As he knows, it is not at the same stage. We are responding to recommendations of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee to consider other financing models. It is the start of a negotiation, but I feel confident that we should take that step to commence.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): But it is a nationalisation, isn't it?

**Greg Clark:** No. The NAO report noted that all major energy projects have some involvement with the state. That is a feature of the current market not just in this country but around the world. We want to drive the best value for money for both the taxpayer and the bill payer.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Now that the British Government have decided to invest directly in nuclear projects, surely they will be doing the same for other energy projects, such as the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, or will this be determined solely on the basis of the contract for difference financing model?

**Greg Clark:** We have decided to enter a period of negotiations and consider the NAO and PAC recommendations. This is an announcement about this particular project. The House will see me make an update as we progress with the negotiations.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): One of the consequences of the Labour party's prevarication on the nuclear industry has been the deskilling of that industry. Will my right hon. Friend expand on his plans for skilling up our workforce, particularly our young people, so they get the opportunity to work in this thriving industry?

**Greg Clark:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I had the pleasure of visiting the National College for Nuclear in Somerset a couple of weeks ago. Seeing the opportunities that will be available to the next generation of nuclear engineers is an inspiring sight. I am pleased that this is now available for them.

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): The Secretary of State will be well aware that several years ago the German Government took the decision to decommission their nuclear reactors and invest heavily in renewables and other suppliers. Given the significant cost advantage of offshore wind and the UK's geographic advantage in delivering it, what do the UK Government know that the German Government do not?

**Greg Clark:** I am surprised the hon. Gentleman mentions that, because one of the problems Germany has faced is that the return to coal has increased the pressure on its greenhouse gas emissions. I checked before I came into the Chamber, and coal was contributing just 1% of our current electricity generation, compared with 20.5% from nuclear. If we are serious about meeting our climate change ambitions, we have to take decisions that are consistent with that.

**Mr David Jones** (Clwyd West) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, which will be widely welcomed in north Wales where Wylfa is such an important part of the regional economy. On timescale, he mentioned that the negotiations will be subject to, among other things, the requirements of state aid. Are we to infer from that that he anticipates the negotiations will be complete before 29 March next year, after which one would hope state aid would not be a consideration?

**Greg Clark:** My right hon. Friend is ingenious in his scrutiny of the timetable. If we start the negotiations on the regime while a member of the EU, it seems to me that we would not want to delay their completion until the date of Brexit.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): What reassurances can the Minister give on genuine consultation with local communities over the long-term considerations of nuclear waste?

**Greg Clark:** The hon. Lady raises a very important point. The treatment and storage of nuclear waste is part of the consultation at the moment. Part of the safety assessment for all new and current nuclear plants is to make sure that the waste is stored and eventually disposed of safely, and part of any contract needs to provide for the money to address that.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): I totally agree that starting the negotiations with Horizon, based in the Gloucester business park, to secure replacement nuclear capacity and to deal with increased demand for electricity is a very good thing. I wish my right hon. Friend all good luck in securing a balance of advantages to the taxpayer between a lower strike price on the one hand and—no doubt—some cost and construction risk on the other. The aspects he highlighted—greater security, low carbon, greater diversity, jobs, supply chains—all apply equally to the fabulous tidal lagoon project mooted for Swansea. I do hope he can secure a positive response to the Hendry review as soon as possible.

**Greg Clark:** I anticipated the direction in which my hon. Friend was heading. He will know that, as we have done in this case, we need to offer and obtain value for money for the taxpayer and the consumer. Just as in this case, that is part of the assessment to be made of the tidal lagoon proposal.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): One aspect of a future nuclear strategy the Secretary of State did not deal with is small modular reactors. I have written him several emails about this. Davy Markham, in my constituency, is one of the few places that can actually machine the largest parts for these reactors, but it is in receivership. The receiver is selling off this capacity, and currently it looks as if it will go overseas. Will the Secretary of State take another look to see what role he and his Department can play in drawing up a plan to save that capacity for this country and make sure it forms an important part of his future industrial strategy, rather than simply being sold off to the highest bidder overseas?

**Greg Clark:** I referred in my statement to the nuclear sector deal and, in particular, investment in innovation in advanced nuclear technologies, which is the area the hon. Gentleman mentions. That initiative, which we will launch with the sector, is forthcoming, and of course I am happy to meet him to discuss the firm in his constituency.

**Mr Robert Goodwill** (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): The Secretary of State in his statement highlighted the need to drive down the cost of the construction and operation of this new generation of nuclear reactors. In that regard, are we likely to see more reliance on offsite modular construction techniques? If so, will that present opportunities not just for Wales but right around the country, including for the expertise that already exists on the Tyne, the Wear, the Tees and, of course, the Humber?

**Greg Clark:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the sector deal, we will set out the opportunities for small modular reactors, which we have been discussing and developing with the sector.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) for his tireless efforts in lobbying for this. He is Mr Energy Island. This £13 billion investment could be multiplied if we get the timing, co-ordination and planning right. Central Government need to co-operate with the Welsh Government, local government, the rail companies, further education, higher education and the private sector. Will the

[Chris Ruane]

Secretary of State meet a cross-party delegation of north Wales MPs to make sure we get this crucial aspect right?

**Greg Clark:** I certainly will. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. As we have discussed across the Chamber, one of the benefits of a clear pipeline is the ability to plan ahead and maximise the local opportunities to the benefit of his constituents and many others in Wales.

**Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement and continued support for the nuclear industry. Will he look at Springfields, the nuclear fuel manufacturer, which employs 1,200 people in my constituency, and do everything he can to ensure that the next generation of nuclear fuel is made right here in the UK?

**Greg Clark:** My hon. Friend is a consistent and passionate advocate for Springfields in his constituency. The Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Richard Harrington), who is responsible for industry, will be visiting very shortly. It is a matter for the company where it sources its fuel, but I know that my hon. Friend's representations will be heard.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): I urge the Secretary of State to back small modular reactors, which could be the solution for lower-cost nuclear energy. Is there more the Government can do to help the industry bring forward these ideas so that we can be a leader in the world and not a follower?

**Greg Clark:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We announced £56 million of research and development for small modular reactors last year, and we are now looking at the financing and the regulatory framework. I mentioned the forthcoming nuclear sector deal. He will see substantial reference to this point in that agreement.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Today's announcement is important and good news for the supply chain for the new nuclear plants. I wonder if I might join my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) in asking the Secretary of State whether he anticipates a similar good news announcement for companies in the supply chain for the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, such as GE Power based in Rugby.

**Greg Clark:** My hon. Friend tempts me to make a different statement from the one I made, but I note and have heard before his consistent advocacy of the benefits of that project to his constituency.

**David T. C. Davies** (Monmouth) (Con): Has my right hon. Friend noted a cross-party view in the House that £92.50 is the absolute maximum we should be paying for energy generation, and will this feature in his deliberations on further energy projects?

**Greg Clark:** We made a commitment that the strike price agreed for Hinkley would be the high-water mark for new nuclear, and I note my hon. Friend's recommendation that that apply more generally.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): In my constituency, we have two nuclear power stations, which is welcome news for my constituents, but we need a third. We have the site—the seventh site—and I could line up five developers under this proposal. Would the Secretary of State like to meet to discuss this further?

**Greg Clark:** I am happy to do that. I fondly remember a visit I made to a nuclear power station in my hon. Friend's constituency some years ago. Perhaps he could bring me up to date with developments since.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mr Kevin Foster.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker; obviously you are saving the best till last.

I welcome today's statement and the Secretary of State's commitment to a new generation of nuclear reactors. He will be aware of the close link in France between nuclear and the navy and civil nuclear power in terms of long-term careers for those who serve in the submarines providing the deterrent. Will he do the same with our industry?

**Greg Clark:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point. The engineering skills we need in the armed forces and their civil applications can lead to careers that cross both. I will make sure that his recommendation is followed through.

**Chris Philp** (Croydon South) (Con): I warmly welcome this announcement, which, as the Secretary of State says, will help us to maintain a balanced, low-carbon energy mix. So many of these projects can be beset by delays—Hinkley C is an example—so may I urge him to progress this initiative with a sense of urgency and to carry forward the small modular reactor competition as quickly as possible?

**Greg Clark:** I will indeed. We will have more to say in the sector deal about small modular reactors. I stress to the House that we are entering a period of negotiations, and they have to meet some important requirements, but it is in all our interests that they proceed in an orderly way. The purpose of today's announcement is to allow us to do precisely that.

**Mr Speaker:** In a moment I shall call the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) to make an application for leave to propose a debate on a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration under the terms of Standing Order No. 24. The hon. Lady has up to three minutes in which to make her application.

## Offences Against the Person Act 1861

*Application for emergency debate (Standing Order No. 24)*

7.10 pm

**Stella Creasy** (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to propose that the House should debate a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely our role in repealing sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861. I make the application not just in my name, but in the names of the members of the cross-party group who agree that it is time to reform abortion laws: the hon. Members for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) and for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) and the hon. Members for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts) and for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas).

The impact of the Irish referendum has been felt around the world. Of the 2.1 million people who voted, 1.4 million voted to repeal the eighth amendment of the Irish constitution, which prevents abortion. In doing so, however, they have thrown a spotlight on the situation in Northern Ireland, where a million people are affected. It is a situation in which, if a UK citizen is raped and seeks a termination as a result, she faces a longer prison sentence than her attacker; it is a situation in which the mother of a much-wanted child who is given a heart-breaking diagnosis of fatal foetal abnormality is forced to travel overseas for treatment; and it is a situation in which UK citizens are currently on trial, including the mother of a 15-year-old girl who is on trial for buying her abortion pills. That situation is a direct consequence of legislation passed here in the House of Commons, which is why the House of Commons must act.

The Offences Against the Person Act is more than 150 years old. It puts abortion in the same category as homicide, destroying or damaging a building with the use of gunpowder, child stealing, rape, and defilement of women. It is the most common procedure undergone by women of reproductive age in our constituencies, yet even in 2018 they are shaped by that criminal legislation, to their own detriment. Stopping abortion provision does not stop abortions; it simply increases the risk that a woman will have to make a degrading and lonely journey overseas, will be forced to continue an unwanted pregnancy, or—worse—will buy pills online that may not be safe, with the threat of prosecution if she seeks

medical help. It is little wonder that the United Nations has said that we must act, and that the Supreme Court is ruling on our human rights obligations this week. Devolution—even if it is functioning—does not relieve this place of our responsibility to uphold human rights, whether in Northern Ireland or elsewhere.

We must be clear about the consequences of keeping sections 58 and 59. Extending the Abortion Act 1967 does not address the impact of those pills, or the paternalism that means that women are not trusted to make their own choices. Nor does it impose a particular rule on Northern Ireland; it will remove the impediment to Northern Ireland's making its own legislation. Members who may agree that it is a woman's right to choose, but who wish to see the Assembly choose, can be reassured. Repealing the 1861 Act gives us the opportunity both to respect devolution and to respect women. The people of Northern Ireland cannot be held hostage to the ups and downs of the Brexit negotiations, the deals done in a hung Parliament, or the stalling of talks in Stormont. By repealing the Act, we as the UK Parliament can show women across the United Kingdom that we trust them all with their own healthcare, wherever they live. I ask Members to stand up with me, and join me in saying that this is the 21st century.

**Mr Speaker:** I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady's application. I am satisfied that it is proper for the matter to be raised, and indeed discussed, under Standing Order No. 24. Has the hon. Lady the leave of the House?

*Application agreed to (not fewer than 40 Members standing in support).*

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Lady has clearly obtained the leave of the House. I can advise colleagues that the debate will be held tomorrow, Tuesday 5 June, as the first item of public business. The debate will last for up to three hours, and will arise on a motion that the House has considered the specified matter set out in the hon. Lady's application. I am grateful to the hon. Lady, and to other colleagues.

The Clerk will now proceed to read the Orders of the Day. I said that with momentary hesitation, because earlier a Member beetled up to the Chair to indicate his intense interest in raising a point of order, but he is now disinclined to do so. So be it; we are most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the self-denying ordinance that he has applied.

## Ivory Bill

### Second Reading

**Mr Speaker:** I will, in a moment, call—hopefully in an atmosphere of calm and excited expectation of ministerial oratory—the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, upon whose every word I feel sure all Members present are hanging. They are in a state of some animation, but I know that they will wish to hear about the Ivory Bill and the reason it should be given a Second Reading as they listen to the Secretary of State.

7.15 pm

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Michael Gove):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I well understand why so many Members were in the House to hear the application for a debate under Standing Order No. 24 made by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy). I am sure that I speak for Members in all parts of the House in thanking her for giving us all an opportunity to discuss that important and urgent matter.

Nature, as we know, has the capacity to awe and to inspire, and there are few more awe-inspiring examples of nature than the African elephant. It is a remarkable, keystone species: an icon which, for many of us, sums up nature at its most impressive, transformational and powerful. It is an important species not just because of what it symbolises, and not just because of the economic impact of tourism on Africa, but because it is indeed a keystone species on which the health, biodiversity and resilience of Africa's economy depends.

**Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con):** My right hon. Friend is making a fantastic start to his speech. It is estimated that some 20,000 African elephants are being poached every year, the equivalent of about 55 a day. Does that not mean that it is important for us to pass the Bill as soon as possible?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend has anticipated exactly the point that I wanted to make. It is critical that, in appreciating the importance of the African elephant, we also appreciate the scale of the threat that the species now faces. My hon. Friend is absolutely right: given that 20,000 African elephants are being slaughtered every year in a drive by poachers to secure their tusks for criminal gain, we face a remarkable onslaught against the species—an onslaught that is devastating communities and upending economies, and also poses an existential risk to the African elephant. Unless action is taken to interdict the poachers and reduce the demand for ivory, it is possible that, on our watch—on the watch of our generation—the African elephant will meet extinction. I think that, as was well said by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Hague of Richmond, it would be impossible for any of us to face our children and grandchildren and say that we had the opportunity to take steps, legislative and otherwise, to safeguard this magnificent animal, and failed to act.

The Bill gives us in the United Kingdom an opportunity to play our part and to show leadership. We have been invited to show that leadership by the countries at the

sharp end. More than 30 African nations have asked us, and others, to do what we can to stop the poaching, to end the trade in ivory, and to restore balance and health to their nations by supporting their efforts to ensure that the African elephant can survive in the future.

**Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con) rose—**

**Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con) rose—**

**Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab) rose—**

**Michael Gove:** I should be delighted to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare).

**Simon Hoare:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State, whose Bill has my support. Will there be an opportunity, possibly in Committee, to consider including in its scope the Indian elephant, the rhinoceros and the narwhal whale?

**Michael Gove:** I thank my hon. Friend for his support. There will be an opportunity in Committee to consider whether the scope of the Bill is absolutely as it should be. A number of Members have previously indicated their interest in extending its scope to other forms of ivory, such as narwhal horns, and there will indeed be an opportunity to debate precisely that matter in Committee.

I am also happy to give way to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin).

**Sir Oliver Letwin:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, but I was going to ask him the same question and he has given exactly the answer I hoped he would give.

**Michael Gove:** It is always a pleasure to be on the same page as my right hon. Friend. I am also happy to give way to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh).

**Mary Creagh:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I certainly welcome the introduction of this Bill, but would he care to comment on the actions of his friend President Trump, whose Administration in March lifted the US's ban on importing body parts of elephants shot by trophy-hunters? Will the right hon. Gentleman take the opportunity now to condemn without reservation the reversal of that Obama-era regulation?

**Michael Gove:** I absolutely will, because it is incumbent on all of us across the globe to take action. The specific request from African nations could not be clearer, so it is incumbent on us in the United Kingdom, countries in the far east—which often constitute the biggest market for ivory—and also countries like the United States, which has a distinguished global leadership role, to take action; it is incumbent on all of us to play our part as well.

I think there is an appreciation across the House of the importance of the elephant as a species. I mentioned earlier that it is a keystone species: if it were not for the elephant we would not have the means by which we maintain balance in the savannahs and grasslands of Africa. That is in the nature of the role the elephant plays, by the way in which it feeds and—without wanting

to go into too much detail in the House—the way in which it excretes. It is important that we make sure that the elephant survives, because without it savannah and grassland would not survive, and without it we would not have species like zebra or like antelope, and without them we would not have the magnificent predators—the charismatic megafauna, the lions and others which feed on those creatures. So by removing the elephant we would not just see one of the most iconic, beautiful and awe-inspiring species with which we share this planet disappear; we would also unloose upon Africa a cascade effect of environmental degradation and damage that I think none of us could possibly countenance.

**Richard Benyon** (Newbury) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making a very important point about the pyramid of biodiversity that is protected when one protects the megafauna at the top, but does he agree that conservation of the elephant is essentially a human interface that we have to get right, and that organisations such as the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya have been extraordinarily successful in making sure that local people see the value of wildlife? We can assist in that through our role as an international mediator, although we are not a range state.

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend, who played an immensely distinguished role as a Minister in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in leading on the defence of biodiversity and support for wildlife, is absolutely right. As well as acknowledging the role that elephants play as an iconic species in their own right and as a keystone species in guaranteeing biodiversity, the successful co-existence of elephants alongside man is a sign of an effective and functioning nation in Africa which is on the right path for the future. It has been so encouraging that enlightened leadership across African nations recognises the vital importance of ensuring that man and the elephant can live alongside one another in appropriate harmony.

It is also the case, of course, that there are forces within African nations that can see in the ivory trade an opportunity to make money, to feed organised crime and to support terrorist and other activity, and it is precisely because ivory poaching and the illegal wildlife trade sustain organised crime and subsidise terror that it is in the interests of all of us who not only want to protect nature and biodiversity, but want to see human societies and other states flourish, to take action to stamp out this crime, and that is what this Bill seeks to do.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): I welcome the Ivory Bill and the way in which the Secretary of State is putting forward the case for the elephant, but does he agree that one of the difficulties is that if we do things unilaterally they are unlikely to be as effective as if the whole world acts together? Therefore, if we look at the various measures that different parts of the world are taking, for instance the exemption for certain types of ivory from China or the different rules in different parts of Europe, we see that there is a real opportunity for a group like the G20 to harmonise the rules—which musical instruments are going to be exempted and so on—across the world.

**Michael Gove:** Yes, I absolutely take my hon. Friend's point. It is important that we co-operate, and one of the things this country will be doing is hosting the illegal

wildlife trade summit in October. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already been working with other countries, including by visiting Argentina, as the leader of the G20, just two weeks ago, in order to ensure there is the maximum possible buy-in. I had the opportunity myself to talk to a variety of representatives of different nations at the United Nations just a couple of months ago in order to ensure there is that effective co-ordination.

However, there can sometimes be a tendency—I know my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) would not succumb to this—to say, “We need to wait for others to act before we act ourselves.” In so doing, we fail sometimes to act with the urgency, and to show the degree of leadership, that will encourage others to follow. It is absolutely right to acknowledge the leadership shown by the Chinese Government and others in seeking to close their markets to ivory, but this is an opportunity, in this place and at this time, for our generation to show leadership as well. And the leadership we want to show is to specifically ensure that we reduce demand for ivory in this country and globally.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I welcome this Bill and declare an interest as chair of the all-party group on Kenya. Does my right hon. Friend recognise that this is long overdue? In 1989, under the leadership of Dr Richard Leakey, President Moi burnt about 20 tonnes of tusks in order to draw the world's attention to this pillage of the African elephant. It has gone on for far too long; the population in the Selous in Tanzania has gone down from 55,000 to 15,000 in a decade.

**Michael Gove:** I thank my hon. Friend for his campaigning in this area; few people know more about, or are more effective advocates on behalf of, Africa and other developing nations than my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right that African leaders have been showing leadership for a generation on this, and it is important that we do our bit now.

I want, too, to give a particular vote of thanks to those of my colleagues in this House and another place who have shown leadership on this issue. I have mentioned Lord Hague of Richmond; as Foreign Secretary he outlined the case for action, and indeed worked with the Duke of Cambridge in order to secure international support for action. It is also the case that my right hon. Friends the Members for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) and for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom) when they were Secretaries of State in this Department laid the groundwork for the legislation we are now introducing. It is also the case that across this House, in every party, there have been campaigners who have consistently and relentlessly pressed the case for action and we would not be here without their endeavours. We also would not be in a position to introduce this legislation were it not for the fact that outstanding work has been done by a series of non-governmental organisations—WWF, Tusk Trust and others—and also, critically, without support from the public. When we launched a consultation on the need to take action, there were more than 70,000 responses. That is a clear indication of the extent to which the public want us to act, and the overwhelming majority of those responses were in favour of urgent action. We need urgent action because we know that the maintenance of a legal trade in ivory allows illegal activities to pass without effective countering.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): The Secretary of State gave a long list of those he wants to praise for their involvement in this, but will he join me in praising the rangers who do the work on the ground trying to defend elephants, rhinos and other animals against poachers? It is estimated that over 100 rangers a year lose their lives in violence because of the work they do.

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Lady makes an important point: the bravery and determination of those who do this work is outstanding. In countries such as Gabon individuals risk their lives to save elephants and safeguard the animals they love in a country to which they are deeply attached, and as it goes in Gabon it goes in many others countries as well.

The hon. Lady's intervention also gives me an opportunity to thank our own armed services. As the Defence Secretary pointed out, only last week we dispatched more trained military personnel to support the work of rangers on the ground. That capacity of a country like ours to work together and use our expertise alongside the commitment of those from African nations will help us turn the tide and beat back the poachers.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con) *rose*—

**Michael Gove:** With that, I am more than happy to give way to my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence.

**Dr Julian Lewis:** Among the tens of thousands of people who responded to the consultation were my constituents, Susie Laan and Louise Ravula, who are part of a small but effective organisation called Two Million Tusks, representing the million elephants slaughtered in the past 100 years. They did some original research that showed that, in 72 auction houses covering 180 lots of ivory, 90% of the sales of those lots were unable to prove the provenance—in other words, the dating to pre-1947—of the ivory, which is a legal requirement for the sale of ivory at the moment. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that research proves that we need a pretty comprehensive ban if we cannot tell the date of the product being sold?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend makes the next important point in the chain of argument for legislation. Yes, we have restrictions at the moment, but they do not work. The existence of the current legal market allows illegally obtained ivory to pass as legally acceptable ivory or worked ivory for sale. In effect, that means that criminal organisations and those who are driven by the significant profits to be made by selling ivory into markets where there is a demand can use the weakness of the existing provision to pass illegal material off as legal. That is why we need to act.

The need to act, to be more precise and to change the burden of expectation is critical in the minds of all those who responded to the consultation and of those African and other leaders who are pressing action on us. They want to ensure that we take steps to communicate to the world that ivory should not be sold, trafficked or displayed in a way that encourages anyone to think that African elephant ivory is a good of ostentation that someone could derive pleasure from demonstrating their wealth by acquiring. The whole point about the trade in

elephant tusks is that it is abhorrent and involves unspeakable cruelty, and every possible step needs to be taken to stop it.

**Sir Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): My right hon. Friend will perhaps know that there was a debate in Westminster Hall on the fur trade earlier this afternoon. During that debate, the point was made very clearly that one of the reasons why that vile trade should stop was that there was no need for it. Is that not also the case for ivory? There is no need for it.

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend makes absolutely the right point. There is no need for it. This trade has been driven by a belief that, as a result of goods being worked or fashioned in ivory, they have a merit or a capacity to confer on their owner some sort of status. That is completely inappropriate. I sense that there is a recognition across the House that we need to send a message through this legislation and that, through its effective operation, we can end that trade.

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is important, particularly in the context of the online trade in ivory, to have strict enforcement provisions to ensure that we can follow up our good intentions with practical effects?

**Michael Gove:** I absolutely agree. The Bill is designed to ensure that we have appropriate ways of guaranteeing effective enforcement, including appropriate penalties. There will be civil and criminal penalties, if the Bill is passed, and those who break the law will face fines of up to £250,000 and criminal sanctions as well. That is only right if the deterrent effect is to be sufficient to ensure that people are not tempted to engage in the perpetuation of this evil trade.

One critical point that was made during the consultation was that, while those in the antiques and art markets are determined to do everything they can to close down the loopholes and to end the illegal trade that has contributed to poaching in Africa, there is an acknowledgement worldwide that there need to be some exemptions. Those exemptions must reflect decisions that have been made by past generations on the use of ivory and the way in which it has been deployed for artistic or cultural reasons in order to produce certain specific artefacts at specific times that have a particular value.

During the consultation, we looked specifically at exemptions for portrait miniatures. These are tiny but, in historical and cultural terms, hugely significant examples of fine portrait work from the 17th and 18th centuries, and they are valuable not because they are painted on ivory but because they are examples of exquisite artistic endeavour. Similarly, we except that there may be a range of items, including furniture, that are of genuine aesthetic merit and of which ivory forms only a small component. We propose to exempt items with a de minimis content of ivory, which no one is buying and selling because of the ivory but of which the ivory is an integral part.

Another exemption that we propose to introduce is for musical instruments. In the past, pianos, bagpipes and other musical instruments including violins required a proportion of their overall composition be ivory. There are now replacements available, so we no longer

need to use ivory in any of those instruments, but will continue to respect the needs of the musical sector to have access to—and to be able to sell and buy—historically significant musical instruments from the past.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): Would the Secretary of State accept that his commentary ought to be slightly amended, because we do not all recognise that historic ivory should be kept? Some of us think that this is an excuse for a continuation of the trade and that it creates loopholes and opportunities for those who wish to poach to masquerade their products as historic ivory. In fact, a bit like collections of shrunken heads, certain things were done by past generations, but in today's more enlightened world, we do not need to keep those things. Some of us would rather see all ivory banned.

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point and he is absolutely right. This is one of the reasons why we are introducing this legislation. There are occasions on which people attempt to pass off as works of artistic or cultural significance items that do not have that significance. They attempt to exploit a loophole and create an excuse or an opportunity to carry on this wicked trade. That is why the exemptions are so tightly drawn, and it is also why the onus is on any individual who wishes to sell an item to prove that it meets the stringent criteria. That switch changes the obligation and places it on the seller.

In the past, it was possible for someone to say—perhaps not genuinely—that they had no idea, and that they thought the item in question was artistically worked and of appropriate provenance and an appropriate age. They could say, “I had no idea. I am terribly sorry.” Those loopholes, excuses and opportunities will end with this legislation, because individuals will have to pay in order to demonstrate that the item they wish to sell meets one of the criteria. This will be a matter that we can debate in Committee, and of course we are now living in more enlightened times, but I believe that some items fashioned in ivory reflect the historical, cultural or artistic importance of a particular period or artistic movement and that we need to respect that, using a clearly high threshold.

I have mentioned that there will be exemptions for portrait miniatures, for musical instruments and for items such as furniture of which ivory forms only a small part. There is one other area. If an item is of truly outstanding historical or cultural significance, and if, for example, a museum wishes to ensure that an item of such significance can be bought and appropriately displayed, that will still be possible if the appropriate steps are recognised and met.

**Simon Hoare:** I fear that I may be talking myself on to the Bill Committee, but my right hon. Friend has just used the phrase “outstanding historical”. Clause 2, which—I hope he will accept that I make these remarks in good faith—needs some further work and clarity, refers to “outstanding artistic etc value” and puts a huge amount of weight on the Secretary of State in appointing advisers and issuing guidance. The country would breathe easy with my right hon. Friend taking those decisions, but “outstanding artistic” is a broad definition that means all things to all men—beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Will my right hon. Friend commit to thinking in Committee about how the wording can be clarified to give certainty to those with an interest in this area?

**Michael Gove:** I absolutely take that point on board. We want to ensure that individuals with sufficient expertise from organisations such as the Victoria and Albert Museum are in a position to provide a guarantee of the provenance and significance of the work. It is in no way our intention simply to say that something should be exempt either because of its apparent antiquity or because someone happens to consider it to be of aesthetic merit; we want to ensure that an academically rigorous process is undertaken to ensure that an item's provenance can be guaranteed and that its aesthetic merit and its dating can be put beyond doubt.

**Mary Creagh:** Will the Secretary of State comment on the National Wildlife Crime Unit, which is key to tackling the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife body parts? It is funded by DEFRA and the Home Office to the tune of £136,000 each a year—a paltry £272,000 a year in total. Will the unit's funding be increased given the potential for free trade deals—if and when Brexit happens—and the danger that the UK could become a back door for body parts from third countries under the guise of free trade?

**Michael Gove:** It is no part of this Government's intention—I hope that this will be the same for any future Government—to use any trade deals to erode or undermine appropriate protections for animal welfare and environmental standards. I cannot see how any Government would want to weaken the protections that we intend to place on the statute book through this legislation to end this abhorrent trade.

The hon. Lady rightly pays tribute to the work of the NWCU, and in the run-up to the illegal wildlife trade summit this October we will be looking not just to ensure that we can continue to staff the unit and support the officers who work in this field adequately, but to ensure that we go even further. As several Members have already acknowledged, this legislation, important as it will be, is not enough in itself to ensure that we can effectively counter the poachers and to ensure that the precipitous decline in elephant numbers is at last halted and reversed. The global leadership that I hope other nations will join us in showing at the October summit is critical to maintaining momentum in dealing with this trade. The commitment of not just our armed services, but the rangers referred to by the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and others is also critical. It is also important that we continue generously and effectively to fund international development work in African nations to ensure that people can move towards a sustainable economic future so that the temptation that some may have to connive with or work alongside poachers is removed as well.

In contemplating our ambition to ensure that the African elephant survives and that Africa flourishes, it is critical to recognise that the legislation is not enough on its own. However, without this legislation, we will fail to provide the required leadership on the global stage, we will fail to play our part in ensuring that we close down this wicked trade, and we will fail to acknowledge that the United Kingdom has had its position as a global hub for trade and a centre of excellence in the arts and antiques market used and abused in the past by those who want to continue criminal activity. The responsibility to legislate, with appropriate considerations for exemptions and enforcement, but at pace and with determination, falls on the House at this time, which is why I commend the Bill to the House.

7.44 pm

**Sue Hayman** (Workington) (Lab): This action to tackle the international trade in ivory is welcome, if not long overdue. As I have already confirmed to the Secretary of State, the Opposition will not oppose this Bill, but we will seek to improve it in Committee. Labour's 2017 manifesto pledged an outright ban on the ivory trade, which was reaffirmed in our recently published animal welfare plan. There now exists widespread cross-party recognition that a comprehensive ban on the sale of ivory is needed. As we have heard, despite a ban on the sale of new ivory having been in place for over 40 years, the decline in elephant populations demonstrates that the ban has simply not stopped the illegal trade.

The illegal wildlife trade has grown rapidly in recent years, and is now estimated to be the fourth largest transnational illegal trade, worth around £15 billion a year. The illegal wildlife trade drives corruption and has also been linked to other forms of organised crime, such as arms trading, human trafficking and drugs. It is shocking that the number of elephants in the wild has declined by almost a third in the past decade, with about 20,000 a year being slaughtered—an average of around 55 a day.

While Britain is not a country of highest concern in our contribution to the global illegal ivory trade, there is evidence that the UK legal ivory trade is being used to launder illegal ivory, which is then legally and illegally shipped to Asian countries. While ivory sales have declined since 2004, a 2016 survey by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, found that the UK was still a net exporter of ivory, and there was also some discrepancy in the numbers. The UK reported that only 17 raw tusks were exported to other countries, but importing countries reported that 109 tusks had arrived from the UK. TRAFFIC also found that UK ivory traders were often unclear about the laws around the legal ivory trade.

Our priority must be to protect elephants and all the other endangered species, as mentioned by the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), that are hunted for their ivory in Africa and Asia. We have all seen pictures of devastated elephant carcasses left strewn around, often with a young calf left by its mother's body, mourning her loss. Such pitiful scenes remind us just what is at stake and why this Bill is so vital. We must send a clear message at home and internationally that the only ivory that we will value is on a live elephant in the wild. A more comprehensive ban on ivory, building on China's decision at the end of 2017 to close its domestic ivory market, is a step towards giving the UK greater credibility in seeking to persuade other countries in Asia with a history of ivory trade—Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Laos and Myanmar—to commit to closing their domestic ivory markets. I will be grateful if the Secretary of State can confirm today what action he is taking in that regard.

As well as the wide support for the ban from charities and politicians, the public also feel passionately about this ban. The Secretary of State mentioned that there were more than 70,000 responses to the Government's consultation, making it one of the largest consultation responses ever seen by DEFRA. There is now broad consensus that the legal domestic ivory markets contribute to illegal poaching in two main ways: by fuelling the demand for ivory and by providing a hiding place for illegal modern ivory to be laundered through the legal market. However, despite the broad consensus in favour

of a ban on ivory sales, there is also agreement, including from the WWF, that we need the exemptions that the Secretary of State outlined.

There will be an opportunity to debate some of the finer points of the Bill in Committee, but today I will touch on some key questions. We have heard about enforcement, and it is important that the Bill is properly enforced through adequate resourcing. It must be clear that there will be oversight and penalties, including imprisonment as well as heavy fines.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist), the Secretary of State said that he would look to strengthen and resource specialised enforcement to combat illegal ivory dealing, particularly on the internet, and I would be grateful if he could elaborate further on exactly how he sees that being funded and resourced.

We also need further clarity on several of the definitions in the Bill's list of exemptions. We have already heard about how we need clarity on what "museum quality" means in respect to musical instruments, art and portrait miniatures. There will undoubtedly be further questions on the de minimis rule, as well as on how we will close any loopholes through which the system can potentially be abused, such as by using the proposed replacement certificates.

Can the Secretary of State clarify whether he plans to issue any new sentencing guidance along with this new legislation? It is important that the judiciary have the right level of information and training to issue the appropriate sentences, which will then act as an effective deterrent.

The need for international co-operation on ending the ivory trade cannot be overstated, and the Secretary of State has talked about some of that work. The Opposition look forward to hearing more detail on the Government's specific role and on the action they will be taking.

**John Mann:** As the leader of the Labour party has offered the Elgin marbles back to Greece, will my hon. Friend give a commitment that, if the countries from which any ivory in a British museum was originally extracted would like that ivory back—even if the purpose is to destroy such ivory—the next Labour Government will give back those ivory objects?

**Sue Hayman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his interesting contribution. I am more than happy to discuss that with the Leader of the Opposition.

Labour has always been the party of animal welfare, from banning foxhunting and fur farms in the UK to introducing our landmark Animal Welfare Act 2006. Our 50-point animal welfare plan, unveiled earlier this year, offers a comprehensive and ambitious set of proposals for advancing animal welfare standards, based on the latest science and understanding. Animal welfare policy must be taken seriously, must be comprehensive and must never be based on just a campaign of the month. As hon. Members will know, the Conservative party made promises to ban the ivory trade in its 2010 and 2015 manifestos. After it failed to act, the pledge was then quietly dropped from its 2017 manifesto. I am proud that Labour's last manifesto called for a ban on ivory sales, and I am pleased that the Government have finally chosen to follow suit.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I very much welcome the Bill. Does my hon. Friend share my surprise that the Government have managed to introduce this 40-page Bill in a very busy parliamentary timetable but still have not found time to finalise legislation to ban wild animals in circuses? This week we have seen Slovakia become the latest country to introduce such a ban. The Wild Animals in Circuses Bill has been through prelegislative scrutiny, and it has been kicking around for years. It is a very short Bill. Why cannot we pass it now?

**Sue Hayman:** I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. I would be pleased if the Secretary of State could announce when the Government will be banning wild animals in circuses. I am a sponsor of the Wild Animals in Circuses Bill, promoted by the hon. Member for Copeland (Trudy Harrison), and it would be extremely helpful if the Secretary of State could bring it forward.

I reiterate my assurance that Labour will support the Ivory Bill on Second Reading, and I hope that both the Government and the House will give careful consideration to how we can strengthen the Bill both in Committee and at subsequent stages.

7.54 pm

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Workington (Sue Hayman), who has stated the Opposition's support for the Bill. My hearty congratulations go to the real Secretary of State for introducing it.

We lose an elephant every 25 minutes, which is 20,000 elephants a year—we should all remember that incredibly simple fact. During this debate we have already lost two elephants. It is estimated that 100 years ago there was an elephant population of about 10 million, and the decline has accelerated. The great elephant census, published in August 2016, found that only 352,000 savanna elephants were left across the 18 countries surveyed—a 70% crash in numbers since 1979, when the total population stood at 1.3 million.

Encouraged by my then junior Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon), and Charlie Mayhew, the chief executive of Tusk, I went to Lewa when I was Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Lewa is a brilliant example of how local landowners have created conservancies where the management of wildlife is jointly organised by local communities. The rangers, whom the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) mentioned, are all working together, and the local community sees real value in the wildlife. As a result, poaching has been reduced in Kenya in the past couple of years. Lewa is a brilliant example of how, if a local community can see the value of wildlife, it will participate in its long-term regeneration.

A couple of years ago I went to the Kruger national park in South Africa. Whereas in Kenya there was a chronic lack of equipment, in South Africa there was a major general with 35 years' experience in the South African army who had aeroplanes, helicopters and 700 brilliantly equipped rangers, but they lost four rhinos the weekend I was there. The poachers in the Kruger will move on to the wonderful, huge elephants once they have gone through the rhinos, and the reason is money. Northern Mozambique is miserably poor, and

if a person can get one rhino horn out of the Kruger it will keep their community going and they will be a folk hero in their little town.

I have seen two contrasting sides to this issue. There is a big demand for this product, mainly from the far east, and the obvious answer is to grow more. I have thought about this, and that answer is simply not practical. We will never produce enough elephants or rhinos to satisfy the colossal demand. The only answer is to do what this Bill does, which is to sever the demand.

I returned from my trips and met the then Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend Lord Hague of Richmond, and we sat down and organised what became the largest world wildlife conference anywhere. We had great help from my right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening), the then Secretary of State for International Development, who has sadly left the Chamber. She completely got my point about conservancies and bringing in the local communities.

Over 40 countries participated at the conference. Sadly I could not participate because I had an emergency eye operation, but the conclusion of the conference was exactly what we wanted: recognition that the illegal wildlife trade and the poaching that feeds it have, in some places, reached unprecedented levels. In response to the crisis, the London conference

“aimed to reverse recent trends of increasing illegal wildlife trade through measures to eradicate the market...ensure effective legal frameworks and deterrents, strengthen enforcement, and support sustainable livelihoods and economic development.”

Also from the conference came the Elephant Protection Initiative, set up by five African countries, and only today I got an email with the latest update—that 18 African countries have now participated in the initiative.

That was all good, and we were world leaders at the time. Other countries then got ahead of us. President Obama and President Xi Jinping of China announced that they would introduce complete bans, and America did so in June 2016, with pretty tough exemptions. China, I think remarkably—this is a real credit to the Chinese Government—took decisions that have closed down whole factories. At the time, a Chinese Minister told me that 34 designated factories would shut and that China intended to shut down its whole ivory trade and manufacturing process by the end of 2017. In 2016 the French also brought in a near complete ban, with tight provisions on trade. We made the right announcements, but we did not actually take action. Meanwhile, those bans have had a significant impact on the value of ivory. It was about \$2,000 a kilogram, and it is now about \$700 a kilogram.

Our party promised a complete ban in our 2010 manifesto and, in effect, a ban in our 2015 manifesto. Lord Hague and I had not given up at that point, and we worked with non-governmental organisations such as Stop Ivory, Tusk and the Born Free Foundation. I also held meetings with representatives of the antiques trade; the chairman of the British Art Market Federation, Anthony Browne; the chief executive officer of the Association of Art & Antiques dealers, Rebecca Davies; and the secretary-general of the British Antique Dealers' Association, Mark Dodgson. We came up with a text that they would have been happy to put in our manifesto, which reads as follows:

[Mr Owen Paterson]

“As hosts of the 2014 London Conference and the upcoming 2018 London Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, we will continue to lead the world in stopping the trade in illegal wildlife products, which is responsible for the poaching that kills thousands of elephants, rhinos, tigers and other species, negatively impacting livelihoods and security. In response to overwhelming international opinion, expressed at both the CITES and IUCN meetings held in 2016, we will proceed with our commitment to introduce tighter legislation to close the domestic ivory market with appropriate exemptions covering objects of artistic, cultural and historical significance. We will further commit to support the range states of species impacted by illegal wildlife trade, in particular for elephants, rhinos and tigers and will continue to oppose any call for resumption in trade of products from these species.”

When we see the number of people who have signed the petition and who have reacted, we see that had that been in our manifesto, the result of the election a year ago might have been different. It is a great pity that that was omitted from our manifesto. I really believe that what the Secretary of State has brought forward today does honour that jointly agreed statement, and it should encourage a speedy passage for this Bill.

Let me give a crude summary of where I think the antiques trade is at the moment. I think it admits that the Bill, as drafted, is tighter than it would like, but it can live with it. Anthony Browne has written to me, saying:

“Our primary concern now is that the Government’s exemptions should not be made more restrictive by amendment during the bill’s passage through Parliament.”

That is a very helpful statement from the antiques trade. As was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), who has sadly now left his seat, the Two Million Tusks report discovered that only 1.49% of lots for sale in auction houses contained ivory. Given that the total antiques market is worth about £9.2 billion, we see that we are talking about a round of drinks and the trade can probably manage without that business, although this should not be tightened up further.

I am fully aware that other Members are keen to speak, but I wish briefly to mention a few amendments that the Secretary of State might like to consider in Committee. It is obvious that exports, especially those to the world’s largest illegal ivory markets, are our most direct contribution to the global trade in poached ivory. An approximate analysis of the impact of the ban as proposed in the Bill is that about 25% of currently traded ivory items will fall under the exemptions. The UK exported about 35,000 ivory items to Asia from 2010 to 2015, which means that even with the exemptions in place, exports would still have totalled more than 8,000 items. That would mean the UK would still have been among the highest exporters of antique ivory in the world, even on the basis of the proposed ban.

The overriding concern is that the sale of such important items to markets in Asia fuels ivory’s desirability in the minds of consumers. Most people will of course not be able to afford to buy the rarest and most important items that this exemption is to cover, but seeing those pieces being acquired by people in their country will reinforce ivory as a luxury commodity that people wish to own, fuelling desire for items that are affordable, many of which are likely to be fakes from newly poached ivory. The exemptions in the Bill must therefore be incredibly rigorously defined and enforced.

As a start, I wonder whether the Secretary of State would consider having an annual register of how many items exemptions have been issued for under the historical, artistic and cultural definition each year, with a full description and pictures of each item. Such an annual register would be publicly available, and it would demonstrate the commitment that this exemption is for the rarest and most important items only and would allow public scrutiny.

Let me make a few brief suggestions as to how to improve the Bill. Clause 3(1) would be greatly improved if it were to specify documentary evidence to support the application and establish the legality of the ivory item, including age and provenance, as well as proof of identity and the owner’s address. Documentation will not always be available, but the lack of documentation would be a factor in the assessment. This applies in particular to online sales and exports. I would be very grateful if the Minister could provide a little more detail on how he thinks these regulations will apply to online sales, where we know flagrant cheating takes place. The declaration provided for in clause 3(1)(d) should include confirmation that the dealing complies with the convention on international trade in endangered species, or CITES, and the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations, or COTES.

The exemption certificate specified in clause 4(1) should also include the name of the owner, given the reference to an exemption certificate being issued to a “different person”. In general, a new owner of an item subject to an exemption certificate should be required to register their ownership, whether on a prohibited dealing or not, so that a record of ownership is maintained. That will help the register. On clause 4(5), more safeguards are needed on issuing replacement certificates. An item could have several replacement certificates, which could be used to sell items illegally. Under clause 4(5)(b), how could someone legally acquire an item but not obtain the certificate? Careful attention to the numbering system might resolve that issue. On clause 6, we need a clarification of what a “portrait miniature” is—we need a definition.

Importantly, on clause 9(5), the exemption does not apply to items that consist “only of unworked ivory” and therefore excludes tusks. I understand that that is the opposite of what was intended. This is the only reference in the Bill to unworked ivory, and specifying it in this provision calls into question what is meant in the rest of the Bill. Those words should therefore be removed.

The defence of ignorance in clause 12 is a real concern, particularly as it is well known that that the illegal trade is fuelled by unscrupulous traders marketing ivory as a bone or as ivory sourced from other species, such as a mammoth. There should therefore be a basic sanction based on strict liability.

The Secretary of State should also be able to include other ivory-bearing species not listed in the CITES appendices in clause 35(3). As the Born Free Foundation has indicated, there has been an increase in the purchasing of hippo and other non-elephant ivory in the UK to replace elephant ivory in the internal trade. The BFF infers that the legal and illegal trades are targeting these other species, as the Government’s focus is on elephant ivory. Given that the total number of hippo in Africa is only about 25% of the figure for the elephant population, a ban must be careful to ensure that it does not unintentionally place these species under yet more pressure. It would

therefore be sensible to specify hippos in the Bill now, rather than to have the delay of putting through a statutory instrument later.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about extending this provision to other species. Subspecies of hippo, warthogs, walrus and whales are all in the CITES appendix of endangered species, so the approach being taken does not seem to make sense. We know that this will be the only time we have an Ivory Bill before this House for many years to come, so if we are going to try to protect those species, it makes sense for us to do it now, in this Bill.

**Mr Paterson:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her support and I totally agree: if we have the option to put this in, which the clause gives us, we should just get it in the Bill. We know that there will quickly be a diversion to hippos if we do not provide for that.

I am fully aware that others want to speak, so I come to my last point, which is about enforcement. I had interesting negotiations with our current Prime Minister when she was Home Secretary about funding the national wildlife crime unit, and I am pleased to say that that funding is to run until 2020. We would like a strong, firm reassurance from the Minister that this legislation will need enforcing and will need the right level of expertise. The wildlife unit is absolutely brilliant; it is located just south of the river, in a strange suburb where there is a large, redundant Russian tank. For those who cannot find it, I should say that it is painted in party colours. I recommend going to see the NWCU, however, as it does fine work. We need clarity that it will be beefed up and properly resourced for the future. On the same grounds, the CITES Border Force team at Heathrow needs sufficient levels of manpower and resources, as they will be our frontline of defence against illegal imports and organised criminal activity coming into the UK.

The London illegal wildlife trade conference is back on 10 and 11 October. With this Bill, we have a wonderful opportunity to regain our leadership on this issue. How quickly can the Secretary of State get this Bill, which we all support, through its parliamentary process and on the statute book? I will support the Bill this evening.

8.9 pm

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): The Scottish National party welcomes the fact that robust measures to help to protect elephant populations for future generations are one step closer to becoming law and being realised. Today is a good day in Parliament, for this is the right thing to do and we are getting on with achieving it together.

I am pleased that work on the Bill has included widespread consultation with experts, including the environmental groups and charities that see the desperate plight of the decline in elephant populations and the carnage of poaching. They have worked so very hard, and I pay tribute to the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Stop Ivory, the Born Free Foundation and Tusk, to name just a few. The general public overwhelmingly support a ban on ivory, guiding Parliament, as they always do. We must be mindful that we are simply the representatives of the people's voice. With the 70,000 responses to the consultation, the people have spoken, and we must listen.

Musicians and representatives of the antiques trade have contributed to the process, stating that the preservation of ancient ivory is important, but fundamentally ivory belongs to elephants and rhinos—to nature, not to mankind.

**John Mann:** In respect of the stacks of ivory that the Scottish Government have in their museums, will they be prepared to destroy those horrendous objects or to offer them back to the countries from which they were originally poached?

**Dr Cameron:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I am well aware that he is keen to destroy our ancient bagpipes, or perhaps to send them back to Scotland, where they belong. *[Laughter.]* That is certainly an issue for the Scottish Government and they will take it forward.

The cross-party support for the Bill is absolutely astronomical. People often ask whether we spend all day in this Parliament arguing just for the sake of it. I have to remind them that some of the very best work, which is often not reported on—the majority of our best work—is completed with cross-party agreement. The Bill is a perfect example of that. It forms part of our party's manifesto commitments and also my personal pledge to my local constituency in 2017.

I wish to touch briefly on several issues that will require further consideration in Committee. The wording “rarest and most important” appears to have been altered to “rarity”. There is concern that the test may have been toned down. We hope that the wording will remain as strong as possible. Guidance is required alongside the Bill to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place for its implementation. An annually published register would assist, to determine how many items have been issued each year with exemptions and to ensure the veracity of this crucial legislation moving forward. Safeguards are needed for the issuing of exemption certificates, as they could be replicated to sell illegal items.

Also, we need assurances that the assessor will be employed by the institution doing the assessment rather than appointed, so that they have no conflict of interest in commercial trade. A definition of portrait miniatures is needed. New legislation must be enforceable, and it is important that there is permanent funding for the national wildlife crime unit so that that can be in absolutely no doubt. Finally, sentencing guidance will need to be timeous to ensure that those who seek to ignore this critical legislation and who engage in such atrocities against nature are punished severely from the get-go.

When I was in Kenya with the International Development Committee, I had the privilege of visiting Nairobi national park and the Sheldrick elephant orphanage, where I spent time with the valiant rangers who protect baby elephants whose mothers have been killed. They were tiny little elephants that came up to my waist—and unfortunately I have quite short legs, so the House can imagine how tiny those little elephants were. They needed nurture to survive, but had been taken from their mothers and their natural environment, ravaged by the greed and destruction of mankind. I pay tribute to those involved in the vital work to rehabilitate those elephants and get them back into the wild.

[Dr Cameron]

The SNP will support the Bill in Committee and at its subsequent stages. Today, we turn a corner, working together for a future in which elephants survive and continue to stride proudly across the savannahs of our natural world, for future generations.

8.15 pm

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron), who made the point that the Bill has cross-party support. I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has taken the bull by the horns—perhaps that is the wrong analogy to use in this instance—and very much taken on board the ban on ivory sales. He is driving it forward in his characteristically forceful way. I urge him to go even further, because it is the international ivory trade that matters. It is great that the Chinese are introducing a ban, but we need many Asian countries to stop buying ivory, because if there is no value in ivory, people will not risk their lives to deliver it around the world. We are setting a great example.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) who did a lot of very good work when he was Secretary of State. In his characteristic way, he was a hands-on Secretary of State and went right to the heart of Africa to see what was happening.

As we sit in the House today, we do not realise the dangers faced by the rangers. As the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) said, they risk their lives, day in, day out, to try to protect elephants. In many African states, the political and military situation is difficult, and in many places wars are going on, so there is added danger for rangers trying to protect elephants. Through everything that we do, including international aid, we need to try to make sure that we can deliver a better life for so many people in Africa so that they do not go out poaching and can find other ways to make a living. That way, the rangers will not have to risk their lives, day in, day out, to try to protect elephants.

We cannot keep losing more than 20,000 elephants a year. They will be extinct, if not in our generation, certainly in the next. We cannot allow that to happen, so this ban on the sale of ivory in this country is a good step in the right direction. I know that those in the antiques trade are worried, but the problem is that it has been so difficult to identify what is antique ivory and what is not, so a ban on the sale of virtually all kinds of ivory is the best way forward. If we can stamp out the demand, we will drive down the value, which will save many elephants throughout Africa.

I very much welcome what the Secretary of State is doing and know that he will raise this issue internationally and in all his discussions around the world. We do not want to see America rolling back its position and allowing more ivory into America, because that would increase the demand. With the market in China now drying up, we really have the chance to save many more elephants in Africa.

When the ban on the sale of ivory is introduced, will the Secretary of State make sure that it is vigorously enforced? It is no good introducing legislation unless we

can enforce it vigorously. Can we also make sure that the penalties for those who wilfully ignore the ban are proper deterrents? Again, it is no good introducing legislation if there are no real teeth to make sure that people adhere to it. We want to be certain that we are not going to trade ivory in this country.

We can bring about a huge reduction in the number of elephants that are slaughtered throughout the continent of Africa. Earlier, Members questioned whether we needed to protect the Indian elephant. Indeed, there are also other species of animals with ivory that we may need to protect as we go forward. If anybody can get a measure through this House quickly, I believe that it is you, Secretary of State. With the support of the shadow Secretary of State and of Parliament, I believe that we can do this. There are times when Parliament robustly debates matters. There are times, dare I say it, that Prime Minister's questions resembles something of a bear garden. However, there are times such this when we can all unite. This Bill is long overdue. Many of us have been campaigning in this House for a ban. I very much welcome what you are doing, Secretary of State, and I am sure that it will have complete cross-party support tonight. I urge you to work even faster—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. I just cannot let the hon. Gentleman get away with this. It was alright the first time. Then I tried not to listen the second time. But then he referred to the Secretary of State as “you” for the third time. I simply would not be carrying out my duty if I did not stop him and ask him to please address the Chamber through the Chair. Just call the Secretary of State “he” or “Secretary of State”, or “the right hon. Gentleman”, or something other than “you”—please.

**Neil Parish:** I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not intend to offend anybody. I will just say to the Secretary of State that you will—[*Interruption.*] The Secretary of State will get on with the job and deliver this Bill as quickly as possible, with the help of cross-party support.

8.21 pm

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): Let me add my congratulations, too. As I told a group of constituents in this very Chamber this morning, my role as a Back-Bench MP is to highlight the idiocy of the Front-Bench spokesperson who should be immediately sacked for failing to listen to the wisdom that I offer, or immediately promoted to greater things for their infinite wisdom. I offer the Secretary of State the opportunity not to have his career spiked by suggesting that he listens to me on this question of museums and artefacts.

I offer the Labour Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire), my willingness to sit on the Bill Committee in order to ensure that the detail of the Bill is sufficiently clear to meet the purposes and the wishes of the House. I am sure that the shadow Front-Bench team will be delighted to have me in some Committee Room for a period of time on such important matters. None the less, I volunteer to do it, and I look forward to receiving the call.

As well as congratulating the Secretary of State on bringing forward, very appropriately, this piece of legislation, I also must congratulate two women Members of

Parliament who have campaigned on this matter very assiduously over very, very many years. I am now desperately trying to remember their exact constituencies. I am talking about my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and the hon. Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham). They have both worked assiduously, and both have challenged their own parties to ensure that progress is made on this matter. That is not always the easiest thing to do. I pay tribute to them. Their role has been important.

Of course, one can have quibbles, and that is what Bill Committees are for—or Committees of the whole House if one does not have the opportunity to serve one's country in that way—in order to strengthen and improve any Bill. There are some small issues to deal with. However, with due respect, I shall not give my own Front-Bench team such an easy time by merely referring to our party leader when it comes to discussions on our policy. We are a very democratic and open party and autonomy is given to the Front Bench. Therefore, in the Bill Committee, I am anticipating that my party will look at the question—let us call it the Elgin question—of what happens to artefacts. I am not just referring to the Scottish Government; there are local authorities across the country that could be doing things as well. I am not saying this to add humour to the debate. The situation with the elephant species and our responsibility to the planet has reached a critical point. That has been cited by all the experts, and, of course, the most famous of all of those in this country is David Attenborough. I seem to recall him saying that we are at the last 1% of time in terms of the population of these great species.

Frankly, if we cannot deliver on this, we do not deserve to be parliamentarians. We have a moment and a chance to do something, and we must take that chance not just with a piece of legislation, but with what goes beyond it. This matter needs to be addressed, along with two others. The first of those others is cyber-crime. The Government are currently investing lots of resource in cyber-crime—and correctly so. Cyber-crime involving the trade in endangered species, not least in ivory, is phenomenal. I pay tribute to the work that eBay has done to ban ivory from its sales. There are also many other ways in which the internet is being used for trade. I think that we could be wiser and sharper. At the conference in October, trade must be a vital part of the agenda, because, by definition, international co-operation can be the only effective way of dealing with such cyber-crime. We can lead the way as well by tweaking our legislation and by improving our resource.

The other matter that I wish to address is in relation to our international development work. The Batwe, the forest dwellers, are, without question, the poorest people on the planet, and yet, as the custodians of the forest for millennia, they are a perfect group of people for protecting the forest elephants in particular. The small numbers of the Batwe who remain are vastly unemployed and live in the most pitiful of conditions on the edge of the forest in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Uganda. There is an opportunity to do something that would be both humanitarian and effective. With the Bishop of Durham and other parliamentarians, I have had the honour and privilege of visiting the forest with an income and making a critical contribution to protecting such people and to

renewing their traditional way of life. The two things come together very smartly, but straightforwardly. There is also an opportunity to experiment modestly, but urgently, to see whether that works. It would be significant if there were a country willing to accept our assistance.

My next point has been mentioned by the Secretary of State: the use of the British Army in ranger training. I have actually just approached the Royal College of Defence Studies and suggested co-operating on writing a paper on this. Such training has been done successfully in Malawi and in Gabon, but we also have a vested interest. We could give the Parachute Regiment, for instance, a training opportunity in an area of danger. For example, they could use drone technology in training rangers—whether military, civilian or a combination—in countries that want to do that. That is a huge training opportunity in these less conflictual times.

It is far better to carry out such training in large countries such as Tanzania, Botswana or Zambia, or wherever there is a country that wishes to receive such training. We win in a very significant way by training our military. Where else? We do drone training on Ascension Island because we cannot find anywhere big enough in this country to do it. Yet, that technology would clearly be transformational if it were given to rangers who were trained to use it.

I had the privilege of opening and assisting at the US embassy's annual technology challenge, which addresses the issue of dealing with wildlife crime through technology. The event takes place annually in London, and allows entrepreneurs from the IT sector here to develop products to assist in countering wildlife crime using the most advanced technology. It is a brilliant initiative by the Americans. There is a combination of factors, and we can use our skills there. We can facilitate the development of those skills in countries that want them and that can quite clearly see the economic benefit of doing so in terms of direct jobs and the tourism potential. Far more importantly, this is about national identity and national pride. This is about indigenous species in countries in both Asia and Africa that are in danger of being wiped out, so it seems that these measures would be an easy win.

We could put in considerable resource compared with what was there before—in fact it would actually be minuscule in terms of what we are doing anyway, because we already have to train our own people. We have that training ability and we have the ability to pass it on. And I would go further. Some of the best ranger trainers and counter-poacher rangers in Africa are ex-British military and this would be a great opportunity for those who have served our country to develop skills, particularly if they pass them on.

I recommend those policies to Labour Front Benchers as well. With that, let me recongratulate the Government on their brilliance and look forward to assisting them in realising their goal.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. I am afraid that I have to implement a time limit of eight minutes.

8.32 pm

**Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con):** It is a great honour to follow the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) and I strongly endorse much of what he said.

[Zac Goldsmith]

This Bill is pure good news, which is a very rare thing in Parliament, from my short experience. I thank the Secretary of State for being true to his word and actually delivering the Bill, having promised that he would do so.

The situation today is desperate. As we have heard, every 25 minutes, an elephant is killed for its tusks. That is 20,000 elephants a year. There has been a 90% collapse in the elephant population in the last century. Notwithstanding the leadership that this country has undoubtedly shown in recent years, the UK has historically been a very big part of the problem. According to TRAFFIC, it is estimated that the amount of ivory equivalent to that from more than 1 million elephants was transported from Africa to the UK between 1860 and 1920. As we have heard, we are still significant exporters of ivory today.

We are on the brink of losing forever the world's most iconic species—a sentient, highly intelligent animal. And we are not doing it for any justifiable or noble reason; we are doing it so that a few people can have trinkets. It is a brutal, barbaric business that directly funds some of the most abhorrent organisations on the planet today. In the case of al-Shabaab, the organisation responsible for the appalling events in the shopping mall in Nairobi six years ago, it is estimated that 40% of its funding comes from the ivory trade. We know that, where poaching happens, it enriches the worst possible people, but it also destabilises and impoverishes whole communities.

We also know that bans work. In 1989, we had a worldwide ban approved by CITES and immediately poaching levels fell dramatically—as did, by the way, the price and the value of ivory. Tragically, 10 years later, after suspicious levels of lobbying, so-called one-off sales were allowed, and the market was flooded with legal ivory, in turn making it easier for traders to launder illegal ivory. That is exactly why the Bill that we are passing today—I very much hope we are passing it—is so important. If it is passed, we will have introduced one of the toughest ivory bans in the world.

That is fantastic news but, at the risk of sounding churlish, I want to make a few minor suggestions. First, I very much hope that the Bill is passed—I am speaking more quickly as the great Secretary of State departs the Chamber; I hope that he catches this point—before the illegal wildlife trade conference in October, because otherwise we will lack the authority that we are going to need in order to be able to ask other countries to do their bit, and we will need to ask a lot of other countries to do a great deal.

Secondly, the ban will be meaningful only if it is properly enforced, so we need to provide a long-term settlement for the National Wildlife Crime Unit, as well as resources for the CITES border force team. Thirdly, as we have heard, the Bill currently applies only to elephant ivory. The risk is that we will be displacing demand from elephants to other ivory-bearing species such as killer whales, sperm whales, walrus, hippos and narwhals, all of which are under varying levels of threat. There are only 100,000 hippos in the world today. That is staggeringly depressing. I hope that the Government will look again at including a wider range of species in the Bill.

In October, we have the IWT conference, following the first one four years ago. It is right that we should celebrate some of the good news. It is fantastic that China is closing down its state-owned carveries and banned all domestic ivory trade at the end of last year. The US has introduced a near-total ban. Hong Kong is promising to do the same. However, we must also acknowledge that the problem is growing, not shrinking, despite everything we have heard and seen over the past few years. The conference is an opportunity for us to exhibit real ambition. We need to use every lever at our disposal to encourage other countries, including the members of the European Union, to introduce their own ivory bans as a matter of urgency.

We need to tackle online crime. We heard a bit about this from the hon. Member for Bassetlaw. So much of the trade has shifted online. I recommend that colleagues read a recent report by the International Fund for Animal Welfare called “Disrupt: Wildlife Cybercrime”. It paints a very bleak picture, but it also gives reason to be cheerful. In March this year, 21 companies, including Google, eBay, Facebook, Instagram, Microsoft and Alibaba, joined forces with the WWF, IFAW and TRAFFIC to launch the Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online. And it works: in just one year, eBay removed more than 25,000 listings from its site.

We need to expand the focus of the summit beyond ivory. In the past decade, more than 7,000 rhinos have been poached for their horns. Grey parrots are being hoovered out of the African continent at a totally unsustainable rate. Since 2000, 1 million pangolins have been caught and sold for meat and medicine. Fisheries are being desecrated by illegal fishing operations all around the world, plunging the communities that depend on them into desperate poverty. This is organised crime on a massive scale. That needs to be reflected in our approach.

Finally—again, I echo some of the remarks by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw—we need to see a much greater emphasis on this and a greater level of commitment to it from the Department for International Development. It is extraordinary that just 0.4% of our vast official development assistance budget goes towards nature, let alone tackling the illegal wildlife trade. We may be part of a small club of nations honouring our commitment to meeting the UN target on overseas aid, but we are miles behind countries such as Germany, the USA and others when it comes to funding restoration of ecosystems, tackling wildlife crime and protecting the environment. There is a link between poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability—that is well established and unarguable. That must now finally be reflected in the work of DFID, not least so that the public, many of whom are very sceptical about its very existence, can buy into it and understand what it does. It is time for DFID to wake up.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Zac Goldsmith:** I was just finishing, but I will take an intervention.

**Alex Chalk:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend; I have ruined his peroration. Does he agree that there would be a great deal more buy-in from the public if the

Department for International Development were renamed the Department for International Development and Conservation, so that people could understand that that was a key part of its mission?

**Zac Goldsmith:** I totally agree with the thought behind my hon. Friend's question. Whether that should be the Department's name, I do not know, but I agree with where he is coming from.

There is a clear link. One only has to look at Somalia. There is a direct link between the collapse of the fisheries off the coast of Somalia—the moment when it was declared a dead zone by the United Nations—and the rise in piracy. There were tens of thousands of families with boats and children to feed, and knowledge of the seas but no fish to catch. What did they do? They became pirates. The same is now beginning to happen around Senegal as a consequence of illegal activities by vessels from all around the world. When we destroy ecosystems, we plunge the poorest people—the people who most depend on the free services that nature provides—into hideous poverty. It is the most destabilising thing we can do, and DFID has not yet exhibited any understanding whatsoever of that well-known and well-understood phenomenon. It is time for DFID to wake up.

8.40 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is always a pleasure to speak in debates on these issues. First, I want to state that I fully support the Bill and congratulate the Government and the Department on the way they have constructed it. They have put a lot of effort into ensuring that there are the necessary exemptions for ivory in musical instruments and antique ivory.

I am a country sports enthusiast and I enjoy all country sports. However, uppermost in my mind is that any country sport can only be done hand in hand with common sense and conservation, and I have practised that over the years in pursuing country sports. We must put money into the land to take from the land. We must encourage the growth of flocks and habitats for those flocks, to enable us to shoot and ensure that the environment can handle it. That must be the case if country sports and shooting are to continue. This debate has shown clearly that that has not been the case historically in the ivory trade, which is why the present position is so precarious.

As the World Wildlife Fund outlined in its briefing paper for the debate, we are in the midst of a global poaching crisis that threatens decades of conservation success and the future of many species. The illegal wildlife trade has grown rapidly in recent years and is now estimated to be the fourth largest transnational illegal trade, worth more than £15 billion per year. There are many iconic animals across the world, but this debate is about elephants, which are probably the greatest animal in my opinion; others may disagree. We have to retain their numbers and their habitat. As the WWF says, the illegal wildlife trade drives corruption, impacts the rule of law, threatens sustainable development and has been linked to other forms of organised crime such as arms, drugs and human trafficking. The hon. Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) made the point that people turn to other methods of securing income, and illegal trade is the upshot of that.

There are approximately 415,000 African elephants. In the last decade, their number fell by about 111,000, mainly due to poaching, and around 20,000 African elephants are estimated to be killed by poachers annually. In the time that we have been having this debate, between three and four elephants have died across the world at the hands of poachers, and before the debate is over, that number will have doubled and perhaps trebled. That is an indication of what is happening. Some 55 of these grand, beautiful animals are killed a day. It is not only an adult elephant that is being killed; poachers are leaving a baby elephant to its own devices, and it often ends up dying as well. The gestation period of an elephant is 18 months. That gives us an idea of how long it takes to try to claw back what has been lost. That is something we cannot ignore.

It is clear that steps must be taken, and taken quickly, to align us with other nations in the attempt to cease this trade. I went to Kenya with the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme, and we had a chance to see the big five. I remember getting up close and seeing the beauty and brilliance of the elephants and being struck by the intelligence in their eyes. It is such a pity that those who poach them do not share their level of intelligence to understand that they are not only needlessly taking life, but will no longer be able to profit from it. It is clear that, while we carry out the normal protocol of check, double-check and triple-check of new legislation, we must seek to do that as quickly as possible to bring us up to international standards.

I watched a wildlife programme on TV last night, which showed a new way to try to alert people to what poachers are doing. People are putting collars on zebras and other animals. Whenever they see the animals running—they could be running from a lion, but in many cases they are running from poachers in the area—they are able to pinpoint where they are. This is another way of trying to address the issue. We must do everything we can to deal with it.

I have been contacted by auction houses—I have one on the boundary of my constituency—regarding the limited exemptions for antique ivory. The Secretary of State addressed this in introducing this debate and responding to interventions. I have been assured that auction houses and their trading partners are not averse to the legislation, as it stands; that is what they are telling me. They can well see the need to play our part on this horrendous trade, but there is certainly a little fear that any tweaking carried out may adversely affect their ability to sell genuine antiques that are historically and culturally important.

I commend the Government for the exemptions, in the provisions, for bagpipes, violins and pianos. I think that they have made sure that the trade in antiquities is allowed to continue. Pre-1975 musical instruments are also covered by the Bill. There is a real need for balance and to ensure that there is a clear distinction between the modern ivory trade and that in historic or antique ivory. I am given to understand that a strict number of things to be done while selling antique ivory has been suggested. That is right and proper. However, it is also so important that we do not stifle the legal trade in antique ivory while trying to eradicate the modern illegal ivory trade. There are businesses that rely on this

[*Jim Shannon*]

antique trade. They must not be prevented by any changes in the Bill from selling items that are culturally and historically important.

I welcome the fact that the words “enter and search premises” will apply across all the regions of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Indeed, there are further steps that we can take over the cyber-sale of animals and their products. I believe this Bill must be the first of many conversations about how we can conserve and preserve for future generations.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare has said:

“Over a six week period in 2017, with a focus on France, Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom, IFAW’s team of experts and researchers uncovered that thousands of live endangered and threatened animals and animal products were offered for sale online.”

I ask the Minister what we are doing to address the issue of online sales. Many of us understand that, when people can buy ivory online or show ivory for sale online, we need to do something about it and cannot ignore it.

IFAW has identified 5,381 advertisements spread across 106 online marketplaces and social media platforms. It has catalogued 11,772 endangered and threatened specimens worth over £3 million. Again, that shows the magnitude of the problem. I commend the IFAW and other organisations and charities for all that they do. The way in which they highlight this issue, raise awareness and tell us all what is happening is good for us and the story we are telling the House today.

There is work to be done and I would like to see us in the House playing our part to conserve in a common-sense way. We can do our bit here. Let us do it through this Bill.

8.48 pm

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): As my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) said, this is good news. It is very rare to have good news that is supported by all parties in this House. I cannot say I disagree with anything that has been said by anybody on either side of the House, which is also pretty rare. I am delighted that the Bill has come before the House.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has shown huge leadership by pushing the Bill forward, and I think he will bring it in as swiftly as he possibly can. He is, of course, building on the work of other Secretaries of State before him, and particularly on the leadership of the right hon. William Hague—Lord Hague—and the former Prime Minister David Cameron, who said that we should leave this world a better place. I believe that by passing the Bill, we will do that.

Africa needs elephants more than it probably realises in many cases, because it needs the tourism they bring. Many people in the House have young children. I am fortunate enough to have five grandchildren, and I want them to see the elephants. My eldest granddaughter, who will be 14 next month, has seen elephants, but if the ban does not go through and other countries, such as China and America, do not support it in a more limited form, my youngest, who is only three, may not see those iconic creatures, which we all think are fantastic for every reason we can possibly imagine.

The saddest thing about elephant poaching is that it is the oldest elephants that are poached—because they have the biggest tusks, they are a target for the poachers. They are the wise ones of the herd, and they teach and explain to younger family members exactly how to behave. Unfortunately, we are getting some rather wild elephants that are delinquent because they have not had that training, so the sooner we can breed more elephants in the wild to keep the groups together and make those groups larger, the better. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we need to keep the beautiful savannahs as they are.

Poachers kill many rangers, and I would like more Department for International Development money to be spent on training more rangers. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) spoke about using alternative technologies, and that is something that DFID could explore. We could spend more time training people in African countries to understand how they can best beat the poachers, who are pretty clever and ahead of the game. We need to beat them at it.

African elephants are important, but we need to look at other species with tusks that contain ivory, including rhinos and Indian elephants. We need to think hard about how we can include those species, but I do not want to water down the Bill. I want it to be specific, because it is important, but perhaps the Secretary of State will look at how he could include other species later, particularly to save the rhinos, which are on the verge of extinction.

There are many other things that we could do to help the world, including the rainforests. Tigers are endangered, as are gorillas, giraffes and many more animals. We need to save them from extinction because, as I have said, I want my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be able to go and see those different species. It is important for all of us to give future generations that opportunity.

There are a couple more points that I want to mention, but I do not want to take too much time, because this debate is fairly short. It would be useful if DEFRA published a register showing how many exemptions have been issued under the historical, artistic and cultural definition every year, so that a picture could be built up of all the relevant artefacts, which would be verified by people who know what they are doing, such as the V&A and other museums. That register ought to be publicly available, and it would demonstrate a commitment that the exemption is for the rarest and most important items only, not just any old ivory artefact.

Several Members have mentioned the National Wildlife Crime Unit. I hope that the Secretary of State will be able to announce permanent funding for the unit, as its existing funding expires in 2020. That should be part of the UK commitment to enforcement. I also hope that the Border Force CITES team at Heathrow will have sufficient manpower and resources, as it will be the frontline of our defence against illegal imports coming into the UK and organised criminal activity.

Finally, I would like to discuss Hong Kong. Although the Chinese support the ivory ban and, I am pleased to say, were ahead of us, I am told that in Hong Kong—I have a nephew out there—ivory continues to be passed off as mammoth tusks. It is perfectly legal to trade mammoth tusks, so will the Secretary of State work with Chinese leaders to try to shut down that market?

Perhaps he could include a ban on mammoth ivory to close that loophole. People can test the difference between mammoth and elephant tusks, but what border agent or police officer would know about that? They would not challenge it, so we have to be firm and make sure that we close as many loopholes as possible to save these iconic animals that we all want future generations to see. However, I continue to congratulate the Secretary of State on moving fast; I would like to see him do more and move faster.

8.55 pm

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con): I am delighted to rise in support of the Bill. Although our constituents usually see the theatre of questions to the Prime Minister, it is on occasions like this, when we all work together, that the House is strongest. Today is a great example of that. We often work collegially across the House in Committees and all-party groups to achieve good, positive steps like this.

As someone who founded the all-party group on endangered species, along with many Members some who are here, I am pleased that the Government have taken this decisive action and that the group has been able to support the Government's work in this area. Even when some thought it might be just a little too difficult, we held their feet to the fire. I therefore welcome the action that is proposed by my right hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The all-party group is now ably led by my hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean). We work alongside like-minded Members with the stated aim of ensuring

“that the plight of endangered species is on the political agenda of government”,

and we will not be going anywhere.

Elephants—those strong, smart, gentle, beautiful animals—are most definitely, and sadly, in the endangered category. As has been said, according to the WWF, the number of African elephants has fallen from between 3 million and 5 million to 415,000, while the number of Asian elephants has halved over the past three generations. It has also been said already—although it is such a shocking figure that it should be said over and over until something is done about it—that 20,000 elephants are slaughtered every year to fuel the global demand for ivory. It is absolutely horrifying but, in the midst of the horror, we have a glimmer of good news today, as this issue is now firmly on the Government's political agenda—indeed, it is on their legislative agenda too, as the Bill proves. That the Government recognise the need to protect animals and that the Bill will help to close ivory markets and reduce both the price of ivory and the incentive to poach is good news.

I was, of course, first elected to this place in 2015, and the Conservative manifesto on which I stood promised that we would tackle the international wildlife trade and press for a total ban on ivory sales. I am pleased to be able to help deliver on that promise today.

The Bill builds on the proactive and global action that the Government have taken. We held the first international conference on the illegal wildlife trade in London in 2014 and we will soon host the fourth, having supported Vietnam and Botswana in hosting two more.

As an aside, and as my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) and for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) said, the UK spends 0.7% of its GNI on aid, and I believe that wildlife protection would be a worthy use of our aid budget. I therefore urge Ministers to expand that spending.

The UK has successfully lobbied for the EU-wide adoption of a ban on raw ivory, and the UK Border Force successfully targeted ivory sent through postal systems with the WWF-sponsored wildlife crime operation of the year for 2016, Operation Quiver.

We have worked constructively with China to jointly develop and implement law enforcement measures to tackle illegal trade, in stark contrast, I am genuinely sad to say, to past Governments. In 2008, the then Government gave the go-ahead for China to become a licensed trading partner for 108 tonnes of ivory. On my last visit to China, I made the point that it needed to stop the ivory trade. The change in its approach from then to now is remarkable and laudable. I hope that it will go further in the years ahead not only to enforce its law more strongly across the whole of that vast country, but to widen its scope so that other species, such as tigers, get greater protection too.

These are great first steps—they are great steps, but they are just great first steps. As always, we must do more, and for many good reasons. As my hon. Friends the Members for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and for Richmond Park mentioned, the scope of the Bill should be wider. Clause 35 is unnecessarily narrow in referring to the meaning of ivory as only coming from “the tusk or tooth of an elephant.”

The explanatory notes cite many other species that would be eligible for regulations to be laid at a future date, but why wait? Why wait for there to be an issue that affects other animals adversely when we can act today? My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State talked about our goal in providing leadership to the world on this important issue. I say to him and to the Minister that we should deliver that leadership not just for elephants but in pursuit of our goal of protecting animals more widely from what is a wholly unnecessary activity.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): My hon. Friend was kind enough to mention the all-party group. He set up the group, kicking off excellent work on this issue. He talks about how the Bill could go further. Does he agree with both me and the International Fund for Animal Welfare's submission to the debate that we need detailed guidance on what items of artistic and cultural merit should be exempted from the Bill? It is very important that we get the guidance right, so that things do not slip through and contribute to poaching.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I thank my hon. Friend for her kind words, and I urge her to go further in her leadership of the group to deliver what she sets out. She is right that we must be very clear about what we are seeking to achieve. We do not want to create loopholes for those who would seek to perpetuate such crimes against elephants and other animals. We must not allow those loopholes to exist, and we must not create new ones that they would wish to exploit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham) set out, there is a potential loophole in the case of species that are alive and well today but perhaps lower in number than we

[*Mr Jayawardena*]

might like, and in the classification of ivory from mammoths. We could be creating an unnecessary loophole instead of closing it right now. Indeed, I believe we should do that. Unless we are to carbon date every piece of ivory coming through customs checks, we might find that those who commit these crimes will continue to do so.

Britain is very proudly a nation of animal lovers. Animals have a very special place in British society and in the hearts of the generous British people, with a quarter of annual charitable donations going to animal welfare causes. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Bill has wide support from beyond the predictable non-government organisations, which are to be lauded for their efforts in this area. It is so important that the public are on the side of this initiative. Out of 77,000 respondents, 88% supported a ban. The British public want this. Members have called for this. Animals deserve this. Let us get on and do it.

9.3 pm

**Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan** (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con): I am delighted to be able to speak on this important Bill, following on from my hon. Friend the Member for North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena), and to continue to highlight just how Britain is taking the lead across the world in protecting the special and diverse wildlife across our planet. From oceans to the illegal wildlife trade, the Government are showing the environmental leadership that other countries across the globe can emulate and learn from.

There are, sadly, so many species of wildlife across the earth that need our protection from all manner of viruses, diseases, human poaching and destruction of habitat. The poaching and hunting of elephants for ivory is decimating elephant numbers, maiming and killing those sentient animals in the most cruel fashion, and fuelling serious and organised crime which has led to corruption in many of the states where elephants are poached.

The forests of central Africa are the hardest place to study or protect elephants, but it seems they are the first to be hit by poachers. Over the last decade, their number has declined by almost a third. I will not repeat the many statistics already shared with the House, but as my hon. Friend the Member for North East Hampshire just said, the statistic that 20,000 elephants are being lost every year should shock every person listening to or reading this debate.

The demand for ivory in the far east has been the primary driver of the renewal of killing over the last two decades. In the last four years, the wholesale price of raw ivory in China has tripled and reached a \$2,100 a kilo. It is unacceptable for nations to stand by as elephants are killed in their hordes for their ivory. I am proud that, in order to protect elephants for future generations, we are introducing one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales. The maximum available penalty for breaching the ban of an unlimited fine or up to five years in jail seems appropriate, but we must ensure effective enforcement. This tough action will send a message to poachers and countries across the world that Britain is not prepared to stand by while the poaching continues unabated.

While I fully support the Bill and protecting the African elephant, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) about extending its provisions to Asian elephants, the rhino and the narwhal. It is important to consider that when we get into Committee. This is a one-off opportunity to highlight those particular mammals.

I want to raise an issue regarding the exemptions in the Bill. It is good news that there will be exemptions for musical instruments created before 1975 and items with less than 10% ivory content created before 1947—two years when steps were taken towards reducing the ivory trade—as well as those rare items and portrait miniatures that are at least 100 years old. Sales to and between museums will also be allowed, which, thanks to the Bill's registration process, will help us to catalogue these historic items, which are part of the world's artistic heritage.

The WWF has been clear that it does not believe that the exemptions will have a negative impact on the poaching of elephants or the illegal ivory trade. I also note that the exemptions in the USA, which are more relaxed than those in the Bill, have already resulted in a significant decline in the ivory trade across the pond. Given all that, as well as the Chinese ivory ban, which came into effect a few months ago, and the consequent fall in the ivory price, we can have every hope that the Bill will contribute to a reduction in the poaching of our wonderful elephant.

With this in mind, I would ask the Minister to consider one further narrow exemption that I as a Northumbrian MP believe is important for our musical heritage and which should be included in the scope of the exemptions for older musical instruments. In the north of our great country, the pipes—bagpipes and Northumbrian—have been a military and cultural part of our heritage for centuries, and pipers have a particularly long history in Northumberland. The Northumbrian pipes are a physically smaller and perhaps less terrifying musical instrument than their bigger cousin north of the Tweed.

The Northumbrian Pipers' Society is extremely concerned, as am I, that this excellent Bill will inadvertently risk doing severe damage to our piping tradition and therefore to our regional musical heritage. The retrospective nature of the proposals on musical instruments containing ivory, which will make it unlawful to sell or hire instruments made with any ivory in them after 1975, even though they were made perfectly legally and were exclusively made using antique or CITES-licensed ivory, will, according to some estimates by key pipe makers and figures in the tradition, result in at least 500 to 600 sets ceasing to be marketable.

I must declare an interest: my daughter is a Northumbrian piper and owns a set of pipes that contains ivory. I do not know when it was made, and we do not intend to sell it, since we hope to perpetuate this musical Northumbrian tradition by passing them down the generations, but this is no less of an issue for all that. We bought them from a family whose grandfather had died and none of whose children had learned to play. We have been the happy recipients of a musical instrument and a county tradition.

Most of our Northumbrian pipe makers are retiring, including the amazing David Burleigh from the village of Longframlington in my constituency, and the Northumbrian Pipers' Society relies heavily on second-hand

sets to fill the gap and be sold on to those of the next generation, such as my daughter, to continue this ancient musical tradition. It would be a huge error to inadvertently suffocate one of our country's finest musical traditions—it is the only instrument indigenous to England that has an unbroken history of performance—by missing a small exemption to this Bill, which I do not believe would have a negative effect on the poaching of elephants since we are talking about pipes made by recycling old or ancient ivory.

I think it fair to say that extending the exemption to cover all sets of Northumbrian pipes made before and during the Bill's passage would not in any way encourage poaching or feed the illegal trade in ivory, given that the ivory concerned comprises very small pieces that could not realistically be reworked for sale in any other form. I should be delighted to meet the Secretary of State to discuss the matter in more detail, and to find a way of protecting the great tradition of those instruments and the heritage of Northumberland.

Apart from that one issue, which I call on the Government to consider further, I am delighted to support the Bill and to ensure that the UK leads the world in tackling the scourge of the illegal wildlife trade. I want the children of the future to watch "The Jungle Book", which is my favourite film—[*Laughter.*] Confessions, Madam Deputy Speaker! I want those children to see the wonderful herd of elephants on Jungle Patrol, and to know that they are seeing a representation of a living, thriving animal community, not an extinct species.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. I am afraid that I must reduce the speaking time limit to five minutes.

9.10 pm

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): I congratulate all the animal organisations that have encouraged the Government to introduce the Bill, and I completely agree with what my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) and for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham) said. However, there are three people I wish to single out. The first is Mr Attenborough, whose wonderful films and programmes have transformed people's perceptions and views of animals, not just throughout our country but throughout the world. If only I had a voice like Mr Attenborough's, Madam Deputy Speaker, wouldn't I be worth a lot of money?

I also wish to congratulate a lady called Lorraine Platt. I do not wish to upset a number of my colleagues—I do not think that there are any farmers in the Chamber at the moment—but I have been here for quite a while, and there was a time when it seemed that if an animal walked or moved a bit quickly, one might be encouraged to shoot or snare it. Lorraine Platt has transformed my party's perception of the way in which we treat animals, and I salute her for that.

Finally, I congratulate the Secretary of State. We heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), but this is a moment for celebration—and here I come to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Workington (Sue Hayman). Looking around the Chamber, I think that I have been a Member of Parliament for longer than anyone else who is present, and I have a good memory of how we have dealt with

animal welfare measures in the past. We have not always been brilliant on the issue. In fact, it was David Mellor, when he was a Minister, who amended a raft of legislation—I happened to be a member of the Committee considering the Bill in question—but the hon. Lady mentioned the Labour party. It is absolutely true that when Tony Blair took office, animal welfare organisations were very enthusiastic about the way in which the party would develop, and huge amounts of money were given to it.

I salute what I see as a major victory on foxhunting. Indeed, I can tell my colleagues that I was one of the only five Conservatives who used to vote in favour of banning it. How that has changed in 2018. Colleagues saw that when our Prime Minister made an off-the-cuff remark about a free vote on bringing back foxhunting, it went down like a lead balloon. However, let me say gently to the hon. Lady that by the time Tony Blair left office, when I had strong contacts with many animal welfare organisations, I felt that there was some disappointment, so I salute what the Secretary of State is doing. I cannot keep up with it. Each week, each month, all the things we have been asking for for such a long time are happening. The House will be united in encouraging him.

Elephants are wonderful animals. I have kept most kinds of animal, but I have never owned an elephant. We have not had room for one—although, according to my wife, I sound like a herd of elephants when I go up and down the stairs. It is impossible to imagine a world without elephants: that is unthinkable. We need only see the television programmes in which an elephant dies and all the others gather round it. They are absolutely wonderful animals, and what has been happening is barbaric.

I recently met Mr Duncan McNair, founder of Save the Asian Elephants, a remarkable association, and I gently say to the House that we must discourage our constituents from going on safaris where they ride on elephants. They should learn in detail how these elephants are restrained; it is quite wicked.

I was in Strasbourg last week. It was the first time I have ever been there, and it was wonderful. I addressed the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals, and it is going to follow our lead in this regard.

I do not judge a society just on how it treats human beings; I judge it also on how it treats animals. This is a great day for the House of Commons and a great day in terms of progress in animal welfare.

9.15 pm

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate. I want to underscore some of the points already made and develop a further point that I canvassed briefly with my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith).

The first reason why this Bill is so important is the context. Elephants are in decline by 8% per annum according to the 2016 great elephant census, and we have heard today some other startling statistics: 55 elephants killed per day, 20,000 per annum, and an elephant dying every 25 minutes or so. There is legislation in place, but it is inadequate: in 1990 ivory was banned under the convention on international trade in endangered species, but that of course covered only post-1990 ivory. The message

[Alex Chalk]

is therefore unclear and inconsistent, and this excellent Bill will help to bring clarity and consistency. As others have indicated, it also closes off that loophole that exists and the scope to launder illegal ivory as legal ivory.

In due course, after the Committee stage and when this Bill is enacted, the message will go out that the UK ivory market is closed to all items containing ivory, apart from a few very narrow exceptions. That is fantastic, and it also means that the UK will take on a role of global leadership and will be very well placed come the October meeting on the illegal wildlife trade.

There is also a point that I want to develop which will add to this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park made the point powerfully that the British people want to ensure that when we play our important role in the world in this area we can bring real ammunition to the fight. However, we should look at the budget we allocate to this important priority for the British people. When we look at the language used in how we go about deploying that financial firepower, we see that it is very narrowly focused. I am referring to the fact that every year the UK spends 0.7% of our gross national income on international development. We have the Department for International Development, but it is very narrowly focused, because its sole goal, as indicated by the House of Commons International Development Committee report, is ending poverty. That is because in 1970 the UN target was set and at that point the UN General Assembly said the money must be spent on overseas development assistance. So the money must be spent on development assistance, and the Act which enacted the 0.7% requirement was called the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 and the Department is called the Department for International Development. What I would like to see—and what I sense that my constituents in Cheltenham would like to see—is for that Department to become the Department for International Development and Conservation, because at the moment the sole focus on poverty is a difficult pill to swallow. I have poverty in my constituency—there are areas of entrenched poverty—and it is therefore a difficult sell to say that £14 billion must be dedicated exclusively to that fight.

To put this in context, our entire prisons budget is about £4 billion, yet we will be spending £14 billion on tackling poverty. This wonderful Bill, which has enjoyed cross-party support, presents a great opportunity; it can be the springboard for us to do something bolder and more radical. There should be greater fluidity in terms of how we spend this money. Before anyone says that we cannot do that because the OECD says that it must be limited to international development, let me remind the House—lest we forget—that because the United Kingdom is an international aid superpower, we were able to leverage that power to achieve some flexibility in February 2016. We are now allowed to use the money in that budget to pay for peace and security-related costs, so why can we not go one step further? Why can we not use the excellent opportunity presented by the Ivory Bill to go further and to direct that money towards conservation? Let the moment start here. The Department for International Development should in due course become the Department for International Development and Conservation.

9.20 pm

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): I rise to speak in support of this important measure. Indeed, I applaud the first five words of the Bill. Someone said earlier that it was a short Bill, but I do not find it particularly short. However, clause 1(1) is short enough. It states:

“Dealing in ivory is prohibited.”

That is a measure that I believe commands the support of both sides of the House. I stand here in the full knowledge that my constituents, from the very young to the most senior, feel passionately about protecting and preserving the elephant, which is sadly now under critical threat. I also want to speak on behalf of my grandchildren, and of their children yet unborn. I do not want to be part of a generation of humanity that stood by and allowed avarice and cruelty to destroy one of the most extraordinary creatures ever to grace this planet. It is unimaginable to me that the generations yet to come might never see an elephant in its natural environment.

If we do not take the lead on this matter, who will? I for one am proud that we are taking the lead, and the Bill shows that the United Kingdom is once again leading the world in animal welfare. By implementing one of the toughest ivory bans worldwide, this Parliament is sending the world the clear message that we are aware of the dangers facing the elephant population and that we are prepared to do something about it. The worldwide ivory trade has had a massively negative impact on elephants. The statistics have been rehearsed many times during the debate, and they are terrible. The WWF estimates that the current elephant population is barely a tenth of what it was in the early 20th century, and even now 55 elephants are killed for their tusks every day.

However, the ivory trade does more than kill elephants. A ground-breaking study by Dr Katharine Abernethy of Stirling University—where else?—found that routes forged by ivory smugglers enabled trade in other critically endangered species. The demand for ivory creates smuggling routes across forest borders, and those routes are then used by traffickers moving other animals, such as the pangolin. Pangolins are scaly, ant-eating mammals. Their meat is considered a delicacy and their scales are deemed by some to have magical medicinal properties. The pangolin is considered to be one of the most trafficked animals in the world today; it is probably the most trafficked animal that most people have never heard of. The WWF classifies the African elephant as “vulnerable”, but it classifies two of the pangolin species as “critically endangered”, the most serious classification, meaning that those species are at serious risk of extinction.

I therefore welcome the Bill on many different levels, and I hope that it sends a clear signal that the UK intends to bring down the ivory trade and the other criminal smuggling routes it enables. However, my attention has been drawn to certain aspects of the Bill. I believe that some of the definitions will need to be looked at closely in Committee, and either expanded or tightened. For example, clause 6 deals with pre-1918 portrait miniatures, but I believe that the definition of a portrait miniature needs to be looked at. Clause 7 deals with pre-1947 items with low ivory content, providing for an exemption if

“the volume of ivory in the item is less than 10% of the total volume of the material of which the item is made”.

It has been brought to my attention that that measure could have unintended consequences, because the Bill in its current form would inhibit the sale of small antique items consisting entirely of ivory made before 1947. We need to look at these definitions and their consequences, and we need to be determined about what we want this legislation to do.

I am pleased that clause 8 mentions pre-1975 musical instruments, because I am a piper, owning a priceless set of bagpipes with ivory mounts that my father got me—long before 1975, I hasten to add. Those mounts do make me sad, but it is a precious instrument and it makes a glorious sound, symbolising so much for my countrymen. I hope that the House will remain united as the Bill moves through Parliament and that we stamp out the ivory trade, because we must.

9.25 pm

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): I beg some indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, because the start of my speech may seem slightly unrelated to the topic we are discussing. As a football fan, I am a frequent visitor to countries around the world. I do not know much about football, but I love to see it being played internationally, so in 2010 I found myself in South Africa for that great tournament. Who could forget some of those incredible games? We saw Portugal take on the mighty North Korea and defeat them 7-0, and the final saw Spain win their first World cup, defeating the Dutch 1-0 in extra time with Iniesta scoring the goal. However, what was most memorable about my trip to South Africa was the incredible countryside.

I took the 200 km “Garden Route” trip from Cape Town along the coast, through the wine regions, and on to the Tsitsikamma national park and over the suspension bridge that crosses the Storms river—breath-taking scenery and amazing countryside—and I then headed north to Kruger. I was travelling with some friends, and I like to go to bed early, so I left them at the bar, drinking heavily. About an hour later, my good friend Tony awoke me with a tap and said, “You need to get up and see this.” We opened the door of our chalet and immediately outside was a huge elephant within touching distance, eating from the trees. It was incredible to see a magnificent animal like that in a semi-natural habitat, although I appreciate that eating next to a chalet is not completely natural for an elephant. I have two children, one of whom is currently touring the world. She has spent five months in Australia, and I hope that she will one day have the opportunity to see such magnificent elephants in their natural habitat. The work we are doing this evening could lead to that being a more likely possibility—indeed, a probability—in the future.

It is important to remember that we are a long way from South Africa, but the work of the British Government takes us to these places around the world. If I remember correctly, Cyril Ramaphosa became the South African President in February this year, and he met the Prime Minister in April to talk about the work that the British Government can do with South Africa in the future. I understand that we have committed approximately £50 million over the next four years to work with the South African Government to create employment and help the country to overcome barriers that will allow other countries, including the UK—this will be particularly important post-Brexit—to work and trade with South

Africa and other African nations. If they lose out on the income from trading in ivory, it is important that that is replaced somehow.

There is an interesting supply-and-demand argument around the money in the ivory trade. In 2016, approximately 100 tonnes of ivory was publicly destroyed to say to the smugglers, “We are destroying this stuff; it has no place being traded.” However, it is understandable that poor countries such as Zimbabwe, which tried to sell 70 tonnes for approximately \$35 million, feel that they need the income. I believe it is incumbent on us to help support Zimbabwe industrially in order to make sure it can replace that trade.

I conclude with the words of Charlie Mayhew, the chief executive officer and founder of Tusk:

“We believe that an unambiguous message should be communicated to the world that elephants are globally protected and that buying ivory is no longer socially acceptable.”

9.30 pm

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): It is an enormous pleasure to speak in this debate, and it is also a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), who has this evening demonstrated the real mix of wit and insight that the House has come to expect from him.

It is a real honour to speak in this debate, which shows the House at its best as we come together to make law at a time when we can feel the era changing. Not so long ago a person who wished to indicate that they were civilised and that they had travelled the world would do so by bringing something back, and that something would be a part of an animal they had killed to demonstrate that they had been to those places and seen those exotic animals.

Times change, and social attitudes clearly change. It is now no longer acceptable for fashion to be facilitated by cruelty, and that is the law we are discussing tonight. We realise, as we have heard a number of times this evening, that the scale of elephant killing is gigantic. We have lost five or six elephants since the start of this debate. The statistic is that we lose 20,000 elephants a year or one elephant every 25 minutes, which is extraordinary, but those dry statistics just do not do justice to the issue.

Anybody who has been to see elephants—ideally in their natural environment, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North has, but even in captivity where they are being bred or researched for conservation reasons—will realise the extraordinary beauty, sensitivity and intelligence of these animals. Elephants seem almost human, and anybody who has seen footage in a wildlife documentary of parent elephants mourning a dead baby elephant, or mourning one of their own group, will realise quite how important it is that we protect them.

It is important that we have a functioning ecosystem. It is not just elephants, because all the other animals that live on the African plains depend on elephants keeping the ecosystem healthy. Of course it is far more important than that. It is important for the animals, it is important for our environment and it is also important for the people, because we now accept in this House and across the country that we should be protecting, not plundering, developing countries. If developing countries have a resource such as eco-tourism, we realise that we should be helping them—not exploiting them but protecting and helping them to profit from eco-tourism.

[Robert Courts]

I agree entirely with every hon. Member who has said today that they are standing up on behalf of not just current generations but their children. I have a two-year-old toddler, and I would like him to be able to go to Africa or to other countries around the world to see elephants in their natural environment. It is crucial that we do this.

The human impact is so important because it goes further than simply helping people. As with the illegal drug trade, the organised crime ramifications of wildlife crime are enormous. We have heard from a number of Members on both sides of the House that 100 rangers are killed by poachers each year as they try to protect elephants. We simply have to ensure that we stop the demand, and we can do that with the Bill.

I have sympathy for those who require exemptions for various reasons—for example, for cultural reasons—and I am grateful to the Government for thinking about those reasons and for introducing defined, narrow, clearly interpreted and well thought through exceptions, which I also support.

At present, unfortunately, the current regime simply is not working. I ask the Government to consider some of the definitions in clause 35, which other Members have raised. My constituency contains Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, and I may be unique in being a Member of Parliament who has bottle-fed a baby rhino, which I was greatly honoured to do at that park. I am of course aware that rhinos could be affected and so it is strange that the explanatory notes state that the

“delegated power could...be applied if the restrictions under this Bill inadvertently lead to the displacement of the ivory trade from elephant ivory to another form of ivory.”

That is likely to happen and we ought to deal with it now.

In the last few seconds available, let me say that I am grateful to those from all over West Oxfordshire who have written to me to express their support for the Bill. They are on the right side of history and so are the Government.

9.35 pm

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): It is a pleasure to be the last Back Bencher to speak. I shall be looking to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann), whose yawning ratio has increased, to see when I should sit back in my place.

I absolutely support this Bill, for all the reasons as everybody else. Therefore, I will not rehearse those arguments and will instead focus on two matters, the first being the definition of ivory. I note the points that have been made about how that can be extended. The explanatory notes say that under clause 35 the definition can indeed be extended to cover beyond elephants. However, that would happen only if the Government took the view that there had been a shift towards trade in other ivory—they would then perhaps then extend this. It would be a bit more up front to put that extension in place immediately and I cannot understand why this is limited just to the elephant tusk.

The second point I want to make is about the exemptions. In the event that we are to have exemptions, and we see the Bill contains some limited ones, surely it makes sense for the Bill Committee to get those absolutely right.

Notwithstanding the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts), my concern is that I do not find those exemptions particularly tight. There is a series of exemptions. For example, clause 2 refers to pre-1918 rare items and those with artistic, cultural or historical significance. We all have a view on what such things could be and it will be incredibly difficult to differentiate objectively. The Bill also mentions other time limits; there are references to 1975.

I find the exemptions somewhat random, so my idea to throw into the pot is that we have just one pre-defined list—a “now or never” registration, using pre-1947 as the date. People would not be able to add to the list and anything that has not been registered would just get destroyed. That should include museums. Thereafter, we would have the pre-defined set of items in place, we would have certainty and this could not be gamed. We would therefore just have one criterion. That registration process would be paid for, and any excess amounts banked by the Government should be spent on prohibition work in the field in the countries where this exists. If anything in the list is transferred, there should be a 20% tax, which would also go to those causes.

Those are my ideas to throw into the pot. A lot more could be done in Committee to get these exemptions narrowed and standardised, and to give better legal certainty that this will work.

9.38 pm

**Holly Lynch** (Halifax) (Lab): We have had an excellent debate this evening, and I thank Members from across the House for their contributions. To reiterate what my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State said in her opening speech, the Labour party welcomes this Bill and we will be supporting it this evening. Of course we will, however, be seeking to play a role in testing and tightening it in Committee, particularly on its exemptions.

We have heard some well researched and articulated speeches and interventions, and I shall mention just a few. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) and the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), among others, made an important point about online sales. There must not be an online market for such items, and I would be keen to explore every opportunity to close loopholes for the sale and trade of ivory as this Bill progresses. My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh), the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, and others made an important point about the funding of the National Wildlife Crime Unit. It is an important part of resourcing the enforcement efforts required to really enact this legislation in the way that we envisage, and I look to the Government to reassure us further on that point and commit to funding the unit beyond 2020.

The right hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) made a passionate speech based on his experience in this policy area and rightly paid tribute to the bold action taken by the Chinese Government. He also reflected on the difficult and insatiable relationship between supply and demand that will persist unless we step in and sever it.

The hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes) made a characteristically interesting speech that I thoroughly enjoyed. He made a serious point about the economic impact on certain countries of banning the ivory trade and what we might need to consider by way of support as we move through the transition.

It is worth reflecting on the public's role in the progress that has led to the Bill before us and thanking them for their contributions. I am mindful that the last time the House debated this issue was in a Westminster Hall debate on an e-petition calling on the Government to shut down the domestic ivory trade, which secured more than 100,000 signatures. Further to that, as the Secretary of State mentioned, after the Government opened their consultation on the proposals at the end of last year, a staggering 70,000 people and organisations responded. More than 80% of responses were in favour of measures to ban ivory sales in the UK; that has no doubt assisted in the shaping of the Bill.

I think, based on the contributions we have heard, that we all share a great sadness that the illegal wildlife trade has grown rapidly in recent years. It is absolutely right that we take robust domestic action to tackle it head on, while demonstrating leadership on this issue to the rest of the world. Despite the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, to which 183 states are party, and the introduction of an international ivory ban in 1989, we have still witnessed a worrying upward trend in illegal killings since the mid-2000s. As we have heard, recent estimates of African savanna elephant populations indicated a 30% decline in numbers between 2007 and 2014. That is 144,000 fewer elephants.

The examples of decisive action taken by the US and China have already had a positive impact, so we welcome this domestic action, which we hope will help to turn around the situation. One issue that we wish to explore further in Committee is the possibility of displacement and unintended consequences, for which we will have to be ready. There have been suggestions that the Chinese Government's interventions on ivory may have brought about an increase in trade in neighbouring states in which controls are more relaxed. I was interested to hear the point made by the hon. Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham) about mammoth tusks, which proves that workarounds will be found by unscrupulous poachers if there is scope for them to find them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), the hon. Members for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) and for Mid Derbyshire, the right hon. Member for North Shropshire and several others made the point that clause 35 sets out the meaning of ivory as being "ivory from the tusk or tooth of an elephant."

Both the Bill and the explanatory notes reflect on the possibility of a clampdown on elephant ivory resulting in an increased threat to other animals—such as hippopotamuses or a variety of marine animals—but neither offers a comprehensive framework for responding to that threat. Sadly, we can envisage that unintended consequence becoming a reality if we are not prepared for it.

Labour has long been the party of animal welfare, from banning foxhunting and fur farms in the UK to the introduction of the landmark Animal Welfare Act 2006, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) for acknowledging that. In an insightful speech, the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), said that nobody could get legislation through quickly like the Secretary of State. That having been said, we welcome the opportunity

to congratulate the Secretary of State and his team on finally bringing some legislation to the Chamber. For all his bold announcements, we are reassured that he is finally translating the words and consultations into action and law change, as this is the first piece of primary legislation that we have seen from him since his appointment to the role.

Earlier, the hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) made the point that if the Government can implement a comprehensive ban on ivory, they could also look into a comprehensive ban on fur, as debated in Westminster Hall today. Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East, they could also look into banning the use of animals in circuses. We look forward to seeing legislation on both those issues in the not-too-distant future. Again, we welcome the legislation before us and look forward to revisiting the detail in Committee.

9.44 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley):** I wish to thank Members from all parties for their contributions to this really important debate. I am encouraged by the strong consensus in the Chamber that the Bill is essential in the fight against the poaching of elephants for their ivory. I am grateful to Members on both sides of the House for that clear cross-party support. There were some excellent speeches from the hon. Members for Workington (Sue Hayman), for Halifax (Holly Lynch) and for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron), who showed such important cross-party consensus on the fact that action must be taken.

Restrictions on commercial activities in ivory and other products from endangered species were first introduced when the United Kingdom became party to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, CITES, in 1975. The EU wildlife trade regulations introduced in 1997 implement CITES in a stricter manner than is required by the convention. The Bill now builds on those existing regulations to underline the fact the United Kingdom does not accept that ivory should be seen ever as a desirable commodity or, even worse, as a status symbol.

The Government have introduced this Bill quickly—only six weeks after we published our consultation response. We recognise the need to act quickly, which has been highlighted by many Members throughout the House—I am very grateful for that. I am hopeful that Members from across the House will work together to ensure the swift passage of the Bill through Parliament in the weeks ahead.

Before I respond to individual points raised by Members, I should like to pay tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey). Indeed, this Bill bears the hallmarks of her committed campaigning and energy, which make her such a popular figure in the House. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you and Members from across the House will join me in wishing her a speedy recovery. I will do everything that I can, to the best of my endeavours, to provide cover for her from the substitutes' bench until she returns safe and well to join us in this place.

We should also recognise, as many Members have, the incredible efforts of the 70,000 individuals and organisations that took the time to respond to the

[David Rutley]

consultation that was launched last October. It is particularly encouraging that some 88% of respondents supported the ban on the sale of ivory. I thank the environmental bodies represented in those responses, and those from the antiques trade, the music sector and others, for their constructive engagement and support. I have been particularly heartened to see the endorsement of our approach from conservation organisations such as the WWF, the Tusk Trust, the Zoological Society of London, the Born Free Foundation and Stop Ivory, among others. It is most welcome and sincerely appreciated.

That engagement and the level of support for our proposals has convinced us that it is right that the Bill sets out a strong ban to protect elephants in the wild from poaching, with only a very limited number of exemptions for ivory items that would not contribute either directly or indirectly to poaching. We believe that approach is both proportionate and, of course, robust, as it should be.

When I saw elephants in the wild during a very memorable visit to Tanzania in 1988, the African elephant population was estimated to be 600,000.

**Sir David Amess:** I have been listening very carefully to what my hon. Friend is saying. When it comes to the Committee stage of the Bill, will he look very carefully at what colleagues on both sides of the House have said and extend the ban to include, for instance, rhino horns?

**David Rutley:** We have already taken very strong action to combat the illegal trade in rhino horn. Other Members have also talked about the need to extend that to other ivory-bearing species—I will come on to that later if I can. Under clause 35, the Secretary of State does have powers to extend that ban if there is sufficient displacement. That is a delegated power and we will obviously take it very seriously. We can debate that more in Committee.

As I was saying, figures for the elephant population have moved from 600,000 when I visited Tanzania to just 415,000. That is a depressing decline of more than 30%. As many Members have said, we need to ensure that future generations will be able to see these splendid and iconic creatures in their natural habitats and not in captivity. We want future generations to be able to benefit from that.

We are taking positive steps that will lead the way in the global fight against elephants heading towards extinction. The Bill achieves that by banning commercial activities in ivory, which we define as buying, selling or hiring ivory; offering to buy, sell or hire ivory; and keeping ivory for sale. In so doing, we will put a responsibility on both the buyer and the seller, and capture the actions taken by the middlemen who facilitate or support the trade—for example, those advertising ivory illegally. Many hon. Members have mentioned their concerns about online trade, which the Bill seeks to tackle absolutely. However, it should be noted that the ban will not prohibit owning, inheriting, donating or bequeathing ivory that is currently permitted. That will extend to Northumbrian pipes, which my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mrs Trevelyan) will be pleased to hear.

The Bill sets out five limited and targeted exemptions to the ban, including a *de minimis* exemption for items with low ivory content; musical instruments; portrait miniatures; sales to and between accredited museums; and items assessed as being the rarest and most important examples of their type. Those strictly defined exemptions were informed by the consultation and by fully examining global best practice. They have been carefully designed to cover items that, when sold, do not directly or indirectly fuel the poaching of elephants. A certification process is applied to the exemption for the rarest and most important items, while a self-registration process applies to the other four categories.

Finally, the Bill provides for the offences, sanctions and powers necessary for the enforcement of the ban. A mixed regime of criminal and civil sanctions has been applied, recognising that offences are likely to range in severity. Enforcement agencies are empowered by the Bill to ensure that those acting in breach of the ban will face the appropriate punishment. We remain committed to setting a high bar internationally on sanctions for illegal wildlife trade activities. As such, the maximum criminal sanction of five years' imprisonment or an unlimited fine will be applied. That is in line with existing sanctions under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1997. Those penalties rightly reflect the serious nature of the ban. The powers to enforce the ban will be conferred upon the regulatory body, the police and customs officials. Those powers are derived from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Let me move on to some of the issues that hon. Members have raised in this consensual and important debate. It is great to have the support that we have seen from across the House, including from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham) and the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish). We heard from Northern Ireland with the contribution of the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), and from my hon. Friends the Members for Southend West (Sir David Amess), for Newbury (Richard Benyon) and for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), with characteristic flair and commitment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) raised a number of important points. I praise his commitment to this vital work and the contribution he made when he was Secretary of State. He raised concerns about the rarest and most important items. I reassure him that clause 3 is very much a framework, not a comprehensive list; further information will be given in guidance. He and the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow also suggested an annual register of the rarest and most important exempted items. We will happily look at how that data can be published, including by using the new IT system that will be developed to facilitate this task.

Members were concerned about online sales. The Bill captures and fully addresses that issue. As I said before, it will be an offence to facilitate a sale. Some Members mentioned how important it is to look at other ivory-bearing species. They included my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith), who has made huge contributions on this subject, and my hon. Friends the Members for North East Hampshire (Mr Jaywardena), for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman)—my hon. Friend came up at

the rear of the debate, but made an important contribution. Clause 35 will provide that opportunity. I would also like to reassure some colleagues, who have wondered whether the Bill covers Asian elephants, that it categorically covers both African and Asian elephants.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) raised what he called the Elgin question. I can tell my hon. Friend—he knows why I call him that—that it should be called the Bassetlaw question, without a doubt. I will make sure that I get back to him in writing to address the question of whether ivory should be returned to a museum in a country of origin.

The hon. Member for Workington asked about funding for enforcement. The Office of Product Safety and Standards has now been confirmed as the regulator. It will have a vital role in working with the police and customs officials to tackle this very significant crime. We can talk more about that role in Committee, as I hope she agrees. The work carried out by the National Wildlife Crime Unit is also absolutely critical. She asked about funding for that work. I assure her that we are looking at that vital issue ahead of the IWT conference, and I am sure that the Secretary of State will be working on it with the Home Secretary.

**Mr Jayawardena:** I should declare an interest in relation to a visit I made to Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, much conservation work is done with Asian elephants. Currently, however, Sri Lanka is not eligible for aid funding. In line with what my hon. Friends the Members for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) and for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith), among others, have said, will the Minister agree to look at how more aid funding could be allocated to supporting conservation efforts?

**David Rutley:** That is an important point. I am sure that the Secretary of State has been looking at it over recent months, and I will be happy to raise it as well and to meet my hon. Friend to discuss it more fully.

**Mr Paterson:** The Minister touched on the conference in October. As there is tremendous, overwhelming and, I think, unanimous support for the Bill, how quickly does he think he and his colleagues can get it through the Commons, through the other place, and on to the statute book?

**David Rutley:** That is a vital question. I have looked at my boss, the Secretary of State, and his look said it all: it will be at pace. I am sure that there will be the same commitment when we work with Members from across the House. This activity needs to be stopped, and it needs to be stopped very speedily. We will be playing our part in Parliament to make sure that that happens.

The hon. Member for Workington asked what actions are being taken to lobby other countries. Clearly, the IWT conference will be a chance to take that work forward. The Secretary of State and the Foreign Secretary are working very hard to make sure that this work is taken forward with other states around the world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West confirmed his passion for protecting elephants, but it is also important to note that he confirmed that he is a national treasure himself—one that should definitely be preserved.

It has been a real honour to have been able to participate in this debate and to help to take forward this vital legislation on behalf of the Government, but also on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal. We do wish her a very speedy return to this House.

We want these proposals to be passed through the House speedily, but also to be implemented speedily to tackle the heinous crime of poaching. I am grateful to Members on both sides of the House for the support that they have shown for this Bill. I urge them to continue to demonstrate their support as the Bill makes progress through Parliament—hopefully very speedy progress, because that is what it definitely deserves. I know that through the media others will be watching what we are doing in this House. With the illegal wildlife trade conference in October, global leaders will be arriving in London. They will be able to look at what we are doing, and we will be able to demonstrate to others that we mean what we say on ending the trade in ivory. We hope that other nations will follow our lead by helping to close down their own domestic markets, and that this Bill will inspire them to do so. I commend the Bill to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time.*

#### IVORY BILL (PROGRAMME)

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),*

That the following provisions shall apply to the Ivory Bill:

##### *Committal*

(1) The Bill shall be committed to a Public Bill Committee.

##### *Proceedings in Public Bill Committee*

(2) Proceedings in the Public Bill Committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion on Thursday 21 June 2018.

(3) The Public Bill Committee shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it meets.

##### *Consideration and up to and including Third Reading*

(4) Proceedings on Consideration and any proceedings in legislative grand committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which those proceedings are commenced.

(5) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment of interruption on that day.

(6) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings on Consideration and up to and including Third Reading.

##### *Other proceedings*

(7) Any other proceedings on the Bill may be programmed.—*(Rebecca Harris.)*

*Question agreed to.*

#### IVORY BILL (MONEY)

*Queen's recommendation signified.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Ivory Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State under or by virtue of the Act.—*(Rebecca Harris.)*

*Question agreed to.*

## Business without Debate

### COMMITTEES

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** With the leave of the House, we will take motions 4 to 8 together.  
*Ordered,*

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

That Glyn Davies be discharged from the Environmental Audit Committee and James Gray be added.

#### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

That James Duddridge be discharged from the International Development Committee and Mark Menzies be added.

#### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

That Sarah Champion be discharged from the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and Tulip Siddiq be added.

#### WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

That Tulip Siddiq and Rosie Duffield be discharged from the Women and Equalities Committee and Teresa Pearce and Sarah Champion be added.

#### WORK AND PENSIONS

That Andrew Bowie and Emma Dent Coad be discharged from the Work and Pensions Committee and Rosie Duffield and Justin Tomlinson be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

## Geothermal Energy: Clackmannanshire

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

10 pm

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for granting this Adjournment debate on geothermal energy in Clackmannanshire. I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about this potentially exciting, new, greener renewable technology in the energy sector and its ramifications for Clackmannanshire, Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom.

Known as the wee county, Clackmannanshire is the smallest council area in Scotland, situated in the south-western corner of my constituency. It is tucked away beneath the Ochil hills, flanked by Stirling to the west, Kinross-shire to the east and the River Forth to the south. Despite being home to successful companies such as Diageo, United Glass, the William Brothers Brewing Company and innumerable small and medium-sized enterprises, Clacks is a former industrial and mining community and still has some of the most deprived areas in our country. Meanwhile, geothermal energy is a form of renewable energy in its relative infancy in the United Kingdom, with opportunities still being identified and explored, and it is struggling to enter the mainstream of energy provision in the United Kingdom.

While I am sure no one would suggest that Adjournment debates usually only cater to a limited audience, addressing the niche interests of Members, with limited implications for the wider country, on the surface this debate on a relatively minor energy source in one of the smallest council areas in the country may ungenerously be described as such. However, given the limited exploitation of geothermal energy in the United Kingdom and the potential for its use in Clackmannanshire, the implications of investment and development of geothermal for the wider industry sector and the country are enormous.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am here to support him and congratulate him on securing the debate. Does he agree that the impact of such projects on the local economy, and especially the long-term benefits, has to be a significant consideration for Government? Everybody in the United Kingdom could benefit from projects just like this.

**Luke Graham:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, and I could not agree more. One reason why I applied for this debate is to espouse the long-term benefits of these projects and how that will align with the country's industrial strategy.

Before I get too far ahead of myself, I want to look at the broader industry and the place of geothermal within the industry. According to the House of Commons Library, the total energy sector in the UK was worth £24 billion in 2016. In the same year, the industry as a whole invested £11 billion—the equivalent of £1 in every £16 invested in the UK. It is an industry that directly employs 148,000 workers and supports a further 582,000 through the supply chain, consulting and other energy-related activities. That is a total of 730,000 jobs supported in the UK by the energy sector. Meanwhile,

around 22,000 people in Scotland are employed in the energy sector, with the oil and gas sector being a major part of that. The energy sector therefore represents an important industry not just in terms of its contribution to the total GDP of the United Kingdom, but in terms of jobs, investment, research and development and supporting industries.

Energy is important. It heats our homes, cooks our meals and runs the appliances, amenities and communications devices without which our tablets, laptops and businesses could not function. In short, it impacts on every aspect of 21st-century life. The 19th and 20th-century sources of energy have long since ceased to be seen as the future. Renewable energy sources are an ever increasing part of the suite of energy sources, and Scotland has been at the forefront of such innovations, with wind and sea power particularly prevalent in its contribution. I wholeheartedly support those steps and hope that the UK will continue to be at the forefront of such renewable energy options—not just wind and sea but others too, such as geothermal.

You may ask, Mr Deputy Speaker, why geothermal energy? In simple terms, geothermal energy is valuable because it is generated and stored in the earth. It is heat extracted directly from the earth. It is generally available via shallow geothermal ground source heat pumps, which use the heat stored in the earth to generate electricity or provide heating. Geothermal is considered a renewable form of energy due to the vast amount of heat inside the earth and the continuous production of additional heat derived effectively from the earth's core.

It is important to understand that geothermal energy is not the same as fracking, as some have tried to claim. For clarity, geothermal technology uses things such as mine water, closed boreholes and surface water, none of which has any similarity to fracking. Fracking is a process used to break up rock at great depths to release gas from ancient plant deposits. In the UK, this typically happens 2.5 km below the surface using a process involving large diameter boreholes and huge hydraulic pressures, and those are part of the concerns currently being debated. By contrast, with geothermal, the typical closed loop borehole, such as the one that would be used in Clackmannanshire, is no more than 200 metres deep, with a small diameter, and is installed in the same way and to the same standards as a water well.

We should consider the environmental impact, or relative lack thereof, of geothermal energy. It does not require combustion, unlike traditional energy plants, so it emits very low levels of greenhouse gases. It also eliminates the mining and transportation processes involved in fossil fuel energy generation. Finally, it takes up very little surface land, putting it among the smallest footprint per kilowatt of any power generation technology, including coal, nuclear and other renewables.

**Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con):** I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this very important and interesting debate. He is speaking specifically about the size of these developments, but, as he mentioned wind energy earlier, does he accept that there is concern in my Moray constituency, as well as in many parts of Scotland and, indeed, of the UK, that large-scale windfarms are scarring our communities? Indeed, Moray has reached saturation point for the number of wind turbines and windfarms we can have, and we should really be looking at smaller methods of renewable energy.

**Luke Graham:** I would not dare to claim to know more than my hon. Friend about his constituency, but I would say that a key part of the industrial strategy is to have more regional facilities and smaller-scale projects, and I am hoping to advocate doing so tonight.

As I was saying, for comparison, the carbon footprint estimate for an oil boiler is 310 to 550g CO<sub>2</sub>eq/kWh or—for those who do not know—grams of carbon dioxide equivalent per kilowatt-hour of electricity generated. For gas boilers, the figure is 210 to 380, for biomass boilers it is somewhere between 5 and 200, although typically they are below 100, while the carbon footprint range for a solar thermal system is 10 to 35 grams of carbon dioxide equivalent per kilowatt-hour of electricity generated. By comparison, the figure for geothermal is only 10. As a result, geothermal energy systems are becoming an increasingly popular low-carbon energy system of choice.

Yet geothermal energy is barely utilised in the United Kingdom. In a Westminster Hall debate on clean growth energy back in March, there was a great deal of enthusiastic support among the small number of Members present. Those who spoke in support of geothermal energy in that debate came from areas where it already exists, or at least where it is being planned. I do not consider it a coincidence that where geothermal energy has already been explored and exploited, there was support and enthusiasm for it. It evidently works, and indeed, we should take note of the enthusiasm expressed in that debate. It is a clean energy source, with the potential to bring jobs and investment to our constituencies, and given the UK's long history of mining, I refuse to believe that only Clackmannanshire has the potential for geothermal energy to be developed. There was of course one person in that Westminster Hall debate who enthusiastically supported the development of geothermal energy in the United Kingdom—the Minister responding this evening.

The UK has a target that, by 2020, 15% of its energy will be met by renewables. In 2008, renewables constituted just 2.25% of energy sources in the UK. By 2014, this had risen to 7.1%, and 8.3% by 2015. I could not find any more recent figures, so I would be grateful to the Minister if she told us how the UK is performing in 2018, and how it expects to meet its target in 2020.

Although geothermal is still relatively new to the UK, this type of energy is not a particularly new technology. For example, geothermal heating is used in over 70 countries already, while 24 already use geothermal electrical production systems. Furthermore, five countries—Iceland, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Kenya and the Philippines—generate more than 15% of their electricity from geothermal sources. However, across the whole United Kingdom, I could find only nine geothermal energy projects that are in operation or are being planned. Four are in Cornwall, two are in north-east England, and one—the original—is in Southampton. There are two small mine-water geothermal schemes in operation in Scotland: Shettleton in Glasgow and Lumphinnans in Fife, as well as a forthcoming project in Kilmarnock. To put that in context, the fifth largest economy in the world is being outdone by the 106th, 101st, 76th, 68th, and 39th largest economies respectively in geothermal development and energy production.

[*Luke Graham*]

We still have a way to go. Evidently, we can and should be doing more to invest and develop that clean energy source. In 2013, only 900 jobs in the UK were supported by geothermal energy—500 were directly supported, and 400 indirectly. Given the potential for the expansion of that technology in the UK, there is a great deal of potential for the jobs market, both directly and indirectly. High-quality, skilled jobs would be supported by the development of the sector.

Here is the crux of the debate—why Clackmannanshire? Development of geothermal in the UK, as I have said, has been relatively limited so far, largely due to the availability of cheap North sea oil and gas. Geothermal energy is plentiful beneath the United Kingdom but, admittedly, it is not readily accessible, except in specific locations. One such location is Clackmannanshire. Abandoned coal mines in Clackmannanshire could become a source of energy, as the water that has poured into the mines since they closed has been warmed up by the rock surrounding it. It is hot enough to be used for a low-temperature heating system through a heat exchanger, with more potential for it to be used for energy production.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): My hon. Friend is speaking extremely well about this subject, and I bow to his knowledge in this area. On the notion of creating electricity from heat, would that extend to, for example, sewage? Would it be possible to create district heating systems in that way? Is it the same technology? Perhaps he can enlighten me.

**Luke Graham:** On district heating systems, yes. On sewage systems, I am not sure. That is something that we should explore, but when we look at the broader uses of the technology, certainly in energy and electricity production, as we have seen in other countries around the world, absolutely that can be done. There are exciting, direct uses of geothermal energy in countries such as Kenya, ranging from hydroponic farming to powering small communities. There are a number of exciting projects in operation, which is why it is important to run a pilot and secure investment so that we can realise the true potential of the technology.

While it is not often that Clackmannanshire has a competitive advantage over other local communities, we have a relatively unique geographical opportunity. However, there are more reasons to invest in Clackmannanshire. It suffers from high levels of deprivation, and a significantly high level of fuel poverty. Local authority surveys have identified the fact that one in three households in Clackmannanshire suffers from fuel poverty, rising to 49% among pensioners. Heat accounts for nearly half of energy consumption in Clacks and a third of its carbon emissions. Roughly 80% of that is consumed in homes and other buildings.

The local economy is vulnerable. It has a higher than average unemployment rate, the third lowest job density in Scotland, below average earnings, and of all the local authorities in Scotland, Clackmannanshire has the lowest rating for skilled qualifications. That is not to talk Clackmannanshire down. It may be the known as the wee county, but as I said in my maiden speech,

“it is not size but what you do with it that counts.”—[*Official Report*, 27 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 524.]

I want to highlight some of the challenges in Clackmannanshire, but also give an idea of what a significant investment in the area would help to overcome. I want to look at the difference that such an investment could make in Clackmannanshire. It goes without saying that investment would bring valuable, skilled jobs to the area, and that is important, but it is more than that. Investment would help to develop spin-off businesses that would support the industry both directly and along the supply chain. We have already seen that. I was lucky at the weekend to be interviewed by the BBC, and local companies and local champions of geothermal have come forward in the past few days, keen to work with the Government and public and private sector bodies on a project not just in the county but in the wider region.

Developing geothermal energy in Clackmannanshire could see the area become renowned in the UK, not just as a leading low-carbon energy provider but for its energy innovation.

**John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making such a powerful case for this initiative in his constituency. I am sure that there are other parts of Scotland that could benefit from his insight. What opportunities can he see for this initiative being delivered as part of the UK Government’s industrial strategy? Does he recognise that many projects could be delivered in Scotland as part of that overall initiative?

**Luke Graham:** I could not agree more; the industrial strategy is about having a stronger blueprint for the whole of Britain and it is important that the investment, especially in reserved areas such as energy, is spread throughout the United Kingdom in a fair manner to attract the true opportunities that are found in each individual area.

Developing geothermal energy in Clackmannanshire would make the county more attractive to investors, businesses and developers. By helping to establish a resilient, environmentally-friendly heating and energy system, it could provide affordable, low-carbon heating and energy to local households and businesses. Furthermore, by delivering estimated savings of 50% for the local authority, it would free up much needed additional funding to invest back into local services, which have faced substantial cuts.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has stated that we need to move away from having one energy network towards having smaller, more regional networks. That is precisely what we can do and what we hope to do in Clackmannanshire. By reducing energy bills, it will help us to create a more stable, affordable energy market in the area, which is central to improving and maintaining living standards in the community. In turn, it will help Clackmannanshire to become more self-sustaining, allowing it to support businesses, improve educational opportunities, and tackle social inequalities and the fuel poverty crisis.

Geothermal energy is not the solution to every single issue experienced in Clackmannanshire, despite what I have said tonight, but it would be a significant step in the right direction. One of my biggest frustrations since becoming an MP almost a year ago to the day has been the “devolve and forget” approach that has been allowed

to permeate since devolution nearly 20 years ago. However, energy is not devolved. Devolution does not mean separate and it should not act as a wall. Devolution was just a means to bring powers closer to the people who need them in order to deliver things better. This is still the UK Parliament and Scotland is still part of the UK. To be clear, without Scotland there is no United Kingdom.

Scotland has the infrastructure and expertise in place to lead the United Kingdom in geothermal energy and contribute towards the UK's clean growth strategy. That is why I urge the Minister to put Scotland at its heart when considering Government investment and to put geothermal energy in Clackmannanshire at the forefront of that investment. Scotland has been at the forefront of every major industrial development of the United Kingdom, from the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries to oil and gas in the 20th and 21st centuries. It has the infrastructure and expertise to lead the UK, and putting the investment in now could be transformational for the area and for the wider UK.

There is no law stopping the UK Government investing directly in Scottish local authorities, least of all the devolution settlement, the various Scotland Acts or the Smith commission, especially when the right opportunity arises. This is the right opportunity—an opportunity to invest in and improve our renewable energy sector; an opportunity to lower our carbon footprint; an opportunity to tackle fuel poverty; and an opportunity to bring jobs, prospects and prosperity to one of the most deprived areas of Scotland. I urge the UK Government to grasp this opportunity and to let the people of Clackmannanshire lead the rest of Scotland and the United Kingdom in growing geothermal energy.

I make no apologies for keeping Clackmannanshire firmly in the minds of the UK Government and the decision makers who lead it, as I want to maximise the investment coming to the wee county and to my wider constituency of Ochil and South Perthshire from Westminster. Developing geothermal energy in Clackmannanshire has the potential to combine heritage with new technology to bring investment to the county, turning a so called negative legacy into jobs, training and long-term opportunities for the county. This is what I believe Government is for—not to deliver every job, but to ensure that every part of our country can take advantage of the opportunities afforded to it. I hope that the Minister will help Clackmannanshire achieve its potential this evening.

10.19 pm

**The Minister for Energy and Clean Growth (Claire Perry):** What a very lively Adjournment debate. They rarely get as good as this: a seamless team effort from my hon. Friend the Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Luke Graham) and his colleagues focusing on a particularly fascinating new area of technology. It is a refreshing change to hear Members who are passionate about their Scottish constituencies, and who are prepared to stand up and work with the UK Government rather than just criticise and carp. That sense of working together to deliver this technology is very important.

I am delighted to be able to talk more about the Clackmannanshire geothermal energy project, which, as my hon. Friend rightly set out, looks to use a local resource from the legacy of decades of mining in a way that helps us to meet our renewable energy targets,

and create jobs and innovation for the future. My hon. Friend made reference to our renewable energy successes. We are right, collectively across the UK, to be proud of them. Thanks to investment in innovation by UK taxpayers, working together north and south of the border, and east and west we are very much on target to achieve 30% energy supply from renewables by 2020. In fact, it looks as if we will go substantially beyond that. Scotland with its beauty—my hon. Friend alluded to it; his speech was a wonderful travel advert for his constituency—natural geographic advantages and engineering expertise has very much been in the forefront of that.

That brings me to the role of geothermal energy, which is a critical part of the renewable energy resource. It can be used in several ways, for example heat networks. The UK Government have set aside over £300 million to invest in district heat networks over the next few years. They are a really important way of bringing it forward. Deep geothermal power is another opportunity to create heat and generate power, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) discussed.

This is not about finding new resource. The mining legacy has created a lot of holes in the ground beneath our feet, which have filled up with water. The water has become heated and is now available without drilling deep wells. This is relatively easy to set up. I am proud to be working with the Coal Authority and others to consider how we might manage this mining legacy. Across the UK, it has recently been assessed that there are over 2 million GW hours of low-carbon energy stored in mine workings across the UK. I feel strongly that we should be looking at how to extract it.

As I said, there are several ways to use this very valuable resource. We can use it as heat to supply homes and businesses. It can help to deliver the clean growth aspects of our industrial strategy, because it can be used to provide heat to certain business sectors. It can also provide opportunities for energy through regeneration and storage. A lot of work is being done on storage capability. The problem with renewables is that they can be very intermittent. How do we store energy in a liquid state? Deep networks could be a way to help us to lead the world on this going forward. We are looking across the UK to see how we might exploit this great resource.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ochil and South Perthshire eloquently and passionately set out, we have opportunities in Clackmannanshire to understand how we might use this local resource better. He set out the wider benefits from this potential source: not just lower cost lower carbon energy for his constituents, but creating businesses, creating innovation, creating jobs, reducing energy bills, reducing fuel poverty and reducing social inequalities. It could establish Clackmannanshire as a global authority on geothermal energy, attracting inward investment and innovation from other countries across the world. The Department and I are very keen to see more of such projects coming forward, because they deliver carbon savings, cost reductions and innovation.

We are working on heat networks. As my hon. Friend is well aware, there is a series of competences between the UK Government and the devolved Administration. Heat is a devolved matter, but energy is a reserved matter. There is, therefore, a huge area between the two parts of our government system where we have opportunities to work together on heat projects.

[*Claire Perry*]

My hon. Friend and his constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling, should be patting themselves on the back for securing a city region deal worth more than £90 million to the region. The UK Government are investing more than £45 million, the Scottish Government are investing, the local councils are investing—it is truly a good example of partnership working. [*Interruption.*] As I said, it is always better when we work together—a message sometimes lost on Scottish National party Members.

This ambitious and innovative deal will drive economic growth across the region, innovation and research with at its heart, and also focus on the area's incredible natural heritage. I think that we could expand the definition to include the mine workings and geothermal possibilities. That is what the Clackmannanshire geothermal energy project seeks to do, and my Department will absolutely support it, exploring potential funding routes and sharing learning from other networks from across the UK.

We are committed to supporting the project. We see opportunities for high-quality, cost-effective heating, for the creation of renewable energy and for the provision of many other benefits to the area. I am delighted that

my hon. Friend has once again raised this opportunity and demonstrated the passion and commitment with which he and his constituents support it. It was encouraging to hear that other local businesses are already coming forward wanting to be part of it.

I hope that this debate can be the start of the process. It has allowed us to look at how we might fit the scheme into the various funding streams available. I would love to think it could be one of the first of many projects across the UK that will tap back into that resource beneath our feet. It is a resource that was created by the blood, sweat and tears of many thousands of fine working men—generally men—in the past, and it would be wonderful to use that legacy to help us to meet the targets of our renewable and low-carbon future.

My hon. Friend says it is a wee county but that it is not size that matters but what you do with it. It is a little late for that kind of commentary, so I will finish simply by commending him for doing such a superb job of standing up for his constituents and presenting the best way of combining the legacy of that wonderful area with some of the low-carbon energy solutions of the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.26 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

Monday 4 June 2018

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

## Fur Trade

4.30 pm

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 200888 relating to the sale of animal fur in the UK.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. The e-petition, headed “Ban the sale of animal fur in the UK”, explains:

“Fur farming was banned in England and Wales in 2000, followed by Scotland in 2002. However fur products can still be legally imported from other countries and sold here in the UK. Much of this fur comes from countries that have very weak or no animal welfare laws at all.”

I introduce the debate on behalf of the Petitions Committee and will begin with some history. The issue has become one of wide public interest, culminating in a significant campaign to build on previous legislation and end fur imports, but there has long been concern about the issue.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): My hon. Friend has mentioned the legislative history; does he agree that the sensible next step is to extend the fur import ban to all species? Many of my constituents have emailed me to request that.

**Daniel Zeichner**: I assure my hon. Friend that that is the direction in which I shall proceed in the next few minutes.

To return to the history and as the petition states, 18 years ago Parliament banned fur farming in England and Wales. That ban was extended to Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2002. As the petitioners note, that means that in effect we now outsource the issue. We do not want fur farming on our own doorstep but are currently not strong enough to end our complicity in what can only be described as animal suffering. To end it, and reflect the national will, which clearly is that we should go further than we have done, we need more than just a domestic fur farming ban.

**Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab): I was one of the MPs who voted for that ban in 2000. No man is an island, and no animal is either. Does my hon. Friend agree with my constituent, Candace Gledhill, about the cruelty by which foxes, minks and raccoon dogs are kept in

“wire-mesh cages on fur farms for months on end” and

“coyotes and other animal are caught in the wild using crude, inhumane steel traps”?

Does he agree that if we do not act on the matter and do at least what it is possible for us to do here, we are complicit in that cruelty?

**Daniel Zeichner**: Once again, I agree; I shall come on in a moment to some of the cruelties that have been described—but I am still trying to look back 20 years. I shall get there. The ban was originally proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), in her private Member’s Bill, the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Bill. As some of us have cause to reflect, such Bills do not always get all the way, and sadly it was defeated in 1999. At that time, it was pointed out:

“The conditions in which mink are kept and slaughtered—highlighted last year by releases of mink by animal liberation activists—are now widely considered unacceptable. Mink are not domesticated, but are forced to live in small cages. Many show symptoms of extreme stress before being gassed and skinned.”

Those conditions continue today.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): The debate is timely and my hon. Friend is to be congratulated on it. About 48 hours ago, a television programme was shown about mink farming purely for fur. Since 2000, 50%—5,000—of such farms are in 22 countries in Europe. That shows that there is a job of work to be done; does my hon. Friend agree?

**Daniel Zeichner**: I find myself in much agreement today—

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is very generous. I, too, was around as a Member of Parliament when the Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act 2000 was passed. Eighteen years later, it is inconceivable that other European countries, in particular, did not follow suit. Does the hon. Gentleman agree, on the day when we debate the Ivory Bill, by which we will end that abhorrent trade, we can find ways to end the abhorrent trade in fur in this country, and to make exemptions where they are needed for historically and culturally valuable objects? Clearly, that can happen, and frankly it must, sooner rather than later.

**Daniel Zeichner**: Once again, I am in agreement. I am still trying to go back 20 years in my speech. I shall advance slowly.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): Give up!

**Daniel Zeichner**: No, I am not going to give up—but I give way.

**Zac Goldsmith** (Richmond Park) (Con): Before the hon. Gentleman steps back 20 years I ask him to step forward a few months, because as we leave the European Union whatever barriers may have prevented us from raising standards on imports at the point of entry will have gone. We will be free to decide whether we want to continue to import the proceeds of one of the grimmest of human activities. I suspect that, like people who have signed the petition and the majority of those who have written to their MPs, the majority of Members would support such a move.

**Daniel Zeichner**: Tempting though it is, I do not intend to widen the debate on to other issues. I am still trying to go back 20 years, so I shall continue for the moment. At that time we were of course fortunate in

[Daniel Zeichner]

having a Labour Government, and they took up the cause. The Fur Farming (Prohibition) Act 2000 was passed, and the then Minister of State, Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Baroness Hayman, said:

“It has a simple and a clear basis. The Government believe that it is wrong to keep animals solely or primarily for slaughter for the value of their fur. In the Government’s view, fur farming is not consistent with a proper value and respect for animal life.”— [Official Report, House of Lords, 19 July 2000; Vol. 615, c. 1130.]

That was true then, and is true now for the huge numbers signing the petition—hundreds in every constituency—and for many other people, which is why it is wrong for our country to continue to support such an industry, whether it lies inside or beyond our borders.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that many consumers who think they are purchasing fake fur products are actually purchasing real fur products, and that in the past few years there has been quite a trend for what is really cruelly produced real animal fur to be retailed as fake fur? Does he think that trading standards need to play a role in ensuring that there is greater awareness and proper labelling of fur products?

**Daniel Zeichner:** The hon. Gentleman is prescient. I will come on to fake fur later, and I agree with his observations.

Since the implementation of the ban, we have effectively continued fur farming internationally, by allowing in fur imports. Some estimates put the value of the fur imported at £670 million. Humane Society International, which has campaigned powerfully on the issue, estimates that, based on the value of pelts at auction houses, that may equate to some 2 million animal skins imported into the UK in 2016 alone.

I want to say a little more about the conditions in which animals are kept. Beyond the simple idea that farming animals simply for their fur is wrong, the animals in fur farms are too often forced to live in terrible conditions. Humane Society International recently held a drop-in for MPs, and I am sure that some colleagues present for the debate will have attended it. We saw harrowing videos of how animals are treated in the fur trade, and we saw examples of cages and the very small spaces in which animals farmed for fur spend their entire lives. It was a very graphic demonstration of what we are talking about, and it is not easily forgotten—as it should not be.

There is plenty of expert scientific evidence. The European Commission Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare puts it clearly:

“Current husbandry systems cause serious problems for all species of animals reared for fur”.

As we have heard, animals such as foxes and minks are suited in their natural habitat to roam far and wide. When those animals are farmed for fur they are kept in small cages less than 1 metre square.

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): We rightly banned fur farming about 20 years ago, to end such barbaric and unnecessary suffering, but does my hon. Friend agree that as long as we continue to import fur we are complicit in creating a market so that animal suffering continues?

**Daniel Zeichner:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend and near neighbour. Complicit is a word I have already used, and that is effectively what we are by maintaining this trade.

**Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate and on a very fine speech. By banning fur imports, we would depress that market, but would we not also set a good example to other countries? We have a proud record of humane treatment of animals in this country and we could inspire other countries to do the same.

**Daniel Zeichner:** All my hon. Friends are so prescient that my hon. Friend has now stolen my peroration, but never mind; we will come to that in time.

On the subject of faux fur, I do not think anyone, on witnessing or reading the evidence given recently to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee about the living space allocated to some of these poor animals, could help but be sickened.

**Maria Eagle** (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): It was my Bill, which was talked out in 1998, that became the 2000 Act. One reason I took it forward was that the Farm Animal Welfare Council had made clear that there is no way to humanely keep wild animals such as mink in cages and farm them—I do not really call it farming—for their fur, and that a ban was the only way to tackle the inhumanity that that implied. It is true in this country, which was the first nation to ban fur farming, and true in the rest of the world.

**Daniel Zeichner:** I absolutely concur with my hon. Friend’s comments, and commend her for the work she did all those years ago. Now we have the opportunity to build on that and go further.

Going back to the awful conditions faced by animals, sometimes they are overfed to become much larger than their frames are suited to. Apparently that yields more fur but, unsurprisingly, it can give the animals terrible health problems. As some hon. Members have already mentioned, while fur farms in the UK were at least regulated, we have no control over those fur farms abroad.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): My hon. Friend is being very generous in the time he is giving people. Does he agree that, 20 years or so ago when the ban was brought in, absolutely nobody would have thought there would be such a market for the import of animal fur, and it is vital we toughen the legislation on that?

**Daniel Zeichner:** Once again, I agree with my hon. Friend.

Going back to those fur farms abroad, the evidence is somewhat contested and there are different conditions in different countries, but it seems to me that the straightforward answer to that is to stop the outsourcing in general. It is not a case of it being out of sight, out of mind; while we are still allowing imports and the sale of fur in this country, I fear we are still complicit, culpable—call it what you like, but we are responsible. Turning to public opinion, it is clear that there is overwhelming public support for a fur ban.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing this debate. Some 100,000 people signed this e-petition, and 400,000 people signed a petition taken to 10 Downing Street. That is an indication of the large volume of the general public who are against any type of fur farming whatever. Does he agree that it is time the Government listen to the half a million people who have said, “We need action and we need it now.”?

**Daniel Zeichner:** Once again, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The petition itself is testimony to the strength of public feeling, but on top of that, a YouGov poll in February this year showed that 69% of the public, nearly seven in 10, would support a ban on the import and sale of fur in the UK. There is a significant majority across Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat voters too. It is cross-party. It is not a party political issue; it crosses party political allegiances.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is being very generous. I understand that we currently import fur from two other fellow European Union members, Poland and France. Does he know whether we have the power to prevent the imports as an EU member?

**Daniel Zeichner:** I thank the hon. Gentleman; I will come very specifically to that point later in that speech, but my belief is that we do have the power.

**John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the widespread public support. One should always be careful to differentiate grassroots and astroturf in email responses. On this issue, it is clear that there has been sustained interest for a long time from all the different areas of my constituency, all indicating a deep and long-standing concern that the trade should be ended. I am sure that that is true of other hon. Members as well. That is not just a transient mood, but a long-standing demand.

**Daniel Zeichner:** My right hon. Friend makes a good point. The number of hon. Members present shows the breadth of support, and the petition shows that it is consistent across the country. It has also been a response to some strong campaigns. There have been 109,554 signatures to the petition, but there is a spectrum of support behind it from significant organisations, including the Humane Society International; businesses such as Lush; and a range of cultural figures such as Brian May of Queen and Evanna Lynch of “Harry Potter”. It is fair to conclude that our country wants to ban fur.

It is not just the UK. Last week I had the pleasure of meeting a Finnish member of the European Parliament, Sirpa Pietikäinen, who leads the cross-party group on animal welfare. She assured me that there is growing and widespread support not just in the Parliament but in countries that have traditionally been more sympathetic to the fur trade.

The faux fur issue is an added complexity that is currently being probed by the EFRA Committee. The public are being duped into buying fur by mistake. We have a bizarre situation where less scrupulous retailers, or retailers that have been misled by wholesalers or people further down the supply chain, mislabel their products as faux fur when in fact they are real fur.

That is partly a consequence of the fact that, from some suppliers, the real fur is very cheap, which says a lot about how it is produced.

**Sir Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): The nub of this particular item on the hon. Gentleman’s agenda is that it is perfectly possible for anybody half-bright to tell the difference between faux fur and real fur. It is done all the time. The fact is that it is because it is cheap that this material is brought into the country and sold by supposedly reputable outlets. They are conning the public. Should we not throw the book at the people doing that?

**Daniel Zeichner:** I will agree and disagree with the hon. Gentleman. It is absolutely right that we look hard at the people doing that, but in some cases it is not necessarily easy to tell. Hon. Members who were shown examples at the exhibition in the House a few weeks ago saw that, if it is only one or two pieces disguised within a wider piece, it is hard to tell. Some are very cheap indeed—fur bobble hats keep turning up in this context. The consumer is unlikely to know that fur is in the product. It is important that we crack down on those retailers, but to do so we must have a system. That means giving trading standards officers across the country support and resources.

Of course, if we ban fur imports in general, customers will no longer be in the position of buying what they think is fake but is actually real. Many organisations that made submissions to the EFRA Committee’s inquiry on the fur trade lamented the inadequate fur labelling regime we have in this country, which leads to some of that mis-selling. Hopefully, from that Committee’s work, we will see some practical recommendations.

It is worth noting in passing that the evidence from both the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the Select Committee noted that the Government have not carried out any assessment of the size of the fur trade in the UK. That could show either a lack of diligence on the Government’s part, or that the contribution to the UK economy is of no great significance. I suggest it is probably the latter.

The hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) asked whether we can ban fur should we wish to. The advice I have been given is that we can. Straying into trade territory, which is slightly controversial at the moment, I am told that the World Trade Organisation rules contain article XX (a), which provides an exception to the trading rules for measures that are necessary “to protect public morals”. In 2010, the European Parliament and Council banned trade in seal products in the European Union. That led in 2015 to a challenge from Canada and Norway, which fell when the WTO upheld the right of the EU to prohibit trade in seal products because it was a proportionate measure necessary to protect public morals. That may not be quite the terminology we would use, but hon. Members will get the drift. That important case indicates that WTO members have the freedom to define—with proof—their interpretation of that phrase.

**Maria Eagle:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, because we no longer produce fur domestically, the WTO could not conclude that anything we did was about benefiting our local industry?

**Daniel Zeichner:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. She again pre-empts my argument—I will come to that strong point in a moment.

There is a clear case for that same WTO exception to be applied because there are legitimate and widespread public moral concerns about fur, as we have heard. Similarly, within the European Union, as we currently are, our trade is governed by the principle of the free movement of goods, as set out in articles 34 and 35 of the Lisbon treaty. Article 36 provides a similar clause to that in the WTO rulebook, permitting trade barriers in specific circumstances. It says:

“The provisions of Articles 34 and 35 shall not preclude prohibitions or restrictions on imports, exports or goods in transit justified on grounds of public morality, public policy or public security; the protection of health and life of humans, animals or plants; the protection of national treasures possessing artistic, historic or archaeological value; or the protection of industrial and commercial property. Such prohibitions or restrictions shall not, however, constitute a means of arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on trade between Member States.”

I therefore argue that there is a legitimate argument for the UK to prohibit fur imports on grounds of public morality, similar to the exemption allowed under WTO rules, which has been used successfully, as I just mentioned.

I am told that there is no known EU case precedent for the application of the public morality exemption in the trade of cruel animal products, so this would be an important first and perhaps a welcome gift to our friends in Europe. Crucially, as the UK has no domestic production of fur, as my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood said, a UK fur import ban could not be viewed as disguised discrimination or protectionism. To use that defence to impede trade, we will need to prove that the public morality against the fur trade is significant and sustained, which is demonstrated, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar) said earlier, by decades of deep support for a ban in opinion polls, plus the massive public response to the Fur-Free Britain campaign.

**Heidi Allen** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I do not wish to draw the hon. Gentleman away from the core of the debate, but given that he has just outlined why he believes that there are grounds within EU legislation for our stopping the import of fur, does he think that we might set other precedents and extend that to the import of foie gras, which I am deeply uncomfortable with?

**Daniel Zeichner:** I am grateful to my constituency neighbour. I had not necessarily considered that, but as so often with legislation, it seems that there is more scope to do things than people tell us. There may be more flexibility than is sometimes suggested, so that may certainly be worth looking at.

**John Spellar:** That is an extremely important point and is actually an important part of the wider debate. Many of these issues are not a matter of EU regulation—they are a matter of political will and choice in this country. The debate’s clear message to the Minister needs to be that the Government have options and should exercise them, and not keep hiding behind a figment of rules from Brussels, which do not have the weight that the Government put on them.

**Daniel Zeichner:** I once again find myself very much in agreement with my right hon. Friend. My conclusion is very much on those lines, which you will be glad to know I am finally coming to, Mr Hollobone.

The Government’s response to the petition said:

“While some fur products may never be legally imported into the UK the Government’s view is that national bans are less effective than working at an international level on animal welfare standards.”

That sounds very laudable, although it is in fact civil service waffle. I hope the Minister will show some more ambition, exactly as has been suggested. The Government’s response sets up a false dichotomy. A national ban would not stop our Government from continuing to work on international animal welfare, and it would give our country a firm platform from which to work with others. We should be leading, as we should be in Europe generally.

Having had a quick glance at the House of Commons Facebook page and its coverage of the debate, I have to say that I do not think I saw one comment advocating maintaining the import of fur into this country. The vast engagement seems to be entirely on the side of a fur ban, which also seems to reflect the feelings and the comments made by hon. Members.

The EU banned the import and export of cat and dog fur in 2008, and the Fur Free Alliance has active campaigns across the world. New Zealand prohibits mink fur imports; India banned imports of several species of fur; São Paulo adopted a fur farming ban in 2014 and an import and sales ban in 2015; and West Hollywood became the first city in the world to ban the sale of fur in 2013. A few months ago, San Francisco became the largest world city to ban the sale of fur. Designers such as Gucci and Versace have adopted fur-free policies, as have high street retailers such as Topshop and House of Fraser.

Britain has a chance to lead the way in Europe and across the world and become the first country to ban fur imports and trading. What an opportunity we have.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): The hon. Gentleman has been incredibly generous with his time. Does he agree that we in this country sometimes underestimate our power to influence and show leadership? What a powerful statement of intent it would be if we were to take this decisive action and ban fur imports into our country.

**Daniel Zeichner:** I am grateful that there has been a cross-party voice appealing to the Secretary of State, who is not normally shy in coming forward to seek such opportunities. Why will he not grasp this one? This is what the public want. It is the right thing to do.

4.56 pm

**Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): It is a great honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on introducing this important debate. It is a great honour to stand here and represent the 177 people from my constituency who signed the petition and who, like me, believe that a ban on the sale of animal fur in this country needs to be implemented soon.

Although the Government are rightly recognised as a world leader in promoting animal welfare standards, we must ensure that they have no blind spot on this issue.

There remains a significant and, as has been said, sustained demand for fur trade products in this country. Thanks to that demand, fur imports exceeded £55.6 million in 2016. As an animal lover, I believe that should concern us all, since those products are the direct result of shameful animal welfare practices elsewhere in the world. Around 85% of those products come from foreign fur farms where animals are intensively reared in battery cage systems and where conditions are as bad as, or even worse than, the fur farms we once saw and eventually outlawed in this country.

I have some chilling words from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which says that animals are packed into

“unbearably small cages, preventing them from taking more than a few steps in any direction or doing anything that is natural and important to them, such as running, swimming, making nests, and finding mates. Many animals go insane under these conditions. The anguish and frustration of life in a cage leads many animals to self-mutilate, biting at their skin, tail, and feet; frantically pace and circle endlessly; and even cannibalize their cagemates.”

Even though we should celebrate our world-leading ban on fur farming here in this country, it seems that, as the hon. Member for Cambridge suggested, we have only outsourced this form of animal cruelty. That is why I believe that an import ban should be put in place. I recognise that the Minister might not agree with me, as the Government’s position is to pursue international animal welfare standards and to phase out cruel farming and trapping practices, rather than introducing the ban, which is seen as less effective.

However, although I see the merit in that global approach, and I accept that the ban would not be a silver bullet for animal welfare—the practice will continue in other countries—I do not believe that it is right for our country to remain open to these products. Moreover, I am concerned that the Government’s position relies on the full co-operation of the industry to implement these improvements. Such co-operation has not been forthcoming in the past when, even in the face of intense criticism and public opposition, the industry responded by introducing questionable animal welfare improvement schemes, which only pay lip service to the idea, rather than address the fundamental inadequacies of the battery cage system.

I do not believe that co-operation will be forthcoming in the future, either. This is a profit-driven industry, and behaviour will be slow to change. By waiting for that to happen, we only prolong our role in supporting and enabling these dreadful animal welfare practices. That is not in keeping with our British values.

With that in mind, I ask the Government to use Brexit not to maintain but to improve on the shockingly weak EU regulations on the import of furs and skins. We have heard that there are countries inside the EU that carry out these appalling practices. The ban should be extended to all animal fur products after our exit. In that regard, Brexit presents us with a positive opportunity: not only to deliver the Brexit that my constituents in Clacton voted for, but to ensure that our laws truly project our British values.

As I have sought to demonstrate, there are significant animal welfare grounds for introducing a ban. I know that point is important, because the Minister has stated previously that any further restrictions on the importing and sale of fur and fur products after we leave the EU will be based on protection of animal welfare.

Therefore, as we move forward, I ask the Government to consider the animal welfare issues that I have raised today. I also ask that colleagues—this has been mentioned already—do not see this as a party political issue. There is clearly a significant animal welfare cost from this industry, and we should look to change that together, because although we might not see that cost in this country, that does not mean that we should be turning a blind eye to it elsewhere.

I ask the Government to bear it in mind that more than 69% of the public would support a ban—according to figures from Humane Society International—as would the 400,000 or 500,000 people who have already backed this proposal across, I think, two petitions. I am sure that colleagues here today have had emails from many active supporters—I know they have been emailing me—to ask us to support a ban. That is a further demonstration of the public support for a ban.

I am clear that we must work together to stop the flow of fur trade products into this country. Those products are the result of terrible and sustained animal welfare abuses. Our involvement in this industry as a consumer does not reflect the values of modern Britain. As has been touched on, we will surely hear in the main Chamber today that tusks belong on an elephant, but we should also hear that fur belongs on the back of an animal. I therefore ask the Minister seriously to consider implementing what would be a very popular ban.

5.2 pm

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I want to bring word from the far north of Scotland to all who are here today, and perhaps I had better clear the decks by confirming hon. Members’ worst suspicions: I do live in a house in a very remote part of the highlands that contains, I am afraid to say, some animal trophies. Worse than that, I am old enough to remember when well-off ladies wore fur coats. They were made from skins that were probably farmed in those days. My aunt had a fur coat, although I doubt that she paid for it, such was the precariousness of her finances.

That is my background. I now want to give hon. Members a short physics lesson. If we take a rod of glass and rub it with a piece of silk, it takes a negative charge. If we rub it with something else, it takes a positive charge—I am sure that we all did this in physics lessons—and if we put it near little bits of paper, it will pick them up. What shook me at the age of 12 or 13 was what we rubbed it with, which was cat skins—pussycats; moggies. In the physics lab at my state school there were cat skins, and as a young lad I thought, “This was somebody’s cat; it was a pet, surely. What on earth is going on?” So at that age I was put off the whole idea that has led to today’s debate.

I take great comfort from what other hon. Members have said—I will be brief, because I know that many Members want to speak. I am referring to the widespread support for a ban. It is just as deeply felt in the remote parts of Scotland as it is in Camden, the west country or Yorkshire. Believe you me, that is true—I have had a shedload of correspondence about it. Even last week I was contacted by a lady who comes from a crofting background on Skye, Alexandra Smith. One would think that a crofter, out in the sticks, would know about

[*Jamie Stone*]

the rougher end of life, but she, a good Sgitheanach lady—a Sgitheanach is a Skye person; that will test *Hansard*—said to me, “Please speak in this debate. This practice is abhorrent. I hate it and everything else that is cruel to animals: transporting animals, fur farming and”—

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I just want to make a very quick point. Does my hon. Friend agree that it makes no logical sense that there is special protection, in the form of an EU ban, for cats, dogs and seals while other animals are left unprotected? If the logic applies to them, it should apply to the protection of all animals.

**Jamie Stone**: I absolutely agree. My good and right hon. Friend is quite correct. One thing that we should be proud of in this country is our well known love of and care for animals. We should never forget that. If the Government can see their way to a total ban, perhaps we will set an example to the rest of the world and do away with this horrific and hateful practice.

5.5 pm

**Andrea Jenkyns** (Morley and Outwood) (Con): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I thank the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) for securing such an important debate.

I start by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and my hon. Friend the Minister on their work so far in leading the way on tackling animal cruelty. However, we still have a long way to go. As an animal lover, vegetarian and lifelong animal rights activist, and as a compassionate human being, I urge the Minister to listen intently to the strong messages in this Chamber, coming from across the parties, in support of a ban.

I was pleased when fur farming was banned in England and Wales in 2000, and in Scotland in 2002. However, as we have discussed, fur products can still be legally imported from other countries and sold in the UK. In my opinion, the use of fur in 2018 is unnecessary and cruel. The fur trade is responsible for the suffering and death of more than 100 million animals each year—the figure was 135 million in 2015. The majority of the fur—about 85%—is produced by intensively farming animals in battery cage systems, as has been described.

Humane Society International has documented the conditions in which the majority of the animals are kept. I will touch on just a few points. As we have said, animals kept in battery cages on a fur farm are “at best” restrained for their whole lives in wire-floored cages hundreds of thousands of times smaller than their natural territory. They are denied their most basic behavioural needs. Many are killed by gassing or electrocution. Remember that those are the “best” conditions. Examples of the worst conditions of animal suffering in fur farms involve such things as cannibalism, poor psychological wellbeing, untreated wounds, deformities and injuries, and animals having been selectively bred to grow to unnaturally large sizes, with excessive folds of skin, which yield more fur. Then, finally, they are often brutally beaten and stamped to death, and some are even skinned alive.

Shockingly, 100 million animals every year live their entire lives in the barbaric conditions described. In the UK, leghold traps have been banned since 1958 because of their inhumaneness: animals caught in those traps suffer intense pain and injuries until the trapper returns to kill them. However, the three largest exporters of fur—Russia, Canada and the United States—have not banned the use of leghold traps, even though they are banned in the EU.

In 2016 the value of the fur imported into the UK was £55.6 million. The UK has some of the strongest animal welfare protections in the world. However, all we have done, as my hon. Friends have said, is outsource animal suffering to other countries. The only way to end the trade is to ban the sale of fur in the UK.

According to a 2018 YouGov poll, there is now major public backing for a ban; 69% of those participating supported a ban. I am pleased to say that 153 people in my constituency of Morley and Outwood have signed this petition and agree with me that we need a ban on the farming of wild animals in tiny wire cages, as it is demonstrably inhumane. There is no need for it in 21st-century Britain.

As I said, the Secretary of State has shown real leadership when it comes to banning ivory, introducing CCTV in slaughterhouses and cleaning up our oceans. I hope that he and his Ministers see the need to tackle this animal cruelty. In my opinion, by not banning fur, we are inadvertently condoning it by allowing it to be imported from other countries.

5.9 pm

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner). It is always difficult to present the results of an e-petition, particularly when so many people want to intervene. He did a sterling job. I also thank the more than 109,000 people who signed the e-petition. That shows the strength of support across our constituencies for a ban on fur sales in the UK.

In my view, we should avoid all exploitation, abuse and slaughter of animals where we can. Fur farming is just a tiny part of that.

**Danielle Rowley** (Midlothian) (Lab): Sadly, too much of the fashion and beauty industries rely on cruelty to animals. Does my hon. Friend agree that, no matter what, cruelty and suffering cannot be the price of fashion?

**Kerry McCarthy**: I agree. Thankfully, we have made great strides in recent years in banning cosmetic testing on animals. I am not totally averse to all animal testing. People might assume that I would be averse, but I would make an exception in cases of important medical research where there is no alternative. However, people can live without personal vanity and frivolity. There are sustainable, ethical alternatives on the market for clothes, cosmetics, household products and other things that have not been banned from animal testing. In such cases we ought to be pushing for progress. That is why I am speaking today. Although I would like to see far more progress across the board in terms of animal exploitation and cruelty, I am happy to be here, supported by colleagues who are also in favour of a ban.

As we have heard, fur farming was banned in England and Wales in 2000, and in Scotland two years later, on the grounds of public morality. The fact that imported fur produced using the same methods is still allowed is fundamentally illogical and surely immoral too.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge has dealt with the legal position. I tabled a lot of questions at one point about foie gras. Why, if we banned it in this country on the grounds of public morality, could we somehow accept that it was fine for the French to do it and send it over here for people to have in their Fortnum & Mason hampers? There is a strong legal case for us banning it even if we do not leave the European Union.

**John Howell (Henley) (Con):** Surely the reason that there is so much cross-party support behind this motion is because we all feel so compassionate. It is not the details of what happened. It is just a feeling of compassion that makes us all support what the hon. Lady is saying.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I totally agree. That is why so many people signed the e-petition. I would like to see people's compassion extending to other animals, such as farm animal welfare, but I will not go there today—we would have substantially less consensus.

A lot of our fur imports come from countries that have lower animal welfare standards than the UK has, even before we introduced the fur farming ban. In some countries, the standards are simply non-existent. The Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which I am a member of, has just conducted an inquiry into fake faux fur, where people are misled into buying real fur when they think they are buying cheap faux fur. We heard about the conditions on some of the fur farms in other countries.

The idea of ethical fur farming, even in countries which purport to be high-welfare, has been shown time and again to be a complete fiction. A recent investigation by the *Daily Mirror* into Saga-certified fur farms in Finland found morbidly obese foxes that had been grossly overfed and selectively bred to have large folds of skin so that they would produce more fur. This kind of breeding causes an array of health problems for the foxes, including poor reproduction, metabolic disorders and even DNA damage, which cannot easily be identified by the brief visual inspection required for a fur farm to become certified. One awful symptom seen repeatedly is foxes having bent and malformed feet, which occurs due to their forced obesity. That is hugely painful for the animals and severely impedes their mobility, sight and ability to breathe. There is a parallel with how birds are force-fed for the production of foie gras, which leads to their inability to lift themselves off the ground because they are so obese.

This is not just happening on one rogue farm on a bad day. A year later, the *Daily Mirror* went back and found the exact same conditions. Unfortunately, rather than the animal welfare charities cherry-picking the worst examples of fur farming, I have been told that the only cherry-picking taking place is filtering out the most graphic injuries and deformities. Investigations have recorded incidents of cannibalism, infanticide and severe, untreated wounds. Instead of a so-called humane death, there are reports of animals being beaten and stamped to death, and of some even being skinned alive.

Even if we do not look at those worst-case scenarios, the best condition that animals on a fur farm can hope for is to be kept for their whole life in wire-floored cages, which are thousands of times smaller than their natural habitats, while being denied basic behavioural needs such as hunting or swimming, with no mental stimulation and constant stress from being in unnatural social groups and situations, before being killed by gassing or electrocution. No one could argue that that standard of life for an animal on a fur farm constitutes a good or happy life.

The European Commission Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare stated as far back as 2001 that the typical cage in fur farms—not just the worst case, but that used most frequently—

“does not provide for important needs of foxes”

or mink. As a result, abnormal behaviours are far from unusual. In fact, they are “widespread”.

The UK's ban on fur farming was introduced only after our Farm Animal Welfare Council spent years gathering evidence, eventually concluding that fur farms are simply unable to satisfy even the most basic needs of the wild animals kept in them. It explicitly stated that it was not possible to safeguard the welfare of animals kept on fur farms.

Even more distressingly, research has shown that the environment of fur-farmed animals is so impoverished and alien to their natural behaviours that it is impossible to rehabilitate them. Fur farming is causing animals to have permanent brain dysfunction through sensory and motor deprivation during development. This dysfunction can be genetically transmitted from mothers to their offspring. Why do we continue to allow this industry to flourish through allowing millions of pounds' worth of imports and sales into the UK? As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge said, why is it seen as okay to outsource the cruelty overseas when we do not see it as an acceptable practice in this country?

**Giles Watling:** Does the hon. Lady agree that there is correlation between exporting cruelty elsewhere by importing fur and live exports, where we grow animals in this country, then pack them into crates and take them overseas where they can be abused?

**Kerry McCarthy:** I would be more than happy to support the hon. Gentleman in calling for a ban on live exports. At the moment, I understand there is a ban on animals being taken overseas for slaughter, but not for fattening. That seems to me to be a strange distinction. Surely we ought to be stamping out the exporting and transporting of animals in inhumane, cramped conditions.

I want to briefly mention the evidence we saw in the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. Some people might argue that it is up to individual members of the public to exercise choice as to whether they want to boycott products that contain animal fur or shops that sell such products. Humane Society International's recent investigations have shown that mislabelling of real fur as fake fur, or fur products having no labelling at all, is rife on the high street, whether by active disregard or innocent oversight. Complex, multi-country and subcontracted supply chains mean that shops often just do not know what is in their products by the time they arrive in the UK.

[Kerry McCarthy]

I was reassured by the evidence from the likes of Amazon, which seemed truly committed to trying to stamp out real fur sales. It talked about tightening up a lot of processes. Obviously it was trying to put the best gloss on that, but I felt it was genuine in its desire to address this.

**Sir Roger Gale:** I sought to make this point earlier, but I will make it again. We must not and cannot absolve the retailers from their duty of care. It is absolutely vital that people understand that this trade is revolting and that they should have no part of it.

**Kerry McCarthy:** That is exactly why the Select Committee took evidence from the likes of Amazon and Camden Market. A lot of these items are found on market stalls, but they have also been found in shops such as Boots, Tesco, FatFace, Groupon, House of Fraser and Missguided—well-established chains that need to get their own houses in order. Some of them had explicit fur-free promises, which they need to live up to.

I reject, too, any claims from the fur lobby about its “Welfur” mark. On two occasions—once at the APPG on animal welfare, and once when the fur lobby gave evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee—I have heard that a cruelty-free version of fur is on offer, but the fur trade is a cruel, ugly business, no matter how it is dressed up and marketed, and no matter how glamorous the end products or the people who might wear them are.

I implore the Minister to take heed of this debate and to recognise that it is indicative of much wider public support for a ban. He is a great enthusiast for Brexit, so whether or not we are allowed to do it under current rules, I hope he sees it as something that we can do in future.

**Karen Lee (Lincoln) (Lab):** I am a very new MP—I am only a year in—but more than 200 people in Lincoln responded to the petition, so it is the single biggest issue since I was elected. Does my hon. Friend agree that, for many MPs, it has had a huge response?

**Kerry McCarthy:** Yes, and that is often the case. I had 500 emails about puppy farming, which was an earlier iteration of the campaign. I should say hello to Marc from that campaign, who is in the Gallery yet again—he is here more often than I am.

Let us stop outsourcing this cruelty and introduce a ban on all fur imports as soon as possible. It is the humane, moral and right thing to do, and it is something that the public want us to do.

5.20 pm

**Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I thank the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) for securing this important debate.

The UK Government can be proud of their record on animal welfare, and of the fact that this country is a world leader in that field. That is reflected in the many restrictions that we have placed on the fur trade. For example, it is already rightly illegal to bring into

this country furs derived from cats or dogs, or any products made from cat or dog furs, but we can improve on that.

Similarly, we prohibit the import of furs or fur products from 13 different species when they originate in countries where those species are caught by inhumane trapping methods. Those are welcome measures to act against poaching and inhumane trapping or securing methods, and to keep furs obtained through those methods out of the United Kingdom. We can be proud of that, but we can and must do more. I am pleased that the UK Government have been the driving force in the adoption of restrictions such as those at the European level. I am confident that, as we leave the EU, we should keep restrictions in place and work to improve them.

Although the people who signed the petition did so out of a heartfelt concern for animal welfare, which I also feel as an animal lover—I have said before in this Chamber that I am fond of animals and that I come from a farming background, and I realise the care and attention that is given to domestic and farm animals—I fear that a blanket ban would run the risk of fuelling a worldwide illegal market in fur that had no respect for animal welfare or the protection of endangered species. As has been mentioned, some products are already marketed as fake fur that have been found to contain real fur, and even cat fur.

We should be under no illusion that the threat of an illegal market exists—it needs to be recognised and robustly dealt with. To assist in raising standards and to tackle the illegal market, we need international co-operation. As a nation, we have an opportunity to step up those efforts as we take control of our own trade policy. We must use that new trade policy to encourage the adoption of higher standards of animal welfare worldwide. I share the concerns of the many people in my constituency and throughout the United Kingdom who signed the petition. As has been said, the public response is crystal clear, and I hope the Government are listening.

One way to reduce the legal and illegal fur trade is to reduce demand. I ask people to think carefully before buying a fur product about whether they really need it. There can be no pleasure in owning or wearing ill-gotten fur. Despite my concerns about the potential for an underground or illegal market, I support many of my constituents in supporting a ban on all fur imports to the United Kingdom, which should mirror the ban on ivory products.

5.24 pm

**Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. Like many other hon. Members, I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on the way he introduced the debate and on the way that he kept the flow of the argument going, despite the many interventions he took. He did very well to get the main points across, which clearly reflected the great degree of consensus on the issue. He used the apposite phrase “outsourcing responsibility”, and he mentioned the complicity in cruelty that the current policy leads to.

As we have heard, more than 100,000 people signed the petition, which is why the debate has come to the Chamber. Although only 157 signatures came from my

constituency, it seems as though every single one of those petitioners sent me an email in support of a ban—as hon. Members will not be surprised to hear, given that the position we are in does not make a great deal of sense.

As hon. Members have already said, apparently the practices that we have rightly outlawed in this country to protect domestic animals, on the basis that they are cruel and barbaric, are okay if they happen elsewhere. Of course, we cannot tell another country what to do with its domestic laws but we can send a message about the importance this country places on animal welfare.

When I read reports about animals chewing off their own limbs in an attempt to break out of the traps they have been caught in, I am sickened and appalled. I do not want anything that has been produced as a consequence of that to enter this country, and I am sure most people feel the same. It is positive that this country no longer tolerates such cruelty, but if we allow imports from other countries where that sort of sadism goes on, we wrap ourselves in a false comfort blanket.

I am aware of the counter-argument that suggests that the better way to deal with animal cruelty is to work internationally to raise welfare standards. The Government's response to the petition stated that

“we are working at an international level to agree global animal welfare standards and phase out cruel and inhumane farming and trapping practices. We believe this is the best way to prevent animal cruelty and that this approach will lead to a much higher level of animal welfare standards.”

It is arguable that such an approach might be preferable, but there is absolutely no evidence that it will work within a reasonable time period—there is an almost touching naivety about it. In reality, nothing in that statement says why a ban on imports cannot happen; surely international work to improve welfare standards can be done at the same time as imposing a ban on imports.

With everything else that will be going on in our post-Brexit world, I fear that we will have to use up an awful lot of goodwill that we might have gained to secure new trade deals, and that we will have little flexibility left to push on other issues. The sort of issues that we have discussed today will be towards the end of a long list.

The rise of online traders makes it harder and harder to police welfare standards. We can buy almost anything from anywhere in the world, which is a great thing for consumers, but the downside is that it can be difficult to meaningfully establish how a product was made and its adherence to ethical and welfare standards. There is no practical way of enforcing that, which is why an outright ban is so attractive.

Lots of people believe that there can be no ethical basis for the purchase of fur products, which is why polling has consistently shown that a very large majority of the public favour an outright ban on fur imports, as we have already heard. That is why the Government need to come forward with a positive strategy. If something is wrong, it does not matter which country it happens in. The time has come to end the contradiction in policy and implement a full ban.

**Giles Watling:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Justin Madders:** I have actually just finished.

5.28 pm

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. Let me start by making it clear that I hate, and have hated for all my thinking life—which might be quite short, I do not know—[*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis) knows me too well. I have always hated the fur trade. It is interesting that the debate has not divided on party grounds. It is a rather philosophical debate, because this is one of the few issues that appears to unite vegan and carnivore—the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and I appeared on a BBC politics programme the other week to discuss the dairy sector. It also unites people with diametrically opposed views on country sports; indeed, it unites people with diametrically opposed views on all sorts of issues.

I slightly stand aside from the narrative of animal rights, because the giving of rights is a peculiar legal minefield. However, what trumps even that issue is our human duties, responsibilities and response to public morality. I start always by asking this question—is the fur trade actually needed? My judgment is that it is not.

Frankly, I could not care less about how marvellous the standards are for animals, or—more usually—how bad the standards are. It is the principle of farming for fur that I find so objectionable. Animals could be put up in the animal equivalent of the Ritz hotel; they could be given room service 24/7; and they could be killed in the most humane way possible, even being tickled to death by a swan's feather, so that they go out laughing. The principle would still be wrong. So, to those who talk about the “fur fair” campaign and such things, I think that is totally the wrong line of argument to deploy. We should ask ourselves, “In the 21st century, is this a trade that we want to see?”

Of course, regarding the wearing of fur, one can go back to the sumptuary Acts of the Tudor period, which very clearly set out—in Acts of Parliament—who was allowed to wear ermine, who was allowed to wear mink, who was allowed to wear lynx fur and all the rest of it, as fur was a huge status symbol and people in those times often flaunted their wealth by the wearing of furs. I think that people now have other ways of demonstrating that they are wealthy and have access to lots of consumer goods without having to put the skin and the fur of another animal on their backs.

We can point out to those countries that still condone and support fur farming that the economy of a country does not collapse when it is made illegal. When the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) introduced her private Member's Bill, I am sure people said, “Oh, job losses and unemployment, everybody will get rickets and bubonic plague will break out and God knows what else, because nobody can afford any taxes for the health service!” But the sky did not fall down. People who had been involved in the UK fur trade went off and did something else, and the economy kept going.

I think that nationally—not in this debate, but nationally—we are inclined to do something in this House, we make something illegal, we assuage our conscience and we say, “Job done!” We are, of course, fur farmers by proxy, because other countries are farming fur, the demand for which in the UK is worth—I think

[*Simon Hoare*]

my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) said this—£56.5 million in fur sales. So we clearly have to do more as parliamentarians and public policy makers to inform our fellow citizens that fur is something that they should not want, buy or look for.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) when he talks about the absolute “duty of care” on retailers. The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) mentioned internet sales, which I will not go into because everybody tries to grapple with them, and I have not found a solution for controlling such sales; frankly, we know it is a problem. However, at a time when the high street has never been more competitive—fighting over market share—it strikes me as unconscionable that high street retailers are flogging products to people that they believe are fake but are actually real, because those products can be sourced from overseas at very cheap prices. Those retailers should be called out and those customers should not be going through their doors, because the power of the credit card, the purse and the wallet speaks, and in a competitive, cut-throat retail sector I suggest that the customer is king.

**Sir Roger Gale:** First, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point that I had tried to make so much better than I made it myself. Secondly, when the House voted to ban fur farming in 2000, we did so because we believed that it was a vile practice and that it had no place in modern British society. We did not vote to move the problem from A to B. Therefore, when my hon. Friend the Minister responds to this debate, it is only logical that he says that having willed the ends we must now will the means, and ban the trade.

**Simon Hoare:** My hon. Friend is right and if legislation was before us that banned the import of foreign-farmed fur into our country, he would find me in the Aye Lobby voting for it. However, his argument also goes to the point that we slightly salved our domestic conscience when we said—it was before my time in the House—that we have banned fur farming here, but we have not spread the message as to why we banned it, and nor have we pointed out that the doom-mongers’ prediction of an economic collapse after a ban has not materialised. We have not been strong enough in taking that message to those countries where fur farming still continues.

To state the blindingly obvious, we are no longer an imperial power that can send a gunboat to countries that we do not like, so that we can bully people into obeying. However, we can take our soft power and our leadership, and use them. If we wanted to find an example of where we had done that, we and some allies did it on climate change. We realised that there was an issue that needed to be addressed, and through Kyoto and other initiatives we got the world thinking collectively about climate change and the imperative of dealing with it in a proper way to safeguard humanity.

Now, let us not ascribe the same scale to fur farming as to the future climate of our world, although for some it will be equally important, but we should be talking to those countries that still farm fur. Frankly, if our banning imports meant that somebody lost £56.5 million of

sales, I suggest that they would just find that money elsewhere in the world market. They will not stop farming fur because we stop importing it. Banning fur imports will make us feel better; of course, it will. We can write to those constituents who have emailed us on this issue—I have had many emails from my constituents in North Dorset—

**Giles Watling:** On that very point, does my hon. Friend agree that by banning imports of fur products into this country, we would lead where others might follow?

**Simon Hoare:** My hon. Friend makes a point, but if he looks at this matter dispassionately he will see that, although we banned fur farming, the major countries that do the large-scale fur farming have not followed suit. So, yes, we can act and, yes, that would close off to all but the illegal trade the market in fur in this country, but we have to do far more in terms of world leadership to help those countries that have a fur farming sector, to show them how they can move away from it, how they can support the creation of new jobs and how they will not see a black hole in their economy if they ban it. So, let us lead by example, of course, but let us also use the soft power that the UK has.

**Jamie Stone:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that banning fur farming in this country while still buying fur has the smell of hypocrisy about it, whereas a total ban would surely take us to the proper moral high ground, and that in the scheme of things that can appeal to other people and so our influence might well percolate out?

**Simon Hoare:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and a total ban is one of the weapons in the arsenal that one can deploy. It would be bonkers for us to exhort people to stop farming fur if we were still seeking to import it—that is absolutely right. I suggest to the Minister that now—20 years down the timeline set out by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner)—is the time to take that next inexorable step of a ban on UK imports. Having done that, in a timely way, it should not be a matter of thinking “job done”, popping open the Pol Roger, the prosecco, the cava or the drink of choice and saying, “Aren’t we good?” The task then moves to the next stage—the two stages could run in parallel—of convincing those countries that still farm fur that it is time to stop. In the 21st century, the human body does not need another animal’s furs to keep warm. We have ways of doing that and of displaying our disposable wealth other than by wearing the pelt of an animal on our backs.

**Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP):** The hon. Gentleman knows me to be an Ulster MP, but I was surprised when researching this issue that there are still three animal fur farms in the Republic of Ireland, one of which is in Ulster—in Donegal. Those farms kill more than 200,000 mink per year. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a good starting point would be our nearest neighbour and trusted friend—a European partner we collaborate with and sit on British-Irish ministerial councils with—and that in this area we could convince it of the sound arguments, so that it would end its fur trade?

**Simon Hoare:** I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. He catches me totally by surprise, by saying that that remains a fact as we start the second half of 2018. That should be one of the easy wins—if one likes—in our campaign to stop the farming of fur for the retail and fashion trade.

I conclude with two key points. The first is about labelling, customer awareness and customer pressure on the retailer. It is a cut-throat marketplace and high street at the moment and now is the time for the consumer to speak. The second is world leadership. Let us ban here first and take that message, that dialogue and that discussion to those countries that continue to farm fur. Let us make it clear to them that we are not interested, *per se*, in the standards by which the animals are kept or the manner in which they are killed, germane and pertinent as those matters are. We urge them to stop farming fur because we think it is wrong and it is for our country to show the moral and legal leadership I know it can provide.

5.42 pm

**Maria Eagle** (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I was the MP who, 20 years ago—it seems like yesterday—introduced the original Bill on fur farming in the 1998-99 Session, and it was only because I was fortunate to come second in the private Member's Bill ballot that I was able to do that with any prospect of success. It was as a consequence of that origin, as a private Member's Bill, that the legislation was drawn narrowly. I wanted to succeed, and having a broad Bill when debating time is restricted is not a good strategy. I thought very early on, "I want this Bill to get on to the statute book, so let's draw it narrowly. Let's deal with fur farming in this country"—in England and Wales as it was—"and keep it to that". The international fur trade was somewhat on the slide at the time and there was, I think, a reasonable hope that it was sinking and might not recover in the way in which the past 20 years have shown it to.

To my mind, the focus had to be on banning so-called fur farming. What goes on in these places can in no way be called farming; it is factory production of fur and it is as well to bear that in mind. When we say "farm" we think of nice socially useful things that feed the population and help to keep us going. There is no way the production of these animals for fur across the world—no longer here, thank goodness—could possibly be described as farming. Let us be clear about that: it is fur factory-farm production.

Coming back to this debate 20 years later, I hear the same arguments and see the same appallingly poor standards and conditions, and the animals going through the same terrible, unconscionable suffering wherever the fur is produced. There are no viable, humane standards for fur factory-farm production; they do not exist. The farm animal welfare people at the time were right that it was impossible to produce fur humanely in the manner in which the fur farms that existed in England and Wales were operating, and as farms operate now across some of the rest of the world. It is impossible. Colleagues from different political parties set out in their speeches some of the suffering that animals produced in this way undergo. There is no way of ameliorating that suffering. These are wild animals, and they should not be dealt with in the way in which they still are around the rest of

the world. We banned fur farming in this country because it was impossible to produce fur humanely and with any kind of welfare standards in the way in which it was being produced.

I was somewhat shocked, on coming back to the debate 20 years later, to see that 135 million animals are killed for their fur worldwide and an estimated 2 million pelts are imported into the UK every year. That is a lot of unconscionable suffering that we, when we banned fur farming in this country, thought to put an end to. I had hoped that the trade would decline and decline, since it was clear that most people, certainly in this country, did not approve of treating animals in this way. When the public are asked, usually at least three quarters of them reply that they want to see these practices banned. So there has been no reversal of the views of our constituents about how animals should be treated, it is simply that the trade has gone back up and, unbeknownst to most people, the number of pelts being imported has gone up. It seems that fur is not the luxury it was once seen to be, and that is probably responsible, in part, for the increase in the trade.

Given that we have been disappointed that the trade has not naturally declined and given up the ghost, now is the time to remove the contradiction between our having banned fur farming ourselves and our still importing pelts to that level. Now is the time to say, "Okay. It didn't die out naturally. Let's kill it off." There is no way in which fur farming can be done properly or humanely.

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): One reason for the trade going up has been the phenomenal success of Canada Goose, a company that uses real fur trimming from coyotes that are hunted—humanely it says—in Canada. Leghold traps are legal there, but a mother animal, if caught, will chew off her leg to get back to her children, which can in no way be humane. We should call on companies that use fur trimming to do what their rivals do and use artificial fur.

**Maria Eagle:** I agree with my hon. Friend; I do not think that it is possible to hunt humanely with those kinds of traps. Indeed, they have been banned in this country for decades longer than fur farming has been banned. We should not allow that kind of trade into this country.

This is not a party political debate. I hope that the Minister realises that there is widespread support across parties—as there always has been, and as there was at the time of my Bill—for banning this inhumane and appalling way of treating animals. It is not a party political issue, but perhaps the Minister would like to talk to some of his colleagues, particularly in the Lords, who appear not to have fully understood the nature of the ban introduced in 2000. When the Select Committee took oral evidence from Lord Henley, he said:

"I have no desire to close things down. I am not in the business of banning things."

Lord Gardiner said he was

"committed to improving the welfare standards of animals across the world."

Lord Gardiner ought to know that that cannot be done with fur farming; there are no welfare standards that are acceptable. He said that animals

"for whatever purpose are reared and then killed in a humane manner"

[*Maria Eagle*]

and that the fur industry needs

“to be thinking about how we produce fur in a more humane manner...fur farming, if it is to have a future, needs to be concentrating on humane and sustainable farming and trapping.”

The Minister needs to go back to his Department and have a seminar with his colleagues in the Lords about how impossible it is to do the things they seem to think are possible. If they represent the Government's attitude to the issue, we are not going to see any progress. It is not possible—I cannot stress this enough—for fur farming to be done humanely. It has to be banned. After all this time, as the first nation in the world to ban fur farming, we can take a leadership position around the world, but we will only do so if Ministers in the Department understand that it is not possible to do this farming better.

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a powerful case. The core of her argument—I agree with it—is that the ban can be done. Does she agree that it is within the scope of the Government and the Minister to change the practice of importing fur in a way that would please not only those of us taking part in the debate, but the majority of our constituents?

**Maria Eagle:** I think it is possible. It was certainly possible for us to ban fur farming in this country even though we were a full member of the EU at the time and were not talking about leaving. Leading by example is a very good thing. We have done it before: following our ban of fur farming—we were the first country in the world to do so—there have been full bans across many European countries, inside and outside the EU. Austria, the Netherlands, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, the Republic of Macedonia and, most recently, the Czech Republic have banned fur farming. I gave a seminar to Czech parliamentarians ahead of them considering their legislation, and I heard the same arguments from their fur trade people that I heard 20 years ago from the then remnant of our fur industry. There are partial bans in Belgium, Denmark and Hungary. The Germans have just increased their regulations to require all farmed mink to have water to swim in. I doubt that will do much for the viability of mink farming in Germany—in fact, I think it will make it completely unviable.

Progress is being made, but it is too slow. Given the statistics about the level of the trade and the fact that it has not died out, as we might have hoped 20 years ago, now is the time for us to take that next step. I do not agree for a minute that it matters whether we are inside or outside the EU; we can do it either way. We do not have to ask anybody; we can do it ourselves, and parliamentarians should do it. I think we will, and I hope that in considering the matter the Minister will take a view that his colleagues in the Lords did not sufficiently understand the nature of the trade to properly set out the Government's position to the Select Committee.

I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to express that the Government, of which he is a member, will take forward the banning of this trade, because it is time. It is something that our constituents want. Over decades they have shown a very high level of support for banning the trade and for looking after animals

properly. The idea that we can have 135 million animals killed for their fur every year, having put up with the most appalling suffering, is unconscionable. We need to act. We need to lead the world again. The Minister is in a position to do it, and I hope that he will. Perhaps he will tell us so today.

[*PHILIP DAVIES in the Chair*]

5.55 pm

**Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in this debate, which is sponsored by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner). I thank him for his constructive, thoughtful and comprehensive exposition.

By way of preamble—that is never a good way to begin a sentence—in recent weeks and months, I, like others, have spoken in this Chamber calling for a United Nations ban on the sale of cosmetics tested on animals. I have spoken on puppy smuggling, puppy farms, the ivory trade and a range of animal welfare issues. My constituents in North Ayrshire and Arran care deeply about them, as do people right across the United Kingdom. They are hugely important to our constituents. We are a conglomeration of countries—a political union—that cares very deeply about animals.

This is an auspicious day in Scotland, because today we become the first country in the United Kingdom to enact legislation banning the use of wild animals in circuses. I sincerely hope that other parts of the UK and Europe follow us.

**Kerry McCarthy:** The hon. Lady makes a pertinent point. I have been told so many times that we cannot introduce a unilateral ban on wild animals in circuses because the EU would not let us, yet we hear that many other countries have done so—Slovakia did so this week. Clearly, being in the European Union was being used as an excuse.

**Patricia Gibson:** The hon. Lady makes an excellent point. I do not want to wander too far away from the focus of this debate, but we heard today that there might be issues with banning fur sales while we are still in Europe. We need to be careful about finding reasons not to do things. We can always find 100 reasons not to do something, but if the political will is there, we should make a greater effort to do what needs to be done.

As we have heard, fur farming has been illegal across the UK for a considerable time. That ban happened as a response to the public simply making it known to politicians that fur farms were an affront to decency that simply could not and would not be tolerated any longer. Consumers across the UK have been leading the debate, as they often do when it comes to ethical choices, particularly in relation to animal rights. Each year more than 100 million animals around the globe are killed just for their fur, either through being trapped in the wild, which accounts for about 15% of those killed, or from fur factory farms, which account for about 85% of those killed.

The animals farmed for their fur—most commonly, but not exclusively, mink—are wild animals. They are held in the most appalling and unnatural conditions, as was set out clearly and chillingly by the hon. Members

for Cambridge, for Clacton (Giles Watling), for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) and for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy). Animals are held in appalling conditions until they are eventually killed for their fur, usually by gassing or electrocution. Those trapped in the wild are most commonly caught in leg traps. Some animals chew through their own limbs to escape and others are left for days until the trapper returns and kills them by stamping or kneeling on them, taking care, of course, not to damage the animal's pelt.

The sale of fur in the UK has been in steady decline over the past 30 years or so. I am no fashion icon, Mr Davies, as you can probably tell, but fur products have become distinctly unfashionable in many quarters. As I have said, consumers are way ahead of us in Westminster. They have made an ethical choice and have been turning away from fur over the past 30 years, although the volumes of sales are still very disturbing, as the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) pointed out—I thank her for her powerful speech.

We know how consumers feel and we see the evidence in our inboxes. I do not often say this, but the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) is absolutely correct. The trade is simply not needed. A ban on the sale of fur products is important to keep those loathsome and vile products out of the United Kingdom. We have an opportunity here to begin to wash the blood from our hands. As we have heard, other countries will follow. The question that Parliament has to decide—I know the Minister is listening carefully—is whether it wants to lead or whether it wants to follow. The change is coming. The question is how quickly we implement it.

The earlier comment made by the hon. Member for North Dorset was correct: we must deal robustly with ruthless operators in the supply chain who, when we have a ban, will try to pass off real fur as fake fur. We must make sure we are ready for that.

As the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) pointed out, it is not good enough to wait for international welfare standards to improve and simply make the issue go away. A ban would hasten improvements in animal welfare internationally, not impede them. We cannot, as my former head teacher used to say, move at the rate of the slowest caravan.

The UK public, in numbers that are growing all the time, are appalled by the suffering caused to animals by the fur trade. A YouGov poll in February of this year showed that 69% of the British public support a ban on the import and sale of real fur, regardless of their political affiliation. It cuts through any voting behaviour and other belief systems people have. The World Trade Organisation has set a precedent for a ban, as the hon. Member for Cambridge pointed out. Following challenges by Norway and Canada, the World Trade Organisation upheld the right of the EU to ban trade in seal products on the grounds of public morality. It noted that commercial seal hunts pose inherent dangers to animal welfare and the ruling was upheld on appeal. The door is open for a ban on the sale of animal fur in the UK. The question is whether the Minister will allow us to walk through it.

All lucrative endeavours bring with them powerful lobbyists such as we have seen with the tobacco industry. The latest example in the fur industry is an organisation called WelFur. I am sure the Minister is aware of the comprehensive and rigorous “Scientific Review of Animal Welfare Standards and ‘WelFur’”, which concluded:

“WelFur is not able to address the major welfare issues for mink and foxes farmed for fur...or the serious inadequacies in current labelling and regulation.”

I am sure the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood also pointed that out.

For me, and I believe for many people in the UK, it is quite simple when we get right down to it—we have heard it said repeatedly in the debate. If we banned fur farms because of the cruelty they inflict on animals, it is simply not sustainable—indeed, it is actively hypocritical—to allow the sale of real fur in the UK. It suggests that the suffering inflicted on animals for fur is absolutely fine as long as it is not done in the UK. It is not fine. Probably everybody in this Chamber believes that, and every constituent who has contacted me believes it. If something is wrong because it is cruel, it is wrong regardless of where it occurs. The best message we can send today is to show how strongly we believe that by refusing to allow real fur into the UK for sale. We have outsourced the cruelty, as the hon. Member for Morley and Outwood has pointed out, and it is not good enough. No matter what animal we are talking about, the cruelty inflicted is simply not justifiable or acceptable.

I will end by urging the Minister to screw his courage to the sticking place and implement a ban on the sale of animal fur in the UK as soon as possible. The House supports it and our constituents support it and want it. Let us make it happen. I have no doubt that other countries will follow.

6.5 pm

**Dr David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies, and that of your predecessor, Mr Hollobone. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) for introducing the debate—he stole our thunder by giving all the evidence. We have also had important contributions from the hon. Members for Clacton (Giles Watling), for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone), for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns), for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant) and for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), and from my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders). We had a tour de force from my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), who is responsible for taking us to the stage we are at today, and I very much concur with the contribution from the Scottish National party spokesperson, the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson).

I will start with my usual appeal. It is a little strange that we are here in this place. We should be somewhere else later debating the Ivory Bill. I say in all sincerity to the Minister that the ban on animal fur would be much better catered for in a genuine animal welfare Act, which is what we should all push for, where all the different measures would come together. We have not had one for some considerable time. It would be helpful to address the matter in primary legislation. We are thankful that the Government have introduced the Ivory Bill, but it would be nice to think that this would be part of proactive legislative action so that we can deal with all the measures. Not one speech has wavered from the fact that we all want a ban and we want it now, and we want it done in a way in which we yet again show the world that this issue matters. It matters because of the

[Dr David Drew]

109,000 people who have signed the petition, but I know there have been other petitions that got into hundreds of thousands because the issue touches a raw nerve. People do not believe that, having banned it in this country, we should get fur in through the back door, particularly as it looks as though we have simply outsourced our cruelty. That cannot be right. It is not fair and it is not moral.

The Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood was about morality, taking a stand and making it clear that we wanted to ban fur farming. We were told that we could not do it. We were told that it would cost lots of jobs and that it was a minor industry. We were told that for those people who wanted to wear fur it was right that they had a choice. Sadly, we have proved them wrong, but there are people who still think that fur can come in through the back door and we now have to do something about that, so we are revisiting the 2000 ban, which is popular. It is fair to say that it was popular across the House, although there were a few backwoodsmen, whose names will not be recalled, who spent time trying to delay the process, but we took them on and we beat them. It was a great pleasure to see a Labour Government enact the legislation and people felt that we had a strong stance on animal welfare.

It is therefore disappointing that what goes on elsewhere in the world still has an impact in this country. Certain animals are bred in the most cruel manner simply so that somebody can enjoy wearing fur. I do not understand not only why we cannot lean on the retail trade, but why people wear fur—to me, it is the same as wearing a swastika or something. People should not think that it is acceptable; it is not. It is a form of licence that people generally feel we should do something about. It appears that 90% of the British public support us, which is a pretty high figure. People ought to respond to that by recognising that if they have furs in their top drawer, they should quietly dispose of them. It is not acceptable in this day and age to wear them.

We largely welcome what the Government have said, although we do not necessarily agree with their inaction and unwillingness to consider the issue. We also want it to be part of a more comprehensive policy that shows that we are leading the way in this country—with action, not words. In Labour's animal welfare plan, a ban on fur imports is one of our 50 commitments. It is important that we make such commitments in opposition. The difference is that we intend to carry them through if and when we are elected.

It is important to recognise that animal welfare is a key issue. So many Members have spoken in today's debate, and I did not count the number who intervened. The poor presenter of the petition must have taken about 12 interventions. He eventually went back 20 years; I think we must have all gone forward about 40 years with the number of people who wanted to contribute. People feel very strongly about this issue. Hon. Members have turned up to the debate partly because they feel passionately about it, but also because they have been petitioned by their constituents, who want their Members of Parliament to do something about it. That is why we have the petitions process. People can influence policy, and influence their MPs to do something about policy.

In the nicest possible way, I hope that the Minister has listened. He might not clarify all the things that we want him to today, but in due course we want him to accept that there is overwhelming support for such changes. As I said, we can take this forward in various international treaties and negotiations, and say that the world has to ban this heinous crime. It is despicable. There are no grounds for the way in which some countries and people still think that they can earn a living from it. It is not acceptable, and we should say so loudly and clearly.

We have heard a lot about the suffering and the nature of the industry. I will not labour that point, which has been made clearly with some very graphic examples of what happens. We must try to persuade other countries, and certainly those within the EU. When we ban it, we should clearly write to them and explain the ban. There seems to be some misunderstanding that our ban was just based within our borders. It should not and could not be. We are still a member of the EU. If there are the issues in the Republic of Ireland that were identified by the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), we need to write to them and say that it is not something we support. Countries such as Denmark are our close neighbours. I saw the BBC film, which was interesting in how it highlighted what goes on in other parts of the world. Such countries should not be thinking that we just ignore this practice. We should not ignore it; we should take it up and ensure that they understand that what they are doing is wrong, and do what we can about it.

I ask the Minister to be very clear, if he can, that such a measure will be introduced, as the ivory trade ban is being introduced today. As I said, it would be nice if a ban on fur imports were part of a wider animal welfare Bill, and certainly part of a wider strategy, but I will accept that, if he says that in due course the Government will introduce a Bill to ban imports, that is a tangible thing to get from today's debate.

It is important that we send the message loudly to the rest of the world—perhaps more clearly than we did last time, when we banned it within our own borders—that we see the sale of animal fur as an unacceptable trade that should be dealt with at an international level, and that we will deal with it in this country not only by tackling our domestic business, but by banning imports. People will then be under no illusions: the fur trade is wrong and should be abolished.

6.14 pm

**The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George Eustice):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on the way in which he introduced the debate. This is an emotive topic, which I know the public care about deeply. As hon. Members have pointed out, more than 109,000 people have signed the petition, so it is right that we have a long debate today to explore the issues in more detail.

The UK prides itself on being a world leader in animal welfare standards and, as hon. Members have also pointed out, this is a cross-party approach. Governments of all colours have advanced the case for improving animal welfare and tackling animal cruelty. We are at the forefront of international efforts to protect the interests of animals. For example, as hon. Members

have said, we recently announced proposals to ban the sale of ivory to help to bring an end to elephant poaching. That Bill will start its passage through Parliament this evening, and I am sure that it will have universal support from all Members at today's debate.

**Maria Eagle:** Does the Minister accept that it is not possible to improve the welfare of animals that are being farmed for their fur?

**George Eustice:** I was going to come on to that point, because I am aware that the hon. Lady introduced a private Member's Bill on this subject. She recalled earlier how a number of Back Benchers frustrated her Bill. She joins an illustrious list of people before her and since who have had their private Members' Bills frustrated. As a general rule, I find that if the Government do not support a private Member's Bill, Back Benchers support it, and vice versa. It is one of those Catch-22s that we have to live with.

The hon. Lady correctly pointed out that the Farm Animal Welfare Council—now the Farm Animal Welfare Committee—did a piece of work on fur farming. It looked specifically at two species, mink and arctic fox, and concluded that because they are wild animals it was unable to come up with an industry code of practice to enable those two species to be farmed in a way that was conducive to their welfare. On that basis it recommended, and the Government accepted, a move towards a ban on fur farming. It is important to recognise, though, that—for reasons that I will come on to later—the then Labour Government introduced that ban but stopped short of a ban on trade in fur. Instead, they introduced a fur farming ban, which is far easier to achieve.

However, the hon. Lady put her finger on an important point—the difficulty of farming animals, and wild ones in particular, in a way that is conducive to their welfare. That point was made powerfully by a number of hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Clacton (Giles Watling), for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) and for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant), and the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy). My hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) talked about the ethical difficulty of these issues.

The Government have supported higher animal welfare standards worldwide as the best way of phasing out cruel and inhumane farming and trapping practices that are banned here. Once the UK retakes its independent seat on international bodies, such as the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora and the World Organisation for Animal Health, we will have an opportunity to promote the British view on animal welfare in such international forums, and to support improved animal welfare standards internationally.

In the meantime, there are some EU provisions that the UK has always supported—indeed, in many cases the UK argued for them. First, there are regulations that include a blanket ban on the importing of furs from a number of animals, including cats and dogs, as well as seal skins and products from commercial hunts. Secondly, there are EU regulations that ensure that any fur that can be imported into the UK from the EU comes from animals that have been kept, trapped and killed humanely, as defined by EU regulations. Fur production is allowed in some other EU member states, and EU directive 98/58/EC applies animal welfare standards

to farmed animal production, including animals farmed for fur. EU regulation 1099/2009 applies requirements to protect the welfare of fur animals at the time of killing. Those regulations are audited by the European Commission.

Humane Society International figures suggest that about 85% of fur imported into the UK comes from farmed species such as mink, arctic fox, racoon, dog and rabbit, with the remainder coming from trapped wild species. The EU does not allow imports of fur from wild animals caught by unacceptable trapping practices. EU regulation 3254/91 relates to fur from 13 animal species, and requires certification, including from third countries, that animals were trapped in the right way.

All of those EU regulations pertaining to trade from third countries and the standards we require will come across into UK law through the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which is currently making its way through Parliament. I will return to the issue of additional trade restrictions in the WTO and the EU, which a number of hon. Members raised, but first I want to dwell on some of the other restrictions that we support.

In addition to the EU regulations, CITES controls fur from endangered species. For example, export permits and commercial use certificates strictly control the import of fur from endangered species. Those controls are implemented in the UK by the wildlife trade regulations. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs is responsible for processing import declarations and granting customs clearance for regulated goods, and Border Force works to ensure anti-smuggling controls intercept any illegal products. Although there were no seizures last year, 19 consignments were checked because it was considered that they might have some irregularities in their paperwork.

There are legal frameworks for the farming of fur animals in some non-EU countries, including minimum standards and inspections of welfare conditions. However, there are of course no EU or UK checks on farming conditions in those third countries.

**Simon Hoare:** We will all have heard what the Minister said about the international treaties and our ability to make the case that many of us have talked about, but does he accept that, notwithstanding the prevailing regulations and those that might come in the future, we would prefer to live in a world in which those regulations are not required because the trade has ceased?

**George Eustice:** I understand my hon. Friend's point, and I was going to return to the issue of trade. The point is that it is not possible to make a difference just through the restriction on trade to the UK, because we represent a tiny portion—about 0.25%—of the entire global market. We would probably be more effective agitating for change through international forums such as the World Organisation for Animal Health, CITES and others to get improvements and further restrictions, and to encourage other countries to adopt the sorts of measures we have adopted. The Government recognise that some consumers do not wish to purchase fur on ethical grounds. As a consumer protection measure, there are laws about the legal fur trade to ensure consumers can obtain sufficient information about whether a product is composed wholly or partly of fur so they can make an informed choice.

[George Eustice]

I recognise, as several hon. Members pointed out—including my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) in an intervention—that concerns have been expressed recently that real fur is being passed off as fake fur, especially in low-cost items. That is the subject of an inquiry by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, to which my noble Friend Lord Gardiner gave evidence. The hon. Member for Bristol East cast aspersions on Lord Gardiner's knowledge of these issues, but I believe he has looked at them in depth and understands them well.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I did not mention Lord Gardiner.

**George Eustice:** I am sorry; I would like to correct that. I misremembered who made that point—it was the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle). I assure hon. Members that my noble Friend Lord Gardiner has looked at these issues in great detail and, I believe, has a deep understanding of them.

The hon. Member for Cambridge asked about levels of trade. Various figures have been mentioned. I am told that, in 2017, we imported £63 million-worth of fur and articles with fur, and exported £33 million-worth of fur and articles with fur, which suggests that about £30 million-worth of those imports was for UK use.

Let me turn to some of the points made by hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman talked about WTO rules, and I broadly agree with him. I have argued many times in this Chamber that nothing in the WTO rules precludes us from taking stances on ethical grounds and from advancing animal welfare. As he pointed out, an important test case relating to seal fur and seal skins was upheld. It is not perfectly straightforward—the WTO has not upheld other cases—but there is case law that allows individual national Governments to advance such measures on ethical grounds, particularly relating to animal welfare.

It is a little more complicated when it comes to the European Union, because where there are EU harmonising measures relevant to the movement of fur—including the EU animal by-product regulations—any limitation of where such products can be sold and any national restriction would need to meet the requirement of article 114 of the treaty on the functioning of the European Union. That would require us to have the consent of other countries or cede the final decision to the European Commission. It is a complex picture but, for political reasons, it is unlikely that we would be able to advance that while we are in the EU. I suspect that is why the previous Labour Government, when they introduced the ban on fur farming, stopped short of trying to introduce a restriction on trade.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Outwood made a very important point about the use of leghold traps. As I said earlier, under current EU regulations there is a prohibition on the import of furs or fur products from some wild animal species originating in countries where they are caught by leghold traps or trapping methods that do not meet international standards of humane trapping. The furs of animals caught in leghold traps are prohibited from import into the UK, and there has to be certification to confirm the country of origin, so I believe that the existing regulations cover that.

Some hon. Members made an important point about the saliency of this issue to the public. I agree and concur with that completely. The lion's share of the correspondence coming into DEFRA relates to animal welfare. This really does matter. I was not aware that we had ever blamed the European Union for not introducing a ban on wild animals in circuses—indeed, that has been Government policy for a couple of years now. We are committed to introducing that Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset talked about our ability to use soft power. I agree with much of what he said on that issue but, as I pointed out earlier, I believe we will be more effective if we advance that soft power through forums such as the World Organisation for Animal Health, CITES and others in order to get a wider uptake of the types of bans and restrictions that we have in place here in the UK.

There have been many thoughtful contributions to this important debate, including from hon. Members who have been campaigning on the issue for many years. I again congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge on introducing the debate, and all hon. Members on their contributions.

6.28 pm

**Daniel Zeichner:** It has been a good debate and there have been many thoughtful contributions from all sides.

I joined the Petitions Committee only recently, and this is the first time I have introduced a debate. It is a testimony to the power of the e-petitions process that so many people got engaged, signed the petition and are watching us today. My worry is that they will think that all we have had is a debate. That is the challenge for the Minister to go away to think about.

We have had a discussion with excellent contributions. The one made by my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) was particularly telling. She started on this process many years ago and summarised the debate with passion, saying that, in effect, there is no such things as humane fur farming. There is the question of whether a ban can be made while we are members of the European Union but, in my limited experience of this place, one thing that I have noticed is that what we can do often depends on whom we ask and how much we want to do it. That is the real question.

We have heard from every single political party in the House—from Conservative and Labour Members, Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National party—and there is almost unanimity. One of the great Presidents of America, Lyndon Baines Johnson, famously said that politics was about counting the votes. I have been counting the votes and—I am looking at the Government Benches—some Members have self-declared already, tonight. This House has the votes. What it needs is a Government willing to introduce a ban. That is what the public expect.

I hope the Minister will go back to the Secretary of State with the very strong message from this House that it is time we banned the fur trade.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered e-petition 200888 relating to the sale of animal fur in the UK.

6.30 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

# Written Statements

*Monday 4 June 2018*

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

### Serious Fraud Office

**The Attorney General (Jeremy Wright):** I am today announcing the appointment of Lisa Osofsky as the next Director of the Serious Fraud Office (SFO).

Under the Criminal Justice Act 1987, I appoint a person to be the Director of the Serious Fraud Office, who shall discharge their functions under my superintendence. The Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary have been notified of this appointment.

This appointment has been conducted in line with civil service guidance and the process has been overseen by a civil service commissioner.

[HCWS730]

## EDUCATION

### School Places

**The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds):** My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System (Lord Agnew) has made the following written ministerial statement.

The Government are committed to creating more good school places through a diverse education system, to ensure that parents have choice and that children of all backgrounds have access to the best education.

We are investing £7 billion from 2015 to 2021 to create new school places. This forms part of our wider plan to invest more than £23 billion in the school estate by 2021. By continuing to announce the profile of allocations ahead of time, we recognise that good investment decisions require certainty.

As part of this, I am announcing a total package of £730 million of capital funding to create new school places. This includes £630 million of basic need allocations to create the places needed by September 2021. Announcing these allocations means local authorities can plan ahead with confidence, and make good strategic investment decisions to ensure they deliver good school places for every child who needs one.

We recently published the 2017 School Capacity Survey, which highlights the progress to date in providing new school places. By May 2017, our investment had already helped to create 825,000 additional school places since 2010, with 90,000 delivered in 2016-17 alone.

The vast majority of these new places are being created in good or outstanding schools. This is demonstrated through the latest school place scorecards released, which show that 91% of the new places added between 2016 and 2017 in both primary and secondary phases were created in schools rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

The Government are also committed to investing in school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities. As part of this, I am announcing a further £50 million

top-up to the special provision capital fund to take our total investment to £265 million across 2018-21. This additional funding will help local authorities to create further school places and facilities for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

I am also announcing £50 million of basic need funding, contributing towards the capital costs of building a new mainstream secondary presumption free school in a targeted number of local authorities.

Details of this announcement will be published on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website, and copies will be placed in the House Library.

[HCWS729]

## Social Work England

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi):** My hon. Friend the Minister for Care (Caroline Dinenage), for the Department of Health and Social Care, and I have today published the Government response to the public consultation on the policy to establish the regulatory framework for Social Work England, the new, specialist regulator for social workers in England. Alongside this Government consultation response, we have laid regulations that, subject to parliamentary approval, will enable Social Work England to operate.

The consultation, which ran from 8 February to 21 March, sought views from everyone with an interest in social work and professional regulation on the policy underlying Social Work England's secondary legislative framework. The aim of this regulatory framework is to enable Social Work England to protect the public by operating streamlined, proportionate and efficient systems and processes which adapt to emerging opportunities, challenges and best practice. This will ensure the professional regulation of social workers in England reflects the changing reality of delivering social work practice safely and effectively—building public trust and confidence in the profession.

We received 198 responses to the consultation from a wide variety of interested stakeholders, including representatives from social worker networks, local authorities, unions, charities, education providers, service user groups, regulatory bodies and individual social workers. During the consultation period, officials also held 11 events, consulting with social workers, education providers and interested parliamentarians and met again with both the Regulatory Expert Group<sup>[1]</sup> and the Advisory Group<sup>[2]</sup>.

Overall, respondents supported the majority of proposals. The consultation response summarises respondents' views, areas of concern raised and the changes made to address those concerns. We have taken clear and practical steps to respond to what experts, professionals and the sector told us to further strengthen and refine the proposed secondary legislative framework for Social Work England.

A number of respondents also requested further clarity on the role of Government in relation to Social Work England; expressed strong support for collaboration between Social Work England and the sector; and highlighted the importance of minimising disruption to the profession during the transfer of regulatory functions. Many recognised the potential benefits a specialist, single profession regulator will bring to social workers

and for the social work profession. Respondents also provided wider comments on the way in which Social Work England will operate as the regulator on a day-to-day basis, and how it might consider effective and efficient ways to discharge its functions. While these responses fall outside of the scope of the consultation on the secondary legislative framework, we do expect Social Work England to work closely with the sector through its consultations on standards and regulatory rules, and as it establishes itself as the new regulator for social workers in England. We hope that respondents will welcome the opportunity to contribute further to such consultation.

Finally, we can announce today that Colum Conway has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Social Work England. Colum is currently Chief Executive of the regulatory body for the social work profession and social care workforce in Northern Ireland. Alongside his Social Work England experience of running a regulator, he has a background in social work and has many years' experience working in senior leadership roles. We are confident that he will bring a wealth of relevant experience to this role and we look forward to working with him, and Social Work England's Chair Lord Patel of Bradford, to make Social Work England a success.

Copies of the Government response are available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). I will place copies of the consultation response in the House Library.

<sup>[1]</sup> The Regulatory Expert Group includes representatives from the General Medical Council, the Banking Standards Board, Professional Standards Authority and the Legal Services Board.

<sup>[2]</sup> Social Work England Advisory Group membership includes key organisations from across the social work sector, employer representatives, education providers and service users including the British Association of Social Workers, Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Association of Professors of Social Work.

[HCWS728]

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Breast Cancer Screening

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** On 2 May 2018 I informed the House of a serious failing in the national breast screening programme in England, which resulted in thousands of women aged between 68 and 71 not being invited to their final breast screening between 2009 and May 2018. This statement provides an update on the specific commitments I made in my oral statement and the actions we are now taking to support those affected and prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

First, in my original statement, I committed that the NHS would offer an appointment for screening to all women who missed their scheduled appointment as a result of this error, and that we would provide clear information and advice for anyone with concerns. I asked Public Health England to work with the NHS to contact women who missed their screening by the end of May. I can now confirm that Public Health England met this deadline by 18 May, contacting 195,565 women registered with a GP in England. In addition, all the

affected women known to have moved to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland were also written to by 1 June 2018.

The result of this is that as of 1 June 2018, 26,774 women have now received an appointment for screening, with hundreds already screened. I am providing detailed information on how many women have been contacted in each English constituency, alongside the confirmation that we have written to all those women now registered with a GP in one of the devolved administrations—503 women in Scotland, 94 women in Wales and 72 women in Northern Ireland. In addition, a dedicated helpline was established on 2 May 2018 to support women who may have concerns. This helpline operates from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week, and has received over 46,000 calls.

Secondly, I made clear that no one would face delays to their routine screening as a result of the NHS catching up on these additional appointments. I can confirm that, over the last four weeks, the NHS has put in place an additional 68,000 screening appointments nationally and is on track to ensure that all women affected who want a screen will be seen by the end of October, without impacting on other patients. I want to put on record my enormous gratitude to clinical staff who have worked tirelessly to offer additional appointments and to management teams who have co-ordinated and pooled their resources across different centres, or looked to other private providers, to expand capacity to manage the extra demand.

Thirdly, I explained to the House that we were still attempting to understand how many women had been affected and how many had experienced harm as a result. I made it clear that some of the figures I provided were provisional estimates and undertook to provide a further update. I can now confirm, based on analysis by Public Health England, using data provided by NHS Digital that up to 174,000 women were affected by this issue, of which we know that up to 130,000 are still alive. As a result, the numbers who may have had their lives shortened as a result of missing their screening is now estimated to be fewer than 75. While this figure is lower than the original estimates given in my statement, this does not lessen the devastating impact that this has had on some people's lives.

Finally, the most important thing we can do in cases of serious error is to ensure there is a robust and thorough process to investigate, understand and learn from what went wrong. In my original statement, I also announced an independent review, chaired by Lynda Thomas, chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, and Professor Martin Gore, consultant medical oncologist and professor of cancer medicine at the Royal Marsden with Peter Wyman from the CQC as the Vice Chair. I can now confirm that we have agreed the terms of reference for this review, details of which are attached to this statement. The Chairs are considering how best to involve affected women, their families and wider stakeholders and will release information on this when it is available.

Our cancer screening programme is widely recognised as world-leading, but on this occasion a number of women have been let down. It is now clear that this may have resulted in significant harm for a small number of women, while thousands more have faced unnecessary distress and anxiety as they waited to hear if they have been affected. I would like to repeat my wholehearted

and unreserved apology to the women affected and their families—and above all reassure them that we are working hard to understand what went wrong and what we need to do to stop similar incidents from happening in the future.

[HCWS731]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Counter-terrorism

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** The Government's first priority is to keep families, communities and our country safe. Today, I have published an updated version of "CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism". The new strategy has been laid before Parliament as a Command Paper (Cm 9608), and copies are available in the Vote Office and on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The threat from terrorism, globally and in the UK, is higher than when we last published "CONTEST" in 2011. The threat from Islamist terrorism, in particular that inspired by Daesh and al-Qaeda, remains the most severe. Northern Ireland-related terrorism continues to pose a serious threat in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and there is a growing threat from extreme right-wing terrorism. In 2016, we proscribed an extreme right-wing terrorist group, National Action, for the first time.

In 2017, we saw a significant shift in the terrorist threat to the UK. Five attacks in London and Manchester led to the deaths of 36 innocent people, and many more injured. We responded decisively, rapidly adapting our

priorities and capabilities, to break the momentum of these attacks. Since March 2017, the police and the security and intelligence agencies successfully foiled a further 12 Islamist plots, and disrupted four extreme right-wing plots.

This strategy is the culmination of a detailed review of the UK's counter-terrorism arrangements, led by the Home Office. We have designed a new, more agile, flexible and co-ordinated approach to respond to the shifting nature of the threats we face, including terrorist exploitation of new technology, the increase in attacks in Europe, including the UK, as Daesh is forced into retreat in Syria and Iraq, and the speed with which people are being radicalised and plots developed. We will introduce new counter-terrorism legislation to disrupt terrorist threats in the UK earlier, taking account of the scale of the threat and the speed at which plots are now developing. We will share information more widely and support more local interventions with individuals in our own communities who are being groomed or incited to commit or support acts of terrorism. We are piloting multi-agency centres to do this in London, Manchester and the west midlands. We will enhance our efforts to disengage and rehabilitate those already involved in terrorism, including through the expansion of the desistance and disengagement programme. And we will continue to work in partnership with the aviation industry and international partners to deliver robust and sustainable aviation security in the UK and overseas.

This strengthened strategy sets out how we will build on the UK's formidable capabilities, experience and expertise to tackle the growing and changing threat from terrorism in all its forms.

[HCWS727]



# Ministerial Correction

*Monday 4 June 2018*

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

*The following is an extract from an Urgent Question on Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe on 22 May 2018.*

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): Last year, I met Redress, which has been mentioned already, to discuss not just this case but that of Andy Tsege. It published a report in January saying that more than 100 British citizens a year were reporting being mistreated in jails abroad and not being provided with the humanitarian or consular assistance that the British Government should be giving them. It also says that there is inconsistency in the support provided, particularly for dual nationals. What can the Minister do to assure us that any British national, whether a dual national or not, will receive the same consular support if they find themselves in that position?

**Alistair Burt:** They are certainly offered all the same support, but the blunt fact is that not all states treat dual nationals the same: some recognise dual nationality

and allow access to the UK authorities, others do not accept it and treat the dual national solely as a national of their own state. In those circumstances, they do not believe they are required to give access. I can assure the hon. Lady, however, that in each and every case the UK Government make exactly the same representations seeking access, because we believe that dual nationality means what it says: dual nationality, not sole nationality.

*[Official Report, 22 May 2018, Vol. 641, c. 732.]*

*Letter of correction from Alistair Burt.*

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) during the Urgent Question on Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

The correct response should have been:

**Alistair Burt:** For our cases in Iran, they are certainly offered all the same support, but the blunt fact is that not all states treat dual nationals the same: some recognise dual nationality and allow access to the UK authorities, others do not accept it and treat the dual national solely as a national of their own state. In those circumstances, they do not believe they are required to give access. I can assure the hon. Lady, however, that in each and every case **in Iran** the UK Government make exactly the same representations seeking access, because we believe that dual nationality means what it says: dual nationality, not sole nationality.

# ORAL ANSWERS

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## MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

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**not later than  
Monday 11 June 2018**

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