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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 11 June 2018

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

The Secretary of State was asked—

Royal Navy Fisheries Protection

1. **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): What assessment he has made of the level of fisheries protection to be provided by the Royal Navy after the UK leaves the EU.

[905742]

21. **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): What assessment he has made of the capacity of the Royal Navy to protect UK fisheries after the UK leaves the EU.

[905763]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson):

The Royal Navy plays a crucial role in patrolling the seas around the United Kingdom. As we leave the European Union, the needs and level of activity will change, and we are working with other Departments to assess what is required. The Royal Navy will continue to play a vital role in protecting UK waters.

Peter Aldous: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that answer. Given that fisheries protection will be an important component of a sustainable post-Brexit UK fishing policy, has the Secretary of State liaised with his counterpart at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs about what funds will be available to the Royal Navy for fisheries protection and whether the number of operational days will be increased?

Gavin Williamson: The Department received an extra £12 million from the Treasury that we prioritised for that area. We are in dialogue with our DEFRA colleagues to ensure that we have the right levels of policing and support in our territorial waters. The Royal Navy is absolutely committed to delivering that, and we will work with DEFRA to ensure that it happens.

Scott Mann: Will the Secretary of State consider basing the Type 26 and Type 31e frigates in Devonport to protect Cornwall and Devon, and to support the great inshore fisheries and conservation authorities that currently protect the waters?

Gavin Williamson: My hon. Friend is a great champion of the fishermen of the north Cornwall coast, and I imagine that the deployment of the Type 26 would certainly see off the French and Spanish swiftly. He will be pleased to know that Plymouth will shortly be receiving an extra Type 23 frigate, which will be based at Devonport, and while I am sure that she will do some fisheries protection work, she will also be doing other work right around the globe.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Concerning the Royal Navy, SNP Members are most interested to hear whether the modernising defence programme will be grounded in the vacuous “global Britain” speak of Brexiteers, or if it will actually acknowledge the UK’s geostrategic location? Will the Secretary of State assure SNP Members that, unlike the 2010 and 2015 strategic defence and security reviews, the modernising defence programme will explicitly mention the north Atlantic and the high north, and their centrality to the assumptions made therein?

Mr Speaker: And fisheries.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: And fisheries.

Mr Speaker: Well done.

Gavin Williamson: The programme will mention fisheries, the high north and everything else that I am sure the hon. Gentleman would love to see in it.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): The Fishery Protection Squadron is the oldest established unit in the Royal Navy, but does my right hon. Friend agree that technology is moving on and that a combination of data analytics, satellite imaging and the protections that we are now able to deploy around the Pitcairn Islands marine protected area, for example, are the sorts of technologies that we can add to save costs?

Gavin Williamson: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. We need to consider new technologies to assist the Royal Navy and its work. It is a large ocean and there are many threats involved in ensuring that it is properly policed, so we need to embrace new technology, working hand in hand with the Royal Navy, to ensure that our waters are safe from foreign fishermen intruding into our territory.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Oh, very well; I call Martin Vickers.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I am encouraged by what I hear from the Secretary of State about extra resources being made available. We anticipate an increase in the fishing fleet post-Brexit, so will he assure me that the fisheries protection fleet will expand accordingly?

Gavin Williamson: We will be examining what capability our fisheries protection fleet needs. Three offshore patrol vessels are currently engaged in this work, so we will be considering whether that needs to be expanded and how to fund it properly.

Equipment Plan 2017 to 2027

2. **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the affordability of his Department’s equipment plan 2017 to 2027. [905743]

22. **Graham P. Jones** (Hyndburn) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the affordability of his Department’s equipment plan 2017 to 2027. [905764]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): We are taking steps to ensure strategic affordability through the modernising defence programme and our annual financial management processes. The cost of the plan is reviewed on an ongoing basis, and we expect to publish the equipment plan financial summary for 2018 to 2028 in the autumn.

Mr Cunningham: Can the Minister confirm that the Government still intend to procure the full 138 F-35s, as previously announced?

Guto Bebb: It gave me great pleasure to be present at RAF Marham on Wednesday to welcome the first four F-35s. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the first 48 are fully paid for and committed to. We are looking at everything in the modernising defence programme, but the current situation is that we still anticipate the purchase of 138 F-35s.

Graham P. Jones: The Public Accounts Committee said in a recent report:

“The Equipment Plan for 2017 to 2027 is not realistic and the Department lacks cost control.”

Does the Secretary of State share my deep concern about his Department’s equipment budget being in such an appalling state?

Guto Bebb: I am sure that the Secretary of State shares my view that the Public Accounts Committee does an important job, but it is important to state that the assumptions made in the National Audit Office report, which underpin the report of the Public Accounts Committee, highlight the possibility that every single project will end up with no efficiency savings and that the worst-case scenario will be achieved on cost controls. We are very confident we have an equipment plan that is affordable but, as I have stated, we are looking at all issues as part of the modernising defence programme.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): How many drones will we have for the RAF, the Royal Navy and the Army by 2027, both for reconnaissance and for taking out our enemies?

Guto Bebb: I am happy to concede that my hon. Friend has caught me on the hop. I am not able to give him a specific answer at this time, but I am sure that he will allow me to write to him to confirm those figures in due course.

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): Can the Minister confirm that the Type 26 frigates are being built within budget and will continue to provide jobs for the Scottish workforce for years to come?

Guto Bebb: I can confirm that the Type 26 project is going extremely well. The first blocks have been built, the steel has been cut and the first three ships have been named. The really important point, which was highlighted in a recent Westminster Hall debate, is the fact that the last apprentices to work on the Type 26 project have not yet been born. That shows the long-term commitment to shipbuilding on the Clyde that the Type 26 project represents.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): The NAO estimates that, of the £9.6 billion shortfall in the equipment budget, £1.3 billion is for the new Type 31e frigate.

Can the Minister assure the House that, in the autumn, the budget line for the Type 31e will be included in the financial summary?

Guto Bebb: The key submission for the Type 31 is that the procurement is going extremely well. It is currently on target, and our expectation is that the £1.25 billion budget for five Type 31 frigates will be achieved.

Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the arrival of the F-35s on British shores is a signal to the world that “global Britain” is not empty rhetoric, as some would have us believe, but a demonstrable fact?

Guto Bebb: I agree with my hon. Friend that that is a statement of our aspiration, and it is also a significant statement on the contribution of defence to our national prosperity. Some 3,500 F-35s will be procured worldwide, and 15% of them will be produced here in the United Kingdom. That is equivalent to 525 platforms, which is a significant vote of confidence in UK industry.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Can the Minister confirm to the House the details of a letter he sent to me saying that the fleet support vessels will be bound by EU rules on state aid?

Guto Bebb: The situation, as per the shipbuilding strategy and as per the letter I sent to the hon. Lady, is that we are looking to procure the fleet solid support ships. The shipbuilding strategy aims to ensure that we have a strong shipbuilding sector, and a strong sector also needs a degree of competition. We are protecting warships as a national capability, but we are opening other elements of the shipbuilding strategy to international competition.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does the Minister agree that keeping our armed forces equipped to the very highest standard, well led and with a strong fighting spirit, is the best deterrent our country has?

Guto Bebb: I could not agree more.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): “Not affordable”, “not realistic”, “not complete”, “unbalanced” and “unmanageable”—those are some of the politer things that have been said about the Government’s equipment plan. The comments have been made not by the Government’s political opponents, but by the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office. Not since the end of the second world war have there been such devastating criticisms of a Government defence programme.

This £20.8 billion black hole in the MOD’s equipment plan has arisen due to this Government’s shameful incompetence. How do they intend to get out of this mess, and can we look forward to extra resources from the modernising defence programme?

Guto Bebb: I would say, at the risk of repeating myself, that the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee do important work for this House, but I should highlight the fact—I have said this once

but I will say it again—that the figures quoted in the NAO report were a worst-case scenario. It looked at every single project hitting the worst-case scenario and at no efficiencies whatsoever being created within the programme. We are considering all these issues as part of our modernising defence programme, but I genuinely say to the hon. Gentleman that he should read the report with a bit more care and understand it.

Cyber-attacks

3. Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): What recent assessment his Department has made of the threat posed to UK security by cyber-attacks. [905744]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): The Ministry of Defence takes cyber-threats very seriously, and we regularly assess our ability to defend against them. We are strengthening our defences against increasingly sophisticated attacks through a wide range of technical, operational and administrative measures, including close co-operation with the National Cyber Security Centre.

Rehman Chishti: I thank the Minister for that answer. Will he clarify how much the Government intend to spend during this Parliament to improve UK cyber-security?

Mark Lancaster: I am grateful for that question as it gives me the opportunity to highlight that we have invested and continue to invest in cyber-capabilities, including with the opening of the defence cyber-school in March, a £40 million investment in a new cyber-security operations capability, and £265 million towards a new cyber-vulnerability investigation programme.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): The further east one goes, the greater the awareness of the cyber-threat in individual countries. Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Sweden have all published advice on how to deal with that threat. What do this Government intend to do to build resilience among the British people and understanding of botnets, hacktivists and all the other ways in which Russia is attacking our political and social institutions?

Mark Lancaster: I think that we are well on our way. The 2015 national security strategy reaffirmed cyber as a top tier 1 risk. That was precisely why we opened the NCSC, which helps to co-ordinate the work of government and the private sector. It is also why we now consider cyber to be essential in our armed forces' core skills.

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): The Minister's reply shows astonishing complacency. We know that cyber-attacks are a key plank of Russia's hybrid warfare, where fake news, Twitter bots and even ambassadors are used to create confusion, for example regarding the findings of the investigation into MH17. What steps is the Minister taking to educate the British public about the way in which Russia is systematically using our open, democratic, free society to weaken the European Union and to return to a Europe of nation states controlled by spheres of influence?

Mark Lancaster: Frankly, I am staggered that the hon. Lady thinks that £1.9 billion of investment somehow represents complacency from this Government. I have

already outlined exactly how the MOD is investing in cyber. In case she has not visited—it would be interesting to know whether she has—let me say that we also have the NCSC, which is only a mile down the road. If she has not been, perhaps she should go to have a look for herself at what the Government are doing to respond to her request.

Security Threat: Russia

4. Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions he had with other NATO member states on the potential security threat posed by Russia. [905745]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): I met NATO Defence Ministers met last week to discuss progress towards next month's summit. The UK wants NATO to strengthen its deterrence and defence capabilities while ensuring that dialogue with Russia continues as part of the alliance's commitment to avoiding misunderstanding and miscalculation.

Mr Sheerman: I tabled this question before the disastrous consequences of the failure of the G7 in Canada. Does it not seem as though this country is back in the 1939—isolated from Europe, with NATO under threat and with a big gulf between us and our traditional United States ally? What is the Secretary of State going to do about it?

Gavin Williamson: In my discussions with the US Defence Secretary, he has been clear about the US commitment to NATO and European defence. Let us not underestimate how supportive the US has been of NATO, or its commitment over the next couple of years to pump resources, troops and money into ensuring that our defence is the very best we can possibly have.

James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): NATO is quite rightly concentrating on the Russian threat to the east and to the south-east of Europe, but what more can we do to encourage it to take an interest in the high north and the Arctic, where the Russians have recently built eight new military bases at enormous cost? They also have huge submarine activity coming out into the north Atlantic and have reinvented the old bastion concept that was left over from the cold war. Surely there is a huge threat there and NATO has to do something about it.

Gavin Williamson: We have seen a considerable increase in Russian activity in the high north, and we have seen an increase in our activity in the high north as well, with HMS Trenchant taking part in ICEX—Ice Exercise 18—and the announcement of the additional Astute class submarine, HMS Agincourt. This is all about how we invest to keep ourselves safe and the north Atlantic free from threats.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Further airstrikes in Syria on Friday left civilians dead and injured. What conversations has the Secretary of State had with our NATO colleagues about how we can make sure that Russia upholds international humanitarian law?

Gavin Williamson: Syria is yet another of those areas of conflict where we see Russia so heavily involved. We have been working with the Syrian Democratic Forces to make sure that we give the level of support that is needed, and we will continue to have a dialogue with our allies to do everything we can to bring a peaceful solution to Syria. We need a diplomatic dialogue and Russia has to step up to the plate. It has to recognise that it needs to put pressure on the Assad regime to stop the dreadful, atrocious actions that are continuing to be carried out on the Syrian people. This has to be brought to an end.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Will the Secretary of State confirm the role that Romania is playing in tackling the Russian threat and what resources the UK is putting into Romania?

Gavin Williamson: We have been working closely with Romania, with Royal Marines working closely with Romanian defence forces, but more recently the Royal Air Force has been deployed in Romania to deliver air policing over that country and its neighbours. As a result of that RAF support, there has been a significant drop-off in the number of Russian incursions.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Just a couple of weeks ago, myself and SNP colleagues returned from the Ukrainian town of Avdiivka, which is just two miles from the contact line of the conflict. We witnessed at first hand what Russian aggression really looks like against civilians, yet at the weekend President Trump made the astonishing claim that President Obama was to blame for the illegal invasion of Crimea. Will the Secretary of State set the record straight that this Government do not hold that view and that Russia is to blame for the illegal invasion of Crimea?

Gavin Williamson: Russia is solely to blame for the illegal invasion of Ukraine and the activities that have occurred there.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I am extremely grateful for that answer.

Thinking of national security in the broadest context and Russian influence, of course we learned at the weekend of revelations concerning Russian influence operations as far UK electoral contests go, which showed that Russia's operations are as widespread as they are pernicious. What action is the Secretary of State taking in government and with NATO allies to crack down on Russian money flowing through London and to reform Scottish limited partnerships? Does he agree that that is not only in our interest, but in the collective interest of our partners, including Ukraine?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has completed his disquisition and we are deeply grateful to him for doing so.

Gavin Williamson: A number of the areas that the hon. Gentleman touched on are probably more suitable for Treasury questions, but we continue to work with our allies to make sure that everything that we can do is implemented to stop the flow of Russian money into our country and others.

UK Defence Industry

5. **Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): What steps he is taking to support the UK defence industry. [905746]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): We are committed to supporting a thriving and internationally competitive defence sector. We have published our national shipbuilding strategy and refreshed our defence industrial policy, and we are developing a combat air strategy. In March, the Defence Secretary announced he had invited my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne) to conduct a review of the defence contribution to prosperity, and I look forward to the publication of that report shortly.

Mike Amesbury: The fleet solid support ship contract said that there would be the potential to bring jobs and work to shipyards across the UK. Does the Minister not agree that those ships should be built in Britain, and will he make this a UK-only competition?

Guto Bebb: I have consistently argued that the national shipbuilding strategy should be supported across the House, as it offers real support for our shipbuilding industry. We designate warships as a sovereign capability to be built in the UK. Other ships are open to international competition, but I am confident that there will be British yards putting in bids for that work.

17. [905758] **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): When considering a replacement for the RAF's airborne warning and control system fleet, will the Minister commit to holding an open competition so that bids from all defence partners—from the UK as well as abroad—can be considered? Will he also consider whether Sentry and Sentinel may in future be replaced by one aircraft type?

Guto Bebb: My hon. Friend is well known for his championing of issues to do with the Royal Air Force. It is important to say that the Ministry of Defence is currently going through a process of considering the replacement for that capability, and we are also considering the situation with regard to Sentinel moving forward. A decision will be made in due course, and he will be informed at that point.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab): When the Minister sits down after this series of questions, will he remind the Secretary of State, who I see is not listening, that he has been to a number of yards that will compete with Cammell Laird, but not to Cammell Laird itself? When he is deciding on the shipbuilding programme, he needs to be seen to be fair as well as awarding us orders.

Guto Bebb: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his question. The process will be seen to be fair, because it will be fair. This is a real commitment that we are providing to the shipbuilding sector. We are absolutely committed to it, and we have adopted the shipbuilding strategy. I hope that he will have confidence in the process.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): Engineers in Great Baddow in Chelmsford have been designing world-class radar systems for generations. Will the Minister take

into account local skills and jobs when awarding the next contract, to make sure that British capabilities are not compromised?

Guto Bebb: My hon. Friend makes an important point about taking into account the whole contribution made to our economy when a contract is awarded. She will be interested in the new Treasury Green Book and also in some of the conclusions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow in his report on prosperity.

Afghanistan

6. **Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): What plans he has for additional UK force deployments to Afghanistan. [905747]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): No decisions have been taken on sending additional UK troops to Afghanistan. The UK makes an important contribution to the non-combat NATO mission in Afghanistan, where our troop commitment is kept under regular review to ensure that it remains suited to the needs of the mission.

Stephen Doughty: The Minister will be aware that, just today, 12 civilians, including women and children, have been killed in a suicide bombing attack outside a Ministry in Kabul. This is part of a string of attacks that have happened despite ceasefire efforts by President Ghani. Does the Minister agree that we very much need to protect the gains that we have made at the expense of blood and treasure in Afghanistan over many, many years, and will he consider looking at whether we need to provide more support to the Afghan security forces?

Mark Lancaster: The hon. Gentleman makes a very reasonable point. He will understand that, as I spent time in Afghanistan myself in 2006, this subject is very close to my heart. I am determined that we should not, as he says, lose that blood and treasure. Indeed, I raised that issue with Dr Abdullah Abdullah, the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, when I met him last Thursday. We will look at the matter very carefully to see what further support we can offer.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): The Secretary of State made a welcome concession on the issue of Afghan interpreters, but it may be small comfort to those with constituency cases if, as reported, only 50 additional interpreters and their dependants will be allowed to come to the UK. Instead, will the Government look again at the whole process of assessing interpreters and at every case? There are some very deserving cases out there.

Mark Lancaster: The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I chair a joint committee with the House of Lords on this issue, where we do indeed go through that process very carefully. We pluck out individual cases on a quarterly basis and review them for that very reason.

Accommodation Model

7. **Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): What recent steps his Department has taken to develop the future accommodation model. [905748]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: It is very good to see the Minister. I was in his constituency on Friday speaking to school students, and they spoke of him with great warmth and affection.

Mr Ellwood: I did not see the letter, but I am sure that it is on its way.

Mr Speaker: I am sure that I told the right hon. Gentleman, but if I did not do so, I will be the first to apologise. I am pretty sure I did. Anyway, it was a great joy.

Mr Ellwood: On reflection, Mr Speaker, I think I did receive some message that you were heading there.

We can be extremely proud of our armed forces, but if we are to continue to recruit the brightest and best, we must continue to invest in our equipment and training, but also in the welfare of our people. I am pleased that we are moving forward with the future accommodation model, which will give our armed forces personnel three choices: to remain on the garrison in the unit, inside the wire; to step outside and rent accommodation; or to get on the housing ladder by purchasing property.

Alex Sobel: The Royal United Services Institute criticised the future accommodation model, saying that it was woefully inadequate and behind schedule. Will the super-garrison at Catterick be finished on time, to ensure that armed forces personnel can live on garrison? Does the Minister think that the sale to Annington Homes in 1996 was a mistake?

Mr Ellwood: With due respect, I think that the hon. Gentleman is mixing up a number of issues. The future accommodation model has yet to start, but the pilot scheme is on track to start in December. We have been working closely with the families federations, which have themselves recommended the locations for the pilot schemes. I very much look forward to this work taking place in December.

Edward Argar (Charnwood) (Con): Recently, concerns have been expressed to me about the quality of grounds and buildings maintenance at armed forces accommodation at Woodhouse in my constituency. The Minister's commitment to our armed forces personnel is well known and clear. Can he reassure me that the future accommodation model will include high-quality maintenance, and will he meet me to discuss that specific issue?

Mr Ellwood: Accommodation is very important. As I have mentioned, equipment and training are one thing, but we must ensure that we look after our people. The level of accommodation is one of the reasons why armed forces personnel choose to leave, which is why we are investing in more modern accommodation. I would be delighted to meet my hon. Friend to discuss the issue. The Secretary of State and I take very seriously the matter of upgrading the accommodation that we offer our armed forces personnel.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: I call Christian Matheson—[*Interruption.*] Oh, the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Gerald Jones) has been very courteous in sitting there quietly, but I believe that he actually wanted to come in on this question; I do beg his pardon. Have a go, man.

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The affordability of the future accommodation model relies heavily on the present rent adjustment on the Annington Homes estate. As we know, that is due to be renegotiated for 2021, with expectations that rents will rise significantly. The Tories were warned in 1996 that the sell-off of married quarters was a mistake, and that is exactly how it has transpired. What urgent steps has the Department taken to ensure that the rent renegotiation does not further cripple the MOD budget?

Mr Ellwood: The hon. Gentleman raises a number of matters. I agree with that there is a question mark over what happened in the past, but it did happen, and we now need to move forward to provide the necessary offering for our armed forces personnel. As I mentioned, we are working with the families federations to ensure that we get the deal necessary to make accommodation affordable for our troops.

Combat Aircraft Design

8. **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the UK aerospace sector on collaborations for future combat aircraft design. [905749]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): The Ministry of Defence is working closely with other Government Departments, the UK aerospace sector, academia and international partners to explore the UK's future approach to combat air capabilities. We intend to publish the initial findings this summer.

Christian Matheson: We have a world-leading aerospace sector, but we cannot deliver the combat air strategy on our own. Does the Minister expect most of our future collaboration to be with Europe or the United States?

Guto Bebb: I think it is fair to say that we are undertaking a combat air strategy because the UK is a global leader in the field. UK industry's export capabilities in combat air are well known, with £6 billion of exports last year, so we are approaching partnerships across the globe. The Department has written to partners in the US, across Europe and further afield.

Leaving the EU: Aerospace Industry

9. **Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on the defence and military aerospace industry of the UK leaving the EU. [905750]

14. **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on the defence and military aerospace industry of the UK leaving the EU. [905755]

19. **Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on the defence and military aerospace industry of the UK leaving the EU. [905760]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): The Ministry of Defence is working closely with the defence industry to understand the implications and opportunities presented by the UK's departure

from the European Union. We want to explore how our industries can continue working together, but it is worth noting that current collaborative capability projects, such as Typhoon, are managed bilaterally or with groups of partners, rather than through the EU.

Bambos Charalambous: Does the Minister agree that a clear commitment to stay in a customs union with the European Union would provide certainty to industry and investors that they will not be hit by needless tariff barriers after Brexit?

Guto Bebb: What we need moving forward is a strong relationship with the European Union to ensure that we have as frictionless trade as possible with the European Union. I do not think that remaining within the customs union is a prerequisite for a successful defence industry.

Alex Cunningham: American-owned Darchem in Stillingham is just one of the manufacturing firms in my constituency providing aerospace and other engineering products to the military. It really needs certainty about future tariff-free trading with the EU. Will it get that tariff-free trading?

Guto Bebb: The Government's aim and aspiration is to ensure that there will be tariff-free trade with the EU. I think that the company referred to by the hon. Gentleman will be very pleased to see a Government who are proactively pushing forward the combat air agenda. We are world leaders in combat air—as I highlighted, 15% of every F-35 is manufactured here in the United Kingdom. We are leading on this issue, and the Government are supporting industry in that leadership.

Gill Furniss: The Government have often used EU rules as an excuse for not buying British steel for big defence projects. Can the Minister guarantee today that post Brexit, Royal Navy support ships and similar projects will use 100% British steel?

Guto Bebb: I wish I could offer the guarantee that the hon. Lady requests, but it is not possible to do so, because the steel required for the parts of the ships that we are building is not currently available from the United Kingdom. In the work that we are doing on the Type 26 frigate, for example, well over 50% of steel, by value, is from the United Kingdom. However, I am sure that the hon. Lady would be the first to complain if we had defects in our capability as a result of buying incorrect steel.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): How are the preparations for the UK's alternative to participation in Galileo going?

Guto Bebb: That is a crucial question, because our involvement with Galileo is important not just for our own security but for that of the European Union. We have committed significant funds to Galileo over the years. We have an obligation to our industry and to our defence capabilities to ensure that we investigate thoroughly the possibility of remaining within the Galileo programme. However, work is being undertaken on potential alternatives in case they are necessary.

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): The UK defence industry was on show this week with Operation Catamaran 18, involving UK and

French amphibious forces. Can the Minister confirm that HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, two great examples of UK military endeavour, will not be cut in the forthcoming modernising defence programme?

Guto Bebb: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the situation. As I articulated in the Westminster Hall debate, Albion and Bulwark are currently expected to be in service until 2033 and 2034 respectively.

Defence Procurement: SMEs

10. **Jeremy Quin** (Horsham) (Con): What progress his Department has made on encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in defence procurement programmes. [905751]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): Small businesses play a crucial role in our defence capability. To support them, we have launched a supplier portal that brings together a range of information and advice for new suppliers, and we have appointed a champion for smaller businesses to drive engagement. We also now require our largest suppliers to advertise their subcontracting opportunities on Government platforms.

Jeremy Quin: Anti-drone technology produced by an SME in Horsham has been used very successfully by US forces on operations for more than a year now. Will the Minister assure the House that the MOD will always go for best in class in procurement, and that this is open to smaller manufacturers, as it is with our allies?

Guto Bebb: My hon. Friend makes a really important point about the importance of SMEs in innovation and capability. Our refreshed defence industrial policy published last December highlights how we are encouraging competition within the defence sector, maximising opportunities for SMEs. For example, we have produced new short-form contracts that make it easier for SMEs to bid into MOD opportunities.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): Does the Minister recognise that SMEs depend on main contractors for an enormous amount of their work, and that that is why his previous replies on the fleet support ships have been so disappointing? Can he imagine our European G7 partners, let alone President Trump, buying navy support ships from foreign yards? When is he going to shake off Treasury dogma, wake up to European reality, and buy British ships built in British shipyards by British workers, backing British engineering firms large and small, and backing British steel?

Guto Bebb: I listened very carefully to the right hon. Gentleman, but I would not think that we should take any lessons on trade policy from Donald Trump.

Departmental Funding

11. **Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on future funding for his Department. [905752]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): I have regular discussions with the Chancellor. The modernising defence programme will ensure that our armed forces have the right capabilities to address

evolving threats. The Government are committed to spending at least 2% of GDP on defence, and the defence budget will rise by at least 0.5% above inflation every year of this Parliament, taking it to almost £40 billion by 2021.

Dr Lewis: I thank the Secretary of State for that helpful reply. Would he like to take this opportunity to endorse the suggestion by his immediate predecessor that we should aim to spend 2.5% of GDP on defence by the end of this Parliament? Does he agree that that would be a useful staging post on the road to the 3% that we really need? Finally, would the forthcoming NATO summit not be an excellent opportunity to announce any such advance?

Mr Speaker: I thought the right hon. Gentleman was going to give us his usual mantra, “We need three to keep us free,” but it was incorporated in the gravamen of his question.

Gavin Williamson: I think my right hon. Friend is saving that for the next Defence questions.

We need to be looking at the threats that are starting to evolve right across the world, including in Europe. Those threats are increasing dramatically, and we have to ensure that we have the right capabilities to meet them. That is why we have the modernising defence programme to look in detail at how those threats are evolving, and why we are leading that analysis in the Ministry of Defence rather than any other part of Government. We want to come up with the solutions and answers to ensure that Britain and our allies are defended to the very best of our capability.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): The Secretary of State knows that it is about not simply the amount of money but when it is made available for key programmes. It was great to welcome him up to Barrow shipyard a couple of weeks back, but does he accept that unless he can persuade the Treasury to release more money for the Dreadnought programme in the crucial early years, we risk the programme being more expensive and potentially late, endangering the continuous at-sea deterrent?

Gavin Williamson: The hon. Gentleman makes a valuable point. It is essential that we have the right resources at the right time to deliver that critical programme. That is why I was so pleased that we were able to secure an extra £800 million in this financial year to ensure that our nuclear deterrent is delivered on time and in budget.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): As my right hon. Friend will agree, we must adequately fund our armed forces to support those who selflessly put their lives on the line for our country—a concept that the Scottish Government do not seem to understand. Can he update the House on the measures that the UK Government are taking to mitigate Nicola Sturgeon’s Government’s tax hike for those brave service personnel?

Gavin Williamson: It is truly shocking to think that the Scottish National party decided to put that extra taxation burden on our service personnel in Scotland, especially when we asked them not to do so. That is why

we are proceeding with a review rapidly, and we hope to report our findings to the House in the not-too-distant future.

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): I am tempted to respond to that, but can the Secretary of State not convince the Treasury that building the Royal Navy support ships in-house at the likes of Rosyth would see a tax revenue gain for the Treasury and help us to retain skills, talent and investment in our shipyards? Is that not what the shipbuilding strategy is all about, or is the Treasury incapable of playing a team game?

Gavin Williamson: I thought for a moment that we were going to have an apology to the 70% of service personnel who are having to pay extra taxes as a result of the Nat tax that the hon. Gentleman's party has introduced.

This Government are absolutely committed to shipbuilding. That is why we will be building eight Type 26 frigates in Glasgow and five offshore patrol vessels in Govan. The hon. Gentleman should welcome that.

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): A recent profile by BuzzFeed revealed that some colleagues have likened the Defence Secretary to Francis Urquhart, although they suggest that the fictional character may be a bit more sophisticated—they might think that; I couldn't possibly comment. With Ministers arguing in recent weeks that defence funding should rise north of 2.5%, can the Secretary of State tell us what sophisticated tactics he will be using to get the Chancellor to agree?

Gavin Williamson: As a Yorkshireman born and bred, I know that we tend to be quite blunt and plain-speaking, so sophistication is not usually something that is attached to us.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): Speak for yourself!

Gavin Williamson: They are different in West Yorkshire.

What we are doing is taking the time to look at the threat and the challenges this nation faces. Over the past 10 years, we have seen the threat picture change so much. This is not just something we have noticed; from sitting down with our NATO allies, I know we are all seeing exactly the same. The world is getting increasingly dangerous, with state actors playing an ever greater role. It is right that we look at that closely, and make sure our armed forces have the equipment and resources they need to defend this nation against those threats.

Nia Griffith: In January, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), who is the Minister with responsibility for defence people, said that the cap on armed forces pay

“has been lifted...and we look forward to the recommendations that will be made in March.”—[*Official Report*, 29 January 2018; Vol. 635, c. 597.]

Given that it is now June and that this Government continue to be all words and no deeds, will the Secretary of State tell us when service personnel are going to receive the long overdue real-terms pay rise they deserve?

Gavin Williamson: It was the Treasury that announced the changes on public sector pay, but we are working very closely with the Armed Forces Pay Review Body to get to the point where we can make such an announcement as swiftly as possible. I and my right hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will be working closely together to ensure that that is done as swiftly as possible.

Leaving the EU: Defence Policy

12. **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effect on his Department's policies of the UK leaving the EU. [905753]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): I hold regular discussions with my colleagues on this topic. Europe's security is our security. We want to work closely with our European partners to keep our citizens safe and defend our shared interests and values, including through NATO and our future partnership with the European Union. Britain was committed to European security long before the creation of the European Union and our membership of it, and we will be committed to the security of continental Europe long after we leave.

Gavin Newlands: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer—I think. What discussions has he had with the Scottish Government regarding the potential exclusion and uncertainty surrounding future UK participation in the Galileo project?

Gavin Williamson: What we are seeing with the Galileo project is, frankly, the European Union acting in a most unusual and strange way. Why on earth would it wish to exclude Great Britain from a project that is so integral to the security of the whole of the European Union and many other countries? As Britain is currently the largest spender on defence in the European Union, we would have thought that it welcomed our involvement in the project and that it hoped that we would continue to support it, but if it does not want us, we can do this independently.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): The UK Hydrographic Office, which makes most of the world's shipping charts, is the only fundraising arm of the Ministry of Defence. It is based in Taunton, and I am pleased to say that the Ministry of Defence has retained it and is now investing in and helping to support a new state-of-the-art facility. Is this not exactly the kind of asset on which we should be building as we leave the EU to increase our prosperity and influence in the world?

Gavin Williamson: I know my hon. Friend fought a major fight to ensure that the investment came to her constituency and to preserve this important asset. It is a brilliant example of how the Ministry of Defence and our armed forces can play an important role not just in supporting defence, but in creating prosperity and jobs.

Armed Forces: Personnel Levels

13. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): What recent assessment he has made of trends in the size of the armed forces. [905754]

16. **Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of personnel levels in the armed forces. [905757]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): We remain committed to maintaining the overall size of the armed forces, and we have a range of measures under way to improve recruitment and retention. The challenge is kept under constant review.

Alex Norris: Regarding Capita's performance on the recruitment target, the Secretary of State was very clear when he said:

"do you have to give them a red card at some point if they don't deliver? Yes, you do".

Capita is not delivering, so when is it time for the red card?

Mark Lancaster: There have certainly been challenges, particularly with the introduction of the defence recruiting system, but 12,360 recruits joined the British Army last year. I have met the chief executive of Capita on several occasions, and an improvement plan is in place at the moment—I think we need to provide an opportunity for it to be run through—but, absolutely, there is an alternative if need be.

Martyn Day: Before the Scottish independence referendum, the UK Government promised to increase armed forces personnel from 11,000 to 12,500. As of October last year, there were fewer than 10,000 regular forces personnel stationed in Scotland. When will the UK Government keep their promise, or is this just another broken one?

Mark Lancaster: I understand the SNP's desire to get more service personnel in Scotland, as that is more service personnel they can tax under their Nat tax—[*Interruption.*] At least the hon. Gentleman finds it amusing. I am pleased to say that there are 14,000 regular and reserve personnel in Scotland. Also, let us not forget that all of the Royal Navy submarines will be moving to Faslane, and there is the new Typhoon squadron in Lossiemouth and our infantry brigade too.

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): Cadet detachments are an ideal training ground for those young people considering a future career in the armed forces. Can my right hon. Friend outline what he is doing to increase recruitment from cadet forces and will he consider visiting my constituency to see the hard work and dedication put in by cadets in Erewash?

Mark Lancaster: We do not directly target cadets for recruitment in the armed forces. However, it is a fact that nearly 18% of members of the armed forces were once cadets and 4% of cadets go on to join the armed forces.

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Potential recruits may well be concerned about the issue of legal claims against personnel and veterans, especially in the light of the Iraq historic allegations team debacle. It is now more than a year since the Conservatives made a manifesto promise to tackle those claims, and the issue has been raised repeatedly by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Why has nothing been done?

Mark Lancaster: Actually, a lot has been done. I appreciate it is now some time since that consultation was completed, but it really is a reflection of the complexity of some of the legal issues. I can assure the House that we will come back in due course.

Topical Questions

T1. [905767] **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): I start by paying tribute to Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, who fulfilled his last day in the role of Chief of the Defence Staff before moving on to the role of chairman of the NATO Military Committee. Sir Stuart has served the Royal Air Force and his country for a long period and made such a difference to making sure that our armed forces have been properly represented.

I am also incredibly proud to be able to announce the four new cutting-edge F35s that arrived at RAF Marham just last week.

Mr Sheerman: The Secretary of State just confessed to being a blunt-speaking Yorkshireman, so will he give me a straight answer? He must be reeling from the events at the G7 in Canada. Are we prepared and would this country be able to defend itself if America takes its bat home and leaves NATO? Is he talking to the French and the Germans about this?

Gavin Williamson: The United States' commitment to NATO is unequivocal. They are backing it not just with words but with deeds, and we should be incredibly proud of our long-term alliance with one of our very closest of friends and of the important role they have played in ensuring the freedom of Europe over the last 70 years.

T4. [905770] **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): Armed Forces Day in Lowestoft is a very special event, although since the Shoreham air tragedy it has not been possible to have air displays, which are very popular and bring much business to the town. Can the Secretary of State encourage the Civil Aviation Authority to take a proportionate approach to regulation and insurers to charge reasonable premiums?

Gavin Williamson: The Shoreham disaster was an absolute tragedy, but we have to move forward from that. Just at the weekend I was at RAF Cosford and saw the amazing air display that took place there. It shows how such displays can inspire future generations to join the Royal Air Force and play a role in their country's defence, and I will certainly take the point up with the Civil Aviation Authority.

Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab): The review of the defence fire and rescue service has been running in various forms for 10 years now. With neither of the final two bidders having exactly a glowing past record, does the Secretary of State share my concern that if the contract is outsourced and we see a repeat of the Carillion situation, the consequences could be disastrous?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood): I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it has taken too long. I had a briefing on this only last month and we will make progress. I heed the concerns that he raises.

T7. [905773] **Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): Chippenham constituency and wider Wiltshire have a large population of military veterans who sometimes feel isolated and suffer from mental health problems. In addition to the recent and welcome announcements in this area, what more can the Department do to reassure my constituents?

Mr Ellwood: My hon. Friend touches on such an important issue: looking after our veterans, in particular those who are homeless or who feel isolated. The Secretary of State moved forward with a 24/7 support helpline and is launching a new veterans strategy, which will be announced in November. It is important that every local council takes responsibility for having an armed forces champion who looks after those who are homeless and identifies what help can be given.

T2. [905768] **Toby Perkins** (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme is incredibly important for our Army's capability and for the UK defence industry, so when will we finally get to the production contract stage?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): We are at the demonstration phase, with 11 being manufactured. It is currently going through a trials programme and we will report back when that is complete.

T10. [905776] **Leo Docherty** (Aldershot) (Con): The legal pursuit of our veterans and soldiers following combat operations is a national disgrace. The Secretary of State will be aware that many Members support a statute of limitations to protect those who have served. If a legally viable route towards such a statute can be found, will he confirm that he would support it and legislate for it?

Gavin Williamson: The House has a great duty towards all those who serve our country: not just our armed forces, but those who supported our country in Afghanistan and in so many other areas. I am certainly very keen to look at all options to see how best we can protect service personnel who have given so much in the service of our country.

T3. [905769] **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Army numbers are at just over 77,000, rather than the 82,000 promised in the 2015 Tory manifesto. Is this due to Tory incompetence, Capita incompetence or a combination of both?

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): It is an interesting fact that since the second world war I think there have been only two years when the Army has been fully manned. There are challenges, but I am confident that we maintain all our operational commitments. The Army is currently approximately 95% manned, which I think is pretty good, but I am determined to get it up to 100%.

Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): Reports suggest China is fast developing a new generation of military technology, focusing on artificial intelligence and autonomous weaponry, which will soon surpass the capability of the United States. Will the Minister outline what planning is under way with allies to keep up with those advances?

Gavin Williamson: What we are seeing is a number of state actors, not just Russia but China as my hon. Friend outlines, investing heavily in new technologies. It is absolutely right that we do the same, investing in those new technologies not only so we can defeat what they have but to have the capabilities ourselves for our armed forces.

T5. [905771] **Mary Glendon** (North Tyneside) (Lab): During a recent visit to Iraq, a delegation from the all-party group on Kurdistan met British soldiers who have trained thousands of Peshmerga, helping the brave allies whose sacrifice and resistance to ISIS enhances our safety, and whose rights in a federal Iraq need international protection. Will the Minister confirm that the Department will continue that vital mentoring mission?

Mark Lancaster: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for highlighting just one of the many training missions the British Army and other services carry out around the world. Indeed, we are currently operating in excess of 20 countries to provide non-lethal training.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): I know that the Secretary of State will share my hope for a successful summit between North Korea and the United States of America tomorrow, which will hopefully reduce military tensions on the Korean peninsula. What assessment has he made of the role UK armed forces could play to ensure that any deal is successfully implemented and enforced?

Gavin Williamson: Our armed forces have already been playing an important role in ensuring that United Nations sanctions are properly upheld. The deployment of HMS Sutherland and HMS Albion has been a part of ensuring that UN sanctions are upheld. We want a diplomatic solution, and all our work and all our efforts have to go towards ensuring that a diplomatic solution is found.

T6. [905772] **Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Is the Minister aware that most cleaners in Whitehall Departments are now paid the London living wage? Will he cut through PFI bureaucracy to bring the Ministry of Defence into modern times and pay cleaners the London living wage?

Mr Ellwood: I would be delighted to speak further with the hon. Lady on this matter to see what more can be done.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): I warmly endorse the Secretary of State's tribute to the Chief of the Defence Staff, but Sir Stuart Peach did say last week that he was deeply uncomfortable about the process of legacy investigations into veterans. I understand that several years ago, the Ministry of Defence did a lot of detailed staff work into the practicability of the statute of limitations. Would the Secretary of State promise the House that he will ask to see that work and perhaps be able to take it forward?

Gavin Williamson: I can certainly make that commitment to my right hon. Friend.

T8. [905774] **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): It is now 60 years since Operation Grapple. Is it not time that we followed so many other countries and awarded our nuclear test veterans a medal?

Mr Ellwood: I am well aware of the campaign not just by the hon. Gentleman, but by others. I am certainly happy to look into it in more detail. He will be aware that there are two components to this—risk and rigour, and avoiding duplication of other medals that have already been given—but I am certainly happy to discuss it further with him outside the Chamber.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Mr Ross, deliver it as quickly as you raise your flag.

Douglas Ross: Will the Secretary of State please tell my constituents at RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss barracks when this UK Government will mitigate against the Scottish National party's Nat tax?

Mr Speaker: Splendid.

Gavin Williamson: I am certainly hoping to be able to report before the summer recess. We are very conscious that so much investment has gone into Lossiemouth and we do not want people to be disincentivised from moving there as a result of the Nat tax that has been imposed upon them.

T9. [905775] **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): The UK Government have indicated that they want to carry on playing a leading role in common security and defence policy missions, such as Operation Atalanta, post Brexit, but there are currently no arrangements for third parties to be involved in the decision making, so how does the Secretary of State think that we will be able to continue this involvement while still having a say on whether to deploy our forces abroad?

Mark Lancaster: The EU has made it clear that we are not allowed to lead any operations after 29 March next year. However, we are continuing to negotiate how we might be able to take part—for example, Operation Sophia, Operation Atalanta or indeed, Operation Althea in the Balkans.

Peter Heaton-Jones (North Devon) (Con): The Minister will be aware that I and the North Devon community have lobbied hard over the future of Royal Marines Base Chivenor. In the light of media reports over the weekend, is he able to confirm whether a decision is indeed imminent?

Mr Ellwood: On the invitation of my hon. Friend, I visited Chivenor and was very impressed with what is happening there. No decision has been made on Chivenor, so please ignore the reports in the media, and I will be more than happy to discuss where things are going with him outside the Chamber.

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Further to an earlier question, can the Minister guarantee that by the end of this Parliament, the strength of the Army will be in excess of 80,000?

Mark Lancaster: That is absolutely our ambition, yes.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): I asked every Government Department how many contractors they had employed for over one year and five years, and how many they had paid over £1,000 a day to. Can the Secretary of State explain why his was one of only two Departments that was either unwilling or unable to answer that question, and can I urge him to go back and find out how many contractors are paid over £1,000 a day, so that he, and we, can see how well he manages his Department's spending?

Gavin Williamson: I would be more than delighted to make sure that my hon. Friend gets that information.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Will the ministerial team recognise the work of service dogs in the Army, Air Force and Navy, and in particular, welcome the establishment next week in this House of a memorial charity to those animals, to be based in Delyn constituency in north Wales?

Mark Lancaster: The right hon. Gentleman makes a very valuable point. All too often, when we talk about our armed forces, we think purely of humans, but of course, for many centuries, animals have made a fine contribution, too.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): If we cannot protect our service personnel from the Northern Ireland campaign by a statute of limitations coupled with the truth recovery process, who is going to be next: the Falkland Islands veterans, or even the last few from the second world war?

Gavin Williamson: As I touched upon earlier, it is clear that this House has a simple and clear view that we should always do everything we can to protect those who have served our country. We will look at all options to ensure that that is done.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): Did the Secretary of State write to the Prime Minister about further deployment of troops in Afghanistan?

Gavin Williamson: We always keep our troop levels under review right across the world and this is something that we will always do going forward.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): Progress on the REEMA site in Carterton has stalled for far too long. Will the Minister commit to working with me to provide the housing the RAF in west Oxfordshire so badly needs?

Mr Ellwood: My hon. Friend raises an important point about making sure we have the correct accommodation, which is something we touched on earlier. I know there are big questions about what is happening in the Brize Norton area, and again I would be delighted to discuss the matter with him further.

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): In its most recent report on the recruitment plan, the National Audit Office said that the plan was “not affordable”—full stop. The Secretary of State has been given seven recommendations. Which will have the most impact?

Guto Bebb: Once again, we appreciate the work done on that report and are taking it seriously—it is being considered as part of the modernising defence programme—but we state again very clearly that the MOD does not recognise as likely outcomes some of the worst-case scenarios.

Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Time is against us, but my judgment is that proceedings would be incomplete and the House sorely deprived without an intervention from the right

hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes), which I trust will be of its usual poetic quality.

Mr Hayes: I was thinking exactly the same, Mr Speaker.

On behalf of the British nuclear test veterans, and as their patron, I welcome the Minister’s warm words earlier. It is right that we finally remember those who gave so much. Nevertheless, I want a little more. Will the Secretary of State agree to meet me and the veterans to further the case that they should be awarded a medal? Some 1,500 of the 22,000 are left. This generation, by recognising and rewarding those brave people, would be doing a service to theirs—something of which we can be proud.

Gavin Williamson: I would be honoured to meet my right hon. Friend and the test veterans at the earliest opportunity.

Yemen

Mr Speaker: I note in passing that today is the 31st anniversary of the election to the House of a number of right hon. and hon. Members still serving, including—there is a piquancy about mentioning this—the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz). I call Mr Keith Vaz to ask the urgent question.

3.36 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reports of an imminent attack by the Saudi-Emirati-led coalition on the port of Hodeidah and the humanitarian impact of such an attack.

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) on both his length of service and his question. Last Thursday, it was 35 years since I was first elected to the House—so there are a few of us old ones knocking around.

Mr Speaker: I would say long-serving rather than old.

Alistair Burt: On these occasions, I am grateful that you have such a gift for words, Mr Speaker.

On a serious matter, reports have been circulating for some time of a possible assault on either Hodeidah or Hodeidah port. Information at the beginning of last weekend, including from troop movements, suggested that such an attack might be imminent. In view of our responsibilities to aid agencies, the Department for International Development issued a statement based on that information. It read:

“We are doing everything we can through diplomatic channels to discourage an assault on Hodeidah. However despite these actions, a military assault now looks imminent. The Emiratis have informed us today that they will now give a 3-day grace period for the UN [and their partners] to leave the city. Please take all precautions necessary to prepare for this and let us know if there is anything we can do to assist you in any way. We are thinking of you and your staff at this very difficult time.”

That is the email that was reprinted in *The Guardian* today.

The Government are and have been concerned about the potential impact of any assault on the city and port of Hodeidah for some time and have made their concerns clear to the Saudi and Emirati Governments. The UN assesses that an attack on Hodeidah could displace up to 350,000 people and leave hundreds of thousands of Yemenis without access to basic goods or healthcare. The Foreign Secretary spoke to his Saudi and Emirati counterparts over the weekend, and we are in close touch with the UN humanitarian co-ordinator and the UN special envoy.

The majority of Yemen’s food and fuel imports enter through Hodeidah and Saleef ports and it is crucial that humanitarian and commercial imports continue to flow through the port. We urge all parties to facilitate access for essential imports of food, fuel and medical supplies into the country, including through Hodeidah. As with all aspects of the conflict, all parties must respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

No attack has yet taken place. Accordingly, we continue to urge all sides to de-escalate as a matter of urgency and to engage in the political process in good faith. The UN special envoy has previously expressed concern that conflicts in Hodeidah could take peace off the table “in a single stroke”. It is essential for him to be given the time that he needs to facilitate a negotiated solution that avoids conflict in the city and we support his efforts to do so.

It is important to recall the wider conflict. The conflict in Yemen is now in its fourth year. Houthi rebels took the capital by force in 2014 and displaced the legitimate Government of Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition action is designed to facilitate the restoration of effective governance. The Houthis have consistently failed to adhere to UN Security Council resolutions: they have, for instance, launched missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, prevented access to humanitarian supplies—which has led to significant damage to civilians—and prevented vital vaccinations.

We have been clear about the fact that there can be no military solution to the conflict. We continue to encourage all parties to show restraint, to return to negotiations and to engage in the UN-led political process in good faith, to work towards a comprehensive political settlement.

Keith Vaz: Thank you for granting the urgent question, Mr Speaker, and for your kind words. I also thank the Minister for what he has said.

The port of Hodeidah accounts for the entry of between 70% and 80% of humanitarian aid. As we have just heard, it is at risk of an imminent military assault by forces supported by the Saudi and Emirati-led coalition—a coalition strongly supported by this Government, who, of course, supply it with arms.

The three-day period that has been given to the aid agencies is simply not enough. Hodeidah has been the last lifeline to Yemen’s civilians since the conflict began—2.2 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance—and an attack on the port would be a catastrophe. The United Nations estimates that it could lead directly to the deaths of a quarter of a million people, roughly the population of the city of Leicester. It would devastate the peace process. As we heard from the Minister, Martin Griffiths, the UN envoy to Yemen, who has just taken up his post, has said that such an assault

“would, in a single stroke, take peace off the table.”

Will the Minister ask the Prime Minister today, after her statement to the House, to speak to Mohammed Bin Salman of Saudi Arabia and Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates, and tell them that they must immediately stop the military preparations for the offensive? Will he instruct our UN ambassador, Karen Pierce, to convene an emergency meeting of the Security Council to discuss this matter? At that meeting or before it, will the Government make a statement directly condemning an attack on Hodeidah and calling for a ceasefire as a matter of urgency?

Will the Minister convene, as a matter of urgency, a meeting of the Quint nations on Yemen this week? That was promised several months ago. Finally, if an attack on the port does take place—against the wishes of our Government—will we reconsider our support for the coalition, or in what way will we ensure that the peace process succeeds?

[Keith Vaz]

I know that the eyes of the world are on Singapore at this moment, but they should be on Hodeidah. Failure to take this action will lead to more slaughter of innocent Yemenis, and will be a stain on the conscience of Ministers, the Government and the House.

Alistair Burt: Obviously, we share much of the concern expressed by the right hon. Member for Leicester East. That is why we have consistently made the case to the coalition that an attack on Hodeidah could have very serious displacement effects, and we have expressed our concern over a lengthy period. We will continue to do so. The Foreign Secretary did so over the weekend and those conversations will continue. I stress that no attack has yet happened and, even as we speak, the UN special envoy is engaged with both sides to see whether anything in the imminence of circumstances might move the negotiations along.

I have made the case to the House before that this is not a one-sided conflict. Areas under Houthi control have prevented humanitarian access. Abuses of international humanitarian law have occurred. The Houthis stop vaccinations and steal medical supplies.

The coalition came into effect to restore legitimate government to the people of Yemen. We have expressed our concern about any action taken by the coalition that might be in breach of international humanitarian law. We will continue to do so. The Foreign Secretary is in contact with other members of the Quint and those who are concerned about potential action. However, it remains the case that a negotiated solution could still be found. We are continuing to urge that the UN special envoy has the space to be able to do that. That has been our consistent approach over a lengthy period and we will continue to do that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. A good many colleagues are seeking to catch my eye and this matter is urgent, which is why I granted the question, but there are two important ministerial statements to follow and, unusually, today it may not be possible to accommodate all who wish to take part. However, participation will be maximised if questions and answers are brief. To be blunt, there is no time for preamble.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Is Iran involved on one side in this conflict and is that a complication in the wish to find not only a brokered peace in Yemen but a solution to the Iranian situation?

Alistair Burt: My right hon. Friend is right: Iran does have a relevance to this conflict. It is engaged in supplying weaponry and support to the Houthis and we have consistently called on Iran to recognise the damage and danger done through its actions. It is still possible that Iran can be part of the solution and part of the answer to the conflict, as many parties that take part in conflicts clearly are.

Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), the chair of the all-party group on Yemen, on securing it.

There is a bitter sadness in the fact that, less than three weeks ago, we were welcoming the publication of the all-party group's latest report, a blueprint for bringing about a peaceful political solution to this terrible conflict and an end to the humanitarian crisis, yet here we are, 20 days later, facing the exact opposite—an attack on Hodeidah by the UAE, which according to the UN envoy, Martin Griffiths, will

“in a stroke, take peace off the table.”

And not just that but, as has already been observed by Members on both sides and by every aid agency working on the ground, this planned attack will not just threaten the lives of the hundreds of thousands of civilians living in Hodeidah, but turn the humanitarian crisis facing the rest of Yemen into a full-blown humanitarian disaster. Why is this happening? After all, we are used to hearing the mantra in these debates that “There is no military solution to the conflict in Yemen.” However, let us be clear what that actually means. What it means is that we take it on trust that the Saudis and the Emiratis have the good sense and humanity to understand that any conceivable military solution would cause such catastrophic loss of life that both politically and morally it would be impossible to pursue. But that, I am afraid, is exactly what we now face in Hodeidah.

Trusting to the good sense and humanity of the UAE and the Saudis is therefore clearly no longer a viable option, so may I ask the Minister today whether, at the emergency session of the Security Council due to take place in a matter of minutes, the UK will take action and table an immediate resolution demanding that the UAE stop this assault on Hodeidah before it is too late, and will he immediately suspend the sale of arms for use in this conflict?

Alistair Burt: The United Kingdom will continue to do what it has done for a lengthy period, which is to seek to discourage any attack on Hodeidah or on the port. The Foreign Secretary has been engaged in that over the weekend, we will continue to be so and that same case will be made through the United Nations.

In relation to arms sales and the like, I remind the House again that this is covered by international humanitarian law. Any suggestion of breaches of that will be subject to the law, as always, and the UK will continue to consider any possible risk of that in any future arms sales.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I am delighted to see my right hon. Friend joined on the Front Bench by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development and the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood); they demonstrate the joined-up effort that needs to go on here. However, has my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Middle East had time to urge our defence attachés in the region to emphasise to the Emiratis that taking a city of 400,000 is not an easy task? Having served in the operation that captured Basra 15 or so years ago, I can assure him that the invasion is the easy bit; it is the governing it afterwards that makes life incredibly hard.

Alistair Burt: My hon. and gallant Friend speaks from experience. I can assure him that everyone who has been in contact with the coalition in relation to this

has done exactly what he and everyone else in the House would expect in terms of expressing concern about how any assault might be carried out and the dangers involved. That is why we have sought to discourage an attack. The port and the city are separate—they may be separate targets—but our advice has been consistently the same in that we seek to discourage such an attack.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): The United Kingdom Government must decide which side of history they want to be on. The imminent Saudi-led attack on Yemen's largest port, Hodeidah, is set to cut off essential food, fuel and medical supplies, and the United Nations has estimated that

“as many as 250,000 people will lose everything—even their lives.”

Can the UK Government therefore unequivocally assure the House that no UK personnel will assist in this attack and that no UK-made weapons or equipment will be used? Do the UK Government agree that they must take the side of Yemeni civilians over Saudi Arabia and that this attack will be a line in the sand for the UK's support for the coalition campaign? Given the imminent threat of major loss of life and starvation to an entire nation, will this Government finally and immediately cease all arms sales to Saudi Arabia? This is not in our name. Will the UK Government do the right thing, or will they go down in history as having blood on their hands?

Alistair Burt: In this House, mention is hardly ever made of the humanitarian abuses by the Houthi forces, with which the coalition is engaged, after the insurgents sought to remove a legitimate Government. There have been violations such as attacks on civilians in Aden and Taiz, intimidation of UN ships attempting to dock in Aden, the use of schools and hospitals for military purposes, the use of child soldiers, the targeting of aid workers and the imposition of restrictions on humanitarian access. We are on the side of Yemeni civilians—*[Interruption.]* We are on the side of the Yemeni civilians who face those things in Houthi areas every day. I repeat what I said earlier: we will continue to use our influence to discourage any attack on Hodeidah port. It would be nice to hear something about the Houthis every now and again from different sources.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Along with the rest of the UN Security Council, we are unanimously on the side of the Saudi-led coalition, which is trying to bring order to Yemen in the face of the Houthi rebellion. As we have heard from the chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on Yemen, the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), the port accounts for 70% to 80% of the imports into Yemen. Surely, our policy should be to aid the coalition we are supporting to take control of the port and the access into Yemen.

Mr Speaker: Order. We are short of time, and I have tried to make the point that if people asked short questions and got short answers, we would get through everybody.

Alistair Burt: My hon. Friend makes a serious point about the tactics being used to try to bring this conflict to a conclusion. Only a conclusion and a peace settlement will truly serve the interests of the people of Yemen.

It is not for the United Kingdom to get involved in those tactics, but my hon. Friend makes a point about access to the port and how that can be used to benefit civilians.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Surely, though, unconditional support for the Saudi-Emirati coalition will never bring us to a point at which we can legitimately and credibly say that there is no military solution to this conflict.

Alistair Burt: Seeking to discourage an attack on Hodeidah is hardly unconditional support.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): What estimate has the Minister made of the amount of rockets and other munitions that have been fired by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia during the four years of the Yemeni conflict?

Alistair Burt: It is difficult to say. A recent rocket attack killed three Saudi civilians, and there have been a number of different attacks. Attacks on the airport and the royal palace in Saudi have been prevented. Should one of these missiles land on such a target, the whole circumstance in the middle east would change radically.

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister is of course right to condemn the Houthis; I have never heard any Member of this House defend them. The reason for the focus on the Saudis and the Emiratis is that we are allied with them. Can I press him to answer the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) about clearly condemning this proposed attack, and will the Prime Minister speak to the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as a matter of urgency?

Alistair Burt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about the other side of this conflict, because it refers to why the coalition is engaged in the first place and why the UK should recognise its right to act to defend Yemeni civilians. We will continue to discourage action, and I will of course take the requests of the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) to the Prime Minister.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Some 22 million people in the Yemen are in need of humanitarian aid. How can we deliver that aid when we are in the middle of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

Alistair Burt: It is difficult, but we have remarkable people who seek to deliver UK aid. On 3 April, we pledged an additional £170 million to Yemen to cover the financial year 2018-19, and we are the fourth largest donor to the UN appeal, but we should all remember the courage and bravery of the aid agencies that are working to deliver aid in difficult circumstances.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): Is there any prospect of the UN special envoy's proposal to deal with the problem, which is to hand over control of the city and/or the port to the international community, making any progress?

Alistair Burt: The right hon. Gentleman asks a good question. There are several different possibilities for resolving the situation peacefully, but that possibility is

[*Alistair Burt*]

certainly being discussed by various parties. Anything that allows a negotiated end to circumstances that cannot provide an answer for one party or the other should be encouraged.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): The sooner this port is out of the control of the Iranian-backed Houthis, the more aid will get to civilians in Yemen. Why did the UN refuse to accept the requests from the Saudi-led coalition in March last year and April this year for the UN to take over supervision of the port? If the UN will not do that, surely there is no alternative but for the Saudi-led coalition to do it.

Alistair Burt: My hon. Friend makes the point that various offers have been made to bring the situation to a conclusion and for a peaceful solution to Hodeidah port, which requires the Houthis to do something in response to the entreaties made, but that has not happened so far. If the Houthis were to do so in the next 48 hours, that would make a significant difference.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): It is fair to say that there are few Saudi forces on this battlefield and that it is largely an Emirati-run operation, with Emirati troops, but led by 25,000 Yemeni soldiers. The Houthis are currently laying mines at the airport, and they are escalating the conflict in Hodeidah. They have mined the port, which has significantly reduced the amount of aid that can get in, and if they destroy it, that will adversely affect Yemen. If the Houthis blow the port up, would that constitute a war crime?

Alistair Burt: The hon. Gentleman's knowledge is extensive. The Houthis might do just that, which is a demonstration of the dangers that have been caused by Houthi control of the port and other areas and one of the reasons why the coalition is engaged.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): What assessment have the UK Government made of the number of people who will be killed or become refugees if the attack takes place? In what way is that influencing UK policy?

Alistair Burt: The UN has made various calculations. I referred in my statement to the fact that some 350,000 people might be displaced. It is not necessarily a question of numbers, however. Should an attack take place and people become displaced, we are all aware that the impact would be considerable. That is why we have sought to discourage the attack and to encourage a negotiated end to the conflict for the benefit of the Yemeni people.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): A negotiated settlement is clearly the only way forward, but what more pressure can be put on Iran, which is fuelling the conflict by supplying missiles and other armaments to the Houthis? If pressure was put on the Iranians, surely we could get some movement towards a settlement.

Alistair Burt: Iran is aware of the international concern about the role it is playing and about some of the areas where it is alleged to be playing a role. That pressure is

being applied, and Iran has an opportunity here to demonstrate that it wishes to play a less disruptive role in the region.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Following on from the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones), if the port were taken out of action by an attack, would that be a breach of international humanitarian law?

Alistair Burt: It depends entirely on the circumstances. If deliberate starvation is caused as an act of policy, that is a breach of international humanitarian law. Should the Houthis decide to destroy the port, which they are being driven away from, purely to cause such action, that would probably be such a breach.

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): The Minister, once again, has said there can be no military solution to this conflict, but would not an attack on Hodeidah mean a military solution is precisely what the coalition is intending to impose, irrespective of the cost in human lives? If he is not able to secure the guarantees he has been seeking on access to Hodeidah and humanitarian supplies, what action will the UK Government take to enforce international law?

Alistair Burt: In an active conflict, one side or the other often believes that, even though a military solution is not possible, military pressure may lead to a negotiated outcome more quickly. This happens in conflicts in many places. I repeat our view that no overall military solution is possible and that negotiation is best.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister is of course right to condemn the jihadi Houthis, but will an attack on the port not push them into the city, causing far more deaths? Will the British Government draw a red line under this and ensure that no UK personnel service these weapons?

Alistair Burt: We will continue to discourage such an attack, and we urge the Houthis to take the opportunity for negotiations that is currently available.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): Is it not right that this deeply perilous attack could be avoided if the UN took a more robust stance against the way the Houthis are deliberately squandering aid to starve their own citizens and create a worsening humanitarian crisis?

Alistair Burt: Again, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has knowledge of these things and is prepared to express it. Houthi conduct has been devastating to the people of Yemen. The Houthis have an opportunity to end such a conflict and take part in negotiations for a peaceful future.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Can the Minister confirm that Iranian naval vessels are supplying the Houthis? Can he also confirm that Hezbollah is also engaged in supporting the activities of the Houthis?

Alistair Burt: I have no direct information to confirm precisely the terms that the hon. Gentleman uses. These allegations have been made, and we are aware that the UN special panel did indicate that missiles used by the Houthis were of Iranian origin.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I cannot recall operations on this scale having previously been conducted by the Saudis or the Emiratis. Given that the excuse often given for civilian casualties is that they have not previously conducted air campaigns, what hope does the Minister have that we will not be in that same disastrous situation after this operation?

Alistair Burt: The hope we have expressed to the coalition is that such an attack does not take place and is discouraged. That has been the consistent position of the UK Government.

Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): When will the Government realise they will have blood on their hands if they continue to co-operate with the Saudi-led coalition, not least by selling it the arms it is using to kill hundreds and thousands of civilians indiscriminately?

Alistair Burt: I am grateful that this afternoon there have been a number of illustrations of activities by the Houthis that have caused severe damage to the Yemeni population. The House needs to understand there are two sides to this conflict, which is why the coalition has been involved.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): As the UN and other non-governmental organisations are leaving the port, how will the UK deliver humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering in the absence of operational partners?

Alistair Burt: The hon. and learned Lady asks a perfectly fair question. If we have information in relation to an attack, our responsibility is plainly to let those who might be affected know. As soon as such a danger has passed, aid agencies will be able to move back. Again, this is another reason why we have sought to discourage such an attack.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): The UAE is only one force in the Gulf that is increasing belligerence and destabilisation, but it is a very close ally of this

country. Why are the Government not either using their influence with the UAE or reconsidering some of those links and co-operation? They appear to be doing neither at the moment.

Alistair Burt: As I have indicated, we have been in contact with the parties in the coalition over a lengthy period. The Foreign Secretary has been in contact with them this weekend, and it has been our consistent position to seek to discourage the attack on Hodeidah, while understanding what drove the coalition to be involved in the first place, which is to seek to defend the Yemeni people.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): How many British citizens are currently working on aid programmes in Yemen, and what steps are the Government taking to protect them?

Alistair Burt: Very few UK citizens are involved in the aid programmes; my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had a meeting on that, and they have been given the same information as others on the availability of leaving. Obviously, the circumstances of UK aid workers is a matter of priority, as are those of other aid workers. That is why we issued our warning notice.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for his response. What talks are taking place between all those involved in Yemen's daily life? Coming from Northern Ireland, I recognise the importance of all sides being engaged in talk-talk, rather than war-war. Where is the peace process?

Alistair Burt: The peace process is in the hands of the UN special envoy, Martin Griffiths. Since his appointment in March, he has been working hard to get through to both sides and find a way in which he can put a proposal to them. I understand that he is coming back to the UN Security Council shortly to do just that. It is possible that the events that are currently going on might concentrate minds and assist that process—we earnestly hope so.

G7

4.5 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the G7 summit in Quebec. The G7 is a forum that allows close allies with shared history and values to discuss issues that affect the security and prosperity of our people, and of the world at large. Discussion at this year's summit focused on our shared efforts to promote the rules-based international order; to advance free and fair global trade by making the global economy work for everyone; to strive for equal opportunities for all our citizens; and to drive further action to protect the environment, and, in particular, our oceans.

As was clear over the weekend, there was strong debate and disagreement on some issues. But after detailed discussions between both leaders and our teams, we were able to find common ground and draw up a communiqué that reflected those discussions and the agreements we reached. I want to pay a particular tribute to Prime Minister Trudeau for his leadership and skilful chairing, which enabled us, after two days of negotiation between leaders, to agree actions and a shared approach on some of the most pressing challenges facing the international community and our citizens. The United Kingdom fully intends to honour the commitments we have made.

Recent events have underlined the importance of a strong international response to malign state activity. We cannot stand by when international law is undermined, when the security of our citizens is compromised and when foreign interference in our democratic institutions threatens the values and interests that we share. So at this summit we agreed to establish a new rapid response mechanism. As a result, G7 nations will work together to share intelligence, co-ordinate action and develop new strategies to tackle this growing threat. We also agreed that we must maintain the global norm against the use of chemical weapons and that we will strengthen the ability of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks. We all agreed in our discussions and our communiqué that we need to maintain sanctions on Russia, in the light of its failure to fully implement the Minsk agreements in Ukraine, and that we stand ready to take further restrictive measures if necessary.

Turning to trade and the global economy, it is clear that in many of our countries some people feel left behind by globalisation, and not all countries are playing by the rules. We must address that. We need to make the international rules-based trading system work better, so that the benefits of free trade can be felt by all. That includes encouraging the World Trade Organisation to operate more effectively in supporting a global economy that works for everyone. Multilateral action is the right way to achieve this; it cannot be done by taking unilateral action against our partners. So at this summit we expressed deep disappointment at the unjustified decision of the United States to apply tariffs to steel and aluminium imports. The loss of trade through tariffs undermines competition, reduces productivity, removes the incentive to innovate and, ultimately, makes everyone poorer. In response, the EU will impose countermeasures, but we need to avoid a continued tit-for-tat escalation. That is

why it was right that we had such an open and direct discussion at this summit and why, as a champion of free trade, the UK will continue to support a constructive dialogue. As long-standing allies, we do not make progress by ignoring each other's concerns; rather, we do so by addressing them together.

Turning to equality, there was a special session at this summit focused on empowering and supporting women and girls around the world. Efforts to tackle global poverty are fundamentally undermined for as long as millions of girls are not getting the education they deserve, so at this summit the United Kingdom announced £187 million of new funding to support over 400,000 girls in developing countries in getting 12 years of quality education.

We also called for new action to prevent gender-based violence, abuse and harassment online. Women and girls must be able to use the internet without fear of being subjected to online rape threats, harassment, cyberstalking, blackmail and more.

Following the UK's call for action last year, tech companies have made real advances in tackling online terrorist propaganda, so in Canada I called for this work to be extended to end the abuse targeted specifically at women and girls. We committed in particular to new joint working on stopping the internet being used to facilitate people trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

Finally, on World Oceans Day, the UK sought to build on the international agreements we reached at the Commonwealth summit in April by calling for a global effort to protect our oceans from avoidable plastic waste. This is one of the great environmental challenges facing the world today. The summit recognised the need for global action, including work with business, industry and non-governmental organisations, to find innovative solutions. The UK is continuing to lead by example at home through our 25-year environment plan, and on Friday we proposed to extend the blue belt protecting sea life around the English coast with a further 41 new marine conservation zones.

This was a difficult summit with, at times, some very candid discussions, but the conclusion I draw is that it is only through continued dialogue that we can find ways to work together to resolve the challenges we face. The countries round the G7 table have been pillars of the rules-based international order, which has benefited all our citizens and, I believe, the world as a whole. The United Kingdom, with our allies and partners, will continue to play our part in promoting that order to the benefit of all. I commend this statement to the House.

4.11 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for an advance copy of her statement. In her last couple of sentences, she almost gave us an inkling of the atmosphere there must have been at the summit. We could do with more.

The G7 meeting can only be described as a failure, and the blame for that lies with the current incumbent of the White House. In the past, the G7 has played a positive role in responding to the global financial crisis, and indeed in pushing forward the millennium development goals and now the sustainable development goals. The problem facing leaders is that the White House is inhabited

by a President committed to his slogan, “America first”. That has meant a dismantling of multilateral agreements, pulling out of the Paris climate change accords, the destabilisation of the Iran nuclear deal and now the imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminium.

Attempts by G7 leaders, including President Macron and the Prime Minister, to engage with President Trump have resulted in no discernible moderation or deviation from “America first”. In these circumstances, it is clearer than ever that UK policy, whether trade or foreign policy, cannot be outsourced to the US. Will the Prime Minister join me in condemning the comment of President Trump’s trade adviser that:

“There’s a special place in hell”

for Justin Trudeau?

The use of chemical weapons, whether on the streets of Salisbury or in the cities of Syria, is deplorable, and the perpetrators of these crimes must be held to account under international law. The leaders of France and Germany, and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, are right to call for continued political dialogue through the NATO-Russia Council. Will the Prime Minister commit to lead on establishing that dialogue at the NATO summit next month?

For European countries, it is vital that unity is maintained, both in support of the Iran nuclear deal and over trade policy. UK jobs are dependent upon our exports, and it is therefore vital that we robustly defend those interests with multilateral agreed action. However, this must not descend into escalating a tit-for-tat trade war, so what steps are the Government taking with our allies to mitigate that threat?

That is not the only threat to our exporting industries and skilled jobs in this country. In the current climate, that puts a particular obligation on each of us in the Chamber as we consider the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill this week. We must act to guide the Government in negotiations so that our industry, our workers and our communities get the best possible Brexit deal. That concern must be even more acute in the light of the announcement by Jaguar Land Rover that the production of the Discovery model will now happen in Slovakia.

While she was at the G7, did the Prime Minister raise with European leaders the crisis of the Aquarius ship, which the Italian Government refused to allow to dock? I want to put on record my thanks to the Spanish Government and Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez for showing humanity in accepting the rescue ship.

I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister raised the issue of online abuse and the harassment of women and girls as a global problem, but will she today commit to begin negotiations immediately with political parties in Northern Ireland to bring forward legislation to extend abortion rights and end what the United Nations has denounced as a violation of international human rights standards?

On the environment, the Prime Minister’s wafer-thin so-called national plan fails to match her rhetoric on the global stage. There was nothing to tackle deadly levels of air pollution in our cities or the disgracefully low levels of recycling in this country. We can only ever be taken seriously abroad if we speak from a position of moral authority and respect and without any double standards. I appeal to the Prime Minister again today finally to suspend UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

With a more unilateral United States Government, it is more important than ever that we work with our allies and that we do so based on social justice, equality and human rights.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman raised a number of issues, some of which were not on the agenda of the Quebec summit. I will do my best to address the issues that actually were on that agenda.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about the environment and the 25-year environment plan here in the United Kingdom. In fact, the United Kingdom is seen throughout the world as a leader on many environmental issues, not least in the work that we have been doing in relation to plastics. I was pleased to get agreement at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting on action that we are taking in relation to clearing our oceans of plastics. It was important that there was agreement from the G7 as well that action should be taken on this issue. As a Commonwealth country, we have a responsibility in this regard. Many small island states in the Commonwealth are already feeling the problems caused by this issue, especially in the impact on their oceans, and it is important that we act on that issue.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about the relationship with Russia. As we have discussed, and as I said in my statement, it is important that we recognise the need to maintain sanctions on Russia given that the Minsk agreements have not yet been fully put into place and that we stand ready to take further restrictive measures if necessary. He said that Russia plays a role in Syria. Indeed, Russia does play such a role. What we want to see is that the efforts to bring about a political solution and future stability and security for Syria and the Syrian people come through continuing the United Nations process.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the attitude of the United States of America and whether we are working together as allies. We should, of course, look at the recent action that the US has taken in support of the United Kingdom. It expelled a number of Russian diplomats in solidarity with us after the Salisbury incident, as indeed did other countries around the world. The Americans have recently taken action on Russia by imposing more sanctions.

What is important is that we are able to sit down and talk about these issues together, share the information that we need to share and determine the way forward. On the steel and aluminium tariffs, I was very clear—I have been clear directly to President Trump and I have been clear in this House and elsewhere—that they are unjustified, and the European Union will take countermeasures on them. We want to ensure that we can get a dialogue going forward so that we do not simply see a continuous tit-for-tat escalation on these measures, because that is in the interests of nobody. We will be playing our part, as we have done already, in discussions with others around the European Council table to ensure that the EU is able to take the right proportionate action in line with the World Trade Organisation rules. Of course, the EU is taking a case at the WTO on this very issue.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about the importance of trade, saying that this country depends on exports. Well, of course we are an exporting country. I want to see more companies around the United Kingdom exporting.

[*The Prime Minister*]

The Department for International Trade and the Secretary of State are doing excellent work in increasing the number of companies that are exporting around the world. But if we are going to export around the world, we need to be able to ensure that we are negotiating trade deals with other countries and that we negotiate a good trade deal with the European Union, but that we are free to negotiate the trade deals that are in our interests.

The right hon. Gentleman may stand up here and talk about the importance of exports, but it is of course the Labour party's policy to put the United Kingdom into a relationship with the European Union that would mean that, without being a member of the EU, we would hand over the negotiation of trade deals to the EU. That would certainly not be in our interests.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): Does not last week's summit sadly demonstrate that President Trump has little or no time for multilateral meetings or multilateral agreements, and no time at all for the WTO and its rules, and that he wants to take steps that he hopes will force rich and developed countries like ours to export less to the United States and to import more from politically-sensitive sectors of the American economy? Does not the Prime Minister reflect on last week's unfortunate events and think about when she negotiates in Europe? Although things are going to change when we leave the European Union, does she not think that we must keep frictionless trade and as many qualities of a single market, customs union and totally free trade as we possibly can, because we are probably going to need it more in the near future than we have in the past?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. and learned Friend will know, we have set out very clearly the objectives we have for our future customs arrangements with the European Union, which indeed reflect having as frictionless trade as possible, alongside being able to negotiate our own trade deals with an independent trade policy and having no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. As we leave the European Union, we want to ensure that we have a good trading relationship with the EU, but we also want to have an independent trade policy that enables us to negotiate trade deals around the rest of the world.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I thank the Prime Minister for the advance copy of her statement.

I will start by congratulating all those who marched yesterday in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and London to celebrate 100 years of the women's vote. It is very fitting that the G7 had such a strong focus on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The Scottish National party strongly welcomes the Charlevoix declarations on increasing safe and quality education for all girls, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile states, and further declarations on resolving to end all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

It is of course right that the summit shone a light into some of the most hostile conflict zones around the world. SNP Members fully support the urgent call to address the dire and deteriorating situation in the Gaza strip.

The urgency could not be more apparent, as the UN has been clear that the Gaza strip will be uninhabitable by 2020.

On matters of the global economy, the G7 sought to invest in growth for all. Underlining the role of rules-based international trading systems and continuing to fight protectionism drew a wall of intransigence from the President of the United States. The summit may have been a diplomatic disaster, but in an increasingly fractured world the co-operation of world leaders is essential if we are to strive for peace and prosperity.

Before going to Ottawa, the Prime Minister was pushed around by her hard Brexit supporting Ministers; some might say that she was Trumped. The looming trade war with the US demonstrates the weakness in the so-called special relationship, and I associate my remarks with the observation made by the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). Does not the Prime Minister agree, following the chaotic summit she attended at the weekend, that her Brexiteer sidekicks' belief that this Government can secure a trade deal with the US post Brexit is simply delusional?

The Prime Minister: First, I add my congratulations to those of the right hon. Gentleman to all those who took action to recognise the 100 years' anniversary of women getting the vote. This is a very good year for women in politics. We should continue to recognise that anniversary.

There was indeed, as the right hon. Gentleman said, a focus at the Charlevoix summit on the question of gender equality and women's empowerment. As he said, there was the important declaration on increasing opportunities for at least 12 years of safe and quality education for all, and to dismantling the barriers to girls' and women's quality education, particularly in emergencies and in conflict-affected and fragile states. We also recognised that marginalised girls, such as those with disability, face additional barriers in maintaining access to education. That was an important commitment from all those around the table.

The right hon. Gentleman ended up by talking about trade deals and the possibility of a trade deal with the United States of America. We have committed, when we have an independent trade policy, to ensuring that we are able to put in place trade deals around the rest of the world. The United States has been speaking to us about the possibility of such a trade deal. Of course, when we negotiate with the United States, or indeed any other country around the world, we will be ensuring that we negotiate in the interests of the United Kingdom. But we do believe that that free trade—those open markets—is the best way to bring prosperity, to bring jobs, to encourage competition, to increase productivity, and to encourage innovation, which, at the end of the day, is what advances medicine and advances people's lives in so many different ways. We will be looking forward, as I say, to making sure that we do trade deals that are firmly in the interests of this country.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that global free trade has been the single biggest reason why poverty around the globe has fallen so dramatically over the past few years, and that the UK, as an exponent of free trade, stands on that position and wants to

advance it? So apart from the particular place in hell that Mr Trudeau apparently must occupy, did she hear, as I saw in a report today, that the American delegation maintain that they offered unilateral free trade to all the G7, but that this was rebuffed? Does she recall that particular conversation?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that free trade is one of the best ways of ensuring that developing countries are able to move themselves out of poverty and improve the lot of their populations, and it is very important that we continue to advocate it. There was a discussion about the possibility of completely open and free trade, but open, free and fair trade. That means not just tariff-free but also dismantling barriers to trade. It also means ensuring that there are no anti-competitive, unfair subsidies.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): With bitter divisions on trade and the imposition of tariffs by the US that are indeed undermining the international rules-based order of which the Prime Minister spoke, what impact does she think this will have on the timing and the content of any trade deal with the United States of America, bearing in mind that the backstop proposal she published last week for Northern Ireland will mean that we are going to be remaining in a customs union with the European Union until the end of 2021, and possibly for longer?

The Prime Minister: In relation to the timing of trade deals with America, or indeed with any other country, the right hon. Gentleman knows full well that we are not able to put those in place until we have fully left the European Union. We will be able to talk about these issues—to sign and negotiate those treaties—in advance of that.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about the backstop. The point of the backstop is that it is there if, as at 1 January 2021, the future customs arrangement between the United Kingdom and the European Union is not in place. As I said last week, it has always been the case that we believe that the best way to address the issue of the border in Northern Ireland is through that overall relationship between the UK and the EU. We want to ensure that that is in place as soon as possible after the end of December 2020, and we preferably do not want to see the backstop having to be used at all.

Sir Michael Fallon (Sevenoaks) (Con): Given that it is nearly four years since 10 British citizens were murdered when flight MH17 was destroyed over Ukraine by a Russian missile launcher and the west is still trying to refute Russian denials of responsibility, can the Prime Minister tell the House how the very welcome rapid response mechanism agreed in Quebec will help us to better challenge Russian misinformation with much faster truth?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend raises a very important point. The point of the rapid response mechanism is that it will be able to do that in two ways. First, one of the key things is to have faster attribution when these events happen; of course, we have only relatively recently seen a final attribution in relation to the Russian role in MH17. It is about being able to work together to achieve faster attribution when incidents happen and then—this is the crucial point—to co-ordinate

activity to counter exactly the propaganda that he mentions. Working collectively will have a much greater impact than individual states trying to work on their own.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): What is the point of the G7? Since the most important member does not believe in a rules-based system and crucial countries such as China and India are not even members of it, why does the Prime Minister not recommend closing it down?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asks what the point of the G7 is. He should look at the communiqué to see the agreed actions that we will be putting in place, which will be of benefit across areas relating not just to trade and foreign policy but the empowerment of women and girls.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on her resolve at the G7 in standing up for women's rights, the environment, free trade and the international rules-based order, but given events there, what appraisal has she made of President Trump's likely approach to trade deals with the United Kingdom after Britain leaves the European Union?

The Prime Minister: The President of the United States has always made it clear that he is keen to be able to sit down and talk with the UK about a future trade deal. We are also clear that we want to ensure that we have a trade deal that works for the United Kingdom, but let us not forget that we already have a good trading and investment relationship with the US. Every working day, 1 million people in the United Kingdom wake up and go to work for an American company, and 1 million people in the United States wake up and go to work for a British company.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): How did the Prime Minister personally respond to Trump's call for Putin to be let back into the G7? Given yesterday's revelations, is it not now time for a full police inquiry into the relationship between the Kremlin and the leave campaign in the EU referendum?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asks about a police inquiry, which of course is a matter for the police, and the body responsible for looking at elections and the democratic process is the Electoral Commission. He asks about the comments made by President Trump on the G7 versus the G8. There was a good reason why the G8 became the G7—Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea—and the response I have given both in private and in public is that any conversations about whether or not Russia could come back round the table cannot take place until Russia has changed its attitude.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I strongly support the Prime Minister's wish to be a leader of free trade worldwide. Do we not need to get our vote and voice back at the WTO as soon as possible and leave the customs union in order to do that?

The Prime Minister: I assure my right hon. Friend that we are indeed working on establishing ourselves as an independent member of the WTO at the point at which it will be possible to become one, having left the European Union.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister agree that never since the war has the international rules-based system been more at risk following the outcome of the G7 summit and particularly President Trump's behaviour, with his tweet deck on Air Force One after he left? How does she think we can shore up the international rules-based system? All of us who study history know what the consequences of its collapse may be.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady refers to the international rules-based order. That can be looked at in a variety of ways. If we take an issue such as the norms that we all accept or have been accepting on chemical weapons, there is absolutely no doubt about the strength of support there is for action to ensure that those international norms and that rules-based order are maintained. As we say in the communiqué, we recognise in areas like trade that the World Trade Organisation needs reform. Its dispute resolution mechanisms are very slow, and we need to work to ensure that it provides frameworks for not just the economies of the past but the economies of the future—in digitisation and services, for example.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the building of the international order, which has enriched us all in the freedoms that we now have, has been paid for not just with the industry of American and British diplomats, but with the lives of the soldiers given in wars and conflicts to protect the freedoms that we enjoy? Does she agree that protecting, defending and, indeed, expanding that order is not only in our interests, but in the interests of all free peoples, including the United States?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very important point, which is that we as politicians stand and talk about the values that we share, but it is our servicemen and women who actually put their lives on the line to defend those values. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that we are doing them the service of working together to maintain that rules-based international order.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said that the WTO needs reform, and she also said earlier that we were in the lead on climate change and the environment. Will she look at integrating these two institutional networks so that we do not have trade deals that cut across our environmental objectives?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that integrating the two institutional structures that deal with those is the right way forward, but there are of course examples around the world where trade deals do indeed incorporate environmental standards.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): An initiative at the G7 that we can all welcome is the extra £2 billion pledge to educate some of the poorest women and children in the world. Unfortunately, after such international conferences, quite often, the money does not follow the pledge. Will my right hon. Friend commit to doing everything in her power and commit the British Government to making sure that people pay up and that that fund is properly administered—probably through the Department for International Development, which has the best

international network—in order to deliver this much needed education in some of the poorest and hardest-to-reach countries in the world?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree that it is important that this is not just words or words on paper, but money that actually follows through. Of course, the United Kingdom has a very good record on that and we will be doing everything we can to ensure that this money does follow through. It is for a very important objective that is in the interests of us all.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister worry that there is a growing trend towards protectionism in the world, as we saw this weekend? In 2010, there were just 300 non-tariff protectionist measures in G20 countries but, in 2015, there were 1,200. How are we really going to make sure that we, as a country that relies on free and fair trade, can prosper if that protectionism grows?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right that we need to be wary of any seeming approaches taken around the world that increase protectionism or that increase the likelihood of protectionism being adopted. When people talk about trade, there tends always to be a focus on tariffs, but of course free trade depends on a great deal more than tariffs. It depends on having similar systems that ensure that there is not unfair competition and that abilities to reduce tariffs are not simply replaced by the sort of barriers to trade that he talks about. As an independent member of the WTO, we will of course be able to play our part in trying to ensure that we row back any attempt at protectionism.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I am sorry to break the cosy consensus, but has not President Trump got a point to the extent that free trade, like all these theories, depends on some level of equivalence and fair dealing, yet China, with its unlimited population, is rapidly building massive trade surpluses with the rest of the world and draining other economies dry? Given that its secretive Government have proved utterly impervious to previous pressure, perhaps history will prove that there is some method in President Trump's madness.

The Prime Minister: We have absolutely no doubt that there is a need to ensure that everybody is playing within the rules-based international order. Obviously, we have spoken in this House and elsewhere in particular about the overcapacity in steel and the role that China has played in that. That is why I was pleased, at the first G20 I went to, that the global forum on steel excess capacity was set up, with China as a member of that forum. As we committed to in the communiqué, we have called on the members of that forum to implement its recommendations fully and promptly, and we need to say that we must bring those countries that are emerging and perhaps not playing fully by the rules of the international rules-based order, into that order. I am pleased to say that we also in the communiqué committed to continue to fight protectionism.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Prime Minister agree that all of us who believe in international peace, prosperity and security—and hope that they will continue—want the G7 and other global

international institutions to prosper? But are not her Government, just like the Trump Government, not trusted any longer in partnerships, in the European Union, in NATO or in the G7, because they are driven by an inability to play fair in partnerships?

The Prime Minister: Nothing is further from the truth. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman look at the international coalition that supported the United Kingdom in response to what Russia did on the streets of Salisbury in the nerve agent attack.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Might the prospects for consensus have been better had not leaders previously, and so publicly, announced their intention to undermine US policy on Iran?

The Prime Minister: The United States has chosen to reimpose sanctions on Iran and therefore to pull out of the joint comprehensive plan of action—the Iran nuclear deal. We have worked with France and Germany because we continue to believe that, as long as Iran meets its obligations under that deal, it is important to maintain that deal. But we accept—and have been working with those countries, the United States and others—that more needs to be done in relation to Iran’s ballistic missile programme and its destabilising activity in the region. We will continue to work with all partners who want, like us, to ensure that we can take some action to reduce that destabilising activity.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): The international rules-based order of which the Prime Minister speaks is under attack from the rise of nationalism in various parts of the world. What does she think about its strength when the President of the United States can call for the readmission of Russia to the G8 just weeks after Russia has used a nerve agent to try to kill people on the streets of the United Kingdom? Even if we do not have the United States as a partner in this endeavour, will she commit the UK Government to working as closely as possible with other like-minded allies to uphold that order?

The Prime Minister: I responded earlier to the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) on the issue of whether Russia should be sitting around the G7 table and we should go back to the G8. On the point that the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) makes about the United States and its approach to Russia and the nerve agent attack that took place on the streets of Salisbury, I remind him—as I mentioned earlier—that the United States, together with other international allies, expelled Russian diplomats following the attack. Those allies took action, as we did, to recognise what happened in Salisbury. They have also subsequently introduced tougher sanctions on Russia, which have been having an impact on certain individuals in Russia. We continue to work with our allies and others to ensure that we are dealing with the malign state activity that is being undertaken by Russia and others.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for defending free trade and the rule of law, and for championing the need to remove plastic from the world’s oceans. What plans does she have to ensure that commitments made by countries are more binding and that real and urgent action is achieved?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for her comments. First, we have to set an example ourselves, as we have done in the past and will continue to do through the work we are doing on issues such as plastic straws and cotton buds. It is also the case that we can work with other like-minded countries, not just in the G7 but across the Commonwealth, to ensure that they are working with us to take the action necessary. It is widely recognised—this point was emphasised by the Secretary General of the United Nations at the summit—that this is a key issue and a major environmental challenge across our world, and we all need to work together to address it.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister think that the special relationship is stronger or weaker with President Trump in the White House?

The Prime Minister: The special relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States continues to be strong. It will endure and continue to be strong. The nature of the relationship is such that when we disagree with the United States and the President we are able to tell him.

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): In the light of the Prime Minister’s discussions at the G7, does she agree that now is not the time to weaken sanctions against Russia? In fact, there is a very strong argument that we should be co-operating with other international partners to strengthen sanctions against Russia to make sure that pressure continues to be applied on Putin to conform to the rules-based international order.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. The communiqué committed to maintaining sanctions against Russia in relation to the fact that the Minsk agreements have not been fully implemented. That discussion will come up at the June European Council, too. As we made clear at the G7, we stand ready to take further restrictive measures if necessary.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): The communiqué includes a pledge to:

“coordinate efforts to build lasting peace and support democratic transition in Myanmar”.

As the first monsoon rains hit the camps in which the displaced Rohingya people are living, will the Prime Minister say what her Government are doing to ensure that that pledge is not just words?

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom Government are taking a number of actions. We are providing real support for the refugees in the camps. We are providing real support to Bangladesh to be able to provide for those people. We continue to work and will continue to press the Myanmar Government to create a situation in which the refugees are able to return to their former homes in safety and security—that is the key issue. It is not just about people being able to return home; it is about being able to ensure that, when they do so, they have the confidence of knowing they will be safe and secure.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Trudeau or Trump?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure what activity my hon. Friend is asking me to undertake with either. [*Laughter.*]

Mr Speaker: Moreover, if one were being really pedantic one would have to say that the hon. Gentleman's question did not contain a main verb.

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): It's certainly not "Love Island", is it Mr Speaker?

The G7 summit was a fiasco rescued only by our EU allies and friends who filled the vacuum of leadership created by President Trump's tweets. Does his abandonment of the international rules-based trading system not reveal how important it is for us to stay in a customs union and in the European single market, not least for the environmental and social protections that any bilateral trade deals with third countries receive?

The Prime Minister: If we were in a customs union, we would not be able to negotiate our own trade deals and we would not be able to have an independent trade policy. We want to have that independent trade policy, so that we can negotiate trade deals around the rest of the world in our own interests. If we were in a customs union, we would be giving responsibility for our future trade deals to Brussels while not being a member of the European Union. That would mean it would have no incentive at all to negotiate trade deals in our interests. We need to have that independent trade policy and that means being outside a customs union.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to investing in women and girls and to keeping them safe online. This issue concerns us all deeply because women suffer disproportionately when they go online. Will she update the House on this ambition?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to do so. In the United Kingdom, we are committed to doing more on this issue. As I said in my statement, we have already had some success in working with tech companies on other issues and look to do so on this issue. There is a commitment from the wider G7 that this is something to be addressed. We take a simple position that, if an activity is wrong offline, it is wrong online. We need to ensure that that is being enforced.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Is the Prime Minister disappointed or relieved that President Trump did not have time for a bilateral meeting with her?

The Prime Minister: I had actually had quite a lengthy conversation with President Trump earlier in the week, and I had a number of conversations with him at the G7 on a range of issues.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): It seems to be clouded that a great deal of constructive work came out of the G7 meeting—not least the work on reducing plastics in the oceans worldwide and on women's education. Is it not right that if we really are to tackle those issues, we need to do it jointly with the other members of the G7?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Of course, we in the UK look at those issues and take our own actions, but the impact is likely to be much

greater when we are able to work jointly and co-operatively with others to ensure that, around the world, we are addressing these issues. That is exactly what the G7 communiqué committed us to do.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The overwhelming majority of people in this House will welcome the overwhelming majority in the G7 agreeing not to let Russia back to the top table, but Russia is now seeking to exert its influence through the back door, and we learnt about the scale of that over the weekend. The Prime Minister says that it is an Electoral Commission inquiry, but the Electoral Commission does not have the legal power to summon the information that it needs. If she can set up a rapid action taskforce abroad, why can we not have a rapid action taskforce here at home? Why can we not put the Electoral Commission on it along with the Metropolitan police, because that is the only way we will find out whether Arron Banks' millions were in fact Moscow gold?

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier in response to a question, of course if there is a suggestion of criminal activity, it will be a matter for the police as to any investigation that would be undertaken. The question whether or not electoral laws have been met is of course a matter for the Electoral Commission, but as the right hon. Gentleman might recall, from the police's point of view, they have operational independence, and it is not for politicians to tell the police what to investigate.

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con): The Prime Minister referred in her statement to malign state influence. Presumably, that would include Russia shooting down flight MH17, invading a neighbouring country, sponsoring its client state to commit a chemical attack and interfering in foreign elections. Does the Prime Minister intend at the European Council at the end of June to press our European partners to strengthen and expand the range of economic sanctions that we have imposed against Russia?

The Prime Minister: I have already raised with European partners whether the European Council in June should look not just to the question of the sanctions in relation to the Crimea and Minsk agreements, but also to whether we should look further. Indeed, there are some issues that have arisen in relation to Crimea where I think that we should be looking at whether some further sanctions are required.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): The Government's own impact assessments confirm that even the biggest and boldest trade deal with the US would add between only 0.1% and 0.3% of gross value added to our economy. Have these figures been revisited since the G7 and the imposition of tariffs? How far now do the Government believe that a free trade deal with the US would go towards offsetting the between 2% and 8% loss of GVA associated with any of the likely relationships that we might have with the EU in future?

The Prime Minister: We are intending to negotiate. We have started talking about and negotiating a trade deal with the European Union that is good for us here in the UK—I think that it will also be good for the European Union—and ensures that we are able to

continue to trade well with the European Union. We do not talk about a trade deal with America or any other country around the world replacing an ability to trade on a good basis with the European Union. It is in addition to being able to trade on a good basis with the European Union.

James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the education, empowerment and emancipation of women, particularly in developing countries, is a skeleton key that unlocks both social and economic development? Will she ensure that, despite whatever else is pressing at the time, we do not let this most important of agenda items slip down the priority list of the G7?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The question of ensuring that women have those opportunities and that gender equality is in place is right in itself, but it is also important for economies, because there would be a significant boost to economies if women were able to play the same sort of role, in terms of businesses that they are setting up and so forth, as the male part of the population. I can assure him that President Macron, who will be hosting the G7 next year, committed at the summit in Quebec to taking this agenda item—the empowerment of women and gender equality—through to the G7 in France next year.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister share my concern that the good work she described coming out of the G7 seems deliberately to be having the shine taken off it by President Trump and his tweets—insisting that it should be a G8 and pushing on with his tariffs—and his general inability to play by the collective rules? Or are blond buffoons who seek to undermine her at every turn now becoming the norm?

The Prime Minister: G7 leaders signed up to a number of actions in the communiqué. We will ensure that we abide by them, and I expect others to do the same.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Given that the number of new jobs and livelihoods needed globally for young people by 2030 is estimated to be at least 1 billion, did the G7 have the opportunity to discuss how these jobs and livelihoods will be created? In particular, did it discuss the investment—not just free trade, which is vital—that makes free trade possible?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. As one of our early discussions, we were able to have a more general discussion about employment, the future of the world of work, the sort of developments that should take place and how we work to ensure, for example, that as artificial intelligence increasingly comes into the world of work, we can retrain and reskill people to take the jobs of the future. Many people fear that AI will just mean job losses. We need to ensure that alternative jobs are available and that people are trained and up-skilled to take them.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Prime Minister look carefully at my Plastics Bill, published today, which says that plastic producers, instead of

council tax payers, should pay for recycling, that all plastics should be recyclable by 2025 and that we should introduce a levy on plastic bottles, alongside a refill system, so that, instead of paying £1 for two bottles and throwing them away, consumers pay 65p for one and refill it in a local shop?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has set out several ideas there. I can assure him that we are considering ways to increase the ability to deal with this issue of plastics, including working with industry to ensure that the plastics it produces are all recyclable. That is what we want. Working with industry and creating opportunities for new developments are also an important part of this.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): President Trump's decision to impose steel and aluminium tariffs is obviously deeply concerning for my constituents and British Steel at Skinningrove. We all deplore them, but as my right hon. Friend has said, we need to work constructively to get them overturned. With that in mind, can she give further details to the House about the precise nature of her discussions with the President on getting them lifted?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, the UK has been affected by tariffs imposed on the European Union, and we discussed how further dialogue could take place between the EU and the United States to avoid an escalatory tit for tat on tariffs. It is through that dialogue that it will be possible to address the issue of tariffs on steel and aluminium.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): What does the Prime Minister think it says to our European neighbours when the Foreign Secretary advocates behaving like Donald Trump in the Brexit negotiations? Does it present a good face for Britain in our future dealings with the European Union?

The Prime Minister: What presents a good face for our future dealings with the EU is this Government setting out very clearly, as we have done at every stage of the negotiations, the sort of future relationship we want with the EU.

Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con): I welcome the £187 million allocated to support girls' education in developing countries, but does my right hon. Friend agree that we must do whatever we can to ensure that girls have the same opportunities as boys and that both girls and boys in developing countries get improved opportunities?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is important to ensure that girls are not sidelined in terms of education and opportunities, which is why the funding for girls' education—for 12 years of safe and quality education, as we have expressed it—is important. We do also need, however, to increase opportunities for all in developing countries, which is why things such as the jobs compact we have entered into with Ethiopia are important. Such action can help countries to develop their economies and make those jobs available for both men and women.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): The Prime Minister has talked about the communiqué, which has many laudable objectives, but I still want her to clarify what she regards as its status following President Trump's tweets. Is it now a G6 communiqué?

The Prime Minister: The communiqué was signed up to by all the G7 leaders. As I have said, the UK will abide by its commitments, and we expect others to do so as well.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): These US tariffs must be met with a fitting response. What action can the British Government take to ensure that the EU response is calibrated and proportionate and does not lead to damaging escalation?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the International Trade Secretary has been in discussion with the United States, but also with the Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, in the European Union, and I am of course talking to other European leaders. We want to ensure that the action taken is proportionate and within the WTO rules when those countermeasures are put in place.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): The Prime Minister has referred to the empowerment of women and of girls in particular. Did she have an opportunity at the G7 to raise two specific issues: the hundreds of thousands of child prostitutes in India and the use of rape as a method of violence in places such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

The Prime Minister: The specific examples given by the hon. Gentleman were not raised, but the overall issue of the prevention of sexual violence in conflict was referred to in the meeting between the G7 leaders and the Gender Equality Advisory Council, which was set up by Prime Minister Trudeau. I was also able, within that, to talk about the issues of human trafficking and modern slavery, particularly modern slavery for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Paragraph 20 of the communiqué states:

"We...call upon Iran to play a constructive role" for "peace in the region."

The same statement was made at the 2015 G7. Iran has continuously displayed aggressive behaviour in the region, and Morocco has now expelled its ambassador. The Prime Minister has spoken of appropriate action and has said that "some action" will be taken to stop Iran's destabilising activity. What does she mean by "some action", and what is her timeline for taking that action?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: paragraph 20 of the communiqué does refer to Iran. It also states:

"we call upon Iran to refrain from launches of ballistic missiles and all other activities... inconsistent with UNSCR 2231—including all annexes".

That, of course, refers to the joint comprehensive plan of action. We also—as my hon. Friend said—call on Iran to

"cease proliferation of missile technology" and action it is taking that is "destabilising for the region".

We will work with our European allies and others on a wide variety of issues relating to Iran, and we will make every effort to bring Iran to a situation in which it is not interfering in other states in the way that we know it is at the moment.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Since 1949, every President of the United States bar one has supported greater economic solidarity as a bulwark against threats from the east and to dampen the far right and the far left. Reflecting on the summit and on future trade deals, does the Prime Minister believe that the President of the United States is a man with whom they can do a deal, or is he sacrificing the inheritance left to us by Presidents from Eisenhower to Obama for mid-term votes for the Grand Old party?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman and a number of others have raised the possibility of the United Kingdom's being able to do a trade deal with the United States. The United States has made clear that it wants to talk to us about such a deal, but, as I have made clear as well, we already have a good trading and investment relationship with the United States. We want to bring more jobs and prosperity into the United Kingdom, and any trade deals that we sign up to will be in our interests.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): We must leave our rivers and oceans in a better condition for the next generation. Will my right hon. Friend continue to work with international partners to ensure that the high domestic standards that we are developing are reflected internationally?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to give that commitment. When I was in China earlier this year, I was pleased to be able to visit Wuhan and look at some of the work that was being done to try to clear up the Yangtze river, which is, of course, a key source of the plastics that go into our oceans. We will continue to work with others internationally to ensure that we can address the issue.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement and in particular her comments on education for all, especially young girls. Many churches in my constituency and missions across the whole United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are focused on medical and education provision especially in African countries. What help can we give those churches and missions?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: many organisations are providing that medical and education support for young girls, and I will refer his remarks to the International Development Secretary to look at the issue he has raised.

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con): Multilateralism is vital for the global economy and particularly vital in dealing with the technology giants. Does the Prime Minister agree that, while this is a partnership, it is ultimately for Governments around the world to decide what is illegal and for those companies to comply with that legislation?

The Prime Minister: That is absolutely right: Governments decide what is legal and what is legitimate activity, and companies are then expected to comply with that and should do so. In a number of areas, we

have been able to achieve results through voluntary action by the tech companies and we will continue to pursue that, but we have been very clear that they should comply with any current and future legislation.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister confirm her Government's commitment to support UK steelmakers and steelworkers by persistently and robustly defending the industry against these 25% tariffs and ensuring there is no surge of steel imports into Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and, as the hon. Gentleman will know, we have taken a number of measures already over the years to try to help the United Kingdom steel industry. It is important to us that the industry can develop, and we will continue to robustly defend it in a number of ways. We will be working with others in the EU to ensure we can deal with the US tariffs, and what we want of course is an exemption and removal of those tariffs in the future.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's call for new action to prevent gender-based violence, abuse and harassment online, and I heard the answer she gave some moments ago to the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham P. Jones), but may I press her to take every future opportunity to raise the important initiative that the UK has led globally to prevent, and prosecute those guilty of, sexual violence in conflict?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right that the UK has been a leader in that. My noble and right hon. Friend Lord Hague did a great deal as Foreign Secretary to put that programme in place and we can be justifiably proud of it, but we do need to keep the foot on the accelerator.

Grenfell Tower

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower fire, meeting our commitment to update the House following the Opposition day debate on 16 May. I am also writing to the Chair of the Select Committee on Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide a formal report on progress, a copy of which will be placed in the House Library.

As we mark a year since the tragedy, this will be an extremely painful time for the community. Many hon. Members provided powerful and poignant contributions in the e-petition and Opposition day debates last month, and I know that the whole House will join me in sending the bereaved and survivors our love and prayers.

On 14 June 2017 we saw the greatest loss of life in a residential fire since the second world war: 71 people lost their lives on the night of the fire, and a former tower resident who was rescued from the 19th floor passed away earlier this year. The start of the public inquiry was a timely reminder of that terrible human cost: a baby who never lived to learn how much he was loved; three generations of family wiped out; heroes who died saving others. Nobody could fail to be moved by the extraordinary tributes paid by family and friends to the loved ones they lost—by their courage and dignity in the face of unimaginable loss, and, yes, by their anger too. A catastrophe of this kind should never have happened in the UK in 2017, and when it did the initial response was not good enough. Nothing could undo the anguish and devastation this has caused, but as the Prime Minister said, we can and must do right by the memory of those who lost their lives and those left behind, by supporting those affected, securing justice and, above all, ensuring that nothing like this can ever happen again.

There has been an unprecedented effort across Government and our public services. Help is being provided on a range of issues from advice on benefits to emotional and mental health support. In total, we have spent more than £46 million of national Government funds and committed a further £34 million to help meet rehousing costs, deliver new mental health services and deliver improvements to the Lancaster West estate. The appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Mr Hurd) as Grenfell victims Minister has helped to ensure that the voices of those affected inform the response, and we set up the independent Grenfell recovery taskforce to help and challenge the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to provide better support for residents and rebuild trust. I want to thank everyone for their tireless support, particularly the emergency services and the public and voluntary sectors.

Clearly, one of the most pressing issues has been rehousing those who lost their homes. A large-scale programme of investment work has been under way to ensure that the homes are of good quality and personalised to meet the needs of families. The council has acquired more than 300 homes in and around the borough. A total of 203 households needed new homes, and 198 have

[James Brokenshire]

accepted permanent or temporary accommodation. That means that all but five households have accepted offers, and 134 have now moved in. Most of the work to ensure that all the homes that have been accepted are ready to move into is complete, and we expect many of the remaining properties to be ready in the coming weeks. While those households are preparing to move, the council has ensured that they have all had the option to move into more suitable accommodation.

I remain concerned, however, about the 43 households who are living in hotels. My ministerial team has met many of them, and I have personally written to all of them to find out what barriers exist in each individual case and how we can overcome them. This is not where any of us wanted to be a year on from the fire. There has been progress in recent weeks, but overall the pace has been too slow. My Department and the independent taskforce are continuing to provide scrutiny and challenge to the council, and we have provided additional resources directly to the council to help to speed up this work. We will not rest until everyone is settled into a new home.

Those affected also badly need answers and to see justice done. The Grenfell Tower inquiry and Metropolitan police investigations will ensure that this happens, but we must also learn from what has happened. Over the past year, my Department has been working closely with fire and rescue services, local authorities and landlords to ensure that other buildings like Grenfell Tower are safe. Remediation work has started on two thirds of buildings in the social housing sector. Also, the Prime Minister announced last month that the Government will fully fund the removal and replacement of potentially dangerous aluminium composite material cladding on buildings over 18 metres high owned by social landlords, with costs estimated at £400 million, and we have made it clear that we expect building owners in the private sector not to pass costs on to leaseholders. To that end, I recently met leaseholders and put their concerns to industry representatives at a number of roundtables. Some in the sector, such as Barratt Developments, Legal & General and Taylor Wimpey, are doing the right thing and taking responsibility. I urge all others to follow. Those in the private sector must step up, and I am not ruling anything out if they do not do so.

In addition, I recently welcomed Dame Judith Hackitt's final, comprehensive report following her independent review of building regulations and fire safety. In response, I committed to bringing forward legislation to reform the system of fire safety and give residents a stronger voice. Having listened carefully to concerns, the Government intend to ban the use of combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise residential buildings, subject to consultation. We will publish the consultation next week. It is essential that people living in buildings like Grenfell Tower not only are safe but feel that the state understands their lives and works for them. There is no question but that their faith in that has been shaken. That is why, as well as strengthening building and fire safety, we will be publishing a social housing Green Paper by the recess. I am confident that these measures will help us to rebuild public trust and deliver the meaningful, lasting change that is needed.

Our country has seen many difficult times, but that night at Grenfell Tower was one of our darkest hours. We will never forget those who died. We will not falter

in our support for those who are still grieving, or flag in our determination to ensure that no community has to go through such agonies again. In doing this, we can be inspired by the incredible spirit of the people of north Kensington and the way they have come together. And when we say never again, we mean it. I commend this statement to the House.

5.14 pm

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for honouring his commitment to make this statement following our Opposition day debate and for giving me early sight of it this afternoon.

In this anniversary week, we remember the 72 people who lost their lives through the Grenfell Tower fire, and we will not forget our special duty as Members of Parliament to do right by them and by those who survive them.

Directly after this national disaster, the Prime Minister was right to make the first statement to the House herself, and she had the whole House with her when she pledged that Grenfell residents would have all the help and new homes they needed and that every necessary step would be taken to stop this ever happening again. Imagine the reaction if the Prime Minister had said instead, "One year on, more than half of Grenfell survivors will still be stuck in hotel rooms or temporary accommodation; more than 300 other tower blocks around the country will have the same Grenfell-style cladding, yet only 10 will have had it removed and replaced; there will be more tower blocks in private hands that have still not been tested; and, astonishingly, the Government will still not know how many high-rise tower blocks there are in the country." In truth, Ministers have been off the pace and too slow to act at every stage for 12 months, and I welcome the Secretary of State's admission of that this afternoon. The Government's response has not been good enough, and it is still not good enough. The time for warm words is long past. More action, not more apologies, is needed now.

On rehousing survivors, Grenfell residents feel that they were failed before the fire, and many feel failed since. They were promised permanent new homes within a year, but only 82 of the 209 households are in permanent new homes. On the wider Grenfell estate, only 39 of 127 are in permanent new homes. The dossier released today by the North Kensington law centre catalogues the defects in the new homes that have been offered, which include damp, delayed repairs and tenancy terms different from those for the homes people lost in the tower. The Secretary of State told the House on 16 May that he was

"establishing at pace what further action could be taken, by the Government or by the council, to speed up this process."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 2018; Vol. 641, c. 314.]

However, he has told us nothing more today. What further action is he taking? What deadline has he set for all survivors to be permanently rehoused so that they can begin to rebuild their lives? Without a deadline, more words of regret will simply ring hollow to the still homeless residents of Grenfell Tower.

Turning to the safety of the other high-rise blocks around the country, after 12 months only 10 of more than 300 with the same Grenfell-type cladding have had it replaced, despite the Prime Minister's promise to "do whatever it takes to...keep our people safe."

We welcome the funding for social housing tower blocks, which was pledged under Labour pressure, and we welcome the Secretary of State's intention to ban combustible material on the outside of high-rise blocks, which was also pledged under pressure.

May I keep up the pressure following the statement this afternoon and persuade the Secretary of State to go further and take the action that is now needed? Will he accept that sprinklers must be retrofitted in high-rise blocks, and will he set up an emergency fire safety fund to help council and housing association landlords with the costs? Will he publish in full the details that the Department holds on the location, ownership, testing status and evacuation policy of all high-rise blocks confirmed unsafe? Will he make it clear to private block owners that they, not residents, have the legal duty to pay for replacing dangerous cladding? Finally, will he strengthen councils' enforcement powers and sanctions so that they can act when private landlords will not make their buildings safe? That is how we honour the promises made in this House. That is how we ensure that, as the Secretary of State said today, when we say never again, we mean it.

James Brokenshire: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his response. I can say to him that, yes, we are very firmly focused on the outstanding issue of those needing to move into permanent accommodation. Since my last statement to the House, I have been pressing the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and its contractor. It is fair to say that, as I indicated in the initial response, the council had issues with its contracting that meant it needed to replace its contractor. The council has had a new contractor in place for a number of months that is making important progress on ensuring standards are met in respect of accommodation for those needing to be rehoused and that, actually, there is a firm element of personalisation in that accommodation to ensure that, when residents move in, they can see the care, thought and attention that has been put into the accommodation to make it a home and so that they can feel stability and safety in those new homes.

The right hon. Gentleman made a number of other points in respect of high-rise blocks and the various steps that have been taken over the course of this year. I point him to Dame Judith Hackitt's comprehensive report on building safety, which gives a real sense of this Government's commitment to making sustained change on building safety, and, equally, to my decision to go further in respect of banning combustible cladding and to the consultation I will launch next week.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about mandating sprinklers, and I underline to him that, since 2007, building regulations guidance has stated that all new high-rise residential buildings over 30 metres must have sprinklers. Sprinklers can be an effective safety measure, but they are one of many such measures that could be adopted. As Dame Judith Hackitt points out in her report, no single fire safety measure, including sprinklers, can be seen as a panacea.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me to provide details on the list of properties, which is something he has raised before, and there are particular safety concerns around that. In respect of his point on private owners, if he listened to what I have said he would know that I have stated on a number of occasions a very clear message on the responsibility of private owners, and I

have underlined to a number of building owners and developers their responsibilities and the need to take action. We have also ensured that local authorities have the appropriate powers to investigate further, as I have previously indicated to the House.

The right hon. Gentleman's broader point is a very relevant one, on remembering and honouring the victims of this appalling tragedy—one that, across this House, we all fully recognise—and the need for us to work together to ensure that appropriate changes are put in place. I certainly will not shrink from that, and I will certainly work with him on bringing forward changes. He knows that substantive changes have come from the Hackitt review, and I intend to publish further proposals on building regulations before the summer recess. I will certainly be updating the House on that again before the summer recess because, in honour of all those who lost their lives, we must get this right, and that is what the Government intend to do.

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): The Secretary of State says he has an expectation that building owners in the private sector will not pass costs on to leaseholders. I have met constituents at Premier House in Edgware who are rather concerned and would like to know what tangible and legal steps the Secretary of State will introduce to ensure that costs are not passed on to them, as leaseholders, either through a management charge or through a direct charge.

James Brokenshire: I certainly understand the concerns that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have expressed, which is why I have met a number of building owners directly to set out our expectations. The industry is considering how to ensure that those obligations are not passed on to leaseholders, but there is a growing sense of doing the right thing. It is notable that more building owners have determined to meet the costs themselves but, as I have indicated to the House, if they do not, I have not ruled anything out.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I thank the Minister for advance sight of his statement. One year on, our thoughts are with all the families and communities whose lives have been touched and altered unimaginably by this terrible tragedy. We welcome the publication of the Hackitt report, and I want to make it clear that the Scottish Government will swiftly consider any lessons and any actions that may be needed, as they did earlier this year when the Scottish housing Minister, Kevin Stewart, announced changes on requiring smoke alarms to be put in buildings.

One question I wish to ask today is whether the changes the Minister is announcing apply to buildings not in the super high-rise category? Do they apply just to super high-rise buildings or do they also apply to other high-rise buildings and other high-risk buildings that may be affected by combustible cladding and other poor fire safety procedures? We welcome the Prime Minister's acceptance earlier today that her and her Government's initial response to Grenfell was not good enough. I echo the views of the Opposition spokesperson in saying that I hope that those actions can be solid and can be taken much more quickly in future. I particularly wish to highlight issues relating to the mental health support that is available. I ask the Government to look closely at what is being done to ensure that those whose

[Kirsty Blackman]

lives have been affected by this terrible tragedy are not at the high risk of attempting suicide that they seem to be just now and at ensuring that suitable mental health support is put in place so that they have the best support in future.

James Brokenshire: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her comments and for the indication about the Scottish Government working with us as we seek to take a number of these proposals forward. Judith Hackitt's report was very much focused on high-rise residential blocks, but she did indicate a need for reflection on whether the requirements she set out should have broader application. Clearly, as we move forward with the implementation of the Hackitt review and the consultation on the banning of combustible cladding, we will be keeping this under examination.

As I have indicated to the House, we accept that the initial response was not good enough and I have set out why we have been taking a number of the steps we have. The hon. Lady highlights the mental health issue. NHS England has responded really proactively, in terms of contacting all the bereaved through the family liaison officers, providing a 24-hour emergency response service, making outreach contacts and providing a comprehensive trauma service. The point is that that is not just for now; it will be for a considerable time to come. We firmly recognise the support that will be needed, and discussions continue with the NHS and others to see that that remains in place.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. He will be aware that the Hackitt review described current building regulations as too complex, too confusing and "not fit for purpose" in the 21st century. So what discussions will he be having with representatives of the fire service, particularly the Chief Fire Officers Association, about how we can reform that to make sure that our building regulations are fit for purpose?

James Brokenshire: A considerable body of work needs to be advanced, and we are advancing it. My hon. Friend mentions the fire service, but we are also engaging with others on taking forward the implementation of the Hackitt review. It will require legislation and we want to get that right, and I will certainly be updating the House on the next steps in the coming weeks so that we can make that a reality. We need to put that system-wide change that Judith Hackitt underlined into effect, because of all the wide challenges that she rightly set out.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): I very much welcome the regular updates by the Secretary of State. Will he add Bellway Homes to the list of developers who have been very helpful in paying back any of the extra costs to Palm House and Malt House residents in respect of the temporary fire prevention measures? However, there is some ambiguity about whether or not category 2 aluminium composite material cladding has to be removed from lower high-rise blocks. Clearly, there is concern about that, so I hope he will come forward with some more guidelines that will help the authorities.

James Brokenshire: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for highlighting the particular case in her constituency. The purpose of the consultation that I set out—the technical

consultation that I intend to issue next week in relation to the banning of combustible cladding—is absolutely about seeking to give that clarity. It will obviously allow people to respond to that to ensure that this is in the right place, but issues over the nature of the materials to be used are absolutely at the heart of it.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): When I attended the very moving event held in Speaker's House and spoke to survivors, one of the most striking and moving points made was residents telling me that repeated complaints and concerns had been raised but had not been listened to or acted on. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the point in the Hackitt report where she recommends a clear line of complaint, recognition and action must be acted upon if we are to rebuild trust—not just in relation to Grenfell, but everywhere with tenants in high-rise buildings?

James Brokenshire: Trust lies at the absolute heart of all this, and the issue of escalation is one that Judith Hackitt refers to starkly and clearly in her report; it is one of the key recommendations. Obviously, all of it sets out change that needs to happen, but it is important that the complaints—the voices—are listened to and that there is a means of escalation so that change can happen.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): On this sad anniversary, my thoughts, too, are with all those affected by Grenfell Tower.

The Secretary of State has already mentioned the Hackitt review and the implementation of the recommendations. I would like to insist on one particular recommendation—that is on the named qualified individual responsible for signing off on the safety of high-rise buildings. Is there a timeline for introducing a statutory instrument on that?

James Brokenshire: We will certainly be looking at steps that can be taken sooner rather than later in respect of the Hackitt review. As I said to the House when the review was published, while some of this will require primary legislation, not all of it will. Therefore, as we look at how to take this forward, I have charged my officials to set out what we may be able to do sooner rather than later, and where consultation may be required and where it may not, so that we can see progress and action. That is why I indicated then—and I will do so—that I would update the House before the summer recess.

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): Leaseholders in my constituency are continuing to be beset with fear at having costs ranging between £40,000 and £50,000 passed on to them to carry out remedial and fire safety work, so this is my question: it is okay for the Secretary of State to say that, morally, people should not be doing this, but does he not have to take action? It requires Government intervention to ensure that these costs are not passed on to leaseholders.

James Brokenshire: I hear that message loud and clear. It was a message that was conveyed to me very firmly at the leaseholder roundtable that I convened to hear directly from those who are really suffering at the moment—the concerns, the risks, the fear, the anxieties that they have. I think industry is starting to listen.

I indicated some of the progress that has been made, but that needs to be at pace. It is the landlords and the building owners themselves who should bear that responsibility and cost. As I have said, if that does not happen, I will keep all issues under review.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): The Secretary of State was remarkably and refreshingly candid in saying that the Government had been too slow to act. Nine months ago, West Midlands fire service recommended a raft of measures to be taken to ensure that the 10,000 households in 213 tower blocks in Birmingham were safe, including retrofitting of sprinklers. Nine months later, not one penny has been forthcoming from Government to help Birmingham City Council—cash strapped—to carry out the necessary work to ensure those blocks are safe.

I know the Secretary of State is sympathetic to acting on this, but can I press him further: when will the Government act to make the necessary resources available, in partnership with local government?

Mr Speaker: That is an example of what I call shoehorning. The hon. Gentleman has shoehorned his very legitimate and intense preoccupation with matters Birmingham into an exchange about matters Grenfell, but we know he has done that in a positive spirit, and therefore the House is, I think, benignly disposed to him.

James Brokenshire: I know that that is an issue of particular concern to the hon. Gentleman. He will know that the Government have committed £400 million in respect of the remediation of combustible cladding. He makes a slightly different point, but we obviously have given financial flexibilities to local authorities in respect of other measures, and we are looking to provide any further technical detail in relation to the remediation of cladding in the coming weeks, and working with local government to ensure that the £400 million is duly utilised.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Will the Government set up a fund, as requested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey), so that, where fire safety officers recommend retrofitting sprinklers, they will be fitted and paid for by the Government?

James Brokenshire: I have already set out the position of the sprinkler issue in relation to new buildings. Obviously, it is for building owners to assess risk and consider what is appropriate for them. We have sought to support the sector in relation to remediation of combustible cladding with the £400 million and give financial flexibilities to local authorities, too. We will continue to keep the situation under review.

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab): In his statement, the Secretary of State spoke about further recommendations for change. Given that Government statistics for 2016-17 show that faulty electrical appliances were the second largest cause of accidental house fires in the UK, does he support my early-day motion 1119 on PAT testing of domestic electrical appliances?

James Brokenshire: I must confess to the hon. Gentleman that I am not conscious of his early-day motion, but I will certainly look at it in due course to see the specific point that he has made. If any issues come through, I certainly commit to write to him in respect of his early-day motion. Obviously, we continue to keep the regulations under review, and, of course, the inquiry itself will be looking at a number of these issues.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): I note what the Secretary of State says about sprinkler systems in new buildings, but how can we justify protecting tenants in new tower blocks in that way while leaving vulnerable and exposed tenants in existing tower blocks? How also can we justify the difference in treatment of hotel guests who are protected in existing buildings from sprinkler systems while leaving residents in tower blocks exposed?

James Brokenshire: We must look at the overall position of safety in buildings. I suppose that we could point to the fact that the Hackitt report drew that out. It is for building owners to seek professional advice and to decide whether to fit sprinklers on the basis of their assessment of the particular risk in a particular building. I must point out that my Department did write to local authorities and housing associations in 2013 to ask them to consider a coroner's report recommendation that they should consider retrofitting sprinklers in existing high-rise residential buildings. It is for them to do so. As I have said, it is about looking at all of the measures that are in place in a building to protect and guard against fire safety issues. Again, we look forward to the recommendations that the inquiry itself will make.

Point of Order

5.38 pm

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Have you had any indication from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on whether she plans to make an oral statement on transitional protection in universal credit for people claiming severe disability premium?

On Thursday, the Government announced, via a written statement, that people receiving severe disability premium would not transfer to universal credit until its managed migration begins in 2019, at which point they will receive transitional protection. People who have already moved to universal credit will receive back payments.

This is an extremely important issue affecting more than half a million people. This is the fourth review that the Department has been forced to undertake in the past year, and an oral statement from the Secretary of State would give Members the opportunity to seek clarity over the steps the Department is intending to take in relation to the people affected.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her point of order and for her courtesy in giving me advance notice of her intention to raise it. The short answer is that I have received no indication from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions that she intends to make an oral statement on this subject. I advise the hon. Lady and the House that the question of whether the Government choose to announce a change of policy by written statement or by oral statement is a matter for Ministers to decide rather than for the Chair. That said, if the hon. Lady is dissatisfied—she has voiced her dissatisfaction this afternoon that a judgment has been made to indicate the change only via a written statement—there are various avenues open to her to pursue the issue further. The fact of being unsuccessful one day does not automatically preclude the possibility of success at a later stage, but Members are usually advised to be sensitive to the priorities of the House on the days in question. For example, tomorrow—I mention this en passant, although not entirely at random—the House is focused on very important legislative matters, and the same is true of Wednesday. But in my experience in this House, a combination of persistence and patience can pay. Meanwhile, the hon. Lady has put her view firmly on the record, and it will have been heard on the Treasury Bench.

Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill

Second Reading

5.41 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This country faces significant threats to our national security. The first is the ongoing threat posed by terrorism to the safety and security of our communities and to the freedoms that we cherish as a nation. Another is the threat posed by hostile state activity, which we saw most recently in Salisbury.

As has been said many times before in this House, our police and intelligence agencies are unwavering in their commitment to protecting us and to keeping the country safe. They are ready to put their own lives on the line to help to save others. It is because of this commitment and professionalism that 25 Islamist terrorist attacks have been disrupted since 2013. Four extreme right-wing plots have also been foiled since the Westminster attack. But as we know all too well, there were five terrorist attacks last year. Thirty-six people were murdered, and many more are still grieving or coming to terms with life-changing injuries as a result of the terrorist atrocities in London and Manchester. We owe it to the victims and survivors to do our very best to prevent such attacks from happening again.

Of course, as Home Secretary, I do not want to offer false hope. No Home Secretary can guarantee that there will not be another terrorist attack on their watch. It is impossible for me to promise that there will not be more grieving parents, partners and children because of some senseless act of terrorist violence in the future. But what I can do as Home Secretary is to take a long, hard, forensic look at the powers available to the police, security services, prosecutors and judiciary, and to make sure that they have what they need, including powers to tackle the evolving threat to the UK from terrorism and from hostile state activity and powers to keep the public safe and protect our national security. This is what the wide-ranging Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill is all about; it is about keeping the people of this country safe.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): My right hon. Friend used the term “wide-ranging”. Is not that the key thing? The legislation should be wide-ranging and flexible because those who wish this country and our fellow citizens ill are always trying to keep one step ahead of our rules and regulations. It is important to have the flexibility to ensure that all the tools that our agents need are available to them.

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He and other hon. Members will see that much of this Bill is about updating existing powers to reflect the modern age—for example, some of the powers regarding the internet and online content.

This important piece of legislation will allow the police and MI5 to disrupt threats earlier and to ensure that our laws reflect modern use of the internet. It will change existing laws to manage terrorist offenders better

and it will allow for more effective investigations. It will also give police more powers to investigate hostile state activity.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): My right hon. Friend may be aware that, on the previous Bill dealing with the same subject matter, I tabled an amendment relating to terrorists coming from other countries. It said, in effect, that they should not be allowed back into this country and that measures should be taken. I know that the Security Minister is aware of this matter, and I do not want to go into it in detail, but I intend to table an amendment during the Committee stage. I would be grateful if it were given careful consideration because, relying on human rights legislation, far too many people are coming back into this country and then in a position to radicalise other people in the jails.

Sajid Javid: I know that my hon. Friend has taken a great interest in these matters for many years. I will listen carefully to anything he has to say on that issue and so will the Security Minister. I look forward to seeing any amendments that he tables.

In March, we saw the attempted assassination in Salisbury of Sergei Skripal using a deadly nerve agent. That also put his daughter Yulia, Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, and many others in danger, including the brave men and women in the national health service and our frontline officers, who did all they could at the scene. They have continued to do so in the weeks and months since and have worked hard to save the Skripals. The attack was highly likely to be the work of the Russian state—a conclusion that is shared by many of our international partners. They have joined the UK in demonstrating to the Russian Government that the actions that they take are undermining the rule of law and international norms, and have serious consequences.

The events in Salisbury are part of a pattern of behaviour by the Russian Government, and the Russians are of course not alone in engaging in hostile activity that threatens our United Kingdom. So it is high time that we hardened our defences against hostile state activity.

Simon Hoare: My right hon. Friend mentioned my constituent Nick Bailey, the police officer at Salisbury. Wiltshire police have been incredibly helpful to Nick and to his family, with whom I am liaising. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he, his Department and Wiltshire police will continue to give Nick and his family all the support that they need, given the unique circumstances of the incident and the ramifications that he and his family have had from it?

Sajid Javid: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. I think that the whole House has commended Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey for what he did and how he put himself in the line of danger just doing his job—as I am sure he would put it. We will work with him, through Wiltshire police and others, to make sure that he gets all the support that he needs.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Given what the Home Secretary is saying about Russia's attempts to undermine our society and engage in very hostile acts such as the one in Salisbury, will he say a little about the allegations that we have read about over the weekend in *The Observer*, *The Sunday Times*

and elsewhere about other Russian attempts to potentially undermine parliamentary democracy and our democracy in this country? What steps is he taking to work with other Departments—notably the Treasury and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport—the Security Service and others to ensure that Russia is not attempting to influence and carry out potentially illegal activities in other areas?

Sajid Javid: The Cabinet Office is the Department responsible for overseeing elections and looking at allegations of that type. I know that it is taking this issue seriously. Alongside my Department, it is looking at intelligence and other information it is receiving. The two Departments are working closely together on this issue. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are taking it very seriously indeed.

It is because of hostile state activity that the Bill provides new powers to stop, question, search and detain people at ports, airports and the Northern Ireland border to determine whether they are spies or engaged in other types of hostile state activity. If it is confirmed that someone is a spy, they could be refused entry, deported or have other action taken against them. Those powers will of course be subject to strict safeguards and robust oversight to assure their proper use at all times.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that this is also about reducing the risk to the UK's interests overseas from terrorism, as is the Contest strategy?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I can confirm that. The powers in the Bill are designed to better protect us against all types of terrorist threats, including those from overseas, and against hostile state activity.

The other provisions in the Bill are about ensuring that we can respond more effectively to the changing terrorist threat. Part of that is arresting, prosecuting and convicting terrorists and imprisoning them for longer, as well as more rigorous management of those terrorists following their release from custody to prevent reoffending. The Bill will enable us to do all those things, in part by closing gaps in a number of existing terrorism offences.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Before the Home Secretary moves on, I just want to take him back to the issue of hostile states and checks on UK borders, including the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Can he confirm what discussions he has had with the Police Service of Northern Ireland? We talk about no border and it being as frictionless as possible, but some checks do need to be carried out for national security and safety.

Sajid Javid: I have not had a discussion directly with the PSNI on this, but the Department has had discussions with our Northern Ireland counterparts, and I believe there have been discussions with the PSNI, to ensure that the measures we are taking, on the borders in particular, take into account the needs of Northern Ireland.

In particular, the Bill will help to stop terrorists exploiting the internet. We know that terrorists are using the internet and social media to spew out vile propaganda and to call on others to follow their murderous

[Sajid Javid]

lead. We know that online platforms are being used to spread hate and to try to recruit more people to join the ranks, and we know that people are being rapidly radicalised via the web. That is why the Bill includes measures to combat what is happening online as well as offline. For instance, the Bill will make it a criminal offence to display a terrorist flag online, in the same way that it is already a criminal offence to march down the high street waving one to show support for a terrorist organisation.

Provisions in the Bill will also make it easier to tackle those who stream or repeatedly view extremist material online. At the moment, if someone downloads a bomb-making video from the internet, they are committing a criminal offence. However, if they watch the same video by streaming it, they could escape prosecution. That is not right. The Bill criminalises the repeated viewing or streaming of terrorist material online, which will close the loophole that allows some people to watch gruesome propaganda without any fear of prosecution. The Bill will mean that people who repeatedly view terrorist content online could face up to 15 years behind bars.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Home Secretary will know that I share his strong belief in taking strong action against the terrorist threat, but I am concerned about the wording of clause 3 and some of the other clauses. Would the clause apply if, for example, I streamed or watched on YouTube a National Action video? The Select Committee has been taking action to try to get its video removed. If, in the process of pursuing and pressurising YouTube to get the National Action video taken down, members of the Home Affairs Committee watched the video more than three times, would that mean we were guilty of a criminal offence? I can tell him that it was certainly left up there for rather more than three times and we were forced to watch it.

Sajid Javid: That is an important question from the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, and I want to be clear in my response. This would not apply in the circumstances that she describes. The objective is clearly to find and punish those with terrorist intent. There will be a reasonable excuse defence, as there is for other laws, for those who have a legitimate use; the right hon. Lady gave one example, but it could apply to academics, journalists or news organisations. That defence will exist.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), I support many of these measures, but why is it three times? I accept the definition in terms of academic research, a journalist or the case of the Home Affairs Committee, but what happens, for example, if a teenager or someone with mental health problems watches a video more than three times? Do they automatically fall into this category, or does the reasonableness test apply?

Sajid Javid: The objective is to allow for the fact that it is quite possible for someone to accidentally come across such a video, be curious and watch it one time and perhaps a second time. I am not pretending that there is something magical about the number three.

This is an attempt to capture repeated viewing, which may suggest that the intent is not innocent. Of course, should the Bill become an Act of Parliament and someone is prosecuted under this law, that decision would be made by the police, based on evidence and working with the Crown Prosecution Service. As with other criminal offences of this type, the CPS would use its judgment to decide whether it is in the public interest to prosecute.

Mr Kevan Jones: I am just intrigued why it is three times and whether this always has to be done in context. Clearly, if it is part of a pattern of behaviour and someone is watching not just one video three times but a series of videos, that is different but, if we are not careful, some opponents of the Bill will highlight the fact that anyone who watches such a video three times will necessarily get prosecuted, which I know is not the Home Secretary's intention.

Sajid Javid: The right hon. Gentleman is right to make that point. Some people have already made similar comments, but clearly that is not the intention behind the Bill, and there are safeguards in place. I welcome his overall support for the Bill. This is why it is important to debate these issues and for Parliament to come to a collective decision. I am quite open to ideas from parliamentarians, and perhaps in Committee we can look more closely at these provisions to ensure that we have the balance right.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): I can tell my right hon. Friend that he has my wholehearted support for the Bill. It is one thing to go after the people who are looking at terrorist material online, but it is another thing under clause 4 to go after people who are publishing it online. Surely, what we really need to do is get this material offline as quickly as possible. Will the Bill do anything to shut down the internet providers that allow such material to be put online?

Sajid Javid: I will give my hon. Friend two responses. First, he may know that the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is looking separately at the whole issue of internet safety and potential legislation, which I am sure he will discuss with the House at the right time. Secondly, I was in silicon valley just last week to meet all the big internet and communications companies. While recognising that they have done a lot to remove terrorist content, especially in the past year, there is still a lot more that can be done. Those efforts will continue beyond the Bill, and given the meetings that the US Homeland Security Secretary and I have had with those companies, I hope that we will be able to announce in due course further measures that they will take to do just that.

Yvette Cooper: The Home Secretary is being generous in giving way. The Bill will make it illegal to watch the streaming of such material, but will he confirm that it is definitely an offence for YouTube or any such platform to stream terrorist material?

Sajid Javid: It is not an offence for internet companies to stream such material under UK law—currently—and the Bill will not have an impact on that. That said, as I mentioned a moment ago in response to my hon. Friend

the Member for The Cotswolds (Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown), the Government, led by DCMS, are separately looking at what further internet safety measures may need to be taken.

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): The Home Secretary is being very generous in giving way. He mentioned that social media providers have taken lots of action, but it is my understanding that the Metropolitan police have asked for 400 videos to be taken off YouTube that are essentially about incitement to violence. Is this Bill not an appropriate vehicle to provide a power for all police authorities to compel social media providers to take down videos that are about incitement to violence?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman mentioned YouTube, and I think—if I remember the number correctly—that it has removed something like 300,000 pieces of terrorist material. There is, however, a lot more that needs to be done not just by YouTube, but by many other internet companies. There is already an ability for the Government or, more likely, the police and other trusted organisations to flag up certain content on the internet, whether videos, stills or other types of content. So far this year, we are seeing a marked improvement in the speed with which that content is being taken down. In many cases, it is being taken down within the hour.

The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that what has also grown considerably in relation to taking down content is the use of machine learning—trying to have the right algorithms to take down content much more quickly. For example, Facebook removed some 1.9 million pieces of content in the first quarter of this year, which is up some 70% on the same quarter of last year. In many cases, the content is being removed within minutes, and in some cases it can be stopped even before it is uploaded.

Stephen Doughty: Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle), I was very concerned to hear, when the companies appeared before the Home Affairs Committee, that they are not routinely searching even for the basic list of all proscribed organisations. I accept that some of this is stuff is in quite a grey territory and may sometimes not be picked up by machine learning, but one would expect that they, at a very basic level, would be searching for the names of proscribed organisations. I have found multiple examples of such content, including from Northern Irish terrorist organisations and others, on all these platforms that is not being removed even by the most basic checks. Why can we not compel the companies to do this?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman makes another good point in this debate. He is right to say that many leading internet organisations were not searching for proscribed organisations, or certainly not for all of them. So far this year, however, there has certainly been a significant improvement. We are monitoring this ourselves, and we are in constant dialogue with those companies. I am not going to pretend that every single one of them is doing that now, but there has been a huge improvement.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I am slightly confused about the Government's direction of travel. I think that there is quite widespread support

across the House for action against the people publishing this material, to get it before it is put up. The Government are clearly looking at that, and if they come forward with such measures, they would be welcomed. However, the Home Secretary has said of the provisions in the Bill that the Government are not sure that the three clicks approach is right because it could catch innocent people. Is it not more advisable to focus on what would actually work, solve the problem at the root cause and get support from across the House?

Sajid Javid: To be absolutely clear, what the right hon. Gentleman referred to as the three clicks approach—let us call it the multiple viewing approach—is absolutely the right one, which is why it is in the Bill. From the discussions that I and the Minister for Security and Economic Crime have already had with colleagues on both sides of the House, I think that it commands a wide body of support in the House, and that will of course be tested during the passage of the Bill.

The wider issues of internet regulation—those applying not just to terrorist content, but to child sexual exploitation, serious violence, gang violence and such offences—and the collective harms of some internet content are together being looked at by the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, and I believe that a consultation is going on at the moment. That is the right place to look at those issues, because the kind of regulation mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman is not covered by the Bill.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: I am very sorry to labour this point with my right hon. Friend, but one of the most critical aspects of defeating terrorism is getting this content off the internet as quickly as possible. Surely, a voluntary approach is better than a legislative one, so can he give the House any information from his private meetings with the internet companies? After all, Google, Facebook and others have some of the cleverest IT writers on the planet, so they should surely be able to take down this stuff almost before anybody notices it.

Sajid Javid: As my hon. Friend knows, because I have already said it, I met the companies he has mentioned and others last week. This was the only topic that we discussed: the meetings were very focused on terrorist content on the internet. He is right to point out that, through voluntary action and persuasion, a lot has already been achieved, and all these companies understand that legislation has not been ruled out.

My hon. Friend asked me to say a bit more about some of the newer work that the companies are doing, but I hesitate to do so. That sort of thing should be announced at the right time, because it requires international co-ordination. There is a lot more work, and I will say that a lot more effort is going into the use of both machine learning and artificial intelligence to deal with this very important issue. I must now make progress, because a number of Members wish to speak in this debate.

The Bill will extend the ability of police and prosecutors to bring charges for terrorist offences that are committed overseas. It is not of course for the law enforcement agencies in this country to police the world, but if someone travels from the UK and commits a terrorist offence abroad, it is right that they are brought to justice if they return here. This is already the case for

[Sajid Javid]

many terrorist offences, but there are a few gaps in the coverage. That is why the Bill extends the jurisdiction of the UK courts to cover further terrorist offences that are committed abroad, including the dissemination of terrorist publications and the possession of explosives for the purposes of an act of terrorism.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): Why has the Home Secretary decided not to include the Australian scheme using the declared area offence, whereby Australia deems it illegal for people to travel to certain designated terror hotspots, such as Iraq and Syria? The Minister for Security and Economic Crime has been looking at this for some time, yet it is not part of the Bill.

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman mentions the Australian extraterritorial offence that has been created, and I am looking at just that. There is a bit more work to do, and it is not as straightforward as it might sound. If it is to become a legislative proposal, I obviously want to make sure that we have considered it properly. If I am persuaded by it and we can complete the work in time, I intend to bring that forward as a Government amendment to the Bill.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): The Home Secretary has my support on the thrust of the Bill. However, on matters such as the one that has just been raised, will he assure me that he will ensure there are exemptions and defences for quite legitimate purposes? For example, we do not want to get into arguments about whether an aid worker has crossed a particular line when they are in an area for purposes that none of us would view as criminal.

Sajid Javid: Yes, I absolutely give my hon. Friend that assurance. As with many of these types of measures, there is always the need to consider what I would call a reasonable excuse defence.

Once we have brought terrorists to justice and secured their conviction by a jury, we want to make sure that the public are protected by locking up terrorist offenders for longer and allowing more robust supervision on their release. The punishment for terrorism must properly reflect the severity of the crime. That is why the Bill allows for the introduction of longer sentences, of up to 15 years, for a number of offences, including the collecting of terrorist information, the encouragement of terrorism and the dissemination of terrorist publications. Previously, the maximum sentence was up to 10 years for such offences.

As well as increasing the maximum length of sentences, we need to ensure that terrorist offenders are not released from custody until it is safe to do so. When they are released, they need to be subject to longer periods of supervision on licence. The Bill will achieve this by enabling the courts to impose a public protection sentence for a wider range of terrorism offences. Offenders will not be released automatically at the halfway point of their sentence, but will instead stay in prison until the Parole Board decides to release them.

We are also extending sentencing provisions to Northern Ireland that already operate in the rest of the United Kingdom. The sentences handed down by the courts in Northern Ireland have been of particular concern to some hon. Members, and the Bill will help to address that.

The Bill will make it easier to monitor terrorist offenders once they have been released by requiring them to notify the police of their bank or passport details and any vehicles that they may possess or have access to.

Mr Kevan Jones: I support the measures that the Home Secretary is outlining. In the briefing documents he sent before the debate, he referred to this measure as being similar to the monitoring of sex offenders in the community. In those cases, there is clear joint working between the probation service and police at local level. Is he envisaging a similar system for monitoring those who have been convicted of terrorism offences?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I am.

The Bill will update the law relating to terrorism reinsurance. The attack last year on Borough market highlighted a gap in the current arrangements that the Bill now addresses. In particular, I thank the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) for the important work that he has done on this issue on behalf of his constituents.

Next Tuesday will mark the anniversary of the attack outside the Finsbury Park Islamic centre last year. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Mr Makram Ali, who died on that day a year ago, just as they are with the victims and survivors of other attacks last year in Westminster, the Manchester Arena, London Bridge and Parsons Green. We cannot turn back the clock to undo what was done in those five attacks, but we can and must learn the lessons and do everything in our power to prevent such suffering from being inflicted ever again. The Bill plays an important part in ensuring we do just that and I commend it to the House.

6.13 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): In 2017, as the House has heard, the UK was subject to five terrorist attacks, which killed 36 people, injured many more and terrified millions. Furthermore, this year there was the shocking assassination attempt on Sergei and Yulia Skripal. So it is reasonable that the Government should review, and if necessary update, counter-terrorism legislation and arrangements for border security.

First, I want to pay tribute to the survivors and the bereaved of the terrorist atrocities in London and Manchester last year. The young girls at the Manchester Arena who came to see their favourite singer saw sights that children of that age should never have to see. I also want to pay tribute to all the brave women and men of the emergency services, who often run into danger and step forward in dreadful times. We should not forget the NHS workers—together with support from Porton Down—who were confronted with circumstances that they could never have dreamed of, but who saved the lives of Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

I turn to the Bill before us. Let me begin by saying that I agreed with the Home Secretary when he said recently that there is no binary choice between security and liberty. What makes us free is often what makes us safe. It is certainly what makes ours a country and a way of life worth serving and defending. I am not saying that just as a member of Her Majesty's Opposition—I fought infringements of our civil liberties, together with some of his Cabinet colleagues, when a Labour Government

tried to introduce them, notably ID cards and 90 days' detention without trial. I defend civil liberties without fear or favour.

The question that arises is whether the Bill is necessary, appropriate and proportionate. Although we support the Bill overall, a careful examination will show that it does not necessarily meet all those criteria. That is why we will seek to amend clauses of the Bill in Committee.

The Home Secretary will be aware that the Home Affairs Committee said in 2001:

“This country has more anti-terrorist legislation on its statute books than almost any other developed democracy.”

In 2008, Lord Lloyd of Berwick told the other place:

“No other country in the world...has had anything like the same plethora of”

anti-terrorism

“legislation that we have had.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 8 July 2008; Vol. 703, c. 700.]

More recently, Max Hill QC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said last year that Britain

“has the laws we need. We should review them and ensure they ensure remain fit for purpose, but we should have faith in our legal structures, rather than trying to create some kind of new situation where the ordinary rules are thrown out.”

To the extent that the Bill does not throw out the ordinary rules, it has our broad support.

Finally in relation to expert opinion, I turn to the review by Dave Anderson, QC, of the terrorist incidents last year in Manchester and London. He made a series of recommendations, ranging from multi-agency working to greater intelligence sharing and more consistent handling of intelligence, but there was not a single recommendation of new laws or powers.

Nevertheless, we have the Bill before us, and the Opposition broadly support it. I will now set out our reservations. First, it will update offences in a way that will potentially criminalise information seeking, playing of videos and expressions of opinion. In relation to the playing of videos, the Home Secretary will have heard the opinion of my right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) about three clicks being a significant number. We will seek to clarify the point in Committee.

On the question of expressing opinion, the Home Office says in its note on the Bill that it is

“not making it unlawful to hold a private view in support of a terrorist organisation”.

The Home Office also says:

“Operational experience has shown that there is a gap around individuals who make statements expressing their own support for terrorist organisations...but who stop short of expressly inviting others to do so”.

The Home Secretary will expect that we will press that point in Committee, because we would say that gap between having an opinion and inciting others to unlawful acts is not an anomaly but an important principle in protecting freedom of speech. We are in danger in the Bill of confusing bad thoughts with bad deeds. We hope to clarify this issue as the Bill makes progress.

Another concern about the Bill is the extent to which it allows the retention of biometric data on anyone arrested, including DNA and fingerprints, even if they are mistakenly or even unlawfully arrested. There are already abuses of the national police database, which

the Government have failed to correct. The state has no business keeping records on people who are not criminals. It is an essential part of our liberty that we can go about our day-to-day lives unhindered by state agencies. That is not the case if the state can retain data on all of us. It is an even greater breach of our civil liberties if the retention is done without our knowledge.

A further concern about the Bill is what it has to say about the Prevent strategy. It proposes extending the Prevent strategy by allowing local authorities, as well as the police, to refer people to the Prevent programme. Let me be clear that there will always be a need for a programme that does what Prevent purports to do. I have met Commissioner Neil Basu and other Metropolitan police leads on Prevent, and I visited Prevent-funded programmes in Birmingham and elsewhere. I have no doubt that there is some good work being done in the name of Prevent, but Prevent as a whole is a tainted brand, particularly among sections of the Muslim community. From a recent study by the Behavioural Insights Team, commissioned by the Home Office itself, we also know that more than 95% of deradicalisation programmes are ineffective. I suggest that those two facts—that Prevent is a tainted brand and that so many of the deradicalisation programmes are ineffective—are not unrelated.

Labour is committed to a thorough review of the Prevent programme, which we believe is currently not fit for purpose. In the interests of transparency and accurate evidence-based policy making, I call on the Home Secretary today to publish the research by the Behavioural Insights Team, which has been so widely reported and seems to run counter to the claims made for the success of these programmes.

Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): I did not intend to intervene—I will speak at length later—but is the right hon. Lady aware that about 75% of people referred to Prevent are, having been through the programme, of no further interest to the police or security services? That sounds like success to me.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Just to advise Members who may want to speak at length later, they will have up to 15 minutes and no more.

Ms Abbott: I have visited Prevent programmes and I am aware that good work is being done, but the figure that 95% of deradicalisation programmes are not effective should not be put to one side. We have to address it and we have to address whether there is any connection at all with the fact that Prevent is a tainted brand among the members of some communities.

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is making a fair point. I think we need some sort of Prevent strategy, so I accept the need to review it. Does the fact that over 6,000 individuals were referred through the Prevent strategy, over half of whom were under 20, show how careful we need to be in pursuing this policy, even if it is the right policy for the Government to have?

Ms Abbott: I accept the need for a programme that does what Prevent purports to do, but there is a danger. If we do not review the activities of Prevent, it may prove counterproductive in the very communities we want to work with. As for the question of local authorities

[Ms Abbott]

becoming referral agents, at least the police have had some training in this matter, whatever we think of the programme, but local authorities have no expertise in counter-terrorism. The danger is that pointless referrals and what seems, I am afraid, to be useless deradicalisation counselling will snowball.

Simon Hoare: I am listening carefully to the right hon. Lady. Just to clarify, is she saying that she would review the Prevent strategy, or, given the data or allegations she has repeated—from, I think she said, a lawyer—that she would press the pause button on Prevent, stop it and invent something else? If it is the latter, what is the something else? I think that goes straight to the point made by the hon. Member for Gedling (Vernon Coaker).

Ms Abbott: I said quite clearly that we would seek to review it. We could not at this point press the pause button, but the data we have about the effectiveness of deradicalisation programmes and what we know about how Prevent is regarded in some parts of the community means that we would want to review it.

One of the most worrying aspects of the Bill is the creation of powers of detention, interrogation, search or seizure without any suspicion whatever of crime, but simply while people are crossing borders. That is to treat anyone, British citizen or not, as a potential terrorist simply in the act of crossing the border. Such powers should be granted only with due care. All inhibitions on the rights of the citizen by the state must be based on evidence or reasonable grounds for suspicion. They must be subject to challenge—[*Interruption.*] I hope the House will allow me to conclude my remarks. If suspicion-free detention, interrogation and search is allowed, then it cannot be challenged. If there is no basis for challenge, there is likely to be no basis for detention. How does that accord with the Government's claim to be building a new, global Britain?

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: The director general of MI5, Andrew Parker, said in a speech in October last year that the ongoing terrorist threat was operating at a scale and pace we have not seen before. Does the right hon. Lady's party support the Bill in principle or not?

Ms Abbott: I think I have said three times that we broadly support the Bill in principle, but we are Her Majesty's Opposition and we are entitled to set out our reservations on Second Reading.

There is much in the Bill about increasing sentences for terrorism-related activity. I say seriously to the Home Secretary that he also needs to look at what more could be done to guard against radicalisation in prison. A certain amount has been done in trying to separate imams and so on from other prisoners, but the fact is that too many young men not of a Muslim background get caught up in extremist ideology while behind bars. We cannot continue to have a situation where people emerge from prison more radicalised than when they went in.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): On that point, does the right hon. Lady agree that we should be concerned by reports that emerged from Belgium that the suspect

in the appalling and brutal murder of two police officers was a small-time crook who, it appears, had been radicalised in custody? Does she therefore agree that she should support all the Government's excellent efforts to try to deal with this important issue?

Ms Abbott: I think Members are seeking to have me say what they want me to say and are not listening to my speech. What I am saying is that it is all well and good to put more people in prison for longer, but there is more we could do about radicalisation in prison. It is shocking to me to see young men, who had no connection with Islam before going into prison, coming out of prison as Islamic radicals. We can do something about that, because while they are in prison they are in the hands of the state. I think there is more that can be done.

In Dave Anderson's review, he called for greater collaboration between the counter-terrorism police, MI5 and neighbourhood police, but—I make no apologies for repeating this—the Government have cut police numbers by 21,000. In practice, their cuts have undermined Dave Anderson's recommendations. We cannot have greater collaboration between counter-terrorism and neighbourhood police if the numbers of neighbourhood police are being cut. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick has said that coping with counter-terrorism is putting an unsustainable strain on the police. The head of the National Police Chiefs' Council, Sara Thornton, said:

“Fewer officers and Police Community Support Officers will cut off the intelligence that is so crucial to preventing attacks.”

New laws, whatever their merits, are no substitute for effective policing, and not just counter-terrorism policing. Ministers will tell us how much more they are spending on counter-terrorism, but almost as important as actual counter-terrorism officers is ordinary neighbourhood policing, which is our frontline against terrorism. Laws, whatever their merit, become a dead letter without enough police officers.

Stephen Doughty: I completely agree with my right hon. Friend on that point. We are very lucky in Wales that, thanks to the investment from the Welsh Labour Government, we still have substantial numbers of police community support officers on our streets. They play a crucial role. All the police officers I talk to, including senior police officers, tell me about the real pressures and strains they face, and the impact of the lack of community policing on the frontline in the fight against terrorism.

Ms Abbott: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is what we are hearing from police leaders all the time. They want to do their very best against terrorism, but the cuts to the number of officers puts them under a great deal of strain.

Broadly, and in principle, we support the Bill. As the Home Secretary would expect, we will give it particularly careful scrutiny in Committee. We hope it will come out of Committee a better Bill. The safety of the nation depends on it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Before I bring in the next speaker, just a reminder—I have told speakers that this is a very important debate, so please let us not abuse other people's time. I call John Hayes; you have up to 15 minutes.

6.29 pm

Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): Terrorism blights lives and in some cases, of course, it takes lives. We have already heard from Members on both sides of the House about the appalling events of the last year, and they will be in all our minds as we debate these measures. The right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) was right to focus on the events in Manchester, not because any terrorist event is greater or less than any other, but because of the chilling image of those children, which she rightly focused on in her remarks.

Terrorism is not just about the people whose lives are lost. All of us are affected by it, including those who are related to the people who died, those in their communities, those in the wider network of people who came into contact with these events—the emergency services have been mentioned—and others. All of us are a little diminished, are we not, when these things happen in our country? Fear is spread. Doubt is fuelled. That is part of the terrorists' aim, of course: to intimidate us, change us and frighten us. It is right to say that in our response, we must be mindful of the need to retain the freedoms that terrorists seek to extinguish. Nevertheless, it is equally true that we must ensure that we are well equipped to deal with terrorists as they change their *modus operandi*.

There are two things that have altered most about terrorism in recent times. The first is the terrorists' ability to communicate their message using modern methods—to proselytise, to convert, to recruit. They do that by messages and images, and modern media is such that it can be done much more easily than in years gone by. They are ruthless and merciless in the way they go about that business. When I was the Home Office Minister responsible for security, I was well aware of the good work that is done in Government to deal with that, but it is a constant challenge. Every day images are put up, and every day they are countered or we aim to get them taken off the internet. They only have to be there for a very short time to have their effect, or their possible effect, as they are digested by vulnerable people.

The right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington also talked about the young people who are referred to the Prevent strategy, and I want to return to that in a moment. Young people, in particular, are at the greatest risk. They are impressionable and vulnerable. They may simply be lonely and in need, and the terrorist acts much like any other kind of social or cultural predator. They recruit by corrupting. They seek to own that young person, and once they own them, they direct them with wicked purpose. There are parallels with other kinds of corruption. People are recruited in the same way by sexual predators: they are groomed. We know this from evidence that has been brought before the House, from the work of Select Committees and from the Home Office.

The Secretary of State is absolutely right to say that it is both our responsibility and our duty to ensure that all those missions to keep young people and others safe are

best equipped to do so not only by their training and skills, but also by the legislation that underpins their work. Successive Governments have recognised that over time. Indeed, it is a sad strength of this country that we have more experience of dealing with terrorism than most others, because of the events in Northern Ireland. That knowledge and understanding of terrorism has allowed us to develop skills that other countries do not always have—as I said, it is a matter of sadness that we should have had to do so. None the less, those skills have to be updated and refined over time, for the other principal change in terrorism is that terrorists have become more flexible.

Countering terrorism is largely about trying to anticipate events. The Contest strategy is about prevention—it is about anticipation as well as response—and anticipating events is, in essence, rooted in the idea that patterns of behaviour and likely courses of action can be measured. When terrorists become less predictable, they are harder to counter, and they have become less predictable over time as the more recent terror events show. For example, let us take the use of vehicles as a weapon—it sounds pretty straightforward, does it not? It is horrible, of course, in its effect. Vehicles are routine things that can be obtained without too much fuss or bother, and once someone knows that they merely need a vehicle rather than a bomb, they know that they can go about their deadly business, as we saw in Westminster and elsewhere. That additional flexibility—that new approach by the terrorists—requires laws that are fit for purpose and which allow us to respond to the changing character of terrorism. That is what has been brought before the House today.

I was pleased as a Minister to bring the Investigatory Powers Bill—now the Investigatory Powers Act 2016—to the House. It was very challenging because, of course, questions were asked about it. The right hon. Lady spoke about scrutiny and the role of the Opposition. She knows that the Opposition and I worked very closely together on that Bill. The Government made key changes as the Bill made its way through the House, because we recognised that part of the Opposition's role is to challenge and oblige Government to question themselves about the appropriateness of various aspects of what they are proposing. We ended up with a good piece of legislation, which has further enabled the security services and police to go about their business in respect not just of terrorism, but of serious organised crime. This Bill is very much in the same spirit. It updates the legislative basis on which our security services and the police can do their work by recognising the changes in the pattern of behaviour of those we face.

The Secretary of State went through the details of the legislation—I have it all here, but to do so again would both be tedious and, I suspect, would test your patience, Mr Deputy Speaker, given the overture at the beginning of the debate that many wanted to speak and none should do so for too long.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: My right hon. Friend has talked about terrorist methods continually changing. Did not the situation in Northern Ireland tell us that we needed constantly to update our legislation, often by emergency legislation, to keep one step ahead of the terrorists?

Mr Hayes: Yes, that did happen, but I would go as far as to say—reflecting what Andrew Parker said—that the scale of what we now face and its character is unprecedented in modern times. I am cautious about being too definitive about these things, because it is never wise to be so, but I defer to the man who runs MI5, who is closest to these matters. I think that we are facing new challenges of the kind that we have never really seen before. To go back to my earlier remarks, when we think of Irish terrorism, there was, for the most part, a degree of predictability, and the key difference with terrorism then was that most of the terrorists did not want to risk their own lives. They wanted to save the lives of the operatives. That is a fundamental difference from the sort of terrorism that we have seen in more recent years. There are also differences in the command structure of terrorism in Ireland compared with what we now face. Many of the terrorists that we seek to counter, and which this legislation addresses, are people who have been radicalised in their own home. They are inspired by rather than part of an organised network. Given what I said about the availability of weapons, in that a vehicle can be a weapon, one can imagine the damage that an inspired terrorist, possibly unknown to the security services and police until they commit the act, might do.

Simon Hoare: Does my right hon. Friend also agree that one acute difference between Irish terrorism and the threat today is that in the Irish situation an agreed code word was usually used to alert the security services that something was about to kick off? We do not have that today, which is why this very flexible, proactive approach to regulations required to try to keep us safe—we will not manage it in all circumstances, but we will do our damndest—is pivotal.

Mr Hayes: The Irish people endured the horror of terrorism for a very long time, and we should not be complacent about any part of our kingdom, but there are differences with what we face now, which I have already mentioned and others will no doubt elaborate upon during the debate.

Before coming to the end of this brief speech—certainly brief by my standards—I want to deal with Prevent. I worked with Prevent and I will mention two things that the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington said with which I fully agree and then I will deal with the things I did not agree with, as that is the polite thing to do. She is absolutely right about radicalisation in prisons. No Government have got this right. In a previous incarnation, I was the Minister responsible for prison education, would you believe? It is not an easy job, I can tell you, and I was never really satisfied that we got it right. I do not think the previous Government got it right either. This is not about party politics. We probably need to look at it afresh. I agree with her about that.

It is, in my view, a good thing, by and large, to keep people who do dreadful things in prison for longer, but the right hon. Lady is quite right that if we are keeping them in prison ever longer, and given the serious chance that they will be radicalised accordingly, there is a risk that they might do a degree in being radicalised, rather than just an A-level. I am inclined to her view that we need to look at that with even greater determination

than in the past. With this Home Secretary and this Security Minister, we have the best chance ever of bringing fresh eyes to this. Proust, I think, said that there was no such thing as “new landscapes”, only “new eyes” to see them. Perhaps, in a Proustian fashion, they will look at the right hon. Lady’s suggestion.

The second thing I agree with the right hon. Lady about is the need to ensure that there is proper oversight of Prevent and that we measure its effect properly. When I was Minister, I revitalised the oversight board in the Home Office—I am sure that my successor has added even greater value than I could have hoped to add in that respect—and I was also determined to measure the effect of Prevent more routinely and more transparently.

None the less, I disagree with her about Prevent as a concept. The work of our Prevent co-ordinators, at the very frontline of radicalisation, is heroic. I met them time and again all over country. I went around the country to see the Channel operation and the Channel panels. The people who contribute to Channel and who co-ordinate and run Prevent are doing immensely good work in very difficult circumstances. I do not say that they always get it right—perhaps they do not—but I do say that without them the circumstances we face would be altogether worse. They are making a huge difference in towns and cities across the country day by day. I celebrate their achievements while never being uncritical, as in my comments on measurement and oversight.

Sir Edward Davey: Did the right hon. Gentleman meet any representatives from Muslim communities who perceived it to be a flawed scheme?

Mr Hayes: There is an argument about how Prevent is perceived and how communities in which the co-ordinators operate understand it, and, consequently, there is an argument for promoting it more effectively—I will meet the right hon. Gentleman halfway—but do not forget that some of the critics of Prevent are people who do not want it to work. Some of its critics are critics because they do not believe in what we are trying to achieve. We have to start from the perspective that not everyone is a balanced and reasoned critic, and perceptions are, to some extent, coloured by that. I introduced the Prevent duty when I was the Minister so that local authorities, health authorities, schools, colleges and others could add value to Prevent by identifying those most at risk. Let us be clear: these are people at risk of being groomed to do wicked things.

With that and to give others a chance to speak far more persuasively than I could ever hope to do, I end by saying that our will to combat terrorism must never falter, our resolve never waver. This House must have the same kind of certain confidence as our security services and police have in their certain determination—their mission—to defeat terrorism.

6.46 pm

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes), who made some thoughtful remarks but inexplicably failed to stick to his 15-minute time limit, which was a surprise to us all in the Chamber.

In the past couple of years, we have seen deadly terrorist attacks across the world, including in Mosul, Baghdad, Istanbul, Kabul, New York, Paris, Nice, Munich and Stockholm, and last year the UK was subjected to five terrorist attacks in London and Manchester that killed 36 innocent victims and injured many more. We may have honourable disagreements about many aspects of the Bill, but we owe it to the people affected by last year's attacks to debate these differences as a matter of principle and efficacy rather than on the basis of petty party political interests.

Glasgow airport, in my constituency, was the target of an attempted terror attack in 2007. It came as a huge shock to all Scots given that we had had very little experience of dealing with terrorist acts on Scottish soil. It proved that nowhere and no one is immune to the threat of terrorism. With that in mind, I can assure the Minister and the House that the Scottish National party will engage in this debate in the appropriate manner, treating it with the respect and seriousness that it deserves.

In an increasingly changing and digital world, the SNP supports giving law enforcement agencies the necessary powers to fight serious crime and terrorism. The world is becoming ever more complex, and terrorists are utilising sophisticated measures to plan their attacks. As such, it is of extreme importance that we keep our response and policies under continual review to ensure that we take the most effective action possible to prevent terrorist acts from occurring, while—crucially—respecting and upholding our civil liberties.

During the debates that will follow, the SNP will judge any proposed new powers or the extension of existing ones according to whether they are appropriate, effective, proportionate and respectful of civil liberties. This is the approach we adopted during the passage of the Investigatory Powers Act, during which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) and I argued that aspects of the Bill were unlawful. We might have been defeated in this place, but we were not alone, and successful court challenges by the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson) West Bromwich and the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), and subsequently by Liberty, proved that we had been right to oppose the measures. I hope that the Government have learned from that experience.

The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace): I just want to clarify the point about the Investigatory Powers Act. It is important for the House to know that in the legal challenge the Government were successful in defending the Act on three out of four measures. It was on the measure about judicial oversight that we conceded, as hon. Members will see in the Bill.

Gavin Newlands: I appreciate the Minister's intervention. As I outlined, my hon. and learned Friend made these points during the Committee stage of the 2016 Act, but I accept his point.

I hope that the Government have learned the lesson and will work with all parties to ensure that the policy can survive any potential legal challenge and carry the support of the House. There will be no petty opposition for opposition's sake, but we will cast a critical eye on the Bill and table amendments to improve it in Committee and on Report.

After the London Bridge attack last year, the Prime Minister announced a review of the Contest strategy to establish whether the police and the security forces had the powers that they needed to tackle those who would seek to cause us harm. Following David Anderson's very thorough review, the Bill is intended to bolster the Government's counter-terrorism approach and strengthen a variety of measures to respond to the terrorist threat, allowing earlier intervention to disrupt terrorism.

I agree with the Government's desire to intervene at an early stage. Such intervention is not only effective in stopping terrorist attacks, but helpful in preventing young people from becoming radicalised. Terrorist organisations are using 21st-century measures, including social media, to promote their propaganda as a means of radicalising youngsters. It is only right for the Government to review their approach to ensure that it is fit for the 21st century and future-proofed as far as is practically possible, but the internet providers and the social media companies also have a responsibility to ensure that terrorists cannot exploit their systems to promote their poisonous agenda. They must be involved in this process as well. On too many occasions they have been unwilling to take down terrorist content, and slow in doing so.

We are broadly in favour of the aims of the Bill but, while some of its provisions will attract our support, others will need to be tested in Committee. We must ensure that lowering thresholds and the burden of proof does not become so extreme that it impinges severely on civil liberties.

The Bill seeks to amend the offence of collecting terrorist information to cover the repeated viewing or streaming of material online. I accept the point that streaming material has become far more common since the previous legislation was drafted, and that we need a more robust approach. The implementation of this policy will give our police and security services the power to compel internet companies to assist them in carrying out covert surveillance on suspects streaming terror-related content. However, the way in which the process is set in motion is key.

In Committee, the Government will need to set out their case very well, explaining their proposed definition of "streaming" and the new three strikes, three clicks approach to people who stream extremist terror content. The right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) pressed the Home Secretary on that point earlier. In all likelihood, the approach will prove to be over-simplistic. While we are sympathetic to the Government's goal of early prevention of potential terrorist acts, we must ensure that their proposals are evidence-based, and that civil liberties are not eroded or forgotten in the process. Like others who have spoken, I feel that the Government should be doing much more to stop the material at source by placing a statutory duty on the online platforms on which the material is viewed.

The Government intend the offence to cover circumstances in which the defendant is in control of a computer but, in addition, and with a much higher degree of difficulty, circumstances in which an individual is viewing the material, for example, over the controller's shoulder. That may prove to be impossible, and is an obvious example of parts of the Bill which, if unamended, may be open to challenge in court. Campaigners have

[Gavin Newlands]

already voiced concerns about the proposed policy, suggesting that it unfairly targets innocent people. Rachel Robinson, of Liberty, has said:

“Blurring the boundary between thought and action by locking people up simply for exploring ideas undermines the foundations of our criminal justice system. Terrorists’ primary goal is to undermine our freedom. With proposals like this, the government risks giving them exactly what they want.”

Along with the Scottish Government, we will work with the Minister to ensure that that is not the case and that we get this important part of the Bill right. Campaigners have also pointed out that an attempt to introduce a similar terror streaming law in France last year was struck down twice. I should be keen to learn from the Minister what discussions he has had with his counterparts in France about their experience of trying to introduce a similar law, and whether the Government have been able to learn any lessons from them.

The Home Secretary also seeks to amend the offence of encouragement of terrorism so that action can be taken to target those who seek to radicalise children or young people who may not understand what they are being encouraged to do. It is vital that we reassess our approach to preventing vulnerable youngsters from becoming radicalised, and send a clear message to the recruiters that they will face the full force of the law if they attempt to prey on our young people. In my role on the Justice Committee, I had a long conversation with a now convicted terrorist. That has had a profound effect on me and, in particular, on my thoughts about how we can try to protect young people from terrorist influence online.

I understand the arguments that certain provisions in this Bill unfairly target innocent individuals’ personal liberty. The fact that the Home Office guidance that accompanies the Bill also accepts that point is telling. However, it attempts to alleviate the concern by stating that it would not be

“unlawful to hold a private view in support of a terrorist organisation”; it would be unlawful only to

“recklessly express those views, with the risk others could be influenced”.

I think that the Government will need to clarify what is meant by recklessly expressing a particular view. That seems to me to be an unnecessarily wide and vague phrase that will undoubtedly be tested later in the Bill’s progress.

There will always be a fine balance between giving the police, the security services and the judiciary enough powers to keep us safe, and liberty itself. Ultimately, it could be argued that, if we restrict our personal freedoms excessively, the terrorists have already won. The Government must tread very carefully, and engage fully not only with the Opposition, the Scottish Government and other Administrations, but with those who instinctively oppose any perceived restrictions of liberty.

The Scottish Government support giving law enforcement agencies and the intelligence services the necessary and proportionate powers that are required to fight terrorism. In the past, the UK Government have chosen not to engage with the Scottish Government before publishing Bills and guidelines on the issue. I am pleased that that has not happened in this instance. I also welcome last

week’s telephone conversation with the Minister, but will he assure me that he will engage with the Scottish Government at every opportunity and throughout this process?

Keeping people safe is the primary function of any Government. By means of the Prevent strategy, the Scottish Government will continue to work with key partners to tackle all forms of violent extremism—for instance, through Police Scotland’s model of community engagement. Working with the Scottish Government will enable people to learn lessons about the range of positive work that Police Scotland and other agencies do in our local communities to keep people safe. The distinct Scottish approach to the delivery of Prevent benefits from the positive relationships that are fostered in our communities. That includes our work to develop a range of credible grassroots community-led projects that help to challenge extremist narratives, giving support and guidance to people who are potentially vulnerable to radicalisation.

John Woodcock: The hon. Gentleman’s description of the “distinct Scottish approach” to Prevent sounded exactly like what Prevent is supposed to do. Will he elaborate on the difference between the Scottish version of Prevent—which he apparently fully supports, unlike Labour Front Benchers—and the English version?

Gavin Newlands: I think that it is a resource issue. In Scotland, resources are invested to ensure that the necessary community engagement takes place and there is support for the policy in the community. At present, that is not always the case south of the border.

John Woodcock: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that there is no difference whatsoever between English Prevent and Scottish Prevent, that it is purely a resource issue, and that he does not share the view of Labour Front Benchers that the policy should be changed?

Gavin Newlands: I have to say that I am no expert on the delivery of the Prevent strategy in England. I represent a Scottish constituency, and I speak on behalf of the Scottish National party.

John Woodcock: The hon. Gentleman said that the Scottish approach was distinct.

Gavin Newlands: It is distinct in terms of its success, in comparison with the success of the strategy as it currently operates south of the border.

John Woodcock: In what way?

Gavin Newlands: I have already outlined in what way.

The Scottish Government recognise that resilient communities which look out for one another are key in keeping people safe and, furthermore, that communities are our greatest ally in that respect. We must ensure that the Bill takes account of the separate and distinct Scottish legal system, respecting the current devolution settlement, and is proportionate and appropriate for Scotland.

I nearly got through an entire speech without mentioning it, but a potential threat to our national security is, of course Brexit, and the loss of access to multilateral

information-sharing tools that we face. Organised crime and terrorism do not respect borders, and it is essential for Police Scotland to have continued access to the information systems, support and technical expertise that are available through Europol—not only to keep Scotland safe, but to contribute to making Europe safer through cross-border collaboration. I fear that, after the UK leaves the EU, there will be a major risk that any new arrangements will be sub-optimal in comparison with those that exist at present. I hope that the Minister will give a guarantee that any new legislation will be prepared in time to fill any gaps that arise from our leaving the EU, and that he will explain, as far as possible, how he intends to ensure that that happens. We need to ensure that our law enforcement agencies can retain the level of access to Europol that they currently enjoy.

Let me end by saying that 2017 was a difficult year for the UK, and we owe it to everyone affected by last year's attacks to work together on this important Bill to give our law enforcement agencies necessary and proportionate powers to eliminate and to prevent terrorism without eroding vital civil liberties.

6.59 pm

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands).

We meet in the shadow of a grim situation for our country. As the shadow Home Secretary said, in 2017, 36 people were killed and, since 2013 alone, some 25 terrorist plots have been foiled. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my constituents at GCHQ, who through their hard work, dedication and professionalism have, I feel sure, contributed to the foiling of a good number of those plots both in the UK and overseas.

I entirely support the Bill, but it is absolutely right, and the duty of the Opposition and all Back Benchers, to scrutinise these matters with great care. I sense the same spirit in this House this evening as there was when it dealt with the Investigatory Powers Act 2016: a spirit of constructive discussion, and at times criticism, to ensure that the provisions we arrive at strike the balance between liberty and security. I remember being in the House listening to discussions on the Investigatory Powers Bill. I am entirely sure that the end statute was better for the process of debate that took place in this House.

I want to examine some of the provisions in the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill and explain why it is appropriate. In simple terms, the Bill serves to clarify existing measures, to extend in a common-sense way their provisions, and in appropriate circumstances to modestly strengthen penalties. I will deal with those three headings and explain why in my view the provisions are justified.

The Bill seeks to

“clarify that the existing offence of displaying in a public place an image which arouses reasonable suspicion that the person is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation covers the display of images online”

as well as in the analogue world. That is appropriate. It clarifies the position and for the position to be otherwise

would make a nonsense of the digital world we are in, so I anticipate that that will not be controversial in Committee.

However, I want to deal with the point raised by the shadow Home Secretary about extending the offence of inviting support for a proscribed organisation to cover expressions of support that are reckless as to whether they will encourage others to support the organisation. The concern has been raised that moving the mens rea from intention to mere recklessness risks broadening the ambit of the offence too greatly. It is absolutely right to have this discussion because it would be a matter of grave concern if we inadvertently broadened an offence so that it unintentionally caught people within it that we were not comfortable being caught within it. Having thought about it, however, my view is this provision is on the right side of the line and I will explain why.

Let us suppose the facts were as follows. The defendant deliberately went to his friend's house from school and said, “I really think you should be joining this proscribed organisation”—be it Isis or al-Muhajiroun—and his intention was to get that individual to sign up, but in the room at the same time was his friend's younger brother, aged 16, and he was not in any way intending for that younger brother to be radicalised but was being reckless as to whether that would happen. In those circumstances, if the message was in fact heard by the younger brother rather than the contemporary friend, should the law have this loophole so that the defendant could not be liable in those circumstances? That would be nonsense. It would create an unconscionable loophole because the mischief at which the legislation is aimed is the propagating of propaganda material that encourages others to support proscribed organisations.

Sir Edward Davey: I agree that we should be debating these issues, but can the hon. Gentleman point to anywhere in case law where there is real development of the concept of recklessness compared with the concept of intentionality?

Alex Chalk: That is pretty much everywhere, and I will give the right hon. Gentleman an example. How about an allegation of assault? Let us suppose the defendant goes out in the high street in Kingston in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency with a baseball bat and starts swinging it around outside the pub, being reckless about whether someone might be struck by it. If he does recklessly strike someone's jaw and they have a fractured jaw, the defendant can, and will in those circumstances, be convicted of a section 20 offence of grievous bodily harm. So the law does recognise that where there is recklessness, that can be sufficient mens rea for a large number—probably even the majority—of offences against the person. So to that extent all this measure would do is make sure the new legislation chimes with existing legislation.

The second provision I want to deal with has already properly been discussed: to

“update the offence of obtaining information likely to be useful to a terrorist to cover terrorist material that is just viewed or streamed over the internet, rather than downloaded to form a permanent record”.

First, we need to consider what material is being addressed here. It could be digital copies of “Inspire”, an online

[Alex Chalk]

publication produced by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. One edition of that publication contains material giving instructions about how to make a bomb using household materials; these are step-by-step instructions on how to manufacture an improvised explosive device with materials that we could buy in a hardware store and a regular supermarket. That is extremely serious and dangerous material if it gets into the wrong hands. Another example of the kind of material published in these online magazines is instructions on how to wreak the maximum amount of destruction using a vehicle in a crowded area.

To be caught by current provisions, such material has to be downloaded, but that creates a loophole because an individual who chooses to view this pernicious content by simply re-streaming it could be outside the net. That would be ridiculous, particularly as every time one of these items is streamed, it will create digital artefacts on the computer. So an individual who downloads it—who has the full digital content on their computer—is liable to be prosecuted, but an individual who keeps streaming it, notwithstanding that that leads to some digital artefacts on their computer, would be outside the net. That would be truly perverse.

So while it is right to say that we should be mindful of the risk of people coming within the ambit of this provision, so long as the defence of reasonable excuse exists, we can be confident that that proper balance is struck.

Mr Kevan Jones: I am not a liberal on any of these issues, but there is a problem with this. One difficulty the security services face is dealing with the amount of material that is out there and targeting the right people. If someone who has viewed such material three times can be pulled in by this provision, does that not throw the net rather wide, making it more difficult for law enforcement to target the right people?

Alex Chalk: The right hon. Gentleman is right to raise that question, but I do not think that is the case. We accept that an individual deciding to view this material online and then download it on to their computer so that they can watch it at their leisure three times commits an offence—and we do so because terrorist offences often escalate quickly from the viewing of such materials. Given that we accept that, would it not be perverse to say that an individual who simply views this material three times—and while doing so takes account of the instructions in that material to build a bomb or wreak havoc with a vehicle—would be outside the law? That would be a bizarre anomaly, and it would say more about the digital habits of that individual than the pernicious nature of the content. So while we should always be mindful of the point the right hon. Gentleman makes, in my view the risks of doing nothing simply leave open huge loopholes that terrorists, who are increasingly digitally savvy, can exploit, so this is a proportionate and appropriate step to take.

Mr Kevan Jones *rose*—

Alex Chalk: I am not going to give way again on that point.

If I may, I will move on to the issue of increasing the maximum penalty. At the moment, the maximum penalty under section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000 is just

10 years' imprisonment. The Bill proposes to increase that to 15 years. It is important to make the point that, certainly until the recent sentencing guidelines increase, someone pleading guilty to being in possession of material that might be of assistance to a person planning an act of terrorism could expect to be sentenced to just 14 or 15 months and to be released in seven months. We have to recognise, when we are dealing with these kinds of offences, that part of the necessity for the legislation is to ensure that dangerous people are kept out of circulation. In those particulars, this proposal is necessary and proportionate.

Elsewhere in the Bill, there are common-sense extensions including the proposal to add terrorism offences to the list of offences for which an individual can be subjected to a serious crime prevention order. That makes perfect sense, because SCPOs enable the authorities to continue to manage an individual convicted of a terrorism offence. In the interest of balance, it is important to note that the proposed legislation also contains protections for individuals. For example, it introduces a statutory bar on the admissibility as evidence in a criminal trial of oral admissions made in an examination at a port under schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act, so it would be wrong to get the impression that this is one-way traffic. Overall—certainly so far as part 1 is concerned—these measures serve to clarify and to extend in a way that chimes with common sense. They update the law, and they will lead to a modest strengthening of penalties, which is a calibrated, proportionate and modernising approach that I am happy to support.

7.11 pm

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), and I echo the spirit of consensus in which he began his contribution. I wish to speak exclusively to the extension of terror reinsurance in clause 19 in chapter 4 of the Bill. This crucial clause might appear under the miscellaneous provisions, but it offers a significant opportunity to protect businesses and people from future attacks, as well as helping those who have already experienced an attack.

The Home Secretary is no longer in the Chamber, but I would like to thank him for his kind words about my own work over the past 12 months. I speak as the representative of a constituency and community that was attacked last year in the attack on London Bridge and Borough market on 3 June. I do not wish to dwell on the barbaric and savage motives of those attackers, but clause 19 links directly to the statements from the Prime Minister and other Ministers at the time about not letting the terrorists win and about how we can combat their motives and their potential to change our way of living and working.

I would like to extend my thanks to Bishop Christopher, the Bishop of Southwark, who sits in the other place here, to the dean of Southwark cathedral, Andrew Nunn, and to their whole team for their efforts over the past year and in particular for hosting such a moving commemorative service last week. It focused on the people who had been directly affected, including the loved ones of the eight people murdered last June and those who were injured. It also provided a sense of purpose for now and the future by planting a new tree of life, whose growth will be fuelled by the compost

from the flowers laid by well-wishers on London Bridge last year. That symbol of ongoing life and vibrancy in the area is genuinely well conceived and was delivered very sensitively last week. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Home Secretary, the shadow Home Secretary and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, for attending last week's service. I should also like to thank Southwark Council's leader, Peter John, and its chief executive, Eleanor Kelly, for providing space on the bridge for a minute's silence and for more flower-laying last week.

In the service, the sentiments of the local community came through very strongly. There was a sense that we must continue living our lives, but also that something had dramatically changed. A community project was run after the attacks for people to provide their own testimony and personal experience, and the words of one local resident were echoed by the Home Secretary last week. That person said that

"the terror attack changed this neighbourhood forever but not in the way the terrorists had planned. This community is going to carry on being diverse, inclusive and welcoming."

That sentiment was echoed when the cathedral was reopened by the Archbishop of Canterbury after the attack. He stated that the terrorists had unwittingly created a "renewed sense of community", and that is very much something that I have felt and seen in the past 12 months.

My community stood tall last year. The immediate response was incredible. The police and the NHS deserve our thanks and praise for their incredible efforts, as do the extraordinary individual people who stepped in to prevent others from being attacked and to confront the terrorists directly, putting their own safety at risk. Taxi drivers provided free transport out of the area to those who were worried. Local people opened their doors to complete strangers to allow them to charge their phones or to give them refuge, and hotels and local businesses offered overnight shelter. In the ensuing days, the public response was also incredible. Public donations of almost £50,000 were received, and support of a similar level was received from businesses. Practical support was given by Barclays on Borough High Street, which provided office space to people who could not access their own premises. Even the British Transport police opened up their counselling service to those who had been traumatised by what they had seen.

In the weeks after the reopening, the solidarity within the local community was also incredible. Businesses such as News UK and Merger Market provided vouchers to staff worth tens of thousands of pounds to use at Borough market. Southwark Council provided rates relief of more than £100,000, and Sadiq Khan freed up £300,000 from City Hall to help the local community. The funding was administered by United Saint Saviour's, a brilliant local charity with a long history of helping the local community.

Those responses were much-needed. The attackers could not have known what a huge outpouring of solidarity they would trigger. The attack might have lasted for no longer than eight minutes, thanks to the extraordinary efforts and heroism of the police, but the cordon and the investigation closed the area for 10 days, affecting 150 local businesses. Many people will be familiar with Borough market, but it is not just a place that provides bits and bobs and personal groceries.

The market has been there for 1,000 years, and tonnes of produce come into the market daily. It supplies restaurants and hotels across the capital and far beyond, and tonnes of produce were lost during the closure after the attack. Contracts to supply other restaurants were lost. Bookings at restaurants were lost. The London Bridge Experience was also directly affected and lost bookings.

The total bill for those 150 businesses is estimated to be more than £2 million. I shall give the House a couple of examples. Cannon and Cannon, a wholesaler of British charcuterie, lost about £11,000, but it was able to access compensation. Turnips, the fruit and veg distributor, lost nearly £100,000 as a direct result of the attack and the closure. Its insurer is Aviva, and Aviva has not paid out despite repeated requests to reconsider. It stands out in this regard, sadly, because it is the only insurer that has not responded with flexibility. It is the only insurer to have badly let down the local community, and I hope that its shareholders are aware of its terrible response. It is an insult to British values in the exceptional circumstances following the attack. I should add that many other insurers, including AXA, RSA and Zurich, worked flexibly to provide help, and I am grateful for their advice and support.

I should also like to thank the British Insurance Brokers Association and the Association of British Insurers for all their help over the past 12 months. I did not know about this particular area before. They all accept that clause 19 is needed, and they have worked together to get the Government to this point. Many of those organisations had already raised concerns, and I believe that the Treasury was warned about two and a half years ago. Sadly, the warnings were not heeded. The insurance challenge was recognised, as is clear from the briefings for this debate and the Home Office Bill briefing. The Government-backed pool reinsurance system set up in the 1990s covers only physical damage and not business interruption resulting from investigations into terror attacks.

I welcome the fact that the clause will close that loophole, but the Government are planning only for future incidents, despite the fact that the explanatory notes to the Bill make specific reference to Borough market and the difference that this measure could have made to those affected in my constituency last year. The Home Office has stated that this clause will not be used to help those who were so badly affected last June, and that is a bitter pill to swallow. I find it difficult to understand.

I hope that the Government will reconsider the matter and allow retrospective coverage for all of 2017, and I do so for four key reasons. First, my constituency needs it. London Bridge and Borough market need it. If it had not been for public donations, firms and jobs would have been at risk, and Treasury revenue was at risk. The owners of one microbusiness even had their home mortgage covered as a result of public donations. That situation did not need to happen.

Secondly, despite the public response, the Government were not there last year, and I find that shocking. The Prime Minister visited and showed the Australian Prime Minister around, a Business Minister came and met employers directly, and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury's predecessor held a meeting here for some of the affected businesses. However, not a penny of central

[Neil Coyle]

Government support came to help my local community, and clause 19 represents a chance to rectify that absence from 2017.

Thirdly, the fact that the Government were warned of the need to close the loophole, but failed to do so, is justification enough for retrofitting this scheme now with this clause. My local firms and employers were unacceptably exposed to that loophole.

Finally, Pool Re, the Government scheme, has the funds. There would be no cost to the Treasury, to insurers or to taxpayers for retrofitting coverage for last year. It is simply wilful negligence to deny help to an area so badly hit when the finances are there to allow support.

I close with a plea to the Government to extend cover to last year. I welcome clause 19, but I want coverage to be retrofitted. I hope that Ministers will be sympathetic to that aim as the Bill goes through Committee, in which I hope to participate.

7.21 pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Since this is the first time that I have seen you since the weekend, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I start by congratulating you on your damehood? I am sure that it is much deserved.

The Bill follows up on the 2017 Queen's Speech and reviews our approach to counter-terrorism. Its specific purpose is to amend certain terrorism offences to update them for the digital age, to reflect contemporary patterns of radicalisation and to close gaps. I will comment first on the potential for the prison system to add to radicalisation. I am a member of the Justice Committee, and we have never made a prison visit without raising the question of the radicalisation of prisoners, which is everywhere in the prison system. The prison officers we speak to are trying their best to deal with it, but there is great difference in the levels of success. The right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) was right to refer to the issue, which we ought to be taking seriously and considering carefully to ensure that everything is taken into account.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend knows that the Bill contains provisions to lengthen both the period that prisoners serve and the length of sentence for certain terrorist offences. Is he worried that that will mean that terrorists will serve more time in prison and have more time to radicalise other prisoners?

John Howell: I thank my hon. Friend. In fact, in my notes for this debate I have written next to my previous point "so they will be more radicalised by spending more time in prison." By extending prison sentences, we run the risk that prisoners will be more susceptible to the influences that will affect the radicalisation process. We need to address that matter in total from the beginning.

I was pleased to be able to intervene on the Home Secretary to get him to confirm that the Bill aims to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK's interests overseas. That fits in with the Contest strategy, to which the explanatory notes refer. I point to the UK's enormous commercial interests in many parts of the world, including the middle east and Israel, that are under threat from terrorist activity. Those in Israel are under particular

threat of terrorism from Lebanon. As we have discussed on many occasions, Hezbollah has long insisted that its military and non-military activities are indivisible. At the al-Quds Day rally this weekend, we saw the waving of flags of the alleged non-military wing of Hezbollah, but Hezbollah in its entirety meets the test for full proscription, which would then make it subject to the Bill. I wonder whether the Minister for Security and Economic Crime will refer to that in his summing up and mention whether an amendment to the Bill might proscribe the whole of Hezbollah. That would certainly send a strong message that, together with America, Canada and the Netherlands, we abhor terrorism in any form. It would also recognise that terrorist attacks on British interests overseas must be taken into account.

The Bill rightly points to the need to amend terrorist offences to update them for the digital age, as I said, and the need to then keep them updated. The reaction to terrorism is international, and if the Council of Europe convention on the prevention of terrorism is to mean anything, we need international co-operation and international action. If an individual commits a terrorist offence in a foreign country, they should be liable under UK law as if they had committed the offence in the UK. The explanatory notes refer to the Council of Europe's convention, and I hope that this is last debate on this subject that does not mention the Council and its role in producing that convention. We are part of the Council of Europe—we were a founding member—and it plays an enormous role in sorting out such issues across Europe. Terrorism is a major subject for the Council of Europe, and during debates there I have been critical of the approach taken, for example, by the Belgian Government, who did not take the necessary steps to prevent terrorist activity on their own soil.

We can learn a lot from the international comparisons that we see at the Council of Europe, and I will provide a couple of examples. First, we could limit the finances of Daesh, which uses the internet to gain money and move it about. The Council has considered ways of preventing such movement. Secondly, the Council has considered cyber-attacks, which can have an enormous impact on the UK. A cyber-attack on an air traffic control system would cause absolute havoc, for example. I am also sure that everyone will agree with the Council of Europe's "Terrorism: #NoHateNoFear" campaign.

In many ways, the opening paragraphs of the convention on the prevention of terrorism anticipate what is in the Bill, stating that no terrorist act can be justified by "political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious" considerations—there are no excuses for terrorism. Whatever the purpose behind an act of terrorism, we must ensure that we respect the rule of law, democracy and human rights, because otherwise we become just like the terrorists. That is a difficult thing for western democracies to do, but unless we do it, we are no better than the terrorists, and I hope we are considerably better than them.

We cannot do away with the values we hold dear in order to fight terrorism. The convention on the prevention of terrorism makes much of the need for international co-operation, and it encourages the public to provide factual help. I commend the Council of Europe's excellent work to influence the sort of line we in the UK are taking in putting forward a strategy that is convincing in dealing with terrorism while having the necessary effect to make that help happen.

7.30 pm

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell). I have enjoyed listening to a range of contributions this afternoon and this evening. A number of Members, including the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes) and the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), have referred to the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, the Second Reading of which was on the day when Adrian Ismay, a constituent of mine, died having been subject to an under-car booby-trap bomb 11 days earlier. It was a dissident republican-inspired terrorist attack. Although the need for this Bill clearly comes from Islamic-inspired terrorism and from a change of thought, emphasis and deed in this part of our United Kingdom, I want to mention that we have not passed the worst days in Northern Ireland. There are still those who wish to use the worst messages of terrorism to change the political outlook, to change the determination of our people and to destroy our country. It is important to say that at the start of the Bill's passage.

I will mention just three issues, two that are specifically outlined in the Bill and one, which is not considered at all in the Bill, that I would like the Minister to engage with thoughtfully. Other Members who have had the pleasure or misfortune of participating in a Public Bill Committee may know more than me about them—I have never sat on a Public Bill Committee—but I would be delighted to do so and get involved in some of these issues. Members who have sat on Public Bill Committees tell me that I am mad and that it would be the worst thing to put myself forward for, but there are provisions in the Bill that it would be incredibly useful to have the opportunity to explore in greater depth.

We need to be careful about how we proceed with the plans on border security outlined in the Bill. Although I am a Brexit-supporting Member, I think it would be irresponsible of us to consider these provisions without having at least some cognisance of the issues raised by Brexit when it comes to border security. When the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), the shadow Home Secretary, raised her points earlier, the Secretary of State was right to indicate that schedule 3 emulates what is already provided for in the Terrorism Act 2000. That legislative provision has been in place for the past 18 years, and the only difference I can see is that, whereas the 2000 Act focuses on terrorism, schedule 3 covers “hostile acts” and talks about state party actors. I assume that is the main difference.

The most important border security provision is in paragraph 4 of schedule 3 to the Bill and in paragraph 2(4) of schedule 7 to the 2000 Act, which relates to section 40(1)(b) of that Act. Under those provisions it does not matter whether there is reasonable suspicion of engagement in terrorism or hostile activity. Both the 2000 Act and this Bill go to extraordinary lengths to outline what is meant by “terrorism,” “hostile acts,” “terrorist activity” and “state party activity,” and both pieces of legislation specifically indicate to the border officials who are asked to operate them that it does not matter whether they have reasonable grounds for suspicion. The truth is that, in both the 2000 Act and this Bill, a border official does not need to have any suspicion at all of terrorism or hostile acts. To my mind, that cannot be right.

When we consider the checks that will happen, this Bill and the 2000 Act specifically talk about travel to and from Northern Ireland, to and from Great Britain and between different parts of this United Kingdom—from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, and from the top of Great Britain to the bottom of Great Britain—but no reasonable suspicion whatever is required for a person to be stopped, questioned and potentially searched by one of our border officials.

I will not push the point much further now but, in the atmosphere created around border controls, whether on the island of Ireland or between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, we need to consider this more thoughtfully. When our Scottish brethren, of whom the Security Minister is one, complained during the 2014 referendum that it was inappropriate for a UK citizen from Scotland, when travelling to a UK airport in England, to be stopped and questioned, the answer was, “Well, this House voted for it in the Terrorism Act 2000.”

The common travel area does not allow for a person to be stopped and checked for citizenship or to be asked about their right to travel. When that happens to people travelling from Belfast to Birmingham, it is an affront to UK citizens that they are stopped by a Border Force official. Those stops, those checks and those questions, offensively, are conducted under anti-terrorism legislation, and this Bill gives us the opportunity to thoughtfully consider whether that is really what we want in this country. I will never tie the hands of a Government who want to protect us from terrorists, but is it appropriate that an average citizen from one part of the United Kingdom travelling to another part of the United Kingdom is stopped under anti-terrorism legislation? I do not think it is, and I hope that is something we can thoughtfully consider as the Bill proceeds.

Clause 7 will make terrorist connections an aggravating factor in committing another offence, and it is wonderful that Northern Ireland is being included in that provision. I am not sure why we were left out of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008—I am sure there was good reason, following political discussions in 2007, but it was not right. When a person is perceived or known to be associated with a terrorist organisation, be it an Islamist group, some other fundamentalist group or an organisation originating in Northern Ireland, whether connected to loyalism or republicanism, it is appropriate that that serves as an aggravating factor.

But again I raise the question: how does the Minister believe prosecutors will be able to convince a court that an individual has a terrorist connection? I know from my experience of the judiciary in Northern Ireland, and from my experience both as a barrister and as a politician, that it is extraordinarily difficult to ask a court to accept that a person has a terrorist connection unless, as part of either that prosecution or a previous prosecution, they have been convicted of that offence. I make the gentle point to the Minister that this undermines community confidence in policing and security in this country. People know that a provision is on the statute book saying that an association with terrorism should be an aggravating factor in sentencing. They may know as the dogs in the street know—that is what they say in Belfast—that someone is associated with or involved in paramilitarism, yet there will be no motion in court for that individual to be sentenced for an aggravating offence. Why is that? It is because either there will be an unwillingness to prove it or an inability to do so. The unwillingness

[Gavin Robinson]

will stem from our security services not wishing to share the intelligence that they have in open court. Colin Duffy walks the streets of Lurgan in Northern Ireland because of an unwillingness on the part of the judiciary in Northern Ireland to allow intelligence to remain private. Dissident republicans who have terrorised and tortured our society to this day, and are still intent on destroying Northern Ireland and taking us out of this United Kingdom, walk the streets today because of the inability to present intelligence in open court. The judiciary have said, “If you can’t do it, don’t bring it to us. If you are not prepared to show it openly, don’t bring it to us.”

So although it is wonderful that we are being included in this provision for the first time in 10 years, because Northern Ireland did not feature in this as part of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008, I would like to know—I would be keen to engage with the Minister on this—just how this provision will proceed through an open court process and how such prosecutions will be made. Without going into the details, because of sub judice rules, let me say that there are cases at the moment where individuals are being prosecuted in Northern Ireland because of how they signed off a text message with a Latin phrase, “*quis separabit*”, which means “who shall separate us?” It is the motto of a proscribed organisation in Northern Ireland. Is that as far, without divulging intelligence, as prosecutors are going to go to try to satisfy this provision of

“membership of a proscribed organisation”

or an association with such an organisation? If it is, although it is great to be included in this provision, I suspect that no sentence given in a court in Northern Ireland will ever benefit from an aggravating feature and, thus, an increase. So I look forward to having the opportunity to meet the Minister to discuss this further.

The final part of my contribution seeks to bring to the attention of Members section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006, which dealt with encouraging support for terrorism or the glorification of it. When it was put forward in 2005 and enacted in 2006, there was some discussion not only about “encouraging” people to engage in terrorism, but about the glorification of past offences, and a 20-year limit was put on such provision. That was not done in the legislation; it was spoken about openly and formed part of the guidance to police services. The approach was, “It is okay to glorify terrorist crimes as long as they were more than 20 years ago.” That cannot be right and I hope the Minister will accept amendments to this Bill, be it in Committee or on Report, that will rectify that situation. It is appalling that people who are intent on removing life and destroying our society can legally eulogise such vile acts. I do not need to make that point from my perspective—from a Northern Ireland perspective—because we are seven years off 20 years since the 7/7 bombings. Does anyone in this Chamber think it would be appropriate for any group in this country to memorialise or eulogise the perpetrators of that vile act? We are seven years away from the potential for that happening, if the “20-year” guidance is accepted on historical acts under the 2006 Act. We should thoughtfully consider that.

Let me give the example of D company, an IRA company in Belfast who parade through its streets each and every year. They dress in paramilitary-style clothing. They wear black berets, black sunglasses, smocks over

their faces and military jackets. They have flags, bands and replica arms. They are glorifying acts of terrorism. The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for a body called the Parades Commission, but does it even deem those parades sensitive, let alone ban them for breaching counter-terrorism legislation? No, it does not. It takes no interest in these parades. When we think about whether historical acts have the potential to glorify or not, we should consider this quotation from D company’s 2017 main speaker:

“British rule was wrong in 1916 and it remains wrong today in 2017. Let no one tell you different!”

D company of the IRA in west Belfast was one of the most notorious. It is attaching itself to the events in 1916 and it was responsible for historic acts during the troubles. It is making the connection very clear under the terms of the 2006 Act, saying that the same principles that applied then applied in 2017. If that is not a glorification of previous activities or an encouragement to others to recognise that the conditions under which they “proudly volunteered”—that is their view—equally apply today, and if that is not an “encouragement” under this legislation, I do not know what is. When those responsible for the Shankill bombing unveil a memorial 20 years to the day after carrying out that heinous act in 1993, we have a problem with legislation that tries to account for an historic act that cannot be seen as glorification or an encouragement. I raise this issue in hope, and I draw the analogy because not only have we had horrendous acts in the past year here in England, but we are not going to have to wait too long until it is 20 years after the 7/7 attacks. If Members in this Chamber are as horrified as I am at the prospect that such acts could be lawfully, sensibly eulogised in our society, this Bill gives us the opportunity to do something about it.

I want to thank the Minister, because he has engaged with us over the past weeks, and we have had the opportunity for briefings. I hope that during this Second Reading debate and in Committee we will get the opportunity to shape this Bill so that it does provide what we need to counter terrorism in all its forms in this country.

7.47 pm

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), particularly as at least an element of my speech would have exhibited a degree of naivety without his. I will continue with it, but I think I should apologise for it in advance. The purpose of the first part of my speech was to juxtapose my experience of terrorism in this country with what was happening with regard to the IRA and its activities in this country. Part of my premise is that, after the Good Friday agreement we are in a position where any occurrences that happen in Northern Ireland make the news in a considerably lower-level format than they would have done during my time growing up. So it is almost easy to believe, viewing Northern Ireland from a distance, that all is well over there, peace has broken out and the world is a good place, whereas, the incident mentioned at the start of the hon. Gentleman’s speech clearly proves that that is not the case.

I was drawn towards making this comparison because it is my 50th birthday this year, the troubles started in 1968 and I wanted to talk about my experience of how

they had an impact on us in this country over that time. I am not old enough to remember this, but in 1972 we might have had the first cynical ceasefire that the IRA announced over the Christmas period, and yet only a short time later we had the bombings in Birmingham.

I fully appreciate that nobody has been convicted of those bombings in Birmingham, so it is not possible for us to say so with a degree of certainty or to attribute the cause to it, but I would say that we are fairly comfortable in knowing that the IRA was responsible, and many people lost their lives at that time.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Does the hon. Gentleman share the concern of those of us on this side of the Chamber within our party, and perhaps further afield, who see glorification in a play park in Newry being named after an IRA volunteer who was involved in a campaign of murder and terrorism, and in Gaelic Athletic Association clubs naming their venues and locations after IRA men and IRA women who have been involved in terrorist activity? Does he share our concern about glorification of their activities, which, hopefully, the Bill has the power to change—making it unlawful so that it cannot happen?

Eddie Hughes: I absolutely do share those concerns, and I sincerely hope that the Bill presents the opportunity to prevent that from happening. The hon. Member for Belfast East made the comparison that if we were to experience something similar in this country we would all think it an abomination, yet clearly, that is what is happening over in Northern Ireland.

Let us move through that period to come to a comparison that I want to make. In 1996 the IRA exploded in Manchester what I understand was the biggest bomb to be exploded on the mainland since the second world war—a 1,500 lb bomb. Fortunately, 90 minutes' notice was given, and the excellent work of the emergency services allowed 75,000 people to be evacuated, although, unfortunately, those services were unable to defuse the bomb and I understand that 200 people were injured when it went off.

The cost of that bomb runs to the equivalent today of approximately £1.2 billion, I believe, but how this country responds to that sort of situation is to be celebrated. In 1996, England was hosting the European football championships. The following day, Germany was due to play Russia. That game proceeded and turned into a celebration of the fact that countries around the world would not be oppressed by terrorism and actually joined together in a celebration that said, "Terrorism will not win."

Compare and contrast that with the bombing in Manchester last year. An Ariana Grande concert was targeted with the perpetrator knowing full well that parents would be there with very young children. It was completely despicable. My understanding is that the perpetrator, who was also killed in that attack, had been to Libya and had some Libyan connections. To draw back to that parallel, clearly Libya has been a source of great difficulty given that association and its previous association with the IRA over the suggestion of the supply of arms and a fight against what was considered British imperialism.

We need to say that we are not going to accept terrorism and that we are going to do everything we can to ensure that our laws are tied up to prevent it.

An element of that, which I would like to celebrate, is biometric data. We should celebrate the fact that, many years ago, DNA was discovered in this country, and the double helix formation was subsequently identified, but it was not until 1984 that Sir Alec Jeffreys was able to realise the benefits of using DNA to profile people and help to determine the difference between pieces of evidence.

We should celebrate that because DNA profiling is now used by 120 countries around the world, and 54 of them have DNA databases. This technology is not only used to help to identify people who are guilty; it helps those who are innocent. Its first use was in a case just two years after its discovery. It was a case in Leicester, where somebody had admitted rape and murder only to have the DNA evidence prove that they were not responsible. Some time subsequently, Colin Pitchfork was identified as the murderer as a result of DNA evidence.

It is important that we realise the benefits of modern technology and the pace with which it can change. We need to ensure in this House that the law tracks those developments, because people can now be radicalised in their home in the UK by reading literature produced in other countries. We need to ensure that we act appropriately to prevent the dissemination of that sort of information. To return to the bomber in Manchester last year, that person acting alone, thanks to the internet and those illicit sources, had the opportunity to learn how to make a bomb using items that are freely available in this country. Without physical contact with other people, they were able to garner the information, be radicalised and carry out a dreadful act. It is surely essential that we do everything we can to tidy up the law in this country to prevent that.

I want to end with a quote I heard yesterday:

"The law is reason free from passion."

Aristotle apparently said that. I think it is important that in this House we are not totally free from passion, that we remember these dreadful atrocities that have been committed and that we ensure that we have law that prevents them.

7.56 pm

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Ind): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes). I have sat here and listened to some thoughtful speeches. In particular, the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) gave us a lot to think about on an issue that I had hoped the Home Secretary would cover in his opening remarks—the new provision on encouragement, effectively, of terrorism through statements that fall short of specifically inciting support for proscribed terrorist organisations. This is a really important provision, as the hon. Gentleman set out cogently in relation to Northern Ireland.

This is a difficult subject to raise, but I am brought back to remarks made in the past by Members who sit on the Labour Benches, some when they were MPs. We have the man who would be Chancellor of the United Kingdom having apparently, in 1986, praised the ballot, the bomb and the bullet. That is deeply, deeply serious. If my understanding of the new legislation is right, had it been in place at the time that that Member apparently made those remarks, he would have been guilty of a terrorist offence. Is the Minister able to share his understanding on that, or is he going to let me raise the matter alone? This is a serious matter in and of itself,

[John Woodcock]

but how wide-ranging these new powers could be deserves great thought from Members who will consider the Bill in Committee.

I want to spend a little time talking about the case of Ethan Stables, a young man from Barrow, aged 20, who has just been committed under existing terrorism legislation. On 23 June last year, Ethan Stables posted on Facebook that he was going to war, that he was preparing for a slaughter and planning to attack a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Pride event at the New Empire pub. Fortunately, those posts were immediately seen by someone local. The alarm was raised and he was picked up by the police as he was walking to the New Empire pub. He was convicted of terrorism offences. It was found that he had a machete and knives in his home, that he was a neo-Nazi sympathiser and that he had googled things such as “I want to go on a killing spree” and “What is prison like for a murderer?” Clearly, the signs were all there. There is a separate question about why it took so long to pick up Mr Stables. He was literally on the verge of attacking people who were celebrating a community event in the New Empire pub. If the legislation had been in place, the fact that Mr Stables had repeatedly viewed violent videos online and looked at how to download and create his own bombs, would have made him guilty of an offence long before he got to the stage of actively planning. That in itself is surely a reason to welcome this new legislation.

The case of Mr Stables raises the wider question of resources. It is all very well having the offences in place, but the Government will need to explain how they will be able to secure prosecutions earlier on in the process, rather than finding a reason, once someone has been apprehended for other reasons, to go through their viewing history.

It is my understanding that there is no requirement, or indeed any legal possibility at the moment, for internet companies such as YouTube routinely to provide the IP addresses of people who have viewed banned material more than three times, which would make them subject to criminal action under this terrorist legislation. I am talking about videos which would potentially see YouTube found guilty of a criminal offence, or certainly a civil offence, if it kept them up after having being warned about them. Will the Minister address that matter in his summing up? Will he consider bringing that forward so that there is potential to catch more people who are online at the time they are doing this, rather than as part of some retrofitting?

The Home Affairs Committee took evidence last week from the Met police commissioner, Cressida Dick. She was quite clear about the scale of pressure that her resources are under, even at present. She went through a number of areas, including, of course, counter-terror, where more resource was needed and where the amount available was inadequate at the time. Yet this legislation creates a new tranche of offences, which, unless the Minister can explain otherwise, will not be sufficiently resourced to be properly policed.

The other major omission, which the Minister will expect me to raise as we have been backwards and forwards on it both inside and outside the House for many months now, is on the issue of returning jihadis. It is good to get the recognition from the Home Secretary

in this debate that he is considering introducing the Australian-style offence at the amendment stage. I can see no other way in which the Government will be able to get close to securing sufficient evidence to prosecute people who are returning from places such as Iraq, Syria or wherever the next terror hotspot is.

The Minister knows that I was able to interview at length someone who was being held in a removal centre in Izmir, Turkey on suspicion of supporting Daesh. She was being removed back to the UK on those grounds. There was a suspicion at the time about what would happen to the woman whom we interviewed. The very tough rhetoric that we hear from the Government, which is that we always seek to prosecute individuals, is not actually commensurate with being able successfully to prosecute individuals once they are here. Clearly, people are going over. They are travelling to Syria without a specific or verifiable reason, such as being part of aid work. They are clearly not going for a valid reason, yet, at the moment, we need verifiable proof, which is very hard to find, to be able to prosecute such people.

A number of us have repeatedly pressed the Government on this. The Minister can enlighten us all on this in his closing remarks if he wishes, but for many months now the Government have refused to give the number of people who have returned from Syria who have been successfully prosecuted. The response now is that those numbers are not quantified in that fashion. Well, they were quantified in May 2016, when the Advocate General, Lord Keen, in the other place gave a written response. Back then, he said that 54 people had been successfully prosecuted, with 30 ongoing cases. Clearly, it is possible to update the House on this and the Government are choosing not to do so. Our strong suspicion is that that is because so few are able to be prosecuted—

Mr Wallace: I may be able to help the hon. Gentleman. Approximately 40 have been prosecuted so far—either because of direct action they have carried out in Syria or, subsequent to coming back, linked to that foreign fighting.

John Woodcock: I thank the Minister very much for updating the House. I note that 40 is fewer than the 54, the number we apparently prosecuted, according to Lord Keen, in May 2016. I need to examine those figures to see why they are different. I am grateful that, after many months of pushing, the Minister has given us a figure of 40. As he will know, the Government have said that 400 have come back, so we have been able to prosecute successfully only one 10th of those people. That is very significant.

Ministers in response are now saying that a significant proportion of the people coming back are no longer of concern to the security services. That is as may be, and we want the number of people who are no longer of concern to be as high as possible, but that does not mean that they are innocent of terrorism charges. If they have been to Iraq or Syria, have been aiding Daesh, in whatever form, and they are British citizens and they are returning, they have been aiding enemies of the British state. They are people who are wanted for enacting violence on our civilians and on our armed forces and they should be able to be prosecuted, which is why the Australian-style legislation, the declared area

offence, is a step forward. It would mean that anyone who has visited a designated terror hotspot without good reason—with declarations overseen by a judge—can be prosecuted for terror offences on their return. That would go a long way towards the deterrent effect that the Government understandably want to create to stop people from taking the crazy journey into war zones to support jihadi organisations that seek to destroy our way of life.

8.10 pm

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): It is a pleasure to be called to speak in this debate and particularly to follow the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), who made a thought-provoking speech. It was certainly interesting to hear references to one or two of his party's Front Benchers, although it is probably better that I focus on the substance of the debate than on whether I agree with his comments.

It is important to discuss how to ensure that those who actively set out to support terrorists and organisations that wish to destroy democracy, rather than to engage in debate and democracy, feel the force of the criminal law. I am pleased that this Bill will update the legislation to reflect the fact that we are now in the internet era. However, we must temper this with ensuring that nobody can innocently fall foul of the offences. That can be considered in detail in Committee. I was reassured to hear the Home Secretary's responses to a number of interventions on this point. He said that there will almost certainly be a reasonable excuse defence for those who might stumble on material or for those who might be engaged in research that we would want them to do and that is not connected to another intention.

I am conscious that these definitions need to be drawn fairly tightly to ensure that we do not create a loophole that could be used by someone just claiming that they were engaging in research. For example, we would need them actively to show that they were part of a recognised research project. I am sure that we can sensibly work out such matters when we discuss the Bill in detail. We must always ensure that our intention is clear in the legislation that we pass, rather than hoping that the courts will listen to what we have said. It is the wording of the legislation that courts will ultimately consider when making decisions about any defence.

I am very pleased with what I have heard. It is right that we end the position whereby the law is not necessarily brought into effect by people streaming material, especially given the explosion—figuratively, not literally—of available sources. People can now stream video to their mobile devices in particular, whereas they would have downloaded material from sharing sites in the past. It is also appropriate that the protections are in place to ensure that nobody is innocently caught by such offences.

It is appropriate that more significant sentences are available to the courts for the offences listed in the Bill. Those who are looking to take part in plots to cause significant loss of life should know about the sentencing powers available to the courts and that those powers will actually be used. I was particularly interested to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) mention the possible sentence for someone who pleads guilty. This legislation is not just about everyone getting the maximum sentence, which is very unlikely to

happen, but it will raise the bar for each person convicted or pleading guilty to such offences and ensure that they get time in prison that is commensurate with their offence, time in which it might also be possible for prisons to do useful work with them to turn them away from an extremist path.

We have debated Prevent. Ultimately, the motivation behind this type of behaviour does not matter. It could be the politics of the extreme left or right, or a totally perverted interpretation of a religion. I must be clear that in such cases of extremism or terrorism, the interpretation of the religion is always a perverted one. No religion genuinely backs the actions of extremists walking into a concert and blowing themselves up among women and children who are just enjoying the evening. We need provisions in place to turn people away from that path.

I have certainly found it interesting to listen to this debate. The public are clear that there should be increased sentencing provisions to allow the courts to deal with those who commit such offences. We have seen many stories over the past few years. In particular, I look back at the events of a year ago, when those who were hoping to use terror attacks to deflect from the general election campaign attacked innocent civilians. They hoped that they would somehow terrorise people to change policy or elect people to this place who might not agree with tackling such issues. In fact, all they did was strengthen the resolve of those of us who are democrats, as happened when this Parliament and its Members—some of whom are commemorated on the walls of this very Chamber—were under attack in the past. We were not deflected from our confidence in democracy then, and we will not be deflected in the 21st century from tackling those who wish to destroy democracy. We will ensure that those who believe that they can express views with impunity online that they would never think of expressing in another public forum know that the law will catch up with them.

Members have discussed the retention of materials, particularly fingerprints, as the shadow Home Secretary picked up on the point regarding biometric details. This issue clearly needs further detailed scrutiny and debate. I think that we would all say that there are legitimate intelligence grounds for the police keeping such details following an arrest in circumstances where particular conditions are met. We would not say that details should be destroyed immediately merely because an offence was not proceeded with. I accept that this needs to be balanced with the fact that those who are wholly innocent should not think that their data will always be on a database. For example, there may be a case of mistaken identity that leads to an arrest, or a piece of intelligence may be found leading to the discovery that someone is not, or is unlikely to be, guilty of an offence. It will be interesting to explore how this balance can be struck in more detail in Committee. Clearly, it would not be sensible to throw away potentially valuable evidence that might at a later stage allow us to proceed on an offence, to prevent the commission of a further offence, or simply to identify someone. Again, we have to balance that against rights. The principle is right and the overall thrust of the Bill is correct in this matter, but we could explore it in more detail in Committee and on Report.

Overall, the Bill is timely. The threats against this country are growing—not just from non-state actors such as Daesh, but from rogue state actors who seek to

[Kevin Foster]

engage in behaviour that few of us would have thought likely even a few years ago. The use of chemical weapons against two people on our soil would have been unimaginable only a decade ago. It is therefore right that our legislation is kept fully up to date. The Bill will allow the House and Parliament as a whole to review the legislation, look at it in more depth and produce an Act of Parliament that is firmly rooted in the digital era. In the past, we would have been talking about people displaying flags in public places as our main worry. Now it is about what people are displaying online, particularly under a false flag of a fake digital identity.

This has been a useful debate. I look forward to seeing the Bill progress. It has my support. It has been encouraging to hear the views from across the House that indicate that it is likely to receive cross-party support at this stage, subject to the further debate that we can have only by giving the Bill its Second Reading today.

8.18 pm

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I come to this debate wanting to be positive about attempts by the Government to give our police and security forces the powers that they need in the fight against terrorism and to balance that with the equal priority of ensuring that we do not hit our civil liberties and therefore give the terrorists a victory. Already we have heard how different aspects of this Bill will be judged by those tests.

No one who witnessed the horrors in London and Manchester last year can be in any doubt that we need to redouble our efforts to protect the public. The evidence is clear, and the terrorist threat across the UK remains severe. With that threat morphing into a diverse range of threats, including people acting alone, and with the numbers involved increasing, if anything, the terrorist threat for our security forces and the police is probably the most difficult it has ever been.

Liberal Democrats will not, at this early stage, seek to oppose this Bill, but Ministers and those watching this debate should not take that as agreement, in full or in part, to these proposed laws. We need to scrutinise the Bill to make sure that we get the balance right. It is already clear from this debate that there are serious questions whether some of these proposed laws are necessary, whether they are properly based on sound evidence and whether there are sufficient safeguards to prevent their being abused against totally innocent citizens. The Government may have a job in persuading this House and the other place that these measures should pass totally unamended in the form that we see them tonight.

In considering yet another piece of terrorism legislation, the House should recall the opinion of the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, Max Hill, when he was appointed just over a year ago. He said that he thought that the UK had sufficient offences in the fight against terrorism and that we did not need any more. In a speech in October last year, he said:

“I would suggest that our legislators have provided for just about every descriptive action in relation to terrorism, so we should pause before rushing to add yet more offences to the already long list.”

In his early comments on this Bill, he has gone on to say that

“the Counter-Terrorism Bill does not contain a single new terrorist offence.”

This assessment may seem at odds with what Ministers have sought to persuade the House that they are doing and with complaints by organisations such as Liberty. How Max Hill squares this circle is quite important. He believes that the Bill is only clarifying what is meant by existing offences. Let us see in debate whether it is simply a clarification or whether we are creating new offences.

Clause 3, which is about obtaining or viewing material over the internet, brings in the three click rule that we talked about earlier. The question for the House is whether we think that the line between committing a criminal offence punishable by years in prison is one extra click of a mouse, such that someone moves from innocent at two clicks to guilty at three. There is good reason for the House to scrutinise this, because it is about the intention behind the clicks as opposed to the clicks themselves.

On one level, it might seem reasonable to question the motives of someone who continually looks at violence and hate-inciting material. But what if the intention of that person was never one of pursuing actual terrorism? Perhaps they were a journalist; we have heard that there are protections for journalists. What if the person was so shocked and appalled by the material that they were drawn to look at it again, in their disapproval? We need to make sure that genuinely innocent people are not caught. I was quite pleased by the way that the Home Secretary responded to that point, because it did appear that he was open to genuine scrutiny of it. That is very welcome.

We need to make sure that we abide by the normal ways in which we approach free speech. We usually criminalise free speech only if there is an intention to promote harm, violence and hatred, or to carry out terrorist acts as a result of viewing the material. There is potentially a danger that this proposal crosses a line, so we need to look at it in detail.

In my early reading of these proposals, I have had a few other concerns. The hon. Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster) talked about how important biometric data can be, and he is absolutely right. However—he touched on this in a very thoughtful speech—there are issues of innocent people’s biometric data being retained, such as people who have never committed a crime or people who have been unlawfully or wrongly arrested. Should their DNA—their biometric data—be kept by the police? Possibly for a short period, but what will be the rules on checking that their civil liberties and rights are not constrained and that that biometric data is disposed of in a correct and verifiable way when it is clear that they have nothing to do with any such crimes?

I am not just worried about civil liberties in this regard; I am also worried about the impact on the Government’s negotiations for an EU-UK security partnership should Brexit actually happen. Ministers will know, whether from debates over the general data protection regulation or recent European Court of Justice rulings, that the UK may struggle to get an adequacy agreement from the Commission. The recent immigration data exemption from data rights such as subject access requests are very likely—rightly, to my mind—to be sounding alarm bells at the Commission. Yet it is super-vital

to our fight against terrorism and against organised crime, vital for this country's security, that the data flows between the UK and the rest of the EU, whether the data relates to the work of Europol, Prüm, ECRIS—the European criminal records information system—or the Schengen information system II. I am not sure whether the Government, with all the different things they are doing in this area, are presenting a very strong case to our EU colleagues. Will keeping the DNA of innocent EU citizens help our case for an adequacy agreement? Will the Minister say whether an assessment has been made of how this Bill will affect the UK's chances of securing this vital adequacy agreement, so that we can keep those data flows going to get these wicked people?

My concern about safeguards relates to the way in which the Home Office often operates. In Westminster Hall this coming Wednesday, there will be a debate about section 22, paragraph 5 of the immigration rules, whereby they are used to refuse leave to remain in this country on the basis that the applicant is somehow a threat to national security. This immigration rule has been used when applicants have committed minor tax offences—conduct that was not foreseen when Parliament gave the Home Office these powers. When we debate new rules and new powers for officials, we have to make sure that there are safeguards so that they are not used for unintended purposes.

Let me move on to the Contest, or Prevent, strategy. The Home Secretary seemed rather complacent that all was well with this strategy. When we look at the perception and experience of some people, we might think that expanding referral rights to local authorities seems a terribly modest measure—I know that the Security Minister thinks so—but the question is, how it will be perceived? Although I am sure that the Minister believes that the measure is harmless, if it is based on the assumption that there are many communities out there who think that Prevent is fine, that is an incorrect assumption. For many communities, rightly or wrongly, Prevent is a flawed programme. As I said to the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes), this may be a matter of perception.

I absolutely accept that there are many successful individual projects and areas of work within the Prevent programme. No one can deny that. However, a long list of organisations inside and outside this House have pointed to how Prevent has alienated at least some communities. We should think about that before we act. The Home Affairs Committee has warned about this, as have the Joint Committee on Human Rights, the UN special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the National Union of Teachers, Muslim community associations and the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation. All these people have expressed worries about how the Prevent programme is seen. Given those widely held concerns, I am surprised that the Government are choosing this moment to expand the programme.

Surely it would be far better to restore confidence and trust before involving people's local council. Many of us would support an independent review of the Prevent strategy, as the shadow Home Secretary said, and I hoped that the Government's Commission for Countering Extremism might lead on that. I hope that the Government will reflect on that matter further before pursuing it.

There are clauses in the Bill that one really welcomes, such as clause 19, through which the Government are attempting to improve the system of insurance against terrorist acts. We have heard other Members comment on that. I want the Minister to look specifically at the problems that small businesses and larger businesses involved in hiring and leasing vans and cars are getting into. This is a real concern for them, and I know they are lobbying the Treasury on it. After relatively recent changes in the law, those businesses face unlimited liability if the person who rented or leased a van goes on to use it to commit a terrorist act. Because of the unlimited liability, those businesses' insurers are saying, "We're not going to insure you." If a whole sector is hit because it cannot get insurance, that is a huge problem for our whole economy and society. There may be industry and private sector solutions—I am told that there may be a mutual arrangement in the sector—but if that does not work out, the Bill may be a vehicle to tackle that problem, so that terrorists cannot undermine our economy indirectly in that way.

The last measures I would like to talk about are clauses 1 and 2. As we have heard, clause 1 extends the existing offence of inviting support for a proscribed organisation, so that a person commits that offence if they show support for a proscribed organisation and are reckless in that expression of support. I intervened on the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) on the issue of recklessness, but he may have misunderstood me; he is not in his place, so he cannot respond. Clearly the concept of recklessness exists in law at the moment and is used particularly in relation to the actions that he cited. However, even judging whether people have behaved recklessly in physical acts of violence is pretty controversial, because it is not seen as terribly objective. Different interpretations of recklessness in relation to physical violence—the Caldwell and Cunningham versions—have been found by the courts. That test is much more difficult when applied to speech. If it is subjective with respect to actions, its subjectivity in terms of speech and the impact of that speech on other people seems very difficult to measure. We will have to look at that in some detail.

Clause 2 relates to how clothing might be linked to a proscribed organisation. My concern is how general the clause is. The Minister will know that there are 88 proscribed organisations. I think all of us would be extremely worried if people were going around with flags and encouraging people to join some of those organisations, but when was that list last looked at?

I will give one example from Sri Lanka that may be controversial among some Members. I think the last Labour Government were wrong to proscribe the LTTE, or the Tamil Tigers. It has committed some horrific acts and atrocities—there is no doubt about that—but it was involved in what many people regard as a civil war. In this country there are British Tamils who have become refugees and Sri Lankan asylum seekers who support the aims of the Tamil Tigers, but not its methods, and for them, it is a political movement. I have met young Tamils living in the UK who wear T-shirts bearing one of the emblems of the Tamil Tigers, which is a roaring tiger head with two rifles. I have refused their kind offer of such a T-shirt and have not worn one, but I do not think their offer of a T-shirt should be punishable by a prison term. Does the Minister think that wearing such

[Sir Edward Davey]

a T-shirt of a proscribed organisation will result in the arrest of those people? Will individuals wearing clothing with Tamil Tiger emblems put their liberty in danger if the Bill is passed?

Those are the sorts of question we will have to subject the Bill to as it is debated. I know the Minister is a reasonable and thoughtful man who will want to avoid unintended consequences and injustices, and perhaps he will be able to satisfy us on the concerns we have raised this evening.

In concluding, I would simply like to quote from a letter to *The Times* last year signed by leaders of the legal professions and organisations such as Liberty and JUSTICE. They wrote:

“Suggestions made before the general election, that human rights prevent the police fighting terrorism, are misguided... Human rights exist to protect us all. Weakening human rights laws will not make us safer. Terrorists cannot take away our freedoms—and we must not do so ourselves.”

8.34 pm

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): Thank you for allowing me to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. As this is the first speech I have made in the House since your colleague, the right hon. Member for Epping Forest (Dame Eleanor Laing), received her damehood, may I, in her absence from the Chair, pay tribute to her?

There is nothing more important or more serious for this House to discuss than terrorist issues, because the terrorist seeks to destroy the fundamental rights enshrined in democracy by undemocratic means, which we must do all in our power to prevent.

Before I get on to the Bill, I want to address the comments made by the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson). I totally take to heart what he said about the glorification of terrorist acts once they are, as it is called, time-expired. If I were a member of a family who had lost victims in terrorist incidents, I would feel utterly sick, and I hope that he will succeed in his aim of somehow amending the Bill to prohibit that practice. In saying that, I take to heart what he said about excesses by our military, but I think we owe it to the military—I do not suppose that this will form part of the Bill—to limit the time when a member of our armed forces can be prosecuted for events that took place while serving in a military campaign, including in Northern Ireland. I hope that the Government will somehow find a way to do that before too long.

As I mentioned in an intervention earlier, this debate takes place in the atmosphere that was described by Andrew Parker, the director general of MI5. On 17 October 2017, in a rare public speech by such an official, he described the ongoing terrorist threat as

“multi-dimensional, evolving rapidly, and operating at a scale and pace we’ve not seen”

from such threats. Indeed, in the year ending 31 December 2017, there were 412 arrests for terrorism-related offences in Great Britain, an increase of 58% on the 261 arrests in the previous year.

In his speech earlier, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said there have been 25 Islamic attacks since 2013, including four external plots since the Westminster atrocities. I therefore want to pay a sincere tribute to the

police and the security and intelligence services, who often put their lives at risk in very difficult and dangerous circumstances to keep us all safe, and they do a terrific job. As if that were not enough, we then had the horrific attack on Yulia and Sergei Skripal, and indeed Sergeant Nick Bailey, on 12 March. Following those attacks, the Prime Minister announced on 14 March that, as part of a response to that incident, the Government would

“urgently develop proposals for new legislative powers to harden our defences against all forms of hostile state activity”.—[*Official Report*, 14 March 2018; Vol. 637, c. 856.]

I will move on to one or two of the provisions in the Bill. The first is the provision to make a temporary exclusion order to disrupt and control the return to the UK of British citizens reasonably suspected of being involved in terrorism abroad. As we have heard in the recent exchanges, that is a very difficult offence to prove, and it is clear to me that it needs tightening up. It is also clear to me that, where there is intelligence or other evidence that people have deliberately travelled abroad to take part in terrorist training or atrocities, they deserve to be prosecuted when they come back.

I was quite attracted to the idea of proscribed areas. Why would anybody want to go to Syria, for example, and put their life at risk, unless it was for a specific valid reason such as being a journalist or overseas aid worker? There is a defence in the Bill of having a reasonable excuse for having travelled to these areas, and I am very pleased to hear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering such a provision as a possible amendment to the Bill.

I am also pleased that the Bill contains provisions to be inserted into the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 relating to anti-terrorism traffic regulation orders—the so-called ATTROs. As we have so sadly witnessed in the Westminster attack and others elsewhere, an ordinary car, van or lorry can be a weapon in the hands of a terrorist. The ability to prevent people from being in certain areas at certain times is a sensible one to have. In fact, we should be able to ban traffic from a wider area around any events that are likely to be attended by large numbers of people.

I was pleased to see that the Bill will extend sentences for certain terrorist offences from 10 years to 15 years, and that the sentence actually served will be longer than the norm for non-terrorist offences. As I said in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell), however, we will have to watch radicalisation in our prisons. I know from hearings of the Public Accounts Committee that conditions in our prisons are getting ever more difficult, including the smuggling in of more dangerous drugs and understaffing. It is very difficult to police what goes on in our prisons, but our prison warders and others have to be ever more vigilant for radicalisation taking place in our prisons, and we must do our level best to try to prevent it.

I am also pleased that the Bill contains provisions for allowing Government-backed reinsurance, so-called Pool Re, to be taken out for business interruption. Sadly, some of the small market traders in Borough were put out of business because they were unable to trade for so long.

I made several interventions earlier on the subject that I wish to concentrate on in my final remarks—terrorists’ use of the internet. As has been said, the terrorists’ modus operandi is getting ever more fleet of foot and

using ever more innovative methods. We as legislators, therefore, have to be ever more fleet on our feet to counter them. Terrorists are making still greater use of the internet, and we do not yet have the powers to deal with that. I take strongly to heart the point made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that 1.9 million items of potential terrorist material have been removed from the internet—a 17% increase on last year. The use of the internet is clearly getting greater.

It has already been possible to prosecute people for downloading offences, but it has not been possible to prosecute people for streaming and viewing possible terrorist material on the internet. I know much has been said in the debate about the three strikes approach to viewing such material. A balance has to be struck. Personally, I would make it two views. While once might be a mistake, twice almost certainly is not, and three times establishes a pattern of behaviour that clearly indicates that someone is looking at the material with some form of purpose or intent. The Bill contains a “reasonable purpose” excuse, so a journalist or researcher looking at the material would have a reasonable excuse, but it is right to make looking at it an offence.

It is also right, as the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is doing, to look at how the internet providers can remove such material as quickly as possible. There may well be a need to legislate if that does not happen with increasing rapidity. As I said in an intervention earlier, I cannot see why the likes of Google and Facebook, which have some of the best IT writers on the planet, cannot write programs or use AI to recognise such material and take it down immediately. After all, that is the best remedy, so that people do not have the opportunity to view it. It is all very well prosecuting when they do view it, but it must be best if they do not have the opportunity. I did not want to know the precise mechanisms, because of security implications, but I was interested to know what discussions my right hon. Friend had had with internet providers in the United States on what they could do on a voluntary basis to make the withdrawal of such material much swifter and much more effective.

There are some very important provisions in the Bill, which I welcome. We need to keep ahead of the terrorists. These are some of the most vile crimes on the planet, and we need to ensure that people who contravene the norms of our democratic society are prosecuted, convicted and locked up for a long time. We need to ensure that they know that that will happen, and hopefully that will be a deterrent.

8.45 pm

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): The first duty of any state is to protect its citizens. Historically, this has meant protecting ourselves from other states. That is still relevant today, but increasingly the threat is from terrorism, whether generated here or internationally. Is that going to diminish in the near future? Not from the evidence I have seen.

I would like to begin by adding my thanks to the members of the security and emergency services who reacted so professionally to last year’s tragic events in Manchester and London. We should not forget that members of our police, security agencies and armed forces keep us safe 24 hours a day. We should not take that for granted. The reaction to such events tends to be to want more legislation, but Dave Anderson, the

independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, got it right when he said that the necessary legislation already exists. The intention of the Bill is to tighten up existing legislation. I broadly welcome the provisions in it.

It is clear that radicalisation is taking place through the internet. Dissemination of propaganda is not new. In times past, it would be done through pamphlets, books and meetings. In the 1790s, sedition Acts targeted radicals who argued for revolution from France. Throughout history, Governments have introduced various Acts to try to stop the spread of terrorism and what has been perceived to be radical thoughts against the interests of their citizens.

The situation today is rather different. Online radicalisation is not something we can put our hands on—we cannot put our hands on a book or a pamphlet; we cannot close down a meeting—and it is an international global phenomenon. The access point is relatively low. Sophisticated equipment is not needed to produce a video and upload it. It can be done using a smartphone or even a simple watch on one’s wrist. That is very different from what we talked about in relation to the Terrorism Act 2000. That shows the rate of change. It is right for the Government to react to this type of threat and to the changing way in which this type of radicalisation and propaganda is being put out there.

Another side to this issue, which is not covered in the Bill, although it would be interesting to know what the Government are considering, is terror and finance. I know the Government have taken some steps, but if we look at the open source literature, we see that the dark net is being used to raise money for terrorism organisations and organised crime. This is an area seen to be beyond the reach of law enforcement. In terms of extending that reach, I support the proposal in the Bill for extra-territorial reach to enable actions to be brought against those who radicalise individuals from overseas. This has been an issue. Those returning from Syria, Iraq and other places have been using that so-called safe haven to put out propaganda deliberately aimed at vulnerable people to ensure that they can be radicalised and to incite acts of terrorism here. The change in the Bill that allows those individuals to be prosecuted is right.

Many people who know me know that I am not a bleeding-heart liberal on this subject, but I am a bit concerned about some things in the Bill. There are two issues. First, are the measures practically going to make a difference? Secondly, will they give the opponents not just of this Bill, but of counter-terrorism legislation generally, a club with which to beat the Government? I think the Government have given them that on the viewing of online material, in terms of the three views. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) said, it would be illegal for someone to view something three times, but it would not be illegal, for example, for Google or another provider to host the material. The problem I have is not necessarily about whether this needs to be looked at—I think it does. However, it comes down to proportionality and whether there is the capability so that this does not overwhelm our security services and police. Clearly, if someone is viewing things on a regular basis and we can build up a picture of what they are doing, we need to have legislation or measures to take against them.

[Mr Kevan Jones]

I give credit to the former Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Amber Rudd), for her efforts to try to get internet providers to take such material down in the first place. Hon. Members have spoken in this debate about artificial intelligence and other ways in which this may be done at a quicker pace in future—although sometimes we might want it to stay up longer, so that we can find out who is producing it. However, I want to ask the Government: how is this part of the legislation practically going to make a difference? If it is, the Government will have my 100% support for it, but I think it will be a diversion for campaigners against this entire Bill, which would be unfortunate. The right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey) is not in his place, but he talked about the issue of intent, and this is about intent. If someone is clearly downloading or sharing information that is already illegal on a regular basis, it is quite right that they are prosecuted, but I just wonder what practical effect the measures will have and whether we have the resources to police this or enact it in the first place.

I want to touch on a couple of other areas in the Bill. One is the management of those convicted of terrorism offences. Many of my constituents would think that if someone has been convicted of terrorism, they should stay in jail for life, never being released, but we know that that is just not practical. The Bill highlights an important point, which is how we manage these individuals once they have served their sentence. I asked the Home Secretary in an intervention earlier whether this would be done in the same way as it is, for example, for sex offenders who are released and monitored in the community, and he said yes. If that is the case, that is a good model, but it is expensive. If we are going to have that type of monitoring—I know it is effective and I know about the good cross-working in my area between the probation service and the local police—I just want to be sure that we have the necessary resources at local level. These individuals will need monitoring in some cases and that will be necessary and right if we are to protect our citizens. Therefore, I welcome that provision, but only with the proper resources at local level to be able to do it.

I support the provisions in the Bill that refer to Channel panels from local authorities. At the moment, the police can make referrals, but many individuals come into contact with other agencies, and there should be a mechanism for referring them to Prevent programmes. My only caveat is that training or some resource has to be provided for local authorities and others to ensure that they understand exactly how the system works.

We debated the entire Prevent programme earlier, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) said that it did not have support in certain communities. I recognise that. It is partly down to a sustained campaign by certain organisations to discredit it. I am not opposed to reviewing the situation, but what would we put in its place? There is a lot of talk about the Asian community, but people involved in potential acts of right-wing terrorism are also referred to Prevent. I congratulate the Government on their new emphasis on right-wing terrorism. It is a growing problem not only in this country but across Europe. Some of the groups across Europe are

certainly not benign and they commit acts of violence and terrorism not only against local Muslim populations and other minorities but to terrorise other individuals. What then would we put in place of Prevent? I have not heard anyone answer that. I agree with the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes). Things can always be improved, and we should always look for improvements, but what would we put in its place?

I am not sure how we tackle this, but I am concerned also about the old issue of vulnerable individuals in communities. At least one of the terrorist outrages last year had a mental health element. We need a mechanism for identifying and helping at-risk individuals who do not come into the orbit of a local authority or the health service. These are very vulnerable individuals whose minds can be preyed upon and used by people with bad intentions. I am not sure how we do that, but we do need to consider it.

On ports, I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), who covered the problems very well. I see what the Minister is trying to do, but I cannot see the need for it. It is slapped under the label of state actors, and if it is to deal with that, it has my full support, but I take on board the hon. Gentleman's points. A related matter, and one that raises issues of entry to and exit from this country, is that of closed subjects of interest. From what I have seen, Salman Abedi travelled in and out of this country without ever appearing on any radar screen. There is, then, an issue around monitoring closed subjects and others who could be a threat as they move between countries.

Finally, I want to mention something that is not in the Bill and on which I would welcome the Minister's response. David Anderson made some very good recommendations in his report. Some were operational issues for the security services and police, but others were around the selling of precursors for explosives, such as fertilizers and peroxide, and the hiring of vehicles. Are the Government yet in a position to look at what David Anderson said about those matters? Will they present proposals to tighten the regulation or monitoring of people who buy the precursors of potential explosive devices, or to deal with issues relating to the hiring of vehicles, which were tragically used in some of the attacks that occurred in 2017?

I broadly welcome the Bill, but it clearly needs more scrutiny. I hope the legislation that eventually emerges is proportionate and, at the end of the day, effective, because that is what we all want. I do not think we will ever be able to prevent every single act of terrorism, but our aim must be to make such acts as hard as possible to commit.

9 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): This has been a wide-ranging and thoughtful debate.

Two years ago, our late friend and parliamentary colleague Jo Cox was murdered, and between March and September last year there were five terror attacks. At the forefront of our minds are those who lost their lives in the incidents at Westminster Bridge, Manchester Arena, London Bridge and Borough Market, and Finsbury Park, and those who were injured at Parsons Green. We think of Jo and others who are no longer with us, and we think of the injured and their friends and families.

We also think of our magnificent emergency services who, time and again, showed extraordinary bravery and courage in the most difficult circumstances.

I pay tribute to all the workers in our national health service who saved lives and treated the injured, and to all the services that were involved in the investigation and treatment of Sergei and Yulia Skripal—including Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, who was rightly lauded by Members in all parts of the House during the debate. I also pay tribute to the work of our security services. We should think about what has not happened: since the terrible murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in May 2013, 25 terrorist attacks have been foiled and numerous lives have been saved.

It is in the context of those events that the Bill is to be judged. We all want effective legislation in that context. Such legislation must always keep pace with technology and the times in which we live, and we support the Government in those aims. We also, of course, want to put public safety at the centre of policy in this area, and to make it as effective as possible. Aspects of the Bill build on the recommendations of the previous independent reviewer of counter-terrorism legislation, David Anderson QC. My right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) rightly highlighted the work that David Anderson has done in this area over a number of years.

We are anxious for the wider impact of terrorist incidents on surrounding communities and businesses to be taken into account, and clause 19 is welcome in that it seeks to widen the scope of losses covered. Business interruption costs are not currently covered when there is no physical damage to the commercial premises, although we know that such interruption occurs. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) for the work that he has done in that regard. We will press the Government in Committee on whether they will cover losses that have been suffered by businesses in connection with the incidents of the past 15 months, and not simply losses that will be suffered in future incidents. Will they compensate businesses that have lost out in the past when they should not have done so as a consequence of the current loophole?

We intend to table substantial amendments to the Bill in Committee. The Minister has indicated a willingness to be constructive, and I take him at his word. I hope that he will consider all our amendments in the constructive spirit in which they are intended. We will continue to make the case for proper resourcing, an issue that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock). I myself have asked the Minister about it on a number of occasions. We will continue to hold the Government to account for their funding of our police and other emergency services, and our security services, and, indeed, for how much we pay the workers who do so much for our society.

The first three clauses seek to update terrorism offences on expressions of support for a proscribed organisation, publication of images, and obtaining or viewing material on the internet—the so-called digital fixes. We agree of course that the law should be updated and keep pace with the times, but those clauses will need work in Committee. Max Hill QC, the independent reviewer of terror legislation, has said in recent days that

“the tweaks to existing offences range from pragmatic to problematic.”

Of course, with any change in the law, we have to ensure that there is wide public consent. The independent reviewer of terror legislation said last October:

“While we can all agree that there should be nowhere for real terrorists to hide, we should also agree that legislating in the name of terrorism when the targeted activity is not actually terrorism would be quite wrong.”

That is why the legal frameworks we set in this House must be forensically considered, seeking to protect our daily lives and our values of freedom and respect. It is vital that we guard in our criminal law against any unwelcome consequences.

We will therefore be scrutinising the Government carefully on what they mean by “reckless” in the context of an expression of support for a proscribed organisation. On the photographs provision, we will want the Government to distinguish genuine threat from immature behaviour or other motives. On the streaming of material as well as downloading, I agree that the law needs to be updated in that respect, but we need to be clear about what “streaming” means. At present it is specified in the Bill as three views, but, as a number of contributions to the debate from across the House have suggested, that will need to be carefully considered. Journalists and assiduous researchers accessing material for legitimate purposes—and indeed the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee—should not be criminalised, so we will be looking at the position of the Government with regard to the “reasonable excuse” defence.

On the additional sentences in the Bill, the Sentencing Council published its guidelines for terrorism offences on 28 March, but those were based on the current maximum sentences. I would be grateful for reassurance from the Minister that the Government will work with the Sentencing Council on the new proposed maximum sentences.

The release of terrorist offenders who are subject to extended sentences will be a decision for the Parole Board. There were concerns in a different criminal context with regard to the Warboys case, but I sincerely hope that the Government will be able to give reassurances that shortcomings have now been satisfactorily resolved and that there can be wide confidence in the Parole Board as it carries out such an important task.

On data retention, we will of course look carefully at the Government’s justification as to why the collection of data from people who are arrested but not charged is necessary and proportionate, and what mechanisms are in place for wholly innocent people who wish to have their data removed.

A number of Members mentioned the extension of the Prevent programme, and clause 18 gives local authorities the power to refer to Channel panels as part of that strategy. Labour’s policy is for there to be a review of Prevent, and we will of course consider carefully the capacity of local authorities in this regard in their current funding settlements. Indeed, at Home Office questions only last week, I raised with the Minister my concerns about local authorities being given additional duties in respect of data without appropriate data security and training and the resources required.

It is entirely reasonable for the Government to be looking at border security. Clause 20 activates schedule 3, which includes the power to stop, question and detain.

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

That is a very broad power. Paragraph 1(4) of schedule 3 states that somebody can be stopped, questioned and detained

“whether or not there are grounds for suspecting that a person is or has been engaged in hostile activity.”

In his opening remarks, the Home Secretary made it clear that there should be robust safeguards in circumstances such as these, and I absolutely agree with him. At the moment, the Bill provides for oversight by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, but I suggest that working with the independent reviewer of counter-terrorism—who is at the moment the reviewer of schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act 2000—is going to be crucial. That relationship will need to be spelled out as the Bill proceeds.

Stephen Doughty: We obviously understand the need to detain individuals in certain circumstances, particularly at airports when they are potentially posing a risk. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if we are to exercise these powers sensitively, it is crucial to have regard to compensation for those who have been stopped and subsequently found not to be guilty of any offence—for example, if they have missed their flight or had property taken off them?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I very much agree with my hon. Friend on that point. How we draw the law precisely in this area is very important. The powers will need to be backed up by appropriate safeguards and protections for those who are wholly innocent of any offence.

On the question of border security, the Bill as it stands means that a person who is detained for less than an hour will not have the right to access a solicitor, and that someone detained for more than an hour will be able to access a lawyer, but they could be required to do that within the sight and hearing of an officer. That will clearly have consequences for our cherished and valuable principle of legal professional privilege, under which people have the right to consult a lawyer and to do so in private. This is something that we will want to consider further in Committee, and I very much hope that the Government will listen to the points that have been made about the need for appropriate safeguards.

I hope that the considered nature of this debate will continue into the Committee stage. I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the House to scrutinise and, hopefully, improve this legislation in such a crucial policy area.

9.11 pm

The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace): This has been a good debate, and Members on both sides of the House have demonstrated a desire to take a collaborative approach to counter-terrorism legislation. I am heartened by that, and delighted that we can start the process in that spirit. Every point that I have heard today has been made with passion, consideration and genuine belief. I might not have agreed with some of the points, but I certainly recognise that this is not about posturing or anything other than trying to make an effective piece of legislation that will make us safer. Over time, while we are doing this Bill, I intend to do as much as I can to work with Members on both sides of the House and to be as collaborative as possible. I shall work to see whether there are better ideas to improve

the legislation, to ensure that we can deliver it in such a way as to enable the intelligence services, the police and local communities to feel safer than they do today.

On 22 March last year, many of us who were in the House heard shots being fired outside and heard about the horrendous events on Westminster Bridge. I was about to come into the Chamber when I heard a police officer say, “Shots fired.” We lost our friend PC Keith Palmer that day. He did his very best to defend us from a man intent on killing indiscriminately and spreading terror. On 22 May last year, in this job as Security Minister, I remember being woken just after 11.30 pm by a phone call from my office telling me of the dreadful news that a bomb had been detonated at the Manchester Arena and killed a significant number of people. Manchester is my local city, and my own daughter had been at the Arena only the week before. Those events brought home to us the vulnerability that we face.

Every one of us in the House, while not directly affected by terrorism, will have fought the general election feeling—perhaps for the first time and perhaps because of social media—the level of hate and bile that is directed at us all. I think that that made us feel a little uneasy about the society that we are in, and about what lies at the extremes behind that hate. Some of my friends on the Opposition Benches are right now under threat from the extreme right, and we remember our dear fallen colleague. Also, a good friend in my part of the world has been under real threat from some particularly nasty people. I think that we have to reflect on these issues.

There is often pressure after such attacks to have new legislation—something must be done—and I am proud that this Government did not rush to legislation. We set up several significant reviews that were consolidated into four main reviews. The operational review produced a classified report of some 1,300 pages that went into every single decision, piece of intelligence and bit of work that went on in the lead-up to some of the attacks. I read all 1,300 pages not just because I am incredibly interested and because it is my duty, but because only then could I learn what legislation will put right, what is reasonable to be asked by our security services and police and what should not necessarily need to be placed on the statute book.

We also had the Home Office’s counter-terrorism legislative review, and we reviewed Contest, pausing its relaunch to see whether anything needed to be handled. Several of those reviews were “oversighted” by David Anderson, the former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, or Max Hill, the current reviewer, who reviewed how police used their powers in the aftermath. That gentle but solid consideration is why we are here today with legislation that hopefully helps to answer some of the challenges we face.

When the terrorists unleashed attacks on us in 2017, that demonstrated clearly not only the empowerment that they now have through social media and encrypted communication, but how they had adapted to our statute book to find new vulnerabilities. They have shifted their ambitions to find where we are not as protected as perhaps we should be, and they have exploited that. Good terrorists do that. Terrorists are all about our soft underbelly and our vulnerability. If they cannot get an AK-47, they get a truck. If they cannot get a truck, they get a knife. That is part of what they do, and if they

cannot do any of that, they intimidate and scare us with words and propaganda. They exploit our constituents, whether they are vulnerable or children.

Daesh are the among the worst. They have no fuss about who they twist and corrupt. They do not care whether they are Muslim, young, abused or vulnerable or whether they suffer from mental illness. Anyone will do to carry out their twisted, murderous campaign. Despite the loss of territory in Syria, they keep their flame alive. They are adapting, and as we speak there are people in this country planning to repeat what we saw last year. There were five attacks last year, four extreme right-wing, neo-Nazi attacks have been stopped over the past 12 months, and 25 plots have been disrupted since the murder of Lee Rigby. We have 3,000 current subjects of interest involved in nearly 500 live operations. I have never seen things at such a scale, and the threat is a great challenge not only due to encrypted communications, but due to the speed at which someone who does not mind getting caught can reach out, grab a knife, go out of their front door and literally kill people as they see fit.

I will now answer some of the points made today. The shadow Home Secretary offered some positive support for the Bill in principle, which I welcome, but she highlighted some of her concerns, which I may be able to answer. In clause 1, there was a worry about reckless encouragement, but it is our challenge to deal with people who go out to inspire others. It is no coincidence that al-Qaeda's online publication, which contains sections such as "Just Terror Tactics", is called "Inspire" because inspiration is one of the challenges we face. There are some very charismatic people in our communities, some of whom are currently in prison but are due to be released, who have used their presence and their inspiration to recruit without actually muttering the words, "And I want you to join Daesh, and I want you to go and fight in Syria." That has been part of the challenge, and some of them—one individual, in particular, has been responsible for hundreds of people being drawn into extremism—have used it so well for so long, which is why we have sought to plug the gap in the space of inspiration.

I agree with a number of colleagues on both sides of the House on the substance of Prevent. Whenever I hear people criticise Prevent and I ask, "Okay, what would you do?", they just describe Prevent, and they come back to the bit about the Prevent brand being tainted. Fine, the brand is safeguarding; I will sell safeguarding all day long. We call it Prevent, but it is about safeguarding people from being exploited.

The shadow Home Secretary is worried about whether local authorities have the expertise. They do not have expertise in counter-terrorism, but, by golly, they have expertise in safeguarding vulnerable people and children. We should put Prevent referrals in perspective. There are 9,000 Prevent referrals a year, of which half are of people aged up to young adolescence. There are 621,000 referrals a year to safeguard people from domestic abuse, sexual abuse and grooming. Let us put this in perspective. Prevent is not a Big Brother spying operation.

The end result has been that, in two years, more than 500 people about whom we had serious concerns they were on the path towards, or were about to engage in, violent extremism are now deemed no longer to be a

threat. That is 500 people—it takes one man to drive a van across Westminster bridge—and, in my book, that is a success.

Yes, there are people who are worried about the branding of Prevent, about which I have two things to say. First, when I raise the extreme right or the neo-Nazis, people say, "Prevent is quite a good thing for them." Secondly, when I look people in the eye whose families have been prevented from going to Syria, they do not argue with Prevent; they say that Prevent works. One of the reasons we publish the figures is that they put it in perspective and show that there are successes. It is not 100%, but 30% of the people it picks up need other types of safeguarding.

Often the people who attack Prevent the most are the ones who do not want Prevent to work because they are the flipside of the recruiters of extremism in this country. We should not forget that some people want the narrative to be, "Don't trust the state. We don't like the state, and we don't want the state. Our way is the best way." They peddle this myth that a child was reported to have said, "My uncle lives in a terrorist household"—we have all heard that one trotted out by the anti-Prevent lobby. What the child actually said was, "I live in a terraced house, and my uncle beats me." It never was a Prevent referral; it was a referral because the child was being abused. The same people will peddle that myth until the cows come home.

Our ambition is to broaden Prevent, to get the local community engaged and to get local authorities alongside the police on referrals. One of the criticisms of Prevent is that it is too police-focused. Local authorities may understand some of the nuances in their community to determine whether a person is really being radicalised. If the local authority says, "We think they are being radicalised," why should it not be allowed directly to refer that person to Channel? I think that is a good thing. It is not a step backwards; it is listening to some of those criticisms about Prevent.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes) is right to talk about keeping people safe. This is about safeguarding. On whether we have too much legislation or legislation enough, there are two things to say. Britain is a world leader in counter-terrorism. All our legislation has got us to a point where most countries come to ask us how to do it. Most countries around the world are envious of what we have.

Also, unlike other countries, we have probably the most overlooked intelligence services, security services, police and law enforcement in the world. A number of the measures in the Bill were recommended by the independent reviewers. The hostile activity port stop power has been included because the independent reviewer identified two occasions on which our police were abusing the counter-terrorism power to stop people we thought were from hostile states and recommended a separate power. The Biometrics Commissioner was the one who recommended the changes to the biometrics. So the Government have listened to some of these independent reviewers and thought, "That is a good thing to do."

May I say to the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands) that I welcome the Scottish National party's support in principle for the Bill? Of course I will continue to work with him and the Scottish Government. I first entered the Scottish

[Mr Ben Wallace]

Parliament at the same time as his Justice Minister. I had a phone call with him last night. If he feels at any stage that they are not getting the engagement, he should not hesitate to get in touch and I will make sure that it is done. It is incredibly important that Contest and our counter-terrorism legislation reach all the fingertips of the United Kingdom. I note that when National Action was proscribed, something called Scottish Dawn popped up quickly—it is now proscribed, too. It is important that we do not muddy the waters where we all agree to agree.

On the issue about recklessness, part of this is about how we deal with those who are targeting people without caring whether they understand or not—I refer to the issue of vulnerability. In March, Umar Haque was convicted of trying to radicalise hundreds of children at school. He got them to swear allegiance to ISIL. He got them to re-enact the Westminster Bridge attack in their classroom and he showed them footage of people being beheaded. He said to those children, “If you tell your parents, you will go to prison.” Those people were vulnerable—they were children—and we have to find a way to make sure we close the gap in determining how much intent has to be involved and how much the receiver of that information has to know what they are getting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk)—my learned friend—gave an excellent example about recklessness when he talked about a baseball bat. What we are dealing with here is not that different—I may disagree here with the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey)—and the law has established on a number of occasions where recklessness comes in. My notes tell me to cite *R v. G* and another from 2003, and I think my hon. Friend is the only person who would understand what case that refers to. It was not an enlightening note, but it shows that this has been done.

Points have been made about hostile activity stops on the border. One way we temper the no suspicion issue is by the fact that whatever oral statements are made then cannot be used in court as evidence. That is an important way to try to balance this, but there is the issue about suspicion to address. If I were an agent of a foreign country, I would be trained. I would know the law of the country I am coming into, so I would give my electronic equipment to a family member. If we had to have reasonable suspicion, we would have to have reasonable suspicion about everyone else travelling with that person; it would be harder to adapt to something as it happens.

I hear what the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) says, as he is right, about the impact the current schedule has had, including on my constituency, and the cost and what people perhaps lose when they are stopped under counter-terrorism powers. We have to look at whether we can make sure the information is provided in a timely way, so that people do not miss flights. Sometimes things are too last-minute, but this has been incredibly useful.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) talked about the challenges of dealing with foreign fighters. Some 150 people have been prevented from going to train, fight or engage in terrorism because of that schedule. We managed at the airport to stop

them, and in examining their electronic devices, we saw that they were not really going on a family holiday to Turkey but were in fact, for example, taking their three young children to Raqqa. No one wants to go on such a holiday, and those three children had no say in that.

I hope and believe that the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) will be meeting the Economic Secretary to discuss the issue he raised further. I hear what he says, and I also want to pay tribute to his colleague the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), as she has talked a lot about loss of business around the Manchester Arena. It is right to raise this. I am also glad he has called out Aviva. It is important for us to remember—this is the same for our constituents going on a summer holiday—that slowly but surely over the past 10 years travel insurance firms have dropped terrorism from their coverage, yet the odds of being a victim of terrorism are still absolutely tiny. So I have asked to see what we can do with insurance companies more widely to ensure that, although people are at only a tiny, tiny risk of being a victim, this is not just casually dropped out of people’s schedules.

My hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) referenced Hezbollah. Of course we always keep proscription under review. I hear what he says about it and I understand the hurt people feel here when they see others flying flags of Hezbollah on the streets—for example, on al-Quds day. He also talked about the Council of Europe. It is absolutely the case, on the border point, that we need to engage those partnerships post Brexit. We need to make sure that we continue with all the tools that we use at the moment. The United Kingdom Government’s position is unconditional on that. That is what we would like to engage with. The question is for the European Commission—whether it would like to have that.

Security is not a competition. Trade might be, but security is not. I think that is something they understand in Europe, going by my private conversations, and I hope that, by the time we get to Brexit, we will see it in place, because that partnership, both domestically and internationally, is why we are so successful in counter-terrorism.

I can already give the hon. Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson) some good news from the Dispatch Box: there is no 20-year bar on glorification of terrorism offences, nor will there be. In that sense, hopefully, he will be able to progress and go forward.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness is right that we have to find ways to explore the foreign fighter challenge. That is not just us—it is the French and the Germans, too—where we might have intelligence that someone is out there engaging, but it is hard to get the evidence. During the passage of the Bill, we are going to explore new measures or other measures on which I am happy to work together that I hope will do that for us.

We have also extended extraterritorial jurisdiction, because it is ridiculous that someone can sit in Syria and try to recruit people from the United Kingdom and somehow not be prosecuted correctly.

Mr Speaker: Order. Forgive me. Am I right in thinking that the Minister of State is approaching a peroration as eloquent as Demosthenes but markedly briefer?

Mr Wallace: The usual channels have taken over. I have lost the first battle.

In summing up, I apologise to the other Members who contributed so eloquently to the debate. I would, of course, be happy to meet them outside the usual channels. I should say very clearly that we owe a great duty to our intelligence services and police in thanking them for all the hard work that they do. We will progress with this legislation. I will work as much as possible in partnership with Members from all parts of the House to get a deal and a Bill that works to keep us safe.

Mr Speaker: The Chair was merely making an inquiry, and there was a question mark at the end of it, but I get the impression that the peroration was not altogether unwelcome to the House. We are very grateful to the Minister of State.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND BORDER SECURITY BILL (PROGRAMME)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That the following provisions shall apply to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security 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 Tuesday 17 July.

(3) The Public Bill Committee shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it meets.

Proceedings on 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.—
(*Paul Maynard.*)

Question agreed to.

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND BORDER SECURITY 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 Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any amounts payable by the Treasury in respect of obligations incurred, under any agreement of reinsurance or guarantee, as a result of the amendments made by the Act to the Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993.—(*Paul Maynard.*)

Question agreed to.

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND BORDER SECURITY BILL (WAYS AND MEANS)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the charging of fees, under amendments made by the Act to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, in connection with traffic regulation orders or notices made or issued for the purpose of protecting events or sites from risks associated with terrorism.—(*Paul Maynard.*)

Question agreed to.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Teresa Pearce be discharged from the Women and Equalities Committee and Tulip Siddiq be added.—(*Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Selection Committee.*)

Cornish National Identity: 2021 Census

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Paul Maynard.*)

9.34 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. If Members are leaving, I am sure they will do so quickly and quietly. I cannot believe that there will be hushed private conversations conducted by Members who do not wish to hear the hon. Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double) dilate on the important matter of Cornish national identity in the 2021 census, to which I am sure everybody else wishes keenly to listen.

Steve Double: I am deeply honoured to be able to make the case tonight for celebrating Cornish identity and to call for the inclusion of Cornish identity to be recognised in the next census in 2021. I am very grateful for the support of many of my Cornish colleagues here in the House this evening.

There is no doubt or debate over the fact that the Cornish are a proud people who share an extraordinary history that can be traced back thousands of years. In calling for this debate to make the case for a Cornish tick box for national identity in the next census, there is a risk that some may see this as some sort of gimmick designed simply to boost our tourist industry or play into a stereotype of Cornish country folk. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although it is true to say that many of us Cornish can be guilty of having a playful jibe at the English, especially those from Devon—after all they do put their jam and cream on the wrong way round on their scones—this is not a whim or some notion based on a romantic view of the past.

The Cornish have, along with our Welsh cousins, the longest history of any people in Britain, dating back 12,000 years. It is believed that these ancient people entered this isle after the Ice Age from the area now occupied by the Basques. Genetic codes indelibly mark the Cornish with the DNA of their ancient ancestors. It is believed that a staggering 80% of the Cornish retain this genetic marker. The Cornish language, which is seeing a revival in recent times, has a 5,000-year history. We in Cornwall have our own culture and our own ways. Cornwall even has its own patron saint, St Piran, whose life is celebrated on 5 March every year. We have our own flag and even our own tartan, which I am modelling so well with my tie this evening.

We are all but an island, with the sea surrounding us on three sides and the Tamar River on the fourth, which falls only four miles short of making us an island. There has been many a Cornishman who has been tempted to get his shovel out and dig those last four miles to finish the job, because in so many ways we have the culture, the identity and the attitudes of an island race.

The 80 miles of granite protruding into the Atlantic stubbornly rebel against the great ocean and yet have been shaped by it. The beauty and the desolation defy description and yet somehow portray the spirit of the people who call it their land. It is as if the people and the land are as one. This is not just an historic or romantic notion, but a serious issue that is very much based on current, clear facts.

In 2014, the Government announced that the Cornish would be classified under the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities—a body that I have been honoured to be appointed to recently by the Prime Minister.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this matter forward and remind him that we all love our cultures, which, mixed together, represent the best of British. I certainly appreciate the richness of the Cornish culture. Does he agree that there is also something special about the Ulster Scots heritage, of which I am a part? It is these different branches that come from our Britishness that mean that we can all take pride in being Ulster Scots, Welsh or Cornish, and uniquely British.

Steve Double: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I completely agree with him. One of the beauties of our islands is that we can celebrate both our diversity and the thing that unites us, which is our love for our nation, the United Kingdom, and being British. Like my Celtic cousin, I say that we Celtic fringe nations can bring a true sense of diversity and variety that enrich our British culture.

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC) *rose*—

Steve Double: I have to give way now to the hon. Gentleman.

Ben Lake: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. For what it is worth, he can count on the support of Plaid Cymru—his cousins across St George's channel—in getting this tick box for the Cornish identity. Does he agree that doing so is of not just symbolic, but practical, importance? It is symbolic in that the census would then acknowledge the Cornish nation, just as it does the other Celtic nations of the UK. It would also be of practical importance in allowing the UK Government better to prepare for issues such as the Cornish language.

Steve Double: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention and appreciate his support for my case. He makes the good point, which I will develop in just a moment, that this is not just a matter of Cornish identity and pride; it has a practical application to ensure that the Government can obtain accurate data through the census that can shape future policy. That is so important.

As I was saying, the Government recognised the Cornish as a national minority in 2014. It is worth recalling the words that the Government released in a statement at the time, saying:

“The decision to recognise the unique identity of the Cornish, now affords them the same status under the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as the UK's other Celtic people, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish. For the first time the government has recognised the distinctive culture and history of the Cornish.”

As hon. Members can imagine, there was much celebration and dancing in the streets of Cornish towns and villages at this announcement. We may have even consumed a pasty or two to celebrate. At last—what every Cornish man and woman had known in their hearts for generations

was now officially recognised and declared by the Government. However, we stand here today—more than four years later—and wonder what all the fuss was about. We ask ourselves, what did this mean?

It is worth noting at this point that the Government have in many ways been very supportive of Cornwall in recent times. We are seeing record levels of investment in our transport infrastructure, and Cornwall remains the only rural county to have been given a devolution deal by the Government. However, when it comes to the specific matter of recognition of the Cornish as a people, there is still a great deal to do. Sadly, despite the recognition afforded by the European framework convention and embraced in words by the UK Government, the Government have been criticised by the Council of Europe for not doing enough to address the cultural needs of communities in Cornwall. There have been warm words but little action.

The Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities visited the United Kingdom in March 2016 to assess how the UK Government and other public bodies were complying with the articles of the convention. It published an opinion document in early 2017 that was very critical of the UK Government and their failure to act on the articles of the convention. One of the key proposals in the report to address this shortcoming was the inclusion in the 2021 census of a Cornish tick box for national identity.

The purpose of the census is clear and in many ways simple; it is designed to give an accurate picture of the demographic and social changes within the UK. I celebrate with the Scottish who were identified on the census form in the 2001 census, along with the English and the Northern Irish, of course. The process was, however, flawed because there was no provision for the Welsh. The matter was corrected for Wales in 2011, when 66% of people in Wales chose to identify as Welsh. Imagine the outrage today if the Scottish or Welsh were omitted from the next census. As I highlighted earlier, the Government's statement in 2014 said that the Cornish would now be afforded the same recognition as our Celtic cousins, yet on this simplest and most basic of things—the ability for people to declare themselves as Cornish in the census—the Government are falling short.

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): I am sitting not a million miles away from the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), who is an exiled Cornishman. There are many people outside Cornwall who have moved away, but who were born in Cornwall and would probably like to be able to tick the box on the census. Has my hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double) considered that?

Steve Double: I am grateful to my Cornish colleague for that intervention and for pointing out the hon. Member for Wycombe, who in fact attended the same school as me in Cornwall, so we have a great deal in common. He makes a very good point. This is not just about people currently living in Cornwall; it is about the right and opportunity for people across the country who count themselves Cornish—maybe by birth; maybe by ancestry—to identify themselves as Cornish.

The point has been made that there is the option under "Other" in the census to write "Cornish" as one's nationality. In fact, in 2011 a staggering 73,000 Cornish men and women chose to do so. I should declare an interest in saying that I was one of those 73,000 people. An interesting comparison is worth noting. Those 73,000 people represent about 14% of the residents of Cornwall. That is the same percentage of Welsh residents who wrote "Welsh" under the "Other" option in the 2001 census. In 2001, the inclusion of a specific tick box for "Welsh" increased the percentage of people identifying as Welsh from 14% to 66%. I am convinced that if a tick box was provided, we would see a similar increase in the percentage of people choosing Cornish as their identity. A dropdown menu provision for "Other" is not good enough.

Recognition by way of a tick box will not only satisfy those of us in the far west but enhance the accuracy of the census by allowing the many thousands of Cornish men and women from across the UK—the Cornish diaspora—to know that they can declare their Cornish identity. Gleaning accurate data is surely what the census is all about. We need to know how each nationality within the UK is faring: it is a crucial part of the exercise. We need the census to throw up the relevant and accurate data that can shape future policy for every group identified within the UK.

This issue is not just about the current generation—it is about our future and the protection and nurturing of our unique Cornish identity, culture and heritage. As I highlighted, over 73,000 people registered as Cornish in 2011. Thousands more would have done so if the option had been as straightforward as it is for the other nationalities. What is so telling is that among the young people of Cornwall—our schoolchildren—a clear and rapidly growing number now identify themselves as Cornish. Any argument that there is no demand to identify as Cornish, or that it is a fad of a bygone era, is erroneous. Our young people are proud to be Cornish and deserve the right to be able to say so in future. In fact, there is a growing movement within Cornwall to celebrate our unique identity and culture that is the strongest it has been for many, many years.

I understand the concerns of the Office for National Statistics—and I suspect the Government also—that if it allows a tick box for the Cornish in the next census, it will be overwhelmed with hundreds of other groups calling for their identity to be formally recognised in this way. I appreciate that this is a genuine concern. However, there is a very simple answer. The Cornish are the only nationality recognised by the Government under the framework convention who do not have the option of a tick box in the census—who are not recognised in this way. No other group can make that claim. In that regard, the case for the Cornish is unique. No one else can make the case for inclusion in the way that the Cornish can.

I am very grateful to be backed in this call by all six of Cornwall's MPs, by Cornwall Council, and by a whole raft of organisations from across Cornwall. I am calling on the Government to back our campaign for a Cornish tick box in the 2021 census and thereby take an important step towards fulfilling their responsibilities under the framework convention. In finishing, there is one simple thing left to be said: Kernow bys vyken—Cornwall forever.

9.49 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith): I sincerely thank my hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double) for securing this debate on Cornish national identity and the 2021 census. I am tempted to argue for a special Norfolk identity, but I will restrain myself, even though we have half an hour extra on the clock.

I make my comments in the sure knowledge that my hon. Friend is a proud Cornishman and a strong campaigner for Cornwall and recognition of the Cornish identity. I thank him, his colleagues and those behind the campaign for the work they have done to bring this issue to the House, as well as the other hon. Members who made brief contributions this evening. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where I know he will make strong arguments.

I would like to start by discussing why the census is important and what we do with the data, which is the practicality that I think we all want to get to. The data collected by the census underpins decisions both locally and nationally. The earliest census that could be described as such in this country was the Domesday Book, which was to catalogue assets for taxation; I am sure that that is not what my hon. Friend is looking for. The first official census in 1801 was conducted to monitor population growth and resources. In modern times, the data that the census provides underpins planning and funding for the provision of key services used by everybody, such as education and healthcare. The data allows us to identify and address unfairness and inequality in society, with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. The census also provides detailed data on small groups at a very local level in a way that other sources do not, so I understand the importance of this opportunity to capture better data on the Cornish identity.

Responsibility for delivery of the census in England and Wales sits with the independent Office for National Statistics. Since the last census in 2011, the ONS has been thoroughly preparing for the 2021 census, to ensure that it is fit for purpose, reflects the modern digital society in which we live and ultimately provides the evidence needed for Government and others to identify any areas of inequality in our society and act on them. The ONS is now completing its programme of research, consultation and analysis on the census, and its recommendations will inform the Government's census White Paper later this year.

I should stress that it is important that the ONS is given the time to get its recommendations right. It would not be appropriate for me or the Government to pre-empt its findings, but I know from meeting the ONS that it has listened broadly to stakeholders' views on the topics and questions for the 2021 census. It carried out a topic consultation in 2015, with the response published in 2016, and it has undertaken a programme of research and engagement with communities on a range of issues that need further consideration.

On the need for a Cornish tick box in the next census, the ONS is working to ensure that those who identify as Cornish can and will do so in the 2021 census through a tick box or another means. It has committed to work with Cornwall Council to improve the available analysis

on the Cornwall population from the 2021 census, building on feedback on what was provided in 2011. I know that the ONS has spoken with Cornwall Council and Cornish Members and continues to consider the evidence provided. I know that it will also engage with Cornish community groups and the council to tailor census communications and operations to the Cornish, to increase the response rate of self-identification. That is another point of practicality that I think we are all keen to see.

The consultative approach that the ONS has taken, and the fact that it continues to meet interested parties to reach a common view on the information that should be captured, is welcome. I understand from a recent meeting between the ONS and the council that there is a clear agreement that Cornwall needs better data on the Cornish population. I also know that the ONS is still deciding on, and open to arguments about, the best way to meet that need. It is excellent and timely for us to have this debate tonight, because it allows Cornish Members to bring forward their constituents' arguments, which they have done eloquently, and for those arguments to be considered by the ONS before such decisions are finalised.

Let me acknowledge the important and proud history and unique culture of Cornwall, alongside its distinctive language; I will not try to respond to the saying that my hon. Friend mentioned. That is of course fully recognised under the framework convention for the protection of national minorities, and in 2014 the Government recognised the unique identity of the Cornish, which acknowledged the importance to people in Cornwall of their proud history, culture and heritage. Since then, the Government have supported the work of Cornwall Council and its partners in encouraging the further development of Cornish culture and heritage, including with support for the Cornish language and funding for Cornwall Council in recent years.

Jim Shannon: We are not all from Cornwall, obviously, but those of us who are not—I am from Northern Ireland, from an Ulster Scots tradition, and my colleague from Wales, the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake), is from a Welsh tradition—support recognising Cornish culture, language, history and traditions. There is support for the very same thing from other nations within the great big United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Chloe Smith: I thank the hon. Gentleman for putting that on the record. I know from my meetings with him how proudly he, too, speaks up for his own culture and what it means for his community, and I respect that.

Let me turn to what we need to be able to do with census data. The crucial point is that we need to be able to understand the Cornish population, their circumstances and any issues specific to them. My hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay has argued that the Cornish are uniquely disadvantaged because, as he puts it, they are the only ethnic minority in the UK protected under the framework convention who do not have a tick box in the census. Let me try to set out why this is not a case of disadvantage, and how we may be able to achieve the same goals through a choice of means.

We want to ensure that all minorities are effectively represented in the 2021 census. For that reason—this is a very important point—the 2021 census will for the first time be a predominantly online census. It will be the first time that that has occurred, and it will provide the opportunity for all respondents to express their right to self-identify either through a tick box or a write-in option. I hear my hon. Friend's arguments about how a write-in option is not suitable, but let me try to put some of the points that the ONS feels are important and explain why we think the census will provide the data for which we are all looking as a common goal.

Historically, there has always been pressure to include more questions and response options in the census than can be accommodated without putting an unacceptable burden on members of the public in completing the form. This census is no exception, but because it will be primarily online, it will be quicker and easier for all respondents to identify themselves using free text. That will help us to produce richer and higher-quality analysis about communities without the need to include more and more tick boxes.

I understand the argument that a tick box has been seen as essential in getting to questions of cultural identity, such as ethnicity, national identity and language. However, the innovation of an online questionnaire means that we can add a drop-down box with a “search as you type” option. For example, if one of my hon. Friend's constituents began to type the letter C, it would immediately offer “Cornish” as an option to choice. Along with local campaigns and community engagement, that will aid our ability to raise awareness of the option. With such techniques, it will be possible for respondents to identify themselves more quickly and easily, and they will have every encouragement and opportunity to do so. The ONS will offer comprehensive guidance to support self-identification, whether through a tick box or a “search as you type” function. Those are two ways to meet the same goal. I just wanted to set out for my hon. Friends the alternatives that are under consideration.

10 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Paul Maynard.)

Chloe Smith: To get back to the core point that my hon. Friends have put before the House tonight, we know that tick boxes can provide guidance and assistance to make responding easier, but many questions have too many response options to make a tick box the only solution. That is why I am telling my hon. Friends that it is not the only solution and there are other ways to achieve the same goal.

Online data gathering allows improved ways of enabling respondents to identify themselves as they wish, and for a better quality of statistic to be generated by analysis of the responses. The bottom line is that the ONS absolutely recognises the need for better data on Cornish communities.

Scott Mann: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, especially on the point about statistics. I am slightly worried about having “search as you type”, so that “Cornish” pops up in a box. Some people might put

“Cornish” if there is a tick box, but would not necessarily start typing it—such as the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), who grew up in Cornwall, has moved away and probably would tick Cornish if there were a tick box. The ONS will miss a trick with the statistics if “Cornish” is not written in a proper drop-down box.

Chloe Smith: I take that point. The ONS is listening carefully to this debate, which is timely because it gives us a further opportunity to hear and take into account the views of Cornish hon. Members and the constituents for whom they speak so well tonight.

As I say, the ONS will consider all the evidence to decide how best to gather the data. We are here in a common goal—to try to get to the root of any inequalities or unfairness in society, for which we need quality data. We generally expect better data now, and an online census will bring other benefits. If I may illustrate why I say that we will have a much greater online service this year than 10 years ago, in 2011, 17% of census returns were made online. In 2021, we will look to achieve a 75% online return rate. It should be easier and quicker for individuals, and is much more cost-effective than completion and return of a paper form. I hope that it will also serve to encourage more completion among my hon. Friends' constituents. The ONS will provide detailed assistance to the public to encourage online completion, including a dedicated census contact centre, engagement with community groups, and work by census field staff on the doorstep.

Most importantly for Cornish national identity, the 2021 census will for the first time offer a bespoke analytical product to the Cornish. That really will be a step towards our shared goal of better data about the community, gathered in ways that may be new to those who have made this argument over the years. The core goal is to get the data and put it to use—the practicality that the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) mentioned. That is what will, I hope, allow us to improve the measurement of the socioeconomic conditions and the educational, health and housing outcomes of those who have identified as Cornish and native Cornish speakers. As I outlined, that will be hugely supported by ongoing engagement to ensure that the analysis is helpful to the specific needs of Cornwall Council and that it offers a genuine improvement in our understanding of what it means to be Cornish. That will be provided regardless of whether there is a tick-box solution or a write-in and “search as you type” solution.

I pay tribute again to my hon. Friend the Member for St Austell and Newquay for his campaigning ability in raising this matter. My hon. Friends, this team of six parliamentarians and local champions, have spoken for Cornwall loudly and clearly. They have come here tonight with a strong voice to express what it means to Cornwall for this data to come back from the census. I hope that in return I have been able to explain the position of the independent ONS, and to convey that the Government recognise and value Cornwall. I hope the 2021 census will allow the national identity to be fully expressed.

Question put and agreed to.

10.5 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Monday 11 June 2018

[IAN AUSTIN *in the Chair*]

Leaving the EU: Parliamentary Vote

4.30 pm

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 205169 relating to Parliament's vote on the deal for the UK's exit from the EU.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. I am pleased that the lead petitioner is in the Public Gallery to hear the debate. I present this petition on behalf of the over 113,000 people who signed it. The petition is quite straightforward:

“Parliament's vote on the Brexit deal must include an option to remain in the EU.

A lesser of two evils choice between a bad deal and no deal is not acceptable. Our country deserves better than Hobson's choice, and our MPs should be allowed to vote with their conscience to deliver what they believe is best for the country.”

It is either fortuitous or a strange coincidence that we are debating this petition the day before the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill returns to the House of Commons, having been through the House of Lords, where it was significantly amended—in fact, some might say, put through the wringer in several important ways.

The question of Parliament's role in Brexit has been running since the referendum—from Gina Miller successfully taking a case to the High Court in 2016 to argue that the Government could not trigger article 50 without consulting Parliament, through to the Government's announcement at the start of the year that they would put the final deal agreed between the UK and the European Union to a vote in both Houses of Parliament. The Government's position is that if the Commons does not approve the agreement they present to Parliament, the UK will leave the European Union on 29 March without a deal. That is a “take it or leave it” decision.

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the speech she is making and to the petitioners for raising this important subject. Does she agree that amendment 19, which is due to be voted on this week, would prevent the kind of Hobson's choice the petitioners are concerned about? Over 600 people in my constituency appear to be concerned about that, because they have signed this petition.

Liz Twist: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend, and I will touch on that point later in my speech.

If the agreement that the Government present to Parliament is not approved, the UK will leave the European Union on 29 March without a deal. That is a “take it or leave it” decision or, as the petitioners describe it, “Hobson's choice”, with no option of saying, as the petitioners do, that Parliament's vote on the Brexit deal must include an option to remain in the European Union. No matter what the outcome, there will be no chance for Members of Parliament to say, “It

is better for us to stay in the EU than to accept the deal that the Government manage to negotiate, whatever that ends up being”—something the petitioners believe is essential.

The Labour party has said all along that Parliament should have a meaningful vote on the terms of any withdrawal agreement the Prime Minister reaches with the European Union. It cannot be acceptable, as the Government originally proposed, for the Prime Minister simply to force through a deal on an issue of this importance or, as the Government now propose, for Parliament to have only a binary, “take it or leave it” choice. That is why Labour has repeatedly tried to amend the withdrawal Bill—to ensure that Parliament has a truly meaningful vote, and we have seen much discussion about what a meaningful vote means.

On Tuesday and Wednesday we will return to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and consider some of the 192 amendments made as it went through the House of Lords. For this debate, however, there is one particularly significant amendment, which is the subject of much discussion in the press, as well as inside and outside Parliament, and most of us will know from our constituents contacting us how much discussion there is about it. Amendment 19 looks at the role of Parliament in approving the outcome of negotiations with the European Union. The amendment, which was proposed by Viscount Hailsham and agreed by the Lords, says:

“Her Majesty's Government must follow any direction in relation to the negotiations under Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union which has been—

- (a) approved by a resolution of the House of Commons, and
- (b) subject to the consideration of a motion in the House of Lords.”

That amendment and the amendments on the customs union have the potential to give Parliament a much greater say on the final shape of the Brexit negotiations, but these are of course highly contentious amendments, which the Government are resisting. We must wait for the outcome of votes in the next two days to see what actually happens. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) said, the Lords amendment would ensure that, if any withdrawal agreement is rejected by the House of Commons, it would be for Parliament—not the Prime Minister—to decide the next steps via a resolution of the House. The amendment would also ensure that, in the event of no deal being reached, it would again be for Parliament to decide what happens next.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill raises important questions about the powers of Parliament. Those who argued for Brexit talked about taking back control. Many hon. Members and other people feel that it is important that Parliament has a strong role in shaping the negotiations, just as we must have real scrutiny of how European legislation is translated into our domestic law, which is also central to the Bill. The petitioners believe, however, that the choice before Members of Parliament must include the option to remain in the European Union, and not simply to change the exit deal, whatever that turns out to be. They believe that the no deal option is not acceptable. They are asking the Government to look at this again and to allow Members of Parliament to vote on a remain option. They are asking not for the referendum to be rerun, but for Members of Parliament—nearly two years on from the

[Liz Twist]

referendum, and with a great deal more detailed information out there on the real issues and on the real costs of Brexit to our economy and our communities—to have the option to vote for remain when the Government put the final agreement to the vote.

As MPs, we need to think very carefully about how we vote, bearing in mind the wishes of our constituents, how they voted—to leave or to remain—and whether their views have changed. It is my job, however, to speak for the petitioners on this important issue. They are clear that there should be a remain option when it comes to the vote.

As with all petitions, the Government have already responded online to this petition. They said that the final vote will be as they originally proposed:

“The British people voted to leave and the Government will implement their decision. The vote on the final deal will give Parliament the choice to accept the agreement or leave the EU with no agreement.”

I will let the Minister make her own response to the petitioners in more detail and explain that position to them, but it is pretty uncompromising. Barring a sudden change of mind from the Government, which I am sure the petitioners would welcome, it seems they may be disappointed in the Minister’s response.

The petitioners strongly believe that when it comes to the vote in Parliament, we, as Members of Parliament, should be given a remain option, based on the information now before us.

4.39 pm

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin, and to follow the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist), who gave a thoughtful speech that captured the sense of many people on the remain side of the argument. However, in any debate about Brexit or about Britain regaining sovereignty, we must be clear about why we were in the position we were in the first place.

We joined the European Economic Community in 1973. At that time, people thought of it as the common market. In 1975, we had a referendum. The decision in that referendum was overwhelming endorsement by the British people, who were about 2:1 in favour of remaining in the common market. Since then, the common market has morphed, with no direct say from the British people, into the European Community and the European Union. Once again, Parliament gave the decision to the British people as to whether we should stay or go. There is no doubt about what was decided or what is required.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): Out of the 17.4 million people who voted to leave the European Union, how many put on the ballot paper that they wanted to leave the single market and the customs union? The hon. Gentleman says that there is no doubt about it, so he must have the answer.

Chris Green: In the run-up to the referendum, it was abundantly clear from leave and remain campaigners, including the then Prime Minister and the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, that if we chose to leave the European Union, we would leave the single market and the customs union.

Peter Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Chris Green: No, I will not take too many interventions. I do not know how many sub-clauses there were in the Scottish referendum, but I suspect—

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): On that point, will my hon. Friend give way?

Chris Green: I will.

Colin Clark: There was a 72% turnout in the 2016 referendum. At the last election, the Labour party and the Conservative party stood on manifestos that pledged to deliver Brexit. With regard to the Scottish question, Scotland decided to stay in the United Kingdom. Is the point not that there has been a democratic opportunity and a once-in-a-lifetime referendum—interestingly, the Scottish referendum was supposed to be once-in-a-lifetime referendum? Does my hon. Friend agree that not to deliver on that would be an absolute betrayal of 17.4 million people, and of the 16 million people who took part on the other side of the referendum?

Chris Green: I do to some extent, but we have a healthy democracy and the debate carries on. E-petitions are an important part of that, and many other forms of democratic debate up and down the country are entirely legitimate.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD) *rose*—

Chris Green: For example, if the Liberal Democrats had won the 2017 general election with an overwhelming landslide, endorsing their view of staying in the EU, I would have taken that as a serious statement from the British people.

Wera Hobhouse: Given that we have introduced referendums into our parliamentary system, is it not the whole point that we have asked the people once, and the debate has moved on, so it is now imperative that we ask them again, because we want to have a healthy democracy? We need further clarification on the decisions that are being made about moving on.

Chris Green: The hon. Lady makes an important point about clarity and what people were voting for. We could debate every single general and local election, and the Scottish and the alternative vote referendums, in those terms, saying that the people did not understand and that we must try again until they get it right. I do not agree with that. When we take the question to the people, it is for both sides, and even for people in the middle who are undecided, to make their case and their argument.

Perhaps there were flaws in the timing of the referendum, but that was not down to anyone on the leave side. It was a remainer—the then Prime Minister, David Cameron—who decided the campaign’s timing. If there are any doubts or uncertainties about people not having enough information, or enough time to gather that information, accountability has to sit with the lead remainer, who was responsible for the timetable?

We must regain control over our laws, borders and money, and we must have the right to negotiate trade deals with countries around the world. The petition has 113,613 supporters, which is a substantial number, but it falls far short of the 17.4 million people who voted to leave the European Union, as has been highlighted.

In her opening remarks, the hon. Member for Blaydon described the e-petition as suggesting a choice between two evils, or of the lesser of two evils, but that is disappointing language from the remain campaign. To describe the decision of leave voters in terms of being between one evil and another suggests that leave voters voted for evil.

In my mind, there is no doubt about the feelings of the British people and the direction of travel they want us to take. Increasingly, whether people were undecided, voted leave or even voted remain, they just want politicians to get on with it, to deliver the result and to deliver a good no deal option or—my favoured option—a good deal with the European Union.

We, the British people, want a fantastic relationship with the European Union and our friends in Europe. We want a far better deal than World Trade Organisation most favoured nation status. That is in our power and the European Union's power. I urge the Minister to talk to all her friends and colleagues in the Department, to win that argument and win that deal.

4.46 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I thank the petitioners for bringing this debate to the House. It is a good debate to have. I have already made it clear that it is important to extend the argument about who should make the decision. Does it lie with Parliament or, in the end, with the people, whatever question we ask? That is the point I want to make.

The Liberal Democrats have long and consistently campaigned to let the people have the final say on the deal. That includes the question of remaining in the EU, for this reason:

“We should not ask people to vote on a blank sheet of paper and tell them to trust us to fill in the details afterwards. For referendums to be fair and compatible with our parliamentary process, we need the electors to be as well informed as possible and to know exactly what they are voting for.”—[*Official Report*, 26 November 2002; Vol. 395, c. 202.]

Those words were spoken by the now Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. I agree with him, and I wonder whether he agrees with himself.

Chris Green: Does the hon. Lady think that everyone who voted in the alternative vote referendum fully understood the alternative vote?

Wera Hobhouse: When a referendum result is so close, as was the case with the Brexit vote, and so crucial for the future of this country, it is important to provide clarification.

We are two years on from the 2016 referendum, and the Government's legitimacy for their version of Brexit is lessening. The “will of the people” is the last remaining argument as to why we have made the right decision and why the Government are going forward in this way. Although the discussion and information about what the UK can and cannot achieve when or if we leave the EU moves on all the time, we are repeatedly told that the referendum decision is fixed once and for all and that there can be no change, no update, no clarification, no confirmation and no review—we are stuck.

Chris Green: After the last referendum, we waited more than 40 years for the 2016 referendum. How frequent should referendums be in the future?

Wera Hobhouse: The hon. Gentleman addresses an important debate: what is the lifetime of a referendum? When can we say that a referendum decision has been respected? If he looks at referendums in other countries, he will see that the people of Greece made a decision that was not compatible, but they were asked several times, and that was brave. I think this Government should be brave enough to go for that.

Colin Clark *rose*—

Wera Hobhouse: I hope the hon. Gentleman will let me make a little progress.

We are stuck with a decision that was made in 2016. Why is that? Are the Government too afraid to find out what the people think now? Indeed, the last to be asked now are the people. That is why I continue to say that if we want to be truly democratic and if we truly believe in the will of the people, what is the problem with asking them again?

Colin Clark: The hon. Lady is making a powerful speech, but referendums hold a very strange place in the British constitution, because there is not really a constitutional position for them. Today's debate is about the legitimacy of a referendum. The Liberal Democrats are Unionists, so does she agree with the Scottish National party that there should be another independence referendum in Scotland because people's minds may or may not have changed?

Wera Hobhouse: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, but I do not believe that a discussion on the Brexit referendum should be swapped with one on the Scottish referendum.

Britain is a parliamentary democracy—the hon. Gentleman has pointed that out—and we have now introduced this strange element of a direct democracy and of asking the people directly. However, the Government are now not allowing any mechanism for confirming or updating that referendum, or allowing any say in the final deal. It is that deal that matters most now; it will affect the lives of British citizens for generations.

It is obvious that 650 MPs cannot update, confirm or review a decision by 33 million people, but the people themselves can and should be allowed to see through the decision-making process that they started. As the MP for Bath, I am fortunate enough to have a clear mandate from my constituents that reflects my own beliefs. However, many of my colleagues are torn either between their conscience and the majority vote in their constituency, or between their conscience and their party Whip.

In addition—I have said this before—the closeness and the fierce divide of the referendum vote have made it virtually impossible for many MPs to represent their constituents fairly. Ministers have on countless occasions changed their minds on Brexit. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union himself said on 24 January, concerning his previous support for remaining in the customs union: “New facts, new opinions”.

Much has changed since 2016; we know far more now than we did then. I will hold my hand up and say, “So do I. I didn't know everything.” Members of the public were told by the leave campaign that we could leave the European Union in an afternoon, but now even the hardest of hard Brexiteers will admit that it is

[*Wera Hobhouse*]

far more complicated and will take much longer than many expected. We were told that £350 million a week would go to the NHS; that has been quietly dropped. The potential conflict of leaving the customs union and keeping an open border on the island of Ireland was never mentioned once by the leave campaign, never mind fully understood; it is not fully understood even now.

Chris Green *rose*—

Wera Hobhouse: I would like to make some progress.

Who in 2016 mentioned Euratom, REACH—the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals—or Galileo? Information changes, and politicians move on and tweak, change and update, but they absolutely forbid the people to do so. They hide behind the false pretence that they respect the will of the people and democracy, but that is cynical and insincere. If the Government were truly interested in respecting the will of the people, they would ask them the question now, and again on the deal—although we do not even know whether there will be a deal—including the option to stay in the European Union.

I believe that the real answer is to give the people the final say on the deal. The people must finish what the people have started.

4.54 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): It is a pleasure to contribute to the debate under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bath (*Wera Hobhouse*) and hear her arguments, and to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (*Liz Twist*) lay out the case for the motion. As one would expect from a constituency such as mine, where 81% of people voted to remain in the European Union, a number of my constituents have signed the petition and it is a delight to project their voice this afternoon. Just today, we read that there will potentially be 4,000 job losses at Rolls-Royce and that Poundland is likely to go under, with 5,000 jobs lost, and I believe that over the weekend House of Fraser announced that it is closing a number of its flagship stores, which will affect many of our high streets.

Chris Green: When we look at our high streets, we are looking at our shops. Does what is happening reflect the nature of our transition out of the European Union or does it reflect, to some extent, the nature of our shopping habits, which are changing rapidly?

Catherine West: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention. I am sure it reflects trends such as the increased use of the internet to purchase products, but it is also a fundamental question of there being less money in people's pockets. For example, there is just as much footfall as there has ever been in the high street in Wood Green, which I represent, but all the shops are closing because people do not have money in their pockets to spend. That reflects the 30-year flatness of wages, which I believe has been a big contributor to people's dissatisfaction with traditional politics and led to some of the debate that we have ended up with.

Furthermore on the economy, of course, we have seen the drop in sterling, although it is slightly better now than it was just after the referendum result. However, we have also seen the effect on trade, in terms of uncertainty.

Colin Clark: The hon. Lady is citing specific statistics, so maybe she can answer two questions: why is employment so high; and why is the stock market at an ever-increasing level? How do those things reflect her argument about Brexit?

Catherine West: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention and I am very pleased that unemployment is now about 4%. That is something to be proud of and I am pleased that so many people are forcing themselves to go out to jobs that in other circumstances might not be that attractive. We know that most people—50% of the population—earn under £23,000. London MPs know that a lot of that money goes on rent for those in the private rented sector, and that those in the social housing sector still pay a lot of money for service charges and other things. Although I am very pleased about the employment statistics, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is, we cannot just celebrate on that one fact alone; we have to consider the wider meaning, in terms of the level of income and the other costs that must be borne.

There is another thing to mention, of course, about trade being one of the general indicators of the economy. Today, the *Financial Times* shows the huge drop-off in both exports and imports for the UK, which is very troubling. We cannot say whether that is Brexit-related, of course, but what we can say is that it is related to uncertainty. Also in today's *Financial Times*, I read that even the City of London—of course, as a London MP, I take an interest in jobs, not just the traditional City jobs but also those in all the supply chains that go into the City—seems to be losing its patience with the chaos around the Brexit negotiations. For example, when the Prime Minister gave her Mansion House speech, there was a lot of talk about, "Let's be positive. We can do better." However, there is now more and more concern from Catherine McGuinness, who is a leading member of the City of London corporation. For example, there is a real concern about the insurance industry and the financial services industry, and ensuring that we field the real economy efficiently. We feel that time is running out to mend the many fractures that Brexit has caused. For policy makers to have a chance of success, the City must first agree on its own priorities. So the City itself is confused, which is quite unusual for the City; City people are normally quite confident lobbyists, and rally both the Bank of England and the Treasury behind them.

Chris Green: I appreciate and recognise exactly what the hon. Lady is saying, but the strongest expression of that confidence and certainty about the future would be people choosing to remain in the City of London and the United Kingdom. Alternatively, they could head over to Paris and Frankfurt, but that has not happened in a substantial way; we do not want it to happen, but it has not happened in a substantial way. That goes against some of the fears that people had a while ago.

Catherine West: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, but I am not sure that he is accurate. My understanding is that many companies have now started

to set up subsidiaries in the Netherlands, Berlin and other places—perhaps New York—and it would be remiss of us not to take that seriously. The City has wanted to give the Government time, but it is now getting frustrated. I understand that during the recess, when we were off doing constituency work or having a little break, members of the City of London went to see the Prime Minister and came out a little dissatisfied—because they are worried, I guess, but also because of the lack of coherence in the Brexit strategy, which is something that I, as a London MP, am particularly worried about.

My next point is about the national health service. We are all well versed in what was on the side of the bus and the promises of £350 million for the NHS, so I shall not go over those, but I want to make a point about the workforce. We seem to be in a parallel universe. We know that Brexit will have an effect on migration and it is the stated desire of the Prime Minister to reduce migration, but when our GP clinics and our secondary care—our hospitals—are crying out for talented doctors and nurses to come and serve our constituents when they are ill, it seems rather unadvised that the Prime Minister refuses to at least look at the migration quotas she seems to have set herself.

The other big issue regarding migration is, of course, international students, who, along with education, are one of our best exports. The shadow Minister has done an awful lot of work in that regard and I have followed up on it, trying to raise his concerns and those of others about placing education at the heart of things as one of our proudest exports, and looking again at the target for students. At the moment, there is a cap on international students that is counted as part of the total immigration cap, which seems a bit like cutting off our nose to spite our face. I hope that we will consider that matter urgently, particularly now that we have a new Secretary of State, who might have a different view and a little more sway and that, following the Windrush and other scandals, we will try to take a much more sensible approach to immigration.

I do not think that any of us who are on Twitter will have missed how the tone of the debate has deteriorated somewhat since the referendum. My neighbouring MP, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), has received the most horrendous abuse, not just because he has spoken out clearly in favour of remaining in the EU—fine, that is his position—but because of the colour of his skin. We have seen that again with my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) and I am sure that other Members have also experienced terrible racist remarks. I cannot help thinking that that has been part of the whole Brexit package. Indeed, I feel that there was a lack of leadership, originally, by Mr Cameron. He has gone now so we cannot ask him to come before us, but he promised that referendum without even indicating his plans for the economy or anything else, including for tackling what has become a terribly xenophobic debate, particularly on social media.

I briefly want to mention the leave campaign funding. In the past couple of days, a number of emails have been revealed that show the sheer scale of contact between members of the public who funded that campaign and the Russian Government.

Chris Green: Is that the official leave campaign or another campaign?

Catherine West: That is a very good question, and I am sure that if we asked the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee they would get to the bottom of it if, indeed, the people who were requested to turn up did so. I have been astounded by the cheek of some people who will not come before a Committee of elected Members, and I am pleased that Mr Speaker has taken a firm line on that.

A point has been made that we need to develop more: is the funding for our political campaigning somehow being abused? Do we need to tighten up legislation, approaches and rules? I, too, am worried about that. We know that there is a rule that donations can come only from British residents who are on the electoral register but we must look behind the individual, at what they might be getting in return for their support for a particular side, as with the allegations in today's papers about Mr Banks's business interests and the sheer amount he gave to the leave campaign.

I want to touch on Northern Ireland. As someone who cares a lot about peace and is interested in all sorts of peace negotiations around the world, be they in Colombia, Cyprus or Israel and Palestine, I think that we have made much progress on peace in Northern Ireland. For me, that is the biggest issue, and not just on a pragmatic level. Before Christmas, in phase 1 of the Brexit negotiations, we saw that to be the sticking point, with everyone holding their breath as the Prime Minister spoke to Arlene Foster. That was a fudge, wasn't it? It really just slipped over because it was the end of phase 1. I have a horrible feeling that we will gallop up to the end of the Brexit process and there will be exactly the same issue. Therefore, with your permission, Mr Austin, I thought I might spend one minute going through what I believe to be important in relation to the Northern Ireland question.

Peace in Northern Ireland is one of the largest concerns for all parties negotiating the withdrawal from the European Union. Northern Ireland remains at the heart of the negotiations due to its unique history. Its 300-mile land border with the Republic of Ireland, its at times splintered political structures, its economy and the lasting terrorist threat continue to cause concern. Many now worry that its economic and political fabric could crack as the UK meanders towards a hard Brexit, in part because joint EU membership helps to underpin the Good Friday agreement. The Irish Government have ceded articles 2 and 3 of their constitution, which claim jurisdiction over the whole island of Ireland, willing to rely on collective European identity to reassure nationalists in Northern Ireland that the island will come closer together.

The EU has played a large role in boosting Northern Ireland's economy, through structural funds. In comparison with the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland benefits disproportionately from the common agricultural policy and if, as many expect, London's fiscal transfers do not match the lost EU funds, its economy will be harshly hit. Leaving the EU also puts Northern Ireland at risk of losing future funding for peace and reconciliation programmes.

Meanwhile, Ireland, the EU and the UK Government have all repeatedly made clear their opposition to a hard border, something that locals and campaigners say

[*Catherine West*]

could risk the peace process and hit cross-border trade and the economy. However, the UK Government currently rule out being in the customs union, and I await with bated breath the votes that come between now and 1 August to see how that resolves itself. In the absence of regulatory alignment, all sides are beginning to acknowledge that there will be a hard border, because what else could there be. That has led many of us, in different parties, to call for remaining in the customs union or, at a minimum, committing to regulatory alignment, and that is echoed by many, including Simon Coveney, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland's European Commissioner, Phil Hogan, and even Michel Barnier. We cannot ignore the question of Northern Ireland and I am sure, instinctively, that we will end up with that being the sticking point at 11.59 pm on the day that Brexit is decided.

Finally, on the wider geopolitical picture, this weekend Mr Trump made a number of strange statements, including a questioning of NATO. The idea that America would leave NATO is rather strange, but his speeches, if read carefully, appear to suggest that. That puts a rather different shine on our relationship with Europe and I, for one, am much more concerned to hug Europe closer because of that. Some of Mr Trump's values regarding not wanting to be part of the climate change process—

Chris Green: NATO is incredibly important, as are all our international relationships. In a conflict situation, would the hon. Lady depend more on Germany's 1.1% or 1.2% of GDP on defence spending, or the United States' 4%? Is the United States of America not living up to her international responsibilities in a way that Germany and many other European countries are not?

Catherine West: I do not think it was Mrs May or any of us who said we did not want the US to be in NATO. Unless I am mistaken—perhaps I am reading different newspapers—it was Mr Trump who was putting into question his commitment to NATO over the weekend. It raises questions in the same way as when he wanted to walk away from the Paris climate agreement. He was able basically to decide not to be part of that when almost every scientist internationally accepts that climate change is our greatest scientific challenge. In addition, some of his statements about ethnic minorities and the Muslim community in particular are deeply worrying. I feel they add to the sense of xenophobia that we are seeing not only in this country, but internationally. Such statements corrode our sense of our values as western powers—our values of human rights and a commitment to peace, stability and doing things right.

My deepest concern is about the international rules-based approach being deeply challenged by someone as important as Mr Trump. Last week, on the International Trade Committee visit to Geneva, I was able to speak to negotiators, who described the style of leadership as disruptive leadership. I am not sure what the best description for it is, except “deeply troubling”. This is a time for all of us in the west who are concerned about some of the international challenges to stick together. We should not tear ourselves apart or shout insults by tweet; we should pull ourselves together and face those challenges together. The whole debate on Brexit is corrosive. It

fractures what is so important right now, which is to stick up for our values of human rights, peace, stability and security. I hope those who signed the petition will look at this debate and know we are taking these issues very seriously.

5.12 pm

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Austin. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist), who introduced this debate very fairly, walking on eggshells as she did. I congratulate the petitioners, because it is right and proper that Parliament has the opportunity to debate these issues. I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West).

I want to keep my remarks very narrow, in the sense that I have been clear that I do not want another referendum. When I was in this place previously, I argued that the decision on the EU had to be taken by the British people. I was not directly involved in politics at the time of the referendum, but I thought the experience of the referendum was dreadful. It brought out the very worst in politicians and, dare I say, the public.

I am sure I am the only Member here who took part in the 1975 referendum, in which I voted. I was a member of the Labour party at the time—I have been one for 48 years now—and I remember that referendum being called out of weakness by the then Government, who were in direct conflict with their own party. There is nothing new in politics, is there? The referendum was conducted. It was not left versus right, because the left was split, the right was split and the centre was split, but compared with what happened in the recent referendum, it was so genteel. People actually argued their case. They did not involve themselves in personal invective, and they did not try to get money from wherever to allow the case not to be presented in the way that was best for the British public to understand, but slanted so that the British public ended up believing it was just about pure prejudice. That was not a good way to take the decision.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), who has since disappeared. I am clear that if we re-ran the referendum, things would not get any better. All the evidence is that another referendum would be much more divisive. What would it resolve? If leave won, it would confirm that leave had won, but that is the situation at the moment. If remain won, we would have “neverendum”, because there would have to be a play-off. That is the worry with having another referendum. I am someone who has argued that, in fundamental constitutional issues, there has to be a referendum, but I have changed my mind. I would be happy to bring forward a Bill to ban referendums in this country. They are alien to our form of parliamentary democracy. It might work in Switzerland or other countries, but it has not worked in this country. We have ended up with the worst-case scenario. We had a narrow victory on one side and a poor debate that did not yield the arguments that needed to be brought forward.

What is the alternative? It is about time Parliament reasserted its authority. We only end up with referendums when a Government do not feel they can get their business through and Parliament cops out and refuses to take responsibility. Parliament cannot cop out on

this matter anymore. When we come to the end of the negotiating period, it has to look at what is on the table. To be fair to the Government, this week we are all trying to pre-empt what we think the final deal will look like. Those of us who are partial towards the customs union hope that, at the very least, the Government will move on that issue. On other issues, we will have to see.

Hon. Members should remember that it takes two to tango. We can have all the arguments we like on this side, but if the other side—the EU—decides, “That is not what we want”, we are back to where we started. To my mind, we should rule out a second referendum. We should at least give the Government some opportunity to negotiate, but with pressure from the Opposition, because that is our job. We have to make the Government’s life fairly unbearable. We will do that this week, and we hope they lose a few of the Divisions, because that will make things much more interesting. That is what Oppositions do, and it is what Parliament is there for. Governments have to try to withstand that pressure. They may or may not. The one thing I feel absolutely certain about is that it will be a disaster if we go along the referendum path again. It will lead to even more division.

Catherine West: Given there seems to be an impasse within the Government on which direction to take, does my hon. Friend agree that when the deal is complete, it might help if the Prime Minister went back to the people and said, “Is this what you meant?”

Dr Drew: That is a wonderful notion, but what will come out of the negotiations, if anything, will be a complicated settlement. We could end up with no deal. That would be a disaster, because I fear we would then move towards free trade deals with Lord knows who. We have got a debate on Thursday on agriculture, which is my area of responsibility on the Opposition Front Bench. If we do not negotiate something, I fear we will end up with a real dog’s breakfast of agreements that we might be able to sign.

I know what my hon. Friend is saying. My problem is that it will still lead to an incredibly divisive outcome—people feel so strongly. Anyone who feels differently from me should say so and intervene. I have heard strong opinions on both sides, and I do not think that people have shifted, in the main. Some people will have done, because that is inevitable—some people shift between parties between elections, dare I say—but in the main, people are pretty clear in their views. If those opinions are stirred up by anybody or any side, things will only get worse.

We have to take responsibility, and it will not be easy. We are going to upset some people. Parliament will not necessarily be flavour of the month for those who feel we have come up with the wrong solution, but that is what they elect us for. That is why I have a problem with referendums. In a sense, they negate our power as parliamentarians to do what we believe is right. If people do not like it, they get rid of us. At the moment, if we go back to the referendum, I fear we will end up with an even more difficult outcome, whichever way it goes, and the debate will be dreadful, because what we have seen so far will be there with knobs on. People will feel even more strongly, and they will get up to even more antics because they believe that is their right. That is where we, as a democracy, will struggle, because we

have to put things back together. At the end of the day, whoever is in power will have to try and run things for the whole of the country, divided or not. I worry that the further apart we get and the more divided the debate is, the more difficult it will be to put things back together again.

Catherine West: I share my hon. Friend’s concern about referenda. However, our result was not like the Republic of Ireland’s recent referendum result of 66:33, or whatever the maths is, and the difference was so fine. Does he not accept that, although I am not a great fan of referenda, and given that Mr Cameron has led us this far, a referendum is perhaps the only thing that could give either a stamp of approval or overturn things? I do not put any value judgment on either position. I am talking about giving clarity.

Dr Drew: We always argue whether it is “referenda” or “referendums”, but I will stick to “referendums”. The problem with what my hon. Friend suggests is that I envisage a very close result again, whichever way it goes.

Chris Green: On the question of 52:48, a concern would be where to draw the line. The debate on the Scottish referendum result of 55:45 would then be opened up again, and we have to stop it now. A decision is a decision.

Dr Drew: Of course, the Scottish referendum had a 40% benchmark, which derailed the whole process for Scottish devolution for a time, so there are ways in which we can play tricks, but that is a problem. I do not think we can play tricks anymore. I think the general public will see through it and will feel let down.

We are going to take a lot of stick over the coming weeks and months—dare I say even years—but Parliament needs to reassert its authority to make decisions in the best interests of the people of this country. We individually stand or fall by that. It is easy to say that, eventually, there will be a fail-safe solution, but I fear that if we have got to that stage, it will not be a fail-safe at all and the people of this country will be at war with each other. I do not mean that in a nasty sense, but people’s opinions are divided on this issue. We might suggest having very strict guidelines on another referendum. There were supposedly guidelines on the previous one. Well, you could have fooled me. People simply misbehaved and said things that they thought were attractive and would win votes for their side, without any accountability whatever, so I would worry about that.

Parliament has to take a decision. It will be difficult. We have to get the Government back and hold them to account. We have to see what the final deal is. As I say, I fear a no deal situation. That might be where we push the Government back to say that that is not acceptable. We will be voting this week. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) on the Front Bench might have things to say about that—perhaps not today, but in future. We believe there will have to be a deal, but, as I say, the referendum that could follow it, which might result in a divided outcome, is the worst possible outcome, so please, Parliament, make a decision.

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr Drew: I was just on my peroration there, but I will give way.

Hugh Gaffney: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I am really worried that there has been no White Paper published. That is a big concern for me because people ask me questions about it. Should the Government be held to account for not delivering a White Paper to the people of Great Britain?

Dr Drew: I agree with my hon. Friend. It would be helpful if parliamentarians had the evidence to start with, so that we could make up our minds. The public will not read it and make a decision. They will base their decision on prejudice, which is what we, effectively, catalysed in the debate that took place in the previous referendum. So, please, Parliament, reassert authority, hold the Government to account, force them to get a deal, and let us see where we go from there.

5.24 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Thank you, Mr Austin, for allowing me to make a short speech. I apologise for being in the main Chamber, first for the Yemen statement and then for the G7 statement, but I had put in a request to speak in this debate when neither of those were scheduled.

I want to comment on a couple of points made by the hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Drew). He described the referendum two years ago as dreadful, and I agree with him on that point. I do not, however, agree with his conclusion that we should not have another referendum. It does not automatically follow that if we have a final say on the deal, or a people's vote, that that referendum would be dreadful as well. That is not necessarily the case. From talking to people on both sides of the argument, I have found that the discussion we should have had before the referendum is the one that we have had over the past two years. People's awareness of what it means is therefore much greater now than it was prior to June 2016. I am confident that, although any such campaign will never be 100% clean—I am certain of that—it will be a hell of a lot cleaner than the one we had two years ago, particularly if we make sure that certain safeguards are put in place, as has happened in referendums in other countries.

For instance, an independent arbiter can examine the claims made by both camps. I accept that, two years ago, people on both sides of the argument told porkies. They were, on occasion, mendacious and fantastical. On other occasions they were deluded, and in some cases their claims were all three of those things at once. We could have someone with the ability to say, "No, you cannot say that", and clamp down on it straightaway.

We also need a much higher degree of awareness and checks and balances in social media campaigning, so that every single advert that goes out on Facebook—if we allow it—has the equivalent of the "printed and published by" that appears on the bottom of our leaflets, and people can see who it comes from. If it comes from me, they will see, "Tom Brake, Liberal Democrats", and know it is an advert funded by me. Equally, if it comes from my Conservative or Labour opponent, they will know that as well. If it has nothing on the bottom of it and has therefore come from President Putin, they can draw their own conclusions about the possible source of that particular advert in a referendum campaign. I think we can do things differently.

There is another reason why opinions are so divided, to use the phrase of the hon. Member for Stroud. There is nothing to suggest that, as the Government steamroller through the proposals that some Conservative Brexiters love so much, the nation will not be anything other than even more divided that it was when it voted in June 2016. He might think otherwise. He might think that the Government will somehow, miraculously, manage the process, but they have not even managed to unite their own Front Benchers, so how will they unite the country behind their proposals? Frankly, that will not happen. If we do leave, we will be as divided as we were before June 2016.

In some ways, therefore, having a final say on the deal, or a people's vote, gives everyone the opportunity to look at what it means now that we have an understanding of what is involved. Rather than the European Union being about to give us billions of pounds, the truth is far from it: we are about to give it billions of pounds—up to £40 billion. If people understand the extent of what is involved, they will go into the campaign with a clearer understanding. If a people's vote were to take place and we had a 10-week campaign that was relatively fair and properly administered, and if the country voted 52-48 for whatever deal the Government had secured, as far as I am concerned that would be it. We would have voted to leave the European Union and we would go, even though I dislike intensely that approach. At least most people would feel that they had had the campaign to which they were entitled—but never got—in June 2016. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Stroud that proceeding in the way proposed by the Government will ensure that the country is not extremely divided.

The petition gives rise to the question whether there should be a people's vote, so I suppose the first thing to ask is whether one is wanted. The hon. Member for Stroud said that there has not been a shift in people's views. Most polls suggest that there has been a slight shift in favour of remain. In Northern Ireland, which perhaps has more knowledge than anywhere else of the impact of Brexit, there has been a very large shift in support for staying in the EU.

Anneliese Dodds: I gently point out that this debate is not on the subject of having a people's vote, but on Parliament's ability to have more options as part of a meaningful vote, including—specifically for the petitioners—the option of remaining in the EU. I just want to clarify that, because many thousands of people signed the petition and it is important that we talk about the exact subject.

Tom Brake: I am very happy to do that. Of course, I think of Members of Parliament as people. Clearly we are entitled to a people's vote, as are the people.

Does Parliament want to have a vote on this subject? Certainly, the Lords have made their views clear. From votes that have taken place so far, it seems there is perhaps not yet a majority in the House of Commons in favour of a people's vote or a parliamentary vote that would allow us to choose between the deal the Government secure and staying in the European Union. That would be a meaningful vote. Parliament's meaningful vote cannot be a choice between a deal that we know will be bad—the Government's impact assessments have told us that whatever deal they come up with will be bad for

us and shrink the UK economy—and crashing out of the European Union, which we know would be an absolute catastrophe and lead to blockages at every single port and airport around the country and to huge job losses. That is a not a meaningful vote. A meaningful vote would be one where the Prime Minister conceded that Members of Parliament could send it back.

Frankly, I think the Government are going to come up with a deal that no one likes. Which Member of Parliament, when the Government come forward with a deal, will stand up and say, “This is a brilliant deal—I absolutely love it”? I do not think a single Member of Parliament will stand up and say, “The deal the Government have struck is brilliant.” I will not, because I am a remainer, but nor will the members of the European Research Group, because they can see that the Government are making compromises. I suspect we will end up in a position where Members of Parliament are presented with a deal that no one will support.

Catherine West: Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on the closeness of the original vote? A no-deal exit is so far from any interpretation of the very close original referendum result. It would be different if it were a soft Brexit. Perhaps it could be argued that that was okay, but a no-deal exit is so different from that 52% to 48% result. We all have to interpret the wishes of our constituents, but no deal is so far removed from what people wanted from Brexit in the best case scenario.

Tom Brake: I agree entirely with the hon. Lady. Members of Parliament should be offered a choice that reflects the choices that people made in the EU referendum campaign. I certainly cannot remember anyone saying to me, “I think the best thing for the United Kingdom would be to crash out overnight, on World Trade Organisation rules. That would be brilliant for British businesses and jobs.” If anyone had a constituent come to them and say, “That’s a fantastic solution,” they should stick their hand up now. No one will do so, because no one thought that that was a solution. Yet it seems that that is the choice that Members of Parliament will be offered.

Either we go for a deal that no Member of Parliament will support, whether they are a supporter of the ERG or a remainer like me, or we go for no deal, which nobody has ever supported from the outset. We are in a strange position. If the Government want to do this the right way, I suggest to them that remaining in the EU should be on the ballot paper. If it is, we might end up with a parliamentary outcome that reflects more closely the views of Members of Parliament and possibly those of the public more generally.

Members of Parliament should have a meaningful vote, for the reasons that I have set out. We are entitled to a real choice—not a Hobson’s choice between something catastrophic and something even more catastrophic. I will touch briefly on why there should also be a people’s vote. I have heard worrying reports from some Members of Parliament. Unfortunately, during the EU referendum campaign two years ago we had the murder of Jo Cox. Since then, Members of Parliament have been threatened for their views on our membership of the European Union. The only threats I have had are the comments that everyone who stands at a stall in favour of remain gets. A person stops, says, “You’re a traitor,” and then walks off.

That is the only sort of threat I have had, but I am aware that other Members of Parliament have had much more serious ones. There is a question mark over the extent to which they will be able to vote fairly and cleanly in the forthcoming votes. Potentially, a very small number of votes will determine the outcome, one way or the other. If Members of Parliament are scared of making the decision that they think is right because they have had threats to their lives—often the threats are not as serious as that, but they still have to be reported to the police—that is another reason why throwing this open to the country might be the right thing to do.

I thank the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) for her earlier intervention, ensuring that I came back on track and that, as opposed to focusing all my effort on the people’s vote, I came back to the parliamentary vote, which is just as significant.

Dr Drew: My worry is that whatever pressure we come under in this place and outside, our role in another referendum would be even more dangerously vulnerable, because of the nature of that debate. The right hon. Gentleman said earlier that it would be a better debate. I wish I believed him, but I think it would be a worse debate.

Tom Brake: We are each entitled to our views. I do not know what level of engagement the hon. Gentleman has had with people in his constituency or further afield, but all the discussions we are now having about whether the European arrest warrant will continue, the European Aviation Safety Agency, the European Medicines Agency, and whether we should comply with EU standards on products are, frankly, discussions that were not had before the referendum. They are being had now, and I believe there is a greater awareness of the implications than there was before. That is why I have a hope, though this is not a certainty, that were such a referendum to take place it would be better informed than the previous one.

I should not be overly indulgent, Mr Austin, given that you have allowed me to speak in special circumstances. I congratulate the petitioners on securing more than 100,000 signatures, and on reinforcing the point that not only should there be a people’s vote in the wider country, but Members of Parliament are entitled to be treated as grown-ups and have the opportunity to take part in a meaningful vote—not one that presents us with two options that are completely unacceptable.

5.39 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): It is a pleasure to begin summing up the debate. I commend the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) for the detailed, well-informed way in which she presented the petitioners’ argument. Thank you, Mr Austin, for relaxing the dress code for those of us with a slightly different thermostat. Hon. Members will be immensely relieved to know that I do not intend to adopt the dress code that may have been sported by the hon. Lady’s constituents in Blaydon and people in other parts of the great city of Newcastle upon Tyne at the weekend—that might be a wee bit much for the parliamentary cameras.

We have had an interesting debate, but disappointingly a lot of hon. Members confused the question of a meaningful vote in the House of Commons with the

[*Peter Grant*]

question of a meaningful vote in another referendum. Frankly, that is disrespectful to the petitioners. I understand why people tend to conjoin the two proposals, but the arguments for and against them are completely different. I will focus on the argument for giving elected Members of Parliament a meaningful vote once we know the full details of the deal that has—or, heaven forbid, has not—been struck at the end of the negotiation process. Let us remember that the negotiation process has about four months to go, perhaps five, if we are lucky, so we are running out of time.

The hon. Member for Bolton West (Chris Green) made a stirring speech, but missed the point entirely. I even gave him the chance to come to the point when I asked him how many people who voted in the referendum said in their vote that they wanted to leave the customs union and the single market. The answer is absolutely none. I do not know how many of those 17.4 million people wanted to leave both of those institutions. Perhaps all of them did; perhaps none of them did. We gave people a simple, binary, either/or choice on a question that was far too complicated to be resolved in its entirety by such a vote.

It is worth reminding the hon. Gentleman that the manifesto on which his party got its only overall majority in this place in 25 years said that we would stay in the single market. The manifesto on which it threw away its overall majority—against what, to begin with, looked like an utterly disorganised and divided Opposition—was the one in which it said that we would leave the single market.

Chris Green: I have seen numerous clips on television and read numerous articles in which campaigners from both the leave and the remain campaigns clearly stated that if we voted to leave the European Union, we would leave the single market and the customs union. I have seen abundant examples of people saying that. I am in no doubt that my constituents were perfectly clear about that.

Peter Grant: I have seen abundant statements from leading leave campaigners that said that if we left the European Union we would get £375 million for the health service. I have also seen abundant statements from the hon. Gentleman's colleagues in the Scottish Conservative party who said that voting for me to come down here was a declaration of a desire for Scottish independence. Sadly, it was not; we need a bit more than that.

I do not understand the nonsensical idea that the interpretation of any electoral contest should be dictated by what the losers said was going to happen. What a ridiculous way of interpreting a democratic contest! Most Opposition Members who spoke referred to the serious flaws in the way the referendum was set up and conducted, and the way the referendum rules were enforced—or, as is becoming increasingly clear, were not enforced. The fact is that the referendum produced a result. On a UK-wide basis, it produced a result; in England and Wales, it produced a result; in Scotland and Northern Ireland, it produced a different result, and we ain't going to let people forget that in a hurry.

The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse)—my colleague on the Exiting the European Union Committee—rightly drew attention to a number of the

false promises that were made during the leave campaign. It is a complete fudge to say, “That wasnae our leave campaign; it was somebody else's leave campaign. A big bad boy leave campaign done it, and then they ran away”—in some cases, they ran away to become Foreign Secretary.

Chris Green: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Peter Grant: The hon. Gentleman has had enough chances to speak, between his substantive speech and his interventions. I note that when questions are raised about the conduct of the leave campaign, he wants to know which leave campaign it was. The question, then, is, which leave campaign won the referendum? If we do not know that, we cannot possibly know which version of leave people voted for.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), who is backed up by a substantial majority in her constituency—her constituents are clearly in favour of remaining in the European Union—also drew attention to some of the flaws in the process. Questions must be asked about who provided the massive funding for the leave campaign. I know that opinion polls can sometimes be misleading, but there are certainly many indications that, if it is established that there was something seriously dodgy about how any of the leave campaigns were funded, even people who voted to leave will see that as cheating. That is simply not the way we do what passes for democracy in this place and in these islands.

Catherine West: The hon. Gentleman is making some very important points. Does he agree that, once we know more and journalists have an opportunity to uncover more—perhaps in their own emails—we might discover that there should be a police investigation into some of those worrying issues, such as how the money that pushed the vote in a certain direction was amassed?

Peter Grant: Some of the revelations of the past few days could certainly lead to that. We now need to ensure those in charge of the investigations have the information they need and are co-operated with fully when they carry them out. That, of course, includes Select Committees of this Parliament. It is fascinating that some of the champions of the “bring sovereignty back to Parliament” brigade ran a mile when Parliament asked them to come in and account for the way they ran their campaigns, but the leave campaign has been full of contradictions from the beginning.

The hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Drew) made an interesting speech. He, too, tended to talk about a second referendum, although he made the point that it is possible to reject the idea of another referendum while supporting the idea that Members of Parliament, who have been guaranteed a vote, have to be given a meaningful vote. I do not think that choosing between an option the Prime Minister says is unpalatable and one she says is unacceptable is anything like a meaningful vote.

I find it extraordinary that a Prime Minister who has told us so often that our relationship with the European Union cannot be based on a binary choice is so obsessed with giving us a binary choice when it comes to the crunch. She told us in October 2016 that controlling immigration is not a binary decision. In March 2017, she said:

“It is wrong to think of the single market as a binary issue”—
[*Official Report*, 14 March 2017; Vol. 623, c. 190.]

In October 2016, she said that

“the way in which you deal with the customs union is not a binary choice”—[*Official Report*, 24 October 2016; Vol. 616, c. 35.]

She must have meant it about the customs union, because she repeated that in November 2016, February 2017 and March 2018. That is only in the House of Commons *Hansard*. That does not include the number of times she has made the same comments at press conferences and in fancy speeches. In fact, the only time the Government seem to think that this is a binary question is whenever they want a decision to be made. In the referendum, we had a binary choice—in or out of the European Union, without any consideration of the infinite variety of what in or out could be. The Government palmed off any attempt to amend the article 50 Bill. We either had to support it in its entirety or reject it. In the first major speech the Prime Minister made about the European Union, she made a binary decision that we were leaving the customs union and the single market, before anybody, including the Prime Minister herself, had the faintest clue about where we would go after we had left those destinations.

Incidentally, I can advise the hon. Member for Bolton West that there is no such thing as a good no deal at the end of these negotiations. There is no such thing as a no deal that is better than a bad deal. Even the Government could not negotiate a deal worse than what no deal would mean for the people of these islands.

We are now being told that, when it comes to the last chance to avoid a catastrophic hard Brexit, we will be presented with a choice between a possibly horrific deal that the Government have agreed with the European Union and an even more horrific deal that they have failed to agree.

Chris Green: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is incumbent not only on our Government but on the European Union to do the best thing for the peoples of Europe, which is to have a good negotiation and a good deal when we leave the EU?

Peter Grant: A better way of dealing with it is for the Parliament whose job is to hold the United Kingdom Government to account to concentrate on doing that and let our MEPs hold the European Commission and the European Council to account. The potential catastrophes at the end of the Brexit negotiations are piling up not because the European Union negotiators are not looking after the interests of the population of Europe, but because the United Kingdom Government are not looking after the interests of the people of the United Kingdom. They are looking after their own political skins more than anything else.

Last week’s stand-off between the Prime Minister and the Brexit Secretary is a perfect example of that. So they go to nose to nose, probably both threatening to resign if they do not get their own way, and they come up with some kind of fudge. They then realise that they have been so busy fighting to score points off each other that no one has had the idea of trying to put together a solution that will be even vaguely acceptable to our colleagues in the European Union.

The hard-line Brexiters are bitterly disappointed that Europe has not fallen apart. The 27 remaining member states of the European Union are doing what

Europeans do well in a crisis: they are sticking together. Speak to parliamentarians and Ministers in almost any of the 27 countries and there is no suggestion that the Foreign Secretary or the International Trade Secretary will somehow drive wedges between our neighbours in mainland Europe. That will simply not happen, and the sooner the UK Government understand that the better.

The UK Government need to understand that they took a unilateral decision—without the backing of a referendum—to leave the customs union and the single market, and only then started to look at what the consequences might be. We cannot blame the Europeans for that, or the Irish for the catastrophe that the Government may be stoking up on the Irish border; the catastrophe is entirely of the United Kingdom’s making, and it is entirely up to the United Kingdom to sort it out. We cannot ask everyone else to sort out the mess that our own Government have made for us.

There has to be a meaningful vote in Parliament at the end of the process. There has to be a meaningful chance for the devolved nations to have a say—the voices of the devolved nations have been silenced throughout, despite all the promises about them being listened to and respected. None of the three devolved nations has had any real chance to influence the discussions.

The Prime Minister wants us to have a straight binary choice between unpalatable and unacceptable. I hope that we will now say to the Prime Minister and the rest of the Government that neither of those solutions is an acceptable position to put this Parliament in. At the last gasp, Parliament should have the opportunity to say, “No, Prime Minister, we’re not doing it—take it back and think again”—[*Interruption.*]

Ian Austin (in the Chair): Order. [HON. MEMBERS: “It was outside!”] Was it? I thought it was someone’s phone in the Chamber. Apologies. I call Peter Grant—[*Interruption.*]

Tom Brake: Demonstrators outside are saying, “Stop Brexit!” Good timing.

Peter Grant: They are indeed. I can speak for longer if you want, Mr Austin, but—

Ian Austin (in the Chair): I thought that was coming from someone’s phone—apologies. Had you finished?

Peter Grant: I would love to have that on my phone, but I had finished.

5.52 pm

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to wind up the debate on behalf of the Opposition with you in the Chair, Mr Austin. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) on the thoughtful way in which she presented the feelings of the petitioners. I also congratulate the petitioners on their engagement in this process.

The debate is timely—that is an understatement, given the week that we have ahead. Tomorrow the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill returns to the Commons, and this issue will be at the very heart of those discussions, because it is critical. The petitioners could have expected many more colleagues from all parties and a much longer debate had we not been

[*Paul Blomfield*]

preparing for discussion of the Bill this week. If anyone gets bored with that, we also have Brexit oral questions on Thursday, so it is a Brexit-packed week in Parliament.

The current situation is clearly something of a national disaster. We are having the most important negotiations for our country since the second world war, but we are being led by the most dysfunctional Government in our lifetimes. The uncertainty created by that was highlighted powerfully by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) in terms of the impact on our economy. We have four months to go until the October conclusion of the negotiations. After two years, with just four months left, we see open warfare in the Cabinet. The Government are still incapable—this is quite extraordinary—of publishing the negotiating objectives White Paper they promised only four weeks ago.

Catherine West: Is my hon. Friend surprised that foreign direct investment has dropped by 90% from 2016 to today?

Paul Blomfield: I am not surprised, frankly. A couple of weeks ago, I was in Strasbourg talking to colleagues from different parties and countries, and they are shocked by Britain at the moment. Whatever their differences have been with us in the past, they always respected Britain as having an effective Government with a well-oiled diplomatic machine and being clear on their objectives and how to achieve them. They cannot believe the Government's shambles, creating the uncertainty that my hon. Friend spoke about.

We still have no solution to the Irish border and to fulfilling the obligation made by the Government. We are no further forward on plans to protect what was originally described as frictionless trade—the Government are now backtracking on that and talking about a more limited ambition. We certainly have no clarity on how they will achieve the exact same benefits that we now enjoy in the single market and the customs union—a negotiating aim that they set for themselves and that the Prime Minister has repeated.

[GERAINT DAVIES *in the Chair*]

The open warfare is incredible. Only last week the Foreign Secretary unfavourably compared the Prime Minister's negotiating approach with that of Donald Trump. Is that what we have come to? The holder of one of the key offices of state is undermining his own Prime Minister and, indeed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said a little while ago on national television that he was being openly undermined and briefed against by other members of the Cabinet. This is a shocking position to be in.

With the Government paralysed by their own divisions, it looks increasingly as if Parliament will need—to coin a phrase—to take back control. It is ironic that some of the most vocal supporters of leaving the European Union, who made grand demands about parliamentary sovereignty central to their campaign, are so reluctant to concede that parliamentary sovereignty at this vital time. Those who cried foul about being a vassal state during the transition period seem to want a vassal Parliament in these vital negotiations. At this critical

juncture, they say yes, they want parliamentary sovereignty—but not just yet, and not if it undermines their desire for the most extreme Brexit.

Wera Hobhouse: Does that not demonstrate that the hard Brexiters want Brexit at any cost, including the cost of democracy?

Paul Blomfield: That is a point that I have made on the Floor of the House: there are those within the governing party—though clearly a minority—who want Brexit at any cost to the political stability of our continent and to the economy of this country. They are driven by Brexit above everything, and the Labour party and I do not believe that that is in the interests of this country.

Since First Reading, having a meaningful vote for Parliament on the final deal has been one of the Labour party's key tests for the withdrawal Bill. We have been clear that a binary “take it or leave it” vote, in a zero-sum game tactic from the Government, will in no way constitute a meaningful vote. Crucially, that view unites Members across parties, and that is why the House voted last December for the amendment moved by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), to give Parliament a meaningful vote on the withdrawal agreement—to the consternation of the Government.

The Government immediately looked for wriggle room to avoid meeting that ambition of Parliament. The Lords therefore added greater clarity about what constitutes a meaningful vote, by accepting the amendment moved by the Conservative peer, Viscount Hailsham, which provides for a motion and an Act and, in the event of the motion not passing, for any decision on the next steps to be firmly in Parliament's hands. With two defeats under their belt on the issue, the Government have now moved their own amendment—but they have not moved far enough.

Peter Grant: Does the hon. Gentleman not think it slightly ironic that the Government and their friends at the *Daily Mail* are decrying the anti-patriotic behaviour of lordships who agreed 15 amendments that the Government did not like at the same time as agreeing 160-plus amendments that the Government did like?

Paul Blomfield: The hon. Gentleman makes a very fair point. There has been a series of contradictions over the years in the position that some extreme Brexiters have taken on the House of Lords—some have been its greatest champions and opponents of its reform.

Let me come back to the Government's amendment. If the House was to vote down a motion under their proposals, Parliament would lose all influence. We would get no more than a statement from the Government informing us how they will proceed, frustrating the ambition of the vote that we had in December. Let us be clear: the Government's amendment does not stop them sidelining Parliament from a crucial decision that will determine our future relationship with the EU, and nor does it prevent us from crashing out without a deal.

Viscount Hailsham's amendment is explicit that if we do not accept the Government's deal, it is for Parliament to determine the next steps. We will not be boxed into accepting “take it or leave it” options. We support the amendment because, as my hon. Friend the Member for

Stroud (Dr Drew) pointed out, it is Parliament that is elected to determine the country's future. Viscount Hailsham's amendment would ensure Parliament directs the Government on how to proceed in the article 50 negotiations, in whatever way it sees fit at that time.

It is right that, in the words of the petition,

"A lesser of two evils choice between a bad deal and no deal is not acceptable. Our country deserves better than Hobson's choice".

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bolton West (Chris Green) is no longer in his seat; it is unfortunate that he misrepresented the petition's objective and the use of "evil". I do not think that the petitioners mean that a deal of some sort would in no sense be acceptable; their words were simply that the

"choice between a bad deal and no deal"

is not.

When Parliament makes a decision, all options have to be open, but the petitioners need to recognise that Parliament does not have the political mandate to overturn the referendum. To do so would create a democratic crisis. Clearly, some argue for a further referendum—those arguments were exercised today by the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse); the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake), although at one point he seemed confused about which petition he was talking about; and, in a different way, by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud. But there is no indication of majority public support for a further referendum. There is growing support for a public vote on the final deal, but when polled, people do not want staying in the EU necessarily to be an option on the ballot paper—they are seeking a choice between that deal and a better deal, without looking back at the original referendum choice.

Tom Brake: If the hon. Gentleman has ruled out the option of a referendum on the deal, what solution does he see to the problem that he has identified? If Parliament makes a decision that stops the process, how will the country get out of that democratic dilemma?

Paul Blomfield: I appreciate the Liberal Democrats' love of referendums, but I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, as far back as 2010, it was the Liberal Democrats who called for a referendum on our membership of the European Union—at the time, the Labour party opposed it—for that to be a decisive vote and for Parliament to accept the outcome. They are in a bit of a difficult position as they argue their point.

Wera Hobhouse: I do not think the hon. Gentleman answered my right hon. Friend's question, so it would be nice to hear his answer. Precisely because we believe in debate and in the sensible arguments coming forward in the end, there is no contradiction in our saying, "Let's discuss it to the end and take it to the people in the end." That is the most democratic way forward.

Paul Blomfield: Let me return to the right hon. Gentleman's question: it is not possible for us at this stage to predict how Parliament should exercise its response to the final deal. We need all the options to be available. I was simply pointing out that when the Liberal Democrats called for the 2016 referendum, they said that the results should be binding. It is a little ironic that, just as they jumped on that bandwagon, they are jumping on this one.

Mr Austin—sorry, Mr Davies—

Geraint Davies (in the Chair): I am the new Dr Who.

Paul Blomfield: That was a seamless transition, Mr Davies.

The majority in Parliament respect the referendum result and those who voted in it, too. That majority knows that people voted to get out of the EU but that they did not vote to lose out. The majority wants a sensible approach to Brexit—no longer being in the EU but being in a customs union, with the closest possible relationship with the single market and continuing membership of the agencies that we built together.

The hon. Member for Bolton West was wrong in his characterisation of Labour's position; our position was clear in our manifesto at the last election. The Prime Minister should reach out to the majority in Parliament and the majority in the country. If she comes back in October with a deal that fails the British people, it will be Parliament's duty to set the direction for the next steps.

6.7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman): I thank the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) for opening and contributing to the debate on behalf of the Petitions Committee, and for speaking for the more than 100,000 people who signed the petition. The petition calls for Parliament's vote on the Brexit deal to include an option to remain in the European Union. I applaud the way in which she presented the heartfelt views of the many people who took the time to sign the petition.

I thank also all those who spoke, whether in support of or in opposition to the petition. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton West (Chris Green) provided a balanced speech in which he acknowledged the vibrant democracy and lively debate that Brexit provokes and reflects. He has been a principled campaigner not only for his constituents but for the leave campaign. He made a powerful contribution.

The hon. Members for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) made thoughtful contributions, too. I was, however, concerned to hear a high number of negative words; the Labour spokesperson, the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield), used the words, "catastrophe", "disaster" and "warfare". I must challenge the pessimism of hon. Members—I disagree with it and I will talk about that later.

I echo the sentiment of the hon. Member for Sheffield Central in response to the calls for a second referendum by the hon. Member for Bath and the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake). It is at odds with what their erstwhile leader Nick Clegg pledged in his now famous leaflet that called for a "real referendum" on the European Union, to settle the question once and for all. I do not know about them, but the events of 2016 looked pretty real and authentic to me. In their call for a second referendum, they are slightly at odds with what their previous leader advocated.

Tom Brake: Will the Minister feel that the events of 2016 were as real as she states if, for instance, police investigations determine that one of the leave campaigns—Vote Leave and BeLeave—in fact broke the law with their campaigning?

Suella Braverman: I am not going to comment on the speculative and hypothetical theories that are being circulated, but it is clear that the accusations that the right hon. Gentleman puts are not against the official campaign—the organisation that was nominated to lead the leave campaign in the 2016 referendum.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green made an interesting and wide-ranging speech about many aspects of the European Union—not least the economic case for remaining in the EU, if it is fair to describe it in that way—but again, I disagree with her sentiments. Output in the service sector is up, consumer spending is up, output in the manufacturing and construction sectors is up, growth forecasts have been revised up, foreign direct investment projects are up and unemployment is at a 40-year low—all that despite Brexit—so I question what economic picture she refers to.

Catherine West: What does the Minister make of the 90% drop in foreign direct investment, which has been commented on in the financial pages of every major newspaper? I am referring not to projects—I noticed that she qualified what she said by referring to projects—but to the 90% drop in FDI. Further, what does she make of the drop in house prices in high-value areas, which has an impact on supply chains?

Suella Braverman: The hon. Lady can refer to the Department for International Trade figures that I relied on, which show that foreign direct investment projects have been on the increase since the referendum. More broadly, we can also look at the number of global companies that are choosing the UK as an investment location. Most recently, Amazon announced the creation of 2,500 jobs by the end of this year. If that is not a vote of confidence in the British economy, I do not know what is.

Out of respect for the strength of our democracy and the public's trust in our democratic institutions, I cannot respond in the way that the 100,000-plus signatories to the petition may wish me to. Simply put, remaining in the EU is not an option. I do not say that lightly, as I recognise the strength of feeling about this issue on both sides of the debate. The Government's position is clear: we will respect the result of the referendum. The UK will not remain a member of the European Union. We are also clear, as a matter of firm policy, that our notification under article 50 will not be withdrawn. We will leave the European Union on 29 March 2019.

Before I turn to Members' specific questions, let me set out why that is our policy and how it will be reflected in our approach to the vote on the withdrawal agreement and the terms of our future relationship. When voters walked into polling booths on 23 June 2016, they had received through their doors a leaflet from the Government that set out very clearly, with no room for misunderstanding or misinterpretation:

“This is your decision. The Government will implement what you decide.”

That decision was equally clear. Voters were asked:

“Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?”

On 23 June 2016, 72% of the electorate voted on that question, and 17.4 million of them—52% of those who voted—made a clear and unambiguous decision. They instructed the Government to take the UK out of the EU—to leave.

Peter Grant: Although I do not agree with that decision, I accept that that instruction was given. Can the Minister tell me who instructed the Government to leave the customs union and the single market?

Suella Braverman: To me and to the millions of people who listened to any of the debate in the run-up to that important vote—as I said, there was a record turnout in many constituencies—it is clear that it was said time and again that leaving the European Union would mean leaving the customs union and the single market. Someone would have had to be pretty isolated and switched off to ignore that central feature of the debate.

That is the biggest democratic mandate for a course of action achieved by any Government in the United Kingdom. After the referendum, the House voted by a clear majority to authorise the Prime Minister to trigger article 50, which provided the legal basis for our withdrawal and commenced the leaving process. In the recent general election, more than 80% of people voted for parties committed to respecting the result of the referendum. That is why I must say at this point that the amendments recently tabled by Labour, and the move in its policy, confirm our worst suspicions. Labour's policy is now for us to remain in the single market and the customs union, and it seems likely to accept free movement of people. That looks like remain, it sounds like remain—yes, it is a policy in favour of remaining in the EU.

The instruction from the referendum cannot be ignored. The Government are clear that the British people voted to leave the EU, so that is what we must do. As the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU noted,

“the electorate voted for a Government to give them a referendum. Parliament voted to hold the referendum, the people voted in that referendum, and we are now honouring the result of that referendum, as we said we would.”—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 818.]

The Prime Minister said in October:

“This is about more than the decision to leave the EU; it is about whether the public can trust their politicians to put in place the decision they took.”—[*Official Report*, 23 October 2017; Vol. 630, c. 45.]

The UK can trust this Government to honour the referendum result. We recognise that to do otherwise would be to undermine the decision of the British people, which would have worrying implications for our democracy.

Right hon. and hon. Members may regret the chain of events I have described, and they may regret that there was not a caveat that the result of the referendum could be overturned by Parliament if it did not like the result of the negotiations, but the time to add that caveat was when the European Union Referendum Act 2015 was passed. I note that many Members in the Chamber—the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green, the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, and the shadow Minister, for instance—voted in favour of passing that Act. That Act did not say that the referendum result would be the best of three, it did not say that, if we did not like the first result, we could go away and rerun the referendum to get the result we wanted, and it did not say that there had to be a certain result. That was the time to make these suggestions—not now, after the public has voted.

Wera Hobhouse: Does the Minister not agree that it is in the best interests of the whole country that we come together behind a decision that most people see as a

good way forward that will lead to a good future? Does not her insistence on the result of this one Brexit referendum hide all our difficulties as a country? Is not the best way forward for us all to go to the people again and to clarify and confirm the matter so that we can all move forward together? I absolutely believe that we should get that clarification, in the interests of everyone—including the Government.

Suella Braverman: The hon. Lady's point is inherently contradictory. On the one hand, she says, "Isn't it important that we all come together and unite and put our divisions behind us?" I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment. I urge every Member present to get behind the referendum result and support the Government's agenda.

On the other hand, however, the hon. Lady says, "Let's have another vote"—a divisive vote on a contentious question again. I do not see how that sits easily. We have had a vote and the argument, the people have instructed the Government and we will deliver what they have told us to do.

Tom Brake: I believe that the Minister was a member of the European Research Group. Does she think that the approach the Government are adopting—it is very much the ERG agenda, which is for the hardest Brexit possible—is the best way to secure a united country?

Suella Braverman: I do not recognise any of the terms used by the right hon. Gentleman. I do not believe in a hard Brexit or a soft Brexit, a hardest possible Brexit or a softest possible Brexit. I believe in Brexit. We are either in the European Union or out of the European Union. We are either in the customs union or out of the customs union, and either in the single market or out of the single market, with either free movement of people or no free movement of people.

Wera Hobhouse: Will the Minister give way?

Suella Braverman: I will not, because I need to get on with my speech and I have given way many times. Those are the objectives of the Government and of the Prime Minister.

As I have said, the Government recognise the strength of feeling on this issue. That is why we know that it is incumbent on us to secure a deal that works for all of the United Kingdom and one that Parliament will want to support. As the Prime Minister has said, our decision to leave the EU does not mark an ending; it marks a new beginning for our relationship with our European allies. This is where I diverge from right hon. and hon. Members and their pessimistic view of negotiations so far: we have made significant progress on the negotiations. We have agreed the terms of a time-limited implementation period.

Paul Blomfield: Will the Minister acknowledge that when Labour, echoing the views of business, the trade unions and many across the country, first floated the idea of a transitional period, the Prime Minister said she did not want that, so she defines progress as embracing Labour's aspirations?

Suella Braverman: I do not think the Government have embraced Labour's aspirations for a long time, and long may that continue. The implementation period

was requested by the business community and the Government responded in kind. We have agreed the terms of a time-limited implementation period, and on the wider withdrawal agreement we have locked down entire chapters on citizens' rights and the financial settlement. As to our future relationship, we are confident that we will secure an ambitious future partnership with the EU, covering both a significant economic relationship and a deep security relationship. I look forward to the forthcoming publication of our White Paper, which will set that out in detail.

On the economic side, we want the broadest and deepest possible partnership, covering more sectors and co-operating more fully than any free trade agreement anywhere in the world today. We want the greatest possible tariff and barrier-free trade with our European neighbours as well as the freedom to negotiate our own trade agreements around the world. That is why we are leaving the customs union and the single market. We want to ensure that UK companies have the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets, and to let European businesses do the same in the UK. We therefore propose a unique and ambitious partnership, based on our rules and regulations being the same at the start and on maintaining our commitment to free trade and high standards while allowing for us both to make changes where we want to in a stable and orderly way.

On security, we have been clear that we must do whatever is most practical and pragmatic to provide security for our citizens. We must not allow competition to inhibit our co-operation and jeopardise the security of our citizens.

To return to the detail of the petition, the Government have committed to holding a vote on the final deal in Parliament as soon as possible after agreement has been reached on the withdrawal agreement and the terms of our future relationship, and the negotiations have concluded. The House will know that the Government have tabled an amendment to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill for consideration this week, which will write into law our existing commitment on the vote on the final deal.

Some reference has been made to amendment 19—the Hailsham amendment—which is of concern. The Government's amendment in lieu will write into law our existing commitment on the vote in the final deal. The problem with the Hailsham amendment is that it would remove Parliament's ability to direct the Government in the negotiations—sorry, the amendment we have tabled will remove Parliament's ability to direct the Government in the negotiations, which is a dangerous element contained in Viscount Hailsham's amendment. It is important that I get that right.

Paul Blomfield: The Minister has, on the second attempt, defined what the Government's amendment seeks to do: to remove from Parliament the opportunity to direct the Government in the event of not accepting the deal. Does she not recognise that that would leave the Parliament of the United Kingdom powerless in the most important negotiations facing our country?

Suella Braverman: I disagree. The Hailsham amendment would set a dangerous constitutional precedent that would limit the Government's prerogative in the act of

[*Suella Braverman*]

international treaty negotiation. That would reduce the flexibility necessary for a successful negotiation, which is essential for the Government if we are to get the best deal possible.

Catherine West: Will the Minister accept that such language may lead to a groundswell for a further referendum? Parliament is not being given the genuine power to direct the negotiation, which is the original meaning of giving sovereignty to Parliament.

Suella Braverman: The Government have been clear, and our amendment reiterates that clarity, that Parliament will have the power to have a vote on the final deal. That will be a meaningful vote. The hon. Lady talks about parliamentary sovereignty and encouraging scrutiny, and a meaningful vote on the final deal is the best example and biggest opportunity for Parliament to have the very say she talks about on the deal presented and negotiated by the Government.

Liz Twist: Can the Minister explain what she understands by the phrase “a meaningful vote”? It seems to many of us that the Government amendment might take that away.

Suella Braverman: No, not at all. The Government amendment writes into law our existing commitment on the vote on the final deal. It makes it clear that that is the case. In no way does it reduce the opportunity for and power of Parliament to have a meaningful vote on the final deal.

Paul Blomfield: The Minister is of course right that the Government’s amendment does not remove Parliament’s power to have a vote. However, will she not accept, addressing her remarks to those behind the petition as well, that the Government’s amendment takes all meaning out of the word “meaningful”? It simply provides for Parliament to have a take it or leave it, like it or lump it, no real choice vote.

Suella Braverman: The Government will present to both Houses of Parliament the terms of the withdrawal agreement as agreed between the EU and the UK. We will also present the terms of our future economic partnership. There will be considerable opportunity for scrutiny of the terms of our final deal, and the motion will be presented to both Chambers. That will provide Parliament with the opportunity to accept or reject the deal—there is nothing more meaningful than that.

Peter Grant: On 25 April, the Secretary of State gave evidence to the Exiting the European Union Committee. Its Chair, the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), was trying to tease out what the timing was likely to be and, in relation to the details of the final deal, the Secretary of State told us:

“We will know all of it, to the very last bits of the negotiation, way before we are in a position to put it to the House.”

Will the Minister clarify the Government’s present thinking on timescales? When can we expect to get that detailed statement on what the final deal will look like and on what date does she expect to put that to the House for a

vote, so we can have an indication as to how many days, weeks, hours or minutes we will have for consideration before that?

Suella Braverman: We have been very clear, as has Michel Barnier on behalf of the EU, that we hope that by the time of the October European Council we will be in a position to have a full withdrawal agreement agreed between the EU and the UK, and detail on the terms of our future economic partnership.

Tom Brake: Will the Minister give way?

Suella Braverman: I will not, because I am running out of time and the hon. Member for Blaydon needs time to respond. When the vote is held, it will cover both the withdrawal agreement and the terms of our future relationship. We expect and intend to achieve a deal that Parliament will want to vote in favour of. Again, I am confident that a deal that hon. Members will be able to support will be presented to Parliament. At the end of the day, it is mutually beneficial to both the UK and the EU to strike such a constructive economic partnership, one that supports our businesses, our citizens and our countries.

The choice that will be offered is not whether we should stay in the EU. We have had that debate. We have heard those arguments. This year is not the time to look into that issue again. This choice is in line with what the European Parliament is entitled to: a yes or no vote on the final deal.

The Government’s approach, which I have set out today, will no doubt disappoint those who have signed this petition, but that should not be misrepresented as ignoring their views. It should be understood as respecting the view of the majority of voters, who chose to exercise their democratic right in a referendum made possible by Parliament, on terms agreed by Parliament. For those who say a vote under the Government’s approach is not meaningful, I ask: what more meaning can there be than to show that Parliament will faithfully enact a decision that we trusted the public to make?

6.31 pm

Liz Twist: It is my pleasure to respond on behalf of the petitioners to some of the points that have been made. I start by thanking the many right hon. and hon. Members for their contributions to the debate. I thank the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake), the hon. Members for Bolton West (Chris Green), for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), for Gordon (Colin Clark) and for Glenrothes (Peter Grant), and my hon. Friends the Members for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds), for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), for Stroud (Dr Drew), for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney) and for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield).

We have had a wide-ranging debate, not always on whether Parliament’s vote must include an option to remain in the European Union, but certainly reflecting the importance of the decisions that we are about to make on Brexit and its importance to our communities. It has been valuable and relevant to have that debate; the fact that we have this petition reflects the concerns of people on the ground.

The petitioners had asked to have a vote that would allow a remain option and was not just, “Take it or leave it.” The petitioners were clear that they want

Parliament to have an option to remain. Sadly, I fear that, following the Minister's response, it is now clear that that will not happen and that the vote will indeed be, "Here's the deal; vote on it—whether you like it or not." I suspect that the petitioners will be disappointed with the Government's response.

To paraphrase the hon. Member for Bolton West, the best thing for us to have is a good deal. I think we can all agree on those words, but it is more difficult for us to agree what is a good, or a good enough, deal. That is the crux of the problem. We have heard that the Government amendment does not go far enough to address the concerns about a meaningful vote.

The Minister said she was concerned about the pessimism she has heard. I would say that it reflects an intense interest in the wellbeing of our country and our future development. I do not think it should be taken as pessimism, but as a sign of the vibrant interest from both the petitioners, all 113,000 of them, and Members

of this House in ensuring that we have a deal that best reflects the interests of our country, and that we go forward on that basis.

To conclude, I remind the Chamber that the lead petitioner, who was here today—I think she may have run out of time, but she was here to hear much of the debate—was clear that the petition was about having a remain option. I am sure she will be disappointed. I hope she will be heartened by the shouting we heard a few moments ago outside the window, which to my ears said, "Stop Brexit!"; perhaps she can take comfort from that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 205169 relating to Parliament's vote on the deal for the UK's exit from the EU.

6.35 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 11 June 2018

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Competitiveness Council: May 2018

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah): The Competitiveness Council (Internal Market and Industry) took place on 28 May in Brussels. Lord Henley ‘Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy’ represented the UK.

The standing “competitiveness check-up” debate focused on the linkages between internal market integration and competitiveness in the EU. The Commission argued that its analysis showed that the single market generates significant economic benefits across a range of sectors. The UK underlined its continuing interest in the success of the single market, calling for continued progress, particularly on services, and for the EU to be a force for open international trade. Other member states picked up similar themes as well as other issues including access to finance.

The Council agreed a general approach on the revision of the mutual recognition regulation, which aims to improve the functioning of the mutual recognition principle for non-harmonised products in the single market. Member states were unanimous in their support for the presidency’s compromise text and praised the balance struck between the need to support businesses trading across the EU while allowing member states to protect their legitimate public interests.

The Commission presented its new proposal on platform to business relations, which it believed was a balanced attempt to improve transparency and predictability for users without creating undue burdens on platforms or stifling innovation. The UK responded positively but emphasised the benefits of platforms to businesses, particularly SMEs, and underlined the need to consult businesses. Other member states generally welcomed the Commission’s approach, but the debate displayed the tension between those that have legislated in this area and those who want to avoid fragmentation in the single market as a result of differing national legislation. Some hinted at their preference for further regulatory measures.

The presidency provided an update on progress in negotiations on the copyright package. Member states also responded to the UK’s ratification of the agreement on a unified patent court.

The Commission presented its latest package of digital single market proposals, which focus on the improved use of data at EU level as a tool to drive innovation.

Ministers discussed the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence, including the role of public and private investment, the impact on labour markets, and ethical and legal questions.

The Commission provided information on its “new deal for consumers” proposal, confirming its ambitious timetable for adoption by May 2019. Some member states raised the dual quality of products as a key concern.

The Commission also presented its company law package and a proposal amending the supplementary protection certificates regulation for the export of medicinal products.

The presidency also provided updates on work in the area of tourism and within the SOLVIT network; the Austrian delegation presented its priorities as incoming presidency.

The Competitiveness Council continued on 29 May covering research, innovation and space. I represented the UK.

The Council held a policy debate on the future of European space policy. The UK emphasised the global nature of the space sector and the long heritage of technical excellence and research within the European space agency. The UK also outlined the case for continued full involvement in EU space programmes such as Galileo and Copernicus.

The Council continued with a discussion on the progress report on the regulation on establishing the European high performance computing joint undertaking. The UK assured the EU of our commitment to continuing collaboration in science and innovation and highlighted the importance of a continued focus of wider programmes on excellence. Following the discussion, the Council held a plenary session providing an update on the progress of the regulation.

The following sessions adopted two Council conclusions: the first on accelerating knowledge circulation in the European Union and the second on the European open science cloud.

The Council then agreed a general approach on the regulation on the research and training programme of the European atomic energy community (2019-2020) complementing the Horizon 2020 framework programme for research and innovation. Ministers agreed to the approach set out by the Commission.

The Council held a policy debate on research and innovation within the context of the next multiannual financial framework. The UK noted the value to the EU of the UK’s strength in research and innovation both in terms of results and of expertise in supporting research and innovation as well as emphasising the UK’s continuing desire to engage in European collaborative research and innovation programmes.

The Commission provided information on the outcome of the presidency event dedicated to space (Sofia, 17-19 April 2018). The Council concluded with Austria’s presentation of its incoming presidency work programme.

[HCWS752]

Energy Council: 11 June

The Minister for Energy and Clean Growth (Claire Perry): The Energy Council will take place on 11 June in Luxembourg.

The Council will discuss the regulation on the agency for the co-operation of energy regulators (ACER) with the presidency hoping to reach a general approach.

Under AOB, the presidency will provide an update on the current state of play in the negotiation of the regulation on governance of the energy union, the directive on renewable energy and the directive on energy efficiency. The Commission will then provide information on recent developments in the field of external energy relations. Finally, the Austrian delegation will provide information on the work programme for their forthcoming presidency.

[HCWS749]

TREASURY

Finance (No.3) Bill: Draft

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride): The Government will introduce Finance (No.3) Bill following the Budget in the autumn.

In line with the approach to tax policy making set out in the Government's documents "Tax Policy Making: a new approach", published in 2010, and "The new Budget timetable and the tax policy making process", published in 2017, the Government are committed, where possible, to publishing most tax legislation in draft for technical consultation before the legislation is laid before Parliament.

The Government will publish draft clauses for Finance (No.3) Bill on Friday 6 July 2018, along with accompanying explanatory notes, tax information and impact notes, responses to consultations and other supporting documents. All publications will be available at www.gov.uk.

[HCWS757]

ECOFIN: 25 May 2018

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond): A meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) was held in Brussels on 25 May 2018. EU Finance Ministers discussed the following:

Early Morning Session

The Eurogroup President briefed the Council on the outcomes of the 24 May meeting of the Eurogroup, and the European Commission provided an update on the current economic situation in the EU.

Banking Package

The Council agreed a general approach to the banking risk reduction package including proposals for legislative amendments to the capital requirements regulation (CRR) and directive (CRD), single resolution mechanism regulation (SRMR), and the bank recovery and resolution directive (BRRD).

Strengthening administrative co-operation

The Council discussed measures to strengthen administrative co-operation in the area of VAT, but were unable to reach agreement on a general approach.

General reverse charge mechanism

The Council discussed proposals to allow member states to apply a temporary VAT general reverse charge mechanism, but were unable to reach agreement on a general approach.

E-publications

The Council discussed proposals to allow member states to apply reduced rates of VAT on e-publications, but were unable to reach agreement on a general approach.

Current financial services legislative proposals

The Bulgarian presidency provided an update on current legislative proposals in the field of financial services.

European semester

The Council adopted Council conclusions on the in-depth reviews of macroeconomic imbalances in member states as part of the macroeconomic imbalances procedure, and the implementation of 2017 country-specific recommendations as assessed in the Commission's Country Reports, published on 7 March.

2018 Ageing report

The Council adopted Council conclusions on the 2018 Ageing report on age-related spending and the sustainability of public finances.

[HCWS753]

DEFENCE

Bosnia and Herzegovina EU-led Mission: Call-out order

The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson): A new order has been made under section 56(1B) of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 to enable reservists to be called into permanent service in support of the United Kingdom's contribution to the EU-led mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the request of DSACEUR, the Operational Commander, the UK has agreed to generate an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance task force to enhance his situational awareness in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the period of the general election in October 2018. This capability will operate in parallel with and within the existing EUFOR framework to provide command and control for UK forces.

The planned uplift is consistent with Her Majesty's Government's objective of having a greater ambition for engagement with the western Balkans and sends the clear message of UK commitment to European security despite Brexit.

Some of the specialist skills needed to meet this requirement are held within the Army Reserve. UK forces will deploy for a period of six months with a planned deployment in mid-August 2018. The number of reservists anticipated to deploy as specialists or in support of regular units is estimated at up to eight personnel.

The order took effect from the beginning of 30 May 2018 and shall cease to have effect at the end of 29 May 2019.

[HCWS750]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Education, Youth Culture and Sport Council

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Matt Hancock): The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS) Council took place in Brussels on 22 and 23 May 2018. Lord Ashton of Hyde represented the UK at the Youth session of this Council on 22 May. The UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU, Katrina Williams, represented the UK on 23 May for the meetings on Culture and Audiovisual and Sport.

Youth

This session of the Council began with the adoption of Council conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe. The Council adopted Council conclusions on the role of youth in addressing the demographic challenges within the European Union.

A policy debate was then held on the future priorities for EU Youth policy.

In addition, there was information from the Commission on European Youth Together, followed by information from the Belgian and French delegations on the Franco-Belgian declaration of Ministers responsible for youth on the prevention of violent radicalisation.

Culture/Audiovisual

This meeting began with the adoption of Council conclusions on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU.

There was also a policy debate on the long term vision for the contribution of culture to the EU after 2020, in particular looking forward to the next multiannual financial framework (2021-2027).

Additionally, there was a public deliberation of current legislative proposals. For this, the Council first welcomed information from the German delegation on the directive amending directive (2006/112/EC) as regards rates of value added tax—actively engaging in negotiations from a cultural policy perspective. In extension to this, information was provided by the French delegation on the regulation on the import of cultural goods. No legislative decisions were made in these debates, so there are no implications for the parliamentary scrutiny reservation.

Information was provided by the Lithuanian and Luxembourg delegations, on their respective hosting of the European Capitals of Culture 2022.

Sport

The sport session of EYCS began with the adoption of Council conclusions on promoting the common values of the EU through sport. This was followed by a policy debate on the commercialisation of elite sports and the sustainability of the European model of sport.

The EU member states represented in the World Anti-Doping Agency Foundation Board presented information on the Foundation Board meeting held on 16-17 May. The French delegation presented information on the informal meeting of the EU Minister for Sport (held in Paris on 31 May 2018), where there was the signing of a declaration for a Europe of Sport looking to the horizon of the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Other

The Austrian delegation set out their work programmes as the incoming presidency, for the second half of 2018. They highlighted a number of priorities for their presidency. These priorities included a focus on the work plan for culture 2018 plus, the successor programme to the Creative Europe programme and enhancing the principle of subsidiarity.

[HCWS756]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Death Certification England and Wales: Reforms

The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinelage): My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Lord O'Shaughnessy) has made the following statement:

Between March and June 2016 the Government consulted on a package of reforms to the death certification process and the introduction of medical examiners. The reforms aim to improve engagement with the bereaved in the process of death certification and offer them an opportunity to raise any concerns, as well as improving the quality and accuracy of medical certificates of cause of death. Safeguards will be enhanced in the process to enable medical examiners to report matters of a clinical governance nature to support local learning and changes to practice and procedures.

As part of the drive to further improve patient safety, I have today published the Government's response to consultation on the introduction of medical examiners and the reforms of death certification in England and Wales, and a copy is attached. This sets out the Government's intention to introduce a system of medical examiners in England. The Welsh Government consulted separately in Wales.

Medical examiners are a key element of the death certification reforms, which, once in place, will deliver a more comprehensive system of assurances for all non-coronial deaths regardless of whether the deceased is buried or cremated. Medical examiners will be employed in the NHS system, ensuring lines of accountability are separate from NHS acute trusts but allowing for access to information in the sensitive and urgent timescales to register a death.

The response to the consultation demonstrates that there is widespread support for the aims of the reforms and for the introduction of medical examiners, but there were concerns about some aspects of the proposals. In particular concerns were raised about how the proposed model, based in local authorities, would work in practice and about the timeframes for implementing the system. Feedback on a proposed funding model was also received.

Since the Government consulted on the package of death certification reforms, events have moved on. New information about how a medical examiner system could be introduced has been generated by the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) medical examiner pilot sites and early adopters of the medical examiner system, as well as from the learning from deaths initiative.

There will be two stages to funding the ME system to enable its introduction while legislation is in progress. Initially, medical examiners will be funded through the existing fee for completing medical cremation forms, in combination with central Government funding for medical examiner work not covered by those fees. Following this interim period and when parliamentary time allows for the system to move to a statutory footing, the funding of the system will need to be revisited. The existing medical cremation forms and fees payable associated with those forms will continue to apply for the interim period.

The Government have proposed that all child deaths (up to age 18) be exempt from the cost associated with the medical examiner system. This aligns with the broader purpose of the Government's recent announcement about steps to ensure that no bereaved family will have to pay for the essential costs of burying or cremating their child.

Attachment:

1. Response to consultation (180611 Government response to ME and death certification consultation.pdf)

Attachment can be viewed online at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-06-11/HCWS755/>

[HCWS755]

Gross Negligence Manslaughter in Healthcare: Review

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Mr Jeremy Hunt): On 6 February 2018 I informed the House that I had asked Professor Sir Norman Williams to carry out a rapid policy review of gross negligence manslaughter in healthcare settings. This review was prompted by concerns among healthcare professionals that errors could result in prosecution for gross negligence manslaughter, even in the face of broader organisation and system failings. In particular, there was concern that this fear had had a negative impact on reflection and learning by healthcare professionals, which is vital to improving patient care.

My Department is today publishing the report of Sir Norman's rapid policy review.

Any investigation of a healthcare professional for suspected gross negligence manslaughter begins with the death of a patient—a life needlessly cut short and a family grieving. Sir Norman and his Panel have heard from such families. Their experiences were vital in informing this review and I would particularly like to thank them for their courage in providing evidence to the review.

The report finds that prosecutions and convictions of healthcare professionals for gross negligence manslaughter are rare. It also finds that the legal test for the offence is set at an appropriately high level. This should reassure healthcare professionals that only where conduct is “truly, exceptionally bad” and in consideration of “all the circumstances” will the bar for gross negligence manslaughter be met.

However in order to provide greater consistency the report makes recommendations to improve the investigation of allegations of gross negligence manslaughter involving healthcare professionals. These include:

- developing an agreed understanding of gross negligence manslaughter that reflects the most recent case law;
- improvements to the way that healthcare professionals provide expert advice and evidence; and
- improvements to local investigations into unexpected deaths in healthcare to provide a full understanding of the cause of death, ensuring improvements are made to reduce the likelihood of similar incidents.

The report also considers the impact of criminal and regulatory investigations on the willingness of healthcare professionals to reflect on their practice. It finds that reflective material is rarely sought in such investigations. Nonetheless, in order to provide clear assurance to professionals, the report recommends that those regulators that have a power to require information from registrants when investigating their fitness to practise should have this power removed in respect of reflective material.

Finally the report looks at the regulation of healthcare professionals. It makes a number of recommendations for further work to understand inconsistencies in the way that different regulators carry out their fitness to practise functions. It also finds that the General Medical Council's right to appeal decisions of the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service has resulted in a lack of confidence in their regulator as well as having an unanticipated impact on the willingness of doctors, especially trainees, to reflect fully on their practice. Since the PSA has a near identical right of appeal to Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service decisions, it is clear that there would be no gap in the law where regulatory action is being taken as a result of a serious criminal conviction, and the report recommends that the GMC's right of appeal should be removed.

These recommendations aim to support a just and learning culture in healthcare, where professionals are able to raise concerns and reflect openly on their mistakes but where those who are responsible for providing unacceptable standards of care are held to account. This will support improvements in patient safety.

I thank Sir Norman and his panel for their work in delivering this important report. I accept the recommendations in full.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-06-11/HCWS751>.

[HCWS751]

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Rough Sleeping

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): I am today announcing the allocation of a targeted £30 million Rough Sleeping Initiative fund to support those sleeping rough and those at risk of sleeping rough in 83 local authorities with the highest numbers of rough sleepers.

On 30 March 2018 we announced a new, cross-Whitehall, multidisciplinary Rough Sleeping Initiative. A £30 million fund, targeted at areas with the highest levels of rough sleeping, was part of that package to support the work of the Rough Sleeping Initiative team.

Over the last few months our team of expert practitioners have worked closely with local authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to identify service gaps and create tailored packages to tackle rough sleeping in their area this year. Together they have co-produced bespoke plans to tackle rough sleeping based on local government and third-sector knowledge of what works.

This represents a first significant step in our plans to reduce rough sleeping. It will be followed by a cross-Government strategy, published in July, which will set out how we intend to meet the manifesto commitment of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it altogether by 2027.

This funding will provide for over 500 new staff focused on rough sleeping. This will include more outreach workers to engage with people on the streets, specialist mental health and substance misuse workers and dedicated co-ordinators to drive efforts to reduce rough sleeping

in their areas. It will also provide for over 1,700 new bed spaces including both emergency and settled accommodation.

The new Rough Sleeping Initiative team will work closely with local areas to implement the plans and to monitor their progress.

In recognition of the expertise needed to deliver reductions in rough sleeping immediately, Jeremy Swain, currently chief executive of the homelessness charity Thames Reach, has been brought in to lead the Rough Sleeping Initiative. Jeremy is an outstanding candidate for this position, and he brings with him 30 years of invaluable frontline experience. He will be in post by early July.

A full list of the individual amounts allocated to the 83 local authorities and the GLA has been published on www.gov.uk. Further funding for 2019-20 will be announced shortly.

I am confident this package will achieve substantial results in these areas of high need. It will also build upon the work we have already undertaken in order to meet out manifesto commitment this work includes: piloting the internationally proven Housing First approach in three major regions of England; allocating over £1.2 billion in order to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, including more upfront funding so local authorities can proactively tackle homelessness pressures in their areas; and also the recent changes made under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which means that more people will get the help they need and at an earlier stage—preventing a homelessness crisis from occurring in the first place.

[HCWS754]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement

The Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox): I am pleased to announce that my Department will today publish an impact assessment for the EU-Japan Economic Partnership agreement (EPA). I have separately written to the Scrutiny Committees in both Houses of Parliament such that they can consider this evidence as part of their important scrutiny of this agreement. A copy of this impact assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The European Union and Japan concluded negotiations on this agreement in December 2017, and have announced their intention to sign this agreement at an EU-Japan summit in July, subject to approval by EU member states in the Council of the European Union.

This agreement will promote bilateral trade and economic growth between the EU and Japan by eliminating most tariffs and reducing non-tariff measures that businesses face when trading goods and services and investing.

The Government remain committed to supporting the EU's ambitious trade agenda including the free trade agreements it is putting in place and to date has strongly supported the EU-Japan EPA negotiations.

The Prime Minister and the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed in August 2017 to “work quickly to establish a new economic partnership between Japan and the UK based on the final terms of the EPA” as the

UK leaves the EU. The UK-Japan Trade and Investment Working Group, established last year by the Japan-UK joint declaration on prosperity co-operation, is tasked to deliver on this commitment and met for the second time in May.

[HCWS747]

TRANSPORT

Contingency Liability: Notification

The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling): I have today laid before Parliament a departmental minute describing three contingent liabilities relating to a tripartite deal between Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL), First Greater Western Limited (FGW) and the Department for Transport.

Unfortunately, due to the urgent need to finalise the deal and the confidential commercial nature of the negotiations it was not possible to notify Parliament of the particulars of the liability and allow the required 14 days' notice prior to the liabilities going live. A delay would have resulted in higher HS2 costs and an increased scheduling risk impacting on the December 2026 opening date for phase 1.

The main element of the deal is a service agreement between FGW, HAL and Heathrow Airport Operating Company (HEOC) for the continuation of non-stop rail services between Paddington and Heathrow Airport. Under this agreement FGW will assume operation of Heathrow Express services. Although this is an agreement between private sector companies, there are significant benefits to the Department, in particular, savings generated from not building a replacement depot for Heathrow Express rolling stock at Langley (the land on which the current depot is situated at Old Oak Common is needed by HS2 for the construction of the high speed railway).

In order to conclude the deal, and secure departmental/HS2 benefits, the Department needed to offer indemnities in relation to three risks that the parties were unwilling or unable to assume or manage. The financial exposure is not high—a conservative estimate is £12 million. But they are unusual and outside the Department's normal course of business.

The three contingent liabilities are: first, indemnifying FGW against the cost of any delay to delivery of new rolling stock required to operate Heathrow Express services. The Department's exposure is estimated to be £2.25 million; second, indemnifying FGW against the cost of any redundancies following the transfer of staff, mainly drivers, from HAL to FGW. The cost is estimated to be £3.2 million; third, an indemnity against contagion from a wider industrial relations dispute—nationwide or franchise wide. The exposure is estimated to be £6.8 million.

The Treasury approved these liabilities before they were activated. However, if any Member of Parliament has concerns, he/she may write to me within the next 14 parliamentary sitting days. I will be happy to examine their concerns and provide a response.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-06-11/HCWS748>.

[HCWS748]

Petition

Monday 11 June 2018

OBSERVATIONS

JUSTICE

Dangerous driving sentencing review

The petition of residents of the UK,

Declares that too many lives have been lost due to dangerous driving; further that the House is currently reviewing a Bill relating to death by dangerous driving which currently carries a maximum sentence of fourteen years in prison; and further that petitioners maintain that this sentence does little justice for families who have lost loved ones due to the recklessness of others.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to bring forward this Bill for urgent review and further change the law so that the maximum sentence for causing death by dangerous driving can be increased to imprisonment for life.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—

[P002134]

Observations from The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Rory Stewart):

Killer drivers ruin lives. Their actions cause immeasurable pain to families, who must endure tragic, unnecessary

losses. This Government are committed to making sure that the courts have sufficient powers to deal with driving offences appropriately and proportionately.

In October last year we published the Government response to the consultation on driving offences and penalties relating to causing death or serious injury. In that response we confirmed our proposals to: increase the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving from 14 years' imprisonment to life; increase the maximum penalty for causing death by careless driving under the influence of drink or drugs; and create a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving.

These proposals will require a change to primary legislation. The Government propose to introduce a Bill as soon as Parliamentary time allows and we continue to look for appropriate opportunities to present these provisions to Parliament.

We are, in the meantime, taking the opportunity to address other issues of concern related to safer roads, such as serious offences resulting in death or injury committed by cyclists and cases involving police pursuits.

I welcome the support expressed for these changes and stress again that we are seeking to introduce our proposals for reform of the law as soon as is practicable.

No sentence can of course make up for the loss of a loved one but we are focused on getting the law right, to ensure the changes we make are comprehensive and proportionate, and, we hope, might help avoid some further unnecessary deaths on our roads.

Ministerial Correction

Monday 11 June 2018

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

NHS Outsourcing and Privatisation

The following is an extract from the Opposition day debate on NHS Outsourcing and Privatisation on 23 May 2018.

Stephen Barclay: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, the NHS has £80 billion of PFI contracts and a £200 billion a year spend on PFI.

[Official Report, 23 May 2018, Vol. 641, c. 951.]

Letter of correction from Stephen Barclay.

An error has been identified in my winding-up speech during the Opposition day debate on NHS Outsourcing and Privatisation.

The correct response should have been:

Stephen Barclay: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, the NHS has £80 billion of PFI contracts and a **£2 billion** a year spend on PFI.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 11 June 2018

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
DEFENCE	567	DEFENCE—continued	
Accommodation Model	575	Equipment Plan 2017 to 2027	568
Afghanistan	575	Leaving the EU: Aerospace Industry	577
Armed Forces: Personnel Levels	582	Leaving the EU: Defence Policy	582
Combat Aircraft Design.....	577	Royal Navy Fisheries Protection	567
Cyber-attacks	571	Security Threat: Russia	572
Defence Procurement: SMEs	579	Topical Questions	584
Departmental Funding	579	UK Defence Industry.....	574

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 11 June 2018

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	21WS	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—continued	
Competitiveness Council: May 2018	21WS	Gross Negligence Manslaughter in Healthcare: Review	27WS
Energy Council: 11 June.....	22WS	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	28WS
DEFENCE	24WS	Rough Sleeping	28WS
Bosnia and Herzegovina EU-led Mission: Call-out order.....	24WS	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	29WS
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	25WS	EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.....	29WS
Education, Youth Culture and Sport Council	25WS	TRANSPORT	30WS
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	26WS	Contingency Liability: Notification	30WS
Death Certification England and Wales: Reforms..	26WS	TREASURY	23WS
		ECOFIN: 25 May 2018.....	23WS
		Finance (No.3) Bill: Draft	23WS

PETITION

Monday 11 June 2018

	<i>Col. No.</i>	<i>Col. No.</i>
JUSTICE	5P	
Dangerous driving sentencing review.....	5P	

MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Monday 11 June 2018

	<i>Col. No.</i>
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	3MC
NHS Outsourcing and Privatisation.....	3MC

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Monday 18 June 2018**

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CONTENTS

Monday 11 June 2018

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 567] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for Defence

Yemen [Col. 591]
Answer to urgent question—(Alistair Burt)

G7 [Col. 601]
Statement—(The Prime Minister)

Grenfell Tower [Col. 620]
Statement—(James Brokenshire)

Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill [Col. 630]
Motion for Second Reading—(Sajid Javid)—agreed to
Programme motion—(Paul Maynard)—agreed to

Cornish National Identity: 2021 Census [Col. 689]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

Westminster Hall
Leaving the EU: Parliamentary Vote [Col. 245WH]
General Debate

Written Statements [Col. 21WS]

Petition [Col. 5P]
Observations

Ministerial Correction [Col. 3MC]

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
