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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Thursday 14 June 2018

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The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL [*LORDS*]

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Thursday 21 June (Standing Order No. 20(2)).

Oral Answers to Questions

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Secretary of State was asked—

Rights, Standards and Protections

1. **Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that there is no change to (a) rights, (b) standards and (c) protections derived from the EU after the UK leaves the EU. [905829]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker): The UK has a long-standing tradition of protecting rights and liberties. The decision to leave the European Union does not and will not change that. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill retains the rights, standards and protections derived from EU legislation and treaties as they exist immediately before our departure from the EU. That will ensure that, so far as is practicable, all rights will apply as they did before exit. I have no doubts about the abilities of this House to uphold our rights, standards and protections after we leave the EU.

Liz Twist: Given the Prime Minister's insistence that the Government have committed not to roll back workers' rights, can the Minister explain why Conservative MPs voted against yesterday's Lords amendment to protect employment, equality, health and safety, consumer and environmental rights and standards after Brexit?

Mr Baker: Our commitment to workers' rights is unwavering. On the hon. Lady's specific point, the fact is that, if that amendment had been taken forward, it would have severely damaged our capacity to have a functioning statute book as we left the European Union.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Is not it right that we in this country are not able to exercise some of the rights that people would wish us to exercise? The freedom to be able to transport live animals for slaughter is a freedom that we would prefer not to have. As soon as we leave the European Union, we will be able to take control of those things for ourselves.

Mr Baker: My hon. Friend raises a point on which I am sure that many of us have received correspondence. I look forward to the day when it is within the powers of this House to change those rules.

Mr Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): Is not it right that we have a customs union that protects workers' rights, with the right to allow state aid, the right to allow public ownership, and the right to be able to ban outsourcing and competitive tendering should the Government wish to do so?

Mr Baker: If you will allow me, Mr Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's capacity to use parliamentary procedure to bring an enormous range of issues into his question. I suggest that he might wish to call an Adjournment debate if he feels that he has not had sufficient opportunity during the passage of the withdrawal Bill to debate all the issues that he raises.

Mr Speaker: In reference to the honour of the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr Hepburn), I would simply point out that rights, standards and protections do amount to a pretty broad category, and he has behaved, as usual, in a perfectly orderly, if innovative, manner.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most fundamental rights is to decide who determines our legislation and where that legislation comes from, and that that is exactly the right that we are protecting when we listen to what the people have told us and withdraw from the European Union?

Mr Baker: Yes. The fundamental political right is that power should derive from the consent of the governed. In leaving the European Union, we will re-establish that consent on a basis that has been traditionally understood, which is that it is this Parliament that will determine the laws of the United Kingdom.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The Equality and Human Rights Commission has said that the loss of the charter of fundamental rights will lead to a significant weakening of the current system of human rights protections in the United Kingdom. Given that that is the advice of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, what specific steps is the Minister taking to prevent the loss of human rights protections following the loss of the charter of fundamental rights?

Mr Baker: We disagree with the commission. The charter of fundamental rights is only one element of the UK's human rights architecture. Most of the rights protected in the charter are also protected in domestic law by common law, the Human Rights Act 1998 or other domestic legislation. The fact of the matter, which

the hon. and learned Lady does not seem to wish to accept, is that this House has voted repeatedly on this very question.

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Minister accept that animal welfare and environmental protection are extremely important to British agriculture? What guarantees will the Government put in place to make sure that there is no diminution in that regard? He need not take my word on this—he can take the word of the National Farmers Union.

Mr Baker: We have had wide-ranging debates about animals and animal rights, and the hon. Gentleman will know that that is a subject of continuing interest for the Government. The Government have tabled amendments on environmental protections, and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has brought forward a range of proposals on animal rights. I look forward to us carrying those forward.

Mr Speaker: Mr Linden, you are now much preoccupied with consulting your electronic device, but if you are still interested in contributing to our proceedings, let us hear you.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Mr Speaker, the Secretary of State's departmental colleague, Lord Callanan, wants to

“scrap the working time directive, the agency workers' directive, the pregnant workers' directive and other barriers to actually employing people”.

Which one does the Minister think should happen first?

Mr Baker: The Government's position is that the UK firmly believes in strong labour protections while also embracing the opportunities that arise from a changing world of work. We do not need to stay aligned with the EU to have strong protections for workers, and a key tenet of the Government's industrial strategy is continually to improve labour standards in domestic legislation.

Northern Ireland Border

2. **Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on border infrastructure in Northern Ireland after the UK has left the EU. [905830]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): The Secretary of State and I have regular discussions with ministerial colleagues about how to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and the joint report in December made it clear that the UK is committed to avoiding any physical infrastructure or related checks and controls. By accepting Lords amendment 25, the House has reiterated that position.

Karin Smyth: I am grateful for that reply, but does the Minister's reassurance fly in the face of some of the facts on the ground? The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland has stalled the sale of three police stations on the border and submitted a business case for up to 300 officers. Have the Minister and his Cabinet colleagues discussed that proposal and will they be supporting it?

Mr Walker: The UK Government could not have been clearer about our commitment to ensuring no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. Although the funding settlement for the PSNI is a devolved matter for the Northern Ireland Administration, which we all want to be restored as soon as possible, the UK Government do not intend to allocate any resources for policing a hard border after our exit from the EU, or for the furtherance of any steps that would contradict or undermine the clear commitments we have made.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Were we to leave without an agreement, we would not put a border there, so if anyone wants one, they would have to put it there, wouldn't they?

Mr Walker: My right hon. Friend raises an interesting point, but it is our intention to leave with an agreement. We have been clear that our first priority is to secure the absence of a hard border through the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): Our Government, the Dublin Government and Brussels have all said that they do not want a hard border. Does the Minister have an understanding from the EU that a hard border, whoever might want it, would be totally impossible to police because of the hundreds of crossing points that everyone in Northern Ireland would use, even if someone tried to implement a hard border on the ground?

Mr Walker: The hon. Gentleman speaks with considerable experience and knowledge of the issue. He is absolutely right. That is why, from what I have seen and conversations I have had, London, Dublin, Belfast and Brussels have all been clear about the need to avoid the creation of a hard border.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): When we talk about the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, are we putting the cart before the horse? Surely we need to focus on UK-EU customs arrangements so that we know exactly where we are. We buy 850,000 German cars every year, and £3 billion of flowers and bulbs from the Dutch. Irrespective of what Wetherspoons did yesterday, we still drink more Champagne than the French and will continue to do so.

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend is right about the advantages of ensuring frictionless trade between the UK and the EU, and that is the Government's policy.

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): Would not this Parliament, and the entire island of Ireland, be reassured by what the Minister is saying about a border if the Government had allowed more time for Members of the House to discuss these hugely serious issues? What will the Government do about that, and will the Minister discuss with his Cabinet colleagues how we discuss these issues in Parliament, rather than listening to the waffle of the Minister?

Mr Walker: I seem to remember spending quite a lot of time discussing that issue in Committee, including being harangued by the hon. Gentleman to ensure that the Bill contained a specific reference to the Belfast

agreement. Thanks to the changes we have made, and the acceptance of Lords amendment 25, there is now that specific reference, which I am sure he will welcome.

Jenny Chapman (Darlington) (Lab): I remind Members that the Prime Minister said that we are leaving the EU and it is our responsibility to find a solution to the Northern Ireland border. On Tuesday, the Government accepted the Patten amendment and rightly committed us to no controls, no checks and no infrastructure on the border in Northern Ireland. How on earth can the Government ensure that that will happen without the UK, Northern Ireland, Ireland and the EU being in, as a minimum, a customs union?

Mr Walker: As the hon. Lady knows, we are committed to ensuring customs arrangements that allow for no physical infrastructure at the border. As she also knows, we have put forward our own proposal for a backstop in the EU negotiations, which is an important element of that. We want to secure this for the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Customs Arrangements

3. **Ged Killen** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on future customs arrangements as part of the UK's negotiations to leave the EU. [905831]

16. **Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on future customs arrangements as part of the UK's negotiations to leave the EU. [905846]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): The Secretary of State and I regularly discuss exit issues with Cabinet and ministerial colleagues, including customs. The Prime Minister is clear that we are working towards a customs solution that keeps trade with the EU as frictionless as possible, avoids a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and establishes an independent trade policy.

Ged Killen: Can the Minister tell us how many times the Government's two working groups on future customs arrangements have met, and how close are they to finally reaching a conclusion between the Government's two unworkable and undesirable customs options?

Mr Walker: Those working groups are meeting regularly to advance the work on both of the options. As agreed yesterday, the Government will provide by 31 October a statement to Parliament on the steps taken to negotiate a customs arrangement with the EU.

Gill Furniss: Does the Minister agree with the president of the Confederation of British Industry, who warned yesterday:

"If we do not have a customs union, there are sectors of manufacturing society in the UK which risk becoming extinct"?

Mr Walker: No, I agree with the Conservative and Labour manifestos that said that we should be leaving the customs union and ensuring that we have an

independent trade policy, but we also want to deliver the frictionless trade that businesses up and down our country need.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): In the discussions with the European Union, have the Government made it clear that we would not tolerate a solution that put the customs border down the Irish sea, or for that matter, between England and Scotland, as some others want to do?

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. We have made that abundantly clear, and the Prime Minister has been very clear that no UK Prime Minister could accept such a solution.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting the chamber of commerce from Portugal. While, of course, it was sorry to see us leaving the European Union, its biggest concern with regard to the customs union was how long it was taking for the entire process to be put together—I hasten to add that we then had a potted history about how Parliament works, sadly. Can I ask the Minister to ensure that, whatever comes through this, we send a message to the Portuguese that they are absolutely with us and trading with us in the future?

Mr Walker: Absolutely. My hon. Friend makes an important point. Portugal is our oldest ally in the world—in fact, I think the longest-standing alliance in the world is between England and Portugal—and we want to ensure that the trade between us can continue to flourish, as we do with the trade between the UK and many other EU member states.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Does the Minister think that the sight of Ministers and Whips negotiating in real time their position on the customs union, either from the Dispatch Box or on the Benches, helps or hinders the UK's negotiating position with the rest of the European Union?

Mr Walker: The Government are determined to present the right answer on customs to make sure that we have the frictionless trade we all want to see between the UK and the EU. The sight of the Scottish National party abandoning their parliamentary responsibilities is perhaps not one that encourages confidence from anyone.

17. [905849] **Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): The director general warned that "opportunities are limited" and are

"vastly outweighed by the costs incurred if the UK's rules change so much that it reduces smooth access to the EU's market."

Why then did the Government vote against Labour's amendment for a new relationship with the single market based on shared regulations and common standards?

Mr Walker: Half the Labour party seems to be voting against Labour's amendments nowadays. We meet regularly with the CBI and with different business groups up and down the country. They are all very clear on the benefits of frictionless trade, and that is the policy of the Government.

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): The media inevitably focused on the personalities involved in the Cabinet row over a customs backstop last week, but it is the detail of that policy that really matters, so I ask the Minister a very simple question: are we to take from the fact that the Secretary of State and his other two colleagues are still in post that the Government's position is not to accept, under any circumstances, a customs backstop that is not time-limited?

Mr Walker: The Prime Minister has been clear that the backstop arrangements would be time-limited, but I say to the hon. Gentleman that the fact that our entire ministerial team is in post is a sign that our party is united, unlike the Labour party, which has now had 100—100!—resignations from its Front Benchers or Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

Matthew Pennycook: Not really an answer, Mr Speaker. Last week's backstop paper only dealt with customs, but we know that a solution to the Irish border issue requires agreement on far more than that; it requires full regulatory alignment on goods to facilitate all aspects of north-south co-operation. Does the Minister accept that, and will the Government be making the case for full regulatory alignment on goods in future discussions with the EU?

Mr Walker: As the hon. Gentleman will know if he has looked at the detail of the joint report, we are talking about alignment in those areas necessary for the functioning of the border and ensuring that there is no hard border. That does not mean full regulatory alignment across all areas; it means specific areas relating to agriculture and industrial goods that could otherwise result in tax at the border. We were clear in our presentations to the EU that there is further discussion to be had on that.

Withdrawal Negotiations

4. **Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): What recent progress he has made in the UK's withdrawal negotiations with the EU. [905832]

7. **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): What recent progress he has made on negotiating the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. [905835]

14. **Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): What recent progress he has made in withdrawal negotiations with the EU. [905844]

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (**Mr David Davis**): We reached agreement on more than three quarters of the legal text of the withdrawal agreement, locking down full chapters on citizens' rights, the implementation period and the financial settlement. We continue to build on the progress of March, technical talks have continued and we are focusing on negotiating the right future relationship. These conversations are now well under way, with detailed discussions on future economic and future security partnerships.

In my latest meeting with Michel Barnier on Monday, we discussed a range of issues, from questions of the Northern Ireland protocol, which has just been discussed in the House, to product standards and market access.

It was a productive and positive discussion. We will continue to work hard and at pace, and will set out further details in the Government White Paper in due course.

Matt Warman: My constituents voted more than any others in the country to leave the European Union. In the past couple of days, this House has worked hard to deliver that. I know they will be grateful for all the Secretary of State's work. Does he agree that there is no record anywhere in the world of an international negotiation in which a Parliament in place of a Government has delivered a successful micro-managed outcome?

Mr Davis: My hon. Friend is exactly right. As we made clear this week on consideration of Lords amendments to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, we cannot accept amendments that allow Parliament to instruct the Government on what steps we should take in international negotiation because that undermines one of my three tests, and because such a move would be constitutionally unprecedented.

The current constitutional arrangements have served this country well for hundreds of years over thousands of treaties. Those who have argued for something different did not argue for the House of Commons to negotiate directly our accession to the European Union, or the Lisbon, Amsterdam or Maastricht treaties. It is rather odd that they make such an argument now.

Scott Mann: In the light of the House's rejection of Lords amendments on the European economic area and customs union, will my right hon. Friend now head to Brussels with renewed vigour to support many of my constituents who voted for Brexit, and who want the Government to get on and deliver the result?

Mr Davis: I would hope that my vigour does not need renewal, but I will take my hon. Friend's wishes as I am sure he meant them.

We had a constructive debate in both Chambers and I am pleased that we are now in the final stages of the Bill. This crucial piece of legislation is designed to deliver continuity of law after exit, and ensures that from day one we have a functioning statute book, which will give certainty to both individuals and business. We will build on the hard work at home and in Brussels, and continue to work towards a withdrawal agreement and future framework in October.

Steve Double: I concur with the comments of my Cornish colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Scott Mann). People in my constituency simply want the Government to get on and deliver the Brexit that they voted for. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirm that the Government's position remains that they will take back control of our borders? Will he therefore resist all calls for us to join the EEA, which would precipitate continued freedom of movement and not deliver what the majority of people voted for?

Mr Davis: Yes. As my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor General stated in yesterday's debate on the Lords EEA amendment, continuing to participate in the EEA agreement beyond the implementation period means accepting all four freedoms of the single market,

including free movement of people. In the last election, both main parties clearly said that they would not accept that. It is therefore clear that continuing to participate in the EEA agreement beyond the implementation period would not deliver control of our borders or our laws, which the British people voted for. That point was made by a number of Labour MPs in yesterday's debate—the right hon. Member for Don Valley (Caroline Flint) is not here, and I do not often compliment her, but she made one of the best speeches of the day on exactly that subject.

Our proposals are designed to deliver the best access to the European market consistent with taking back control of our laws and borders. That is what we will do.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Government's proposal for a backstop in Northern Ireland did not include an approach on regulatory standards, which is presumably one reason why Michel Barnier, in rejecting it, said that it would lead to a hard border. Do the Government intend to submit a revised proposal to the EU negotiators before the June European Council?

Mr Davis: The right hon. Gentleman is uncharacteristically inaccurate. Michel Barnier did not reject our proposal. He said in a tweet after his press conference that he would be discussing it with us, which he did on Monday.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The Government have rejected giving Parliament a meaningful voice in the Brexit deal, but does the Secretary of State recognise that the businesses we represent are crying out for some sort of clarity so that they can deliver on the investment that drives jobs in my constituency? When will he deliver that clarity?

Mr Davis: Again—the hon. Lady is wrong. The Government have provided 250 hours of debate on this Bill alone, and there are probably a dozen other pieces of primary legislation, including the withdrawal agreement and implementation Bill later this year. There is a huge range of areas in which Parliament has had its say and will have its say. To come to the point about business investment, in the past year high-tech investment alone—the most important for our future in many ways—was three times in the UK that of any European country. Indeed, it was as much as the next three countries put together.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Political leadership in negotiations is clearly key to their success, but in response to a question I tabled, the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), informed me that until last Monday the Secretary of State had met Michel Barnier only twice since December—once in February and once at a press conference in March. Two meetings in six critical months. Can the Secretary of State explain his absence? Does paralysis in the Cabinet leave him with nothing to say? Or has he simply been sidelined by officials closer to the Prime Minister?

Mr Davis: Is it not wonderful to have the Labour party, of all people, accusing us on this? I am looking at the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman)—don't worry. I read a tweet only this morning in which the

Labour Whips Office was celebrating the fact that only 75 Labour Members rebelled against the amendment yesterday.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am slightly pleasantly surprised to see the Secretary of State still in his place—*[Interruption.]* I suspect that if I am surprised to see him in his place, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are significantly more surprised. Particularly as the negotiations go on to look at our future and long-term relationship with Europe, they will inevitably impinge significantly on matters that are properly and constitutionally devolved to the three devolved nations of this Union. This week, we saw the Government force through without debate provisions allowing Ministers unilaterally to remove and change the powers of those devolved nations. Will the Secretary of State tell us what assurances the people in the devolved nations can have that our interests will not be sold out during the next stage of the negotiations?

Mr Davis: First, might I say that I am touched that the hon. Gentleman is pleasantly surprised that I am still here? I am very pleasantly surprised to see so many of his colleagues with him today.

On the important substantive question, the Government came up with a number of proposals during the course of the Bill which sought to arrange the mechanism by which powers are passed from the European Union through to the devolved Administrations. Those proposals were welcomed by the Welsh Administration but not by the Scots one. Nevertheless, we are continuing in our discussions with the Scots Administration to endeavour to come to an agreement, and while we are doing our work on the White Paper, we are also talking to them about the policy elements of that so they can have an input.

Peter Grant: I remind the Secretary of State once again that it was not the Scottish Government who refused the legislative consent motion but the elected Parliament of Scotland. Four out of five parties agreed that the Government's actions were not acceptable. Will the Secretary of State confirm that as the Government's intentions stand, it would be perfectly possible for the Government to return from Brussels with a deal that substantially damaged the interests of the three devolved nations of this Union, and that the only option that Members of Parliament from those nations would have would be to accept that sell-out or to accept a car crash no deal? That is the Government's intention just now, is it not?

Mr Davis: I made it very clear from the beginning of the negotiation process and the policy creation process that we treat the interests of every nation in the United Kingdom extremely seriously and will defend them to the utmost of our ability. There will be a statement later from the Scottish Secretary on the Sewel convention.

Single Market: North-west Economy

5. **Conor McGinn** (St Helens North) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential economic effect on the north-west of the UK leaving the EU single market. [905833]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman): The Department for Exiting the European Union is working with all Departments at both ministerial and official level to ensure that our preparations for exit from, and new partnership with, the EU are on track. We are committed to seeking the best possible deal for the United Kingdom—one that works for all the regions of the country, including the north-west. I was delighted to visit the region earlier this month, and meet local businesses to discuss their views on Brexit.

Conor McGinn: Despite the very positive work being done by organisations such as the St Helens chamber of commerce, the latest polling shows that confidence among businesses in the north-west has fallen by 22 points, to just 33%. I am intrigued to know to what the Minister attributes that; is it the fact that this Government's chaotic and shambolic handling of negotiations means that there is a real anxiety among businesses that we will crash out of the single market with no deal?

Suella Braverman: I very strongly disagree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis. During my visit to the north-west I was pleased to meet with thriving businesses that are looking forward to the economic opportunities flowing from Brexit, such as trading with an expanded global marketplace. Together with huge investment in the north-west, such as the Mersey Gateway bridge and the northern hub in Manchester, the port of Liverpool, for example, stands potentially to act as an expanded gateway for global trade. This week's Office for National Statistics trade figures show that exports are rising—by 7% to the end of April—faster than imports. That is good news for ports like Liverpool, good news for the north-west region and good news for the country.

Chris Davies (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): As well as the north-west, all other regions in the UK are important to the Union, including the devolved nations, so can my hon. Friend confirm that no area will be treated unfairly when we leave the EU?

Suella Braverman: Absolutely; the integrity of the United Kingdom is paramount as we pursue these negotiations. I am very encouraged by the Government's commitment to securing a unique and mutually beneficial free trade agreement with the European Union that supports our businesses, our jobs and our economy.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): Given that all the analyses show that Scottish GDP would fall by 2.9% in the least-worst scenario of our staying in the single market and the customs union when we leave the EU, what GDP figure are the Government working towards with their current negotiating position?

Suella Braverman: Let us look globally: we have an economy that has increased output—those are the CBI's figures—we have the OECD upgrading growth forecasts for this year and next, and we have the lowest net borrowing in over a decade. That is a very different picture from that suggested by the predictions that were made two years ago. Let us base our position on facts, not scaremongering about the future.

Free Trade Agreements

6. **Robert Courts (Witney) (Con):** What assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK remaining in the customs union on its ability to negotiate new free trade agreements throughout the world. [905834]

8. **Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con):** What assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK remaining in the customs union on its ability to negotiate new free trade agreements throughout the world. [905837]

9. **Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con):** What assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK remaining in the customs union on its ability to negotiate new free trade agreements throughout the world. [905838]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman): We have been clear that the UK will be leaving the EU's customs union and the single market in March 2019. Only by leaving the customs union and establishing a new and ambitious customs arrangement with the EU will we be able to forge new trade relationships with our partners around the world. If the UK were to remain in the customs union, we would be unable to implement our own trade deals or to set our own tariffs. That would not give us control over our trade policy and it would not be respecting the referendum result.

Robert Courts: Any policy whereby Britain leaves the European Union but remains in the customs union would mean surrendering our trade policy to a third party, and would mean that we were required to open our markets to other countries without guaranteed reciprocal access to theirs. Does my hon. Friend agree that no independent, self-respecting nation could tolerate such a position?

Suella Braverman: I agree with my hon. Friend. A customs union creates an asymmetrical relationship. Turkey is an example of a country in a customs union with the EU but not in the customs union with the EU. The effect of that is that if the EU signs a free trade agreement with a third country—let us say, the US or Canada—goods from the US or Canada can enter Turkey tariff-free, but Turkish goods still face a tariff barrier in Canada or America, which puts Turkish businesses and exporters at a significant disadvantage. With free trade as the big prize for Brexit, Labour's support for a customs union makes no sense at all.

Rebecca Pow: I do not know whether you are a cider drinker, Mr Speaker, but say the word Somerset and you inevitably think of cider. Last week I held an event for the cider industry trade, to which I invited all the cider makers from Somerset. There was a great deal of positivity and emphasis on the fact that we can grow in the world market when we leave Europe. Does my hon. Friend agree that yesterday's decision will help us negotiate unfettered and that that will benefit our south-west industries?

Suella Braverman: I agree with my hon. Friend. You may well agree, Mr Speaker, that cider is a delicious drink and, if I may be so bold, like me you may have

had many a joyous occasion, perhaps in your teenage or university days, where the memories were enhanced precisely because of the consumption of cider.

I am very pleased that companies, particularly in my hon. Friend's constituency and her region, have a can-do attitude to Brexit and are looking forward to increased global trading opportunities. Brexit presents those opportunities, especially for the food and drink industry.

Henry Smith: When I have met elected representatives from places as far apart as Wellington and Washington, they have been very keen to do trade deals with the United Kingdom post-Brexit. Will the Minister confirm that that would not be possible if we remained part of the customs union?

Suella Braverman: Yes. Remaining in a customs union or the customs union with the EU would not be compatible with having a meaningful, independent trade policy. It would mean that we would have less control than we have now over our trading relationships with other countries. Neither leave nor remain voters would want that.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady has given an extremely clear and helpful answer, but the problem is that we have a lot of questions to get through and I want to accommodate colleagues. If all Ministers could be brief, that would be great.

Phil Wilson (Sedgefield) (Lab): Car manufacturing in this country is world leading, but the president of the CBI has said that if we leave the customs union it would become extinct. What contingencies do the Government have to replace the 800,000 jobs affected, including the 30,000 jobs in the north-east of England?

Suella Braverman: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's description. The automotive sector is one of our great success stories and the Government will continue to support it. Just this April, Vauxhall announced an investment of more than £100 million in its UK plant, to build the next generation of Vivaro vans. We are seeing more and more success in the sector. We have to support that, and that will be an ambition of our future trade agreement with the EU.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): As well as the motor sector, the food sector has expressed concern that rules of origin in the supply chain could have a real impact post-Brexit if we are not part of a customs union. What is the Department's approach? Is it considering a broader definition of "local origin"? How else will it help those sectors deal with rules of origin post-Brexit?

Suella Braverman: The hon. Lady is right to highlight the issue of rules of origin with regard to the sector. We want to ensure as limited friction as possible, with a tariff-free arrangement for goods, so that we have the integrated supply chains that are vital to the success of the sector.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): Will the Minister comment on the Foreign Secretary's analysis that the Government's EU negotiations are heading for "meltdown"? Is that not just another example of the chaos and division at the heart of Government?

Suella Braverman: I think that the hon. Lady's interpretation is incorrect. The Government are making—*[Interruption.]* Let us look at the progress the Government have made. We have agreed an implementation period. Led by the Prime Minister, we secured agreement in December on EU citizens, and we are now in the phase of talking about the exciting future relationship with the European Union. I am looking forward to the opportunities and success that will be led by this Government, not the predictions of failure.

EU Withdrawal: No Deal Preparations

10. **Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con):** What preparations his Department is making for withdrawal from the EU without a deal. [905840]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker): It is in everyone's interests to secure a good deal for both sides and we are increasingly confident that that can be achieved. As my right hon. Friend will be aware, we continue to implement plans for all scenarios. Some delivery has already become evident; more will become public over the coming weeks and months. As an example, I congratulate my colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who have made progress on our preparations for exiting Euratom. The Nuclear Safeguards Bill has completed its passage through Parliament, and international agreements have been signed with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the USA, helping to ensure continuity as we leave Euratom.

Mr Jones: I am pleased to hear that prudent preparation is being made for leaving without a deal. Does my hon. Friend accept, however, that to provide reassurance to business and the wider public—not to mention to inform our interlocutors in Brussels—the nature and extent of that preparation should be more widely communicated?

Mr Baker: I hear my right hon. Friend's case and I agree that it is prudent for all Departments to prepare for all possible outcomes. We will continue to engage with business to reduce uncertainty wherever we can. Over the next few weeks and months, our preparations for what is an unwanted contingency will become increasingly visible to him and the country.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Deal or no deal, will we still be members of Europol and the European arrest warrant this time next year?

Mr Baker: We will be bringing forward and publishing our plans for the future relationship in due course.

EU Scientific Co-operation

11. **Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con):** What steps the Government are taking in their withdrawal negotiations to facilitate ongoing scientific co-operation between the UK and EU. [905841]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): As the Prime Minister set out at Mansion House and reinforced at Jodrell Bank, the UK is committed to establishing a far-reaching science and innovation pact with the EU,

facilitating the exchange of ideas and researchers, and enabling the UK to participate in key programmes alongside EU partners.

Vicky Ford: Ongoing co-operation is clearly in both our and the EU's interest, but world-leading scientists often explain how they need to move to and fro between different countries in order to build knowledge. Will the Minister ensure that the visa system post Brexit will enable researchers to have that flexible mobility?

Mr Walker: We have been very clear throughout the process that we want the UK to continue to be able to attract the brightest and the best and to be a magnet for key talent around the world. The announcement of the new start-up tech visas is a good indication of how UK immigration policy can contribute in this space.

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab): The Minister mentions that we want to attract the brightest and the best but missed some of what the question was about, which is of great concern to my constituents in the University of Bristol: the free flow of researchers and scientists around the European Union and the exchange of knowledge. They, and scientific firms in my constituency, say that they are already struggling. What further clarification can he please give?

Mr Walker: We have reached some important agreements already with regard to the implementation agreement and the continuation of our existing membership of Horizon during the whole period until the end of the multi-annual financial framework. We now want to secure the science and innovation pact, which we have been discussing in our meetings with the Commission, and those meetings have been constructive and positive.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): As a trustee of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, may I ask the Minister what assurances he can give me that the UK Government will provide at least as much funding, through whatever mechanism, after we leave the European Union as is now given to the universities and institutes around this country?

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend asks me an interesting question, which is probably more appropriate for a Treasury Minister to answer, but I recognise its importance. The UK is stepping up investment in R&D with our target to ensure that 2.4% of GDP is spent on it. That will make us one of the leading countries in the world for investment in research.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The Rheumatoid Arthritis Pathogenesis Centre of Excellence in Glasgow relies not only on the movement of people and talent but on the movement of medical samples across borders. What will the Minister do to ensure that medical samples can travel unfettered across the EU after Brexit?

Mr Walker: The hon. Lady raises a very important point. Having visited the university in Glasgow to talk about some of these issues, I recognise the world-leading research that takes place there. Of course we want to ensure that patients in the UK and the EU continue to benefit from the exchange between us. That is why we

have talked not only about co-operation in science but about the benefits of the UK's continued participation through associate membership of the European Medicines Agency.

International Business Community

12. **Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con):** What steps he is taking to ensure that the Government engage with the international business community during negotiations on the UK leaving the EU. [905842]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman): The ministerial team undertakes regular engagements with the international business community, both in the UK and abroad. In addition to regular visits to Brussels the ministerial team has undertaken 27 trips across EU member states this year. That is supported by business engagement conducted by our embassies.

Peter Aldous: I am grateful to the Minister for her reply. Over the past 50 years, considerable expertise has been built up in the North sea energy sector, which has led to enormous global export opportunities. What steps are the Government taking to ensure that that continues after we leave the EU, with particular emphasis on the emerging offshore wind sector?

Suella Braverman: The UK has been an active member of the North sea's energy co-operation initiative since 2010. The aim is to explore the most cost-effective way of developing offshore grid infrastructure to exploit the considerable renewable energy resources in the North and Irish seas. The UK brings significant experience and expertise to this co-operation. Working together with other countries through this initiative will enable us to maximise the considerable business opportunities in the emerging offshore wind sector.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): Business is getting more nervous as it watches the Government negotiating more with themselves than with the European Union. Can the Minister confirm that it is Government policy to ensure that there are no new impediments to trade for our world-leading service industries, such as financial services, education, the creative industries and others?

Suella Braverman: Considerable amounts of data have been released recently showing an increase in confidence in various sectors, whether it is retail, services, manufacturing or construction. We have to build on that, which is why the Government are committed to reducing barriers to trade to enable our businesses, our exporters, our manufacturers and our service sector to thrive outside the European Union.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): The Minister referred to the offshore wind sector. She visited my constituency, the port of Immingham and neighbouring Grimsby a couple of weeks ago. Does she agree that the facilities there for serving the offshore sector, and the wider trade deals that could follow Brexit, are greatly to the advantage of northern Lincolnshire?

Suella Braverman: I was delighted to visit the ports of Immingham and Grimsby at my hon. Friend's invitation. I was very impressed by the energy estuary, which is located there, and by the wealth of experience and output. It is the energy powerhouse for our nation.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The Conservatives are already arguing about what promises were made, or not made, at the Dispatch Box on Tuesday night; the Cabinet cannot agree a position on the EU; and the Brexit Secretary threatens to resign every other week. What message does that send to the international business community?

Suella Braverman: Well, let us look at the facts. As I said, CBI data shows an increase in output generally, the OECD revised its forecasts upwards for this year and next, and there is record low unemployment throughout the country. Those are signs of an economy that is confident and optimistic about the future, not one such as the hon. Gentleman describes.

Mr Speaker: May I gently say that with ingenuity, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) could shoehorn in his question about fisheries policy, which is a matter of significant interest to the international business community? He is not obliged to do so, but we can happily give him a go.

18. [905850] **David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): Thank you for that, Mr Speaker. I understand that the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), met the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations yesterday. Can he confirm today that he shares the ambition of the NFFO and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation that when we leave the EU, we will have actual, as well as legal, authority over all fishing activities in UK waters, out to 200 nautical miles?

Suella Braverman: The Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), was pleased to meet the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations yesterday. He is keen to keep engaging with the sector. We have been absolutely clear that when we leave the EU, we will leave the common fisheries policy. Indeed, from 2020 we will be negotiating as an independent coastal state. Let me reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) that our plans for exit from the common fisheries policy are not affected by the backstop discussions.

Local Government Funding

13. **Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect on local government funding of leaving the EU. [905843]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman): My Department continues to work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and with other Departments across Government, to ensure that local

government is prepared for the potential effects of EU exit. This work includes assessing any funding issues for local government.

Luke Pollard: Plymouth City Council's new Labour council has established a Brexit scrutiny committee to look at the impacts of Brexit on vital public services. What conversations is your Department having directly with local authority leaders to help it to understand the impacts on the vital public services that many millions of people rely on?

Mr Speaker: I do not have a Department, but the Minister, fortunately, does.

Suella Braverman: Both the Secretary of State and I have met many local authority leaders around the country. We are keen to engage with them so that we understand their concerns about EU exit. Importantly, the UK will continue to participate in the 2014 to 2020 EU programmes until they close, and, thereafter, EU structural funding will be transferred through a UK shared prosperity fund. Comments from local authorities will be very well received.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Proceedings would be incomplete if we did not hear from the conscience of Kettering.

UK Citizens' Rights

15. **Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Whether the EU has agreed to reciprocate in full to UK subjects living in the EU the rights that the Government have offered to EU citizens living in the UK. [905845]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): The UK has reached an important agreement on citizens' rights with the EU that is fully reciprocal, but it is of course important to recognise that it is the responsibility of member states, rather than of EU institutions, to implement some aspects of that agreement.

Mr Hollobone: Do the reciprocal rights that the EU is meant to have agreed extend just to the country in Europe in which UK citizens are living, or do they extend right across all 27 member states?

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We are clear that we would like to secure onward movement rights for UK citizens living in the EU, and we will return to this issue in the next phase of negotiations. In several other areas, it is right that the rights are reciprocal between the UK and the EU and that they apply throughout the whole EU.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I appreciate the Minister's comments about UK citizens living abroad, but does he agree that we still need clarity for EU citizens living here? The David family in my constituency have lived and worked here for 20 years. Both their children were born here, but although one of them is entitled to a UK passport, the other is not. They have now had five different pieces of conflicting advice from UK departments about their passports and citizenship. Is the Minister prepared to meet me to talk about their case and to see whether we can get some clarity on it?

Mr Walker: I would be very happy to meet the hon. Lady to discuss this case. We are working closely with Home Office colleagues to ensure that the new settled status system is clearer and easier to use than what has gone before.

Topical Questions

T1. [905853] **David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Davis): Before I turn to my departmental responsibilities, may I say that today is a sombre day, one year on from Grenfell? I am sure that I speak on behalf of the whole House when I say that our thoughts are with those who suffered bereavement and loss a year ago.

This has been an important week in our policy area. It was Parliament that gave the people a decision on our membership of the EU, by way of a referendum, and it is Parliament that is carrying out their instruction. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill returns to the Lords as a much studied, much debated and, I think, much better piece of legislation. It demonstrates the Government and Parliament delivering what the people voted for, and I know that Members in the other place will have taken note of the decisions taken and views expressed in the Commons in the past few days.

David Duguid: The agricultural sector in England has had the opportunity to be consulted on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' plans for the industry post-Brexit. As the whole UK prepares to leave the EU, does my right hon. Friend agree that farmers in Scotland would be best served if the Scottish National party, rather than continuing its tactic of manufacturing grievance with this Government, consulted Scottish farmers on Scotland's future agricultural policy?

Mr Davis: Leaving the common agricultural policy will deliver significant opportunities for farming, as the consultation to date is already showing. My hon. Friend is right that there has been consultation with the farming sector in England, but the Government are committed to working closely with the devolved Administrations and stakeholders to deliver an approach that works for the whole UK, as I said earlier, and that reflects the needs and circumstances of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. That being said, I agree entirely with my hon. Friend: all of us who are involved in these procedures, bar those of the Scottish nationalist party, have learned the lesson that if we actually want to make things happen, we have to turn up and deal with the issues.

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): May I join the Secretary of State in his comments on Grenfell on behalf of the Opposition and, I am sure, the whole House?

It is good to see the Secretary of State in his place. On the back of an earlier question, I have done a quick tally, and I think that this year he has threatened to resign more times than he has met Michel Barnier.

On Tuesday, to avoid a defeat in this House, the Prime Minister offered a series of apparent concessions to her Back Benchers. Yesterday, after a meeting with the Prime Minister, the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) told Sky News that

“we are going to get a meaningful vote on both deal and no deal. I have no doubt about it”.

Later, the Solicitor General told the “Today” programme:

“I have a problem both constitutionally and politically with a direction given by Parliament”.

Who is right?

Mr Davis: My responsibilities are with the Government, so of course I am entirely with the Solicitor General—that follows automatically. Let me put in front of the House what I said during that debate, which is that whatever proposal is put back to the Lords, it has to meet three criteria: first, that we do not bring about the overturning of the referendum result; secondly, that we do not undermine the ongoing negotiation with the European Union; and, thirdly, that we do not change the constitutional structure that has served this country well for hundreds of years, under which the Government negotiates and Parliament passes its view at the end of the process.

Keir Starmer: Let me press the Secretary of State a little further, because this is a really crucial issue in the process, so we must get it right. Will he say clearly, yes or no—will the Government's amendment, to be published later today, make it clear that, should the proposed article 50 deal be voted down, it would be for Parliament to say what happened next, not the Executive?

Mr Davis: I am afraid that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will have to wait to see the document when it is published. As he says, it will be published later today.

T2. [905854] **Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): As I think my right hon. Friend is aware, I voted to remain in the referendum, and I do not think that he did. Like us, the country is split, and the leave vote won. Does he agree that unity and strength are the only way forward and that holding a second referendum would be expensive madness leading to further division and strife?

Mr Davis: Not only would it lead to further division and strife, as my hon. Friend puts it, but it would also create an incentive for the European Union to give us the worst deal possible, and surely that must trump all other points.

T3. [905855] **Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): Most British manufacturing businesses, including businesses in my own constituency in Bath, are part of complex European supply chains. Why does the Minister think that leaving the customs union and the single market—she does not need to repeat that it is the will of the British people—is good for British manufacturers?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman): Since the referendum, and contrary to the predictions at the time of the referendum, we are seeing an increase in exports outpacing imports, an increase in manufacturing, and an increase in sales in particular sectors, such as the car

industry. We must build on those successes. Leaving the customs union will enable us to develop an independent trade policy beyond the EU and with other countries, and leaving the single market will give us power and control over our rules and regulations.

T6. [905858] **Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): Can the Minister confirm that, as the UK will be able to sign free trade agreements during the implementation period, we will have taken control of our trade and so will be able to enjoy all the benefits that that offers from March 2019?

Suella Braverman: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The green section of the withdrawal agreement includes an express indication that, during the implementation period, we will, for the first time in 40 years, have the freedom to negotiate, sign and ratify trade agreements with third countries, opening our markets for British manufacturers, exporters and businesses, which is a surefire way of generating growth, jobs and prosperity.

T4. [905856] **Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): In response to my previous question, I think the Minister said that there would be no additional Government resources for the Northern Ireland police force. Will he confirm that additional resources for any contingency would be met from within its existing budget?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): I think the hon. Lady may have misheard me. I said that there would be no resources spent on going against our commitments on the border. That is the point I was making. Obviously, resources allocated by the Government are really a question for the Treasury and the Northern Ireland Office.

T7. [905860] **Rebecca Pow** (Taunton Deane) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that coming up with a plan soon to enable seasonal or short-term labour from the EU or the wider world in the form of, say, a seasonal agricultural worker's visa or seasonal worker's visa would be really helpful to businesses? We do not necessarily need to keep them waiting until we actually exit the EU, and it would mean they could plan.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker): We have been engaging with businesses up and down the country to build a strong understanding of the challenges and opportunities that Brexit brings, particularly in relation to immigration, and that will help us to design a new immigration system that ensures that employers have access to the skills they need. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that I discussed her proposal with the Minister for Immigration very recently. The Government are alive to my hon. Friend's arguments, and we will continue to consider them as we deliberate.

T5. [905857] **Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): Other than the Sewel convention, what is there to stop the Government repeating their unilateral rewriting of the constitution and devolution power grab in other Brexit-related legislation?

Mr Robin Walker: I am very glad that we have legislation now that ensures that the devolution system is respected. That has been recognised by the devolved Government in Wales, and I still think that there is an opportunity for the devolved Government and the devolved Parliament in Scotland to come forward and recognise that fact.

T8. [905861] **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that ending freedom of movement will at long last give us control over who can come to this country, and allow us then to create an immigration system that works for science, without limitless immigration from the EU?

Mr Walker: My hon. Friend, who is a great champion of science in the UK, makes a very important point. We want to continue to attract the brightest and best to the UK, particularly those looking to work in our world-leading science and innovation sector. As I said earlier, the announcement of the new start-up visas is an important step in showing that a UK immigration policy can do that.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May I ask the Secretary of State directly whether he thinks that he and his team have the right level of competencies to conduct these difficult negotiations? Is not it about time that he thought very carefully about bringing in some new talent? I would suggest perhaps David Miliband, Gordon Brown and even the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. They might actually help him to do a job that needs attention to detail and real competence.

Mr David Davis: The attention to detail that delivered the financial crisis of 2008 is precisely what we do not want.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): The people of Willenhall and Bloxwich voted enthusiastically and overwhelmingly to exit the EU. Will the Minister assure them that they will get a Brexit deal that they recognise as Brexit?

Mr Baker: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We are determined to take back control of our laws, borders and trade policy. We will ensure that we go forward as a normal, independent country, where people know that it is this Parliament that governs their lives.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): If the Government are so confident of achieving this wonderful trade deal with the EU—outwith the single market and the customs union—that they keep talking about, why are they so frightened to put that deal to the public to see whether it is the kind of Brexit that they expected?

Mr David Davis: The hon. Gentleman really must learn to pay attention during these questions. The simple truth is that creating such an incentive for the European Union would actually be the one thing that undermined the negotiations.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): In any divorce, the assets are divided. Including the £39 billion divorce bill, from the day we joined in 1973 to the day we leave,

we will have given £250 billion in today's money to this organisation. What proportion of the assets are we going to get back?

Mr Baker: First of all, I refute the idea that this is a divorce. I prefer to think that we are loving siblings who have decided to grow up and move out into the house next door. We have reached a fair financial settlement, and I am pleased that we have.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): The Secretary of State will understand that the natural consequence of proceedings on Tuesday was that amendments regarding Northern Ireland, the devolved regions and the border did not get the thoughtful or considered reflection that they should have. Will the Minister use his influence to ensure that, should those amendments come back to this House, any programme motion will be framed in such a way that thoughtful and considered reflections can be made during our proceedings?

Mr Robin Walker: The hon. Gentleman raises a good point. We did spend quite a lot of time discussing some of these issues during the earlier stages of the Bill. I think the amendment that was eventually passed reflected some of that debate, as well as the very good debate in the Lords. But of course these are very important issues, and we will look carefully at the programme motions for any further stages.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Yesterday's remarks by the outgoing head of the CBI are very serious and need to be taken in that context. Do the Government have any plans to provide a detailed response to those remarks, given the importance of them to the auto industry and many other industries?

Mr David Davis: We take all remarks from business and business leaders very seriously. We have to make an assessment as to what is in the best interests of the whole country. We also have to balance—for example, with respect to customs union—the interests of existing companies and companies that may make the most of opportunities in the rest of the world when we get freedom from the common commercial policy. My direct answer to the end of my hon. Friend's question is that we will be publishing a White Paper in the near future, and the matter will be addressed in that White Paper.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Can the Secretary of State confirm that any separate regulatory alignment deal for Northern Ireland will be available to Scotland?

Mr Davis: As we said in our proposal to the European Union, the backstop proposal was for the whole of the United Kingdom, and everything else will be for the whole of the United Kingdom, with minor variations that currently exist in Northern Ireland.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): Will the Secretary of State join me in appreciating the irony inherent in the news today that even businesses set

up by Members of his own party are announcing their intention to move business to Ireland and are warning their investors of the uncertainties of Brexit?

Suella Braverman: Let us also focus on the recent investment decisions that we are hearing about. We have a record number of foreign direct investment projects in the UK. We have just heard that Amazon will be investing more money to create 2,000 or so jobs in the UK. Multinational global companies in pioneering sectors are choosing the UK, after our decision to leave the European Union, to build their businesses and grow jobs.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The Dutch Government are offering advice on Brexit to Dutch businesses. The Irish Government are offering grants to Irish businesses affected by Brexit. In the absence of anything from this Government, the North East England chamber of commerce has produced a checklist. The Secretary of State seems to think it is unreasonable for businesses to demand greater clarity or progress, but could he at least offer them some advice?

Mr Baker: We have done a huge amount to engage with business. As I said in response to earlier questions, we will reveal more of our plans in the next few weeks and months, and as we do that, we will engage in more detail with businesses right across the country.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The UK Government have long used the fact of being in the EU as an excuse for not implementing the international code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes. Will the Government make it their policy to adopt that code after we leave the EU?

Mr Robin Walker: The hon. Lady has raised that point before in these questions. She will appreciate that that is not necessarily a question for this Department, but she points to an area in which the UK may have greater flexibility in the future, which we should welcome.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Secretary of State listed a series of conventions and mandates that he wants to see respected in the Brexit process. I notice that he did not mention the mandate of the 62% of people in Scotland who voted to remain and the 20-year-old Sewel convention, which determines the relationship between this place and the Government in Scotland. Does he seriously think that ripping up the 20-year-old devolution settlement on this island is a price worth paying for a hard Tory Brexit?

Mr Walker: As I have said, we are absolutely committed to the devolution settlement. The arrangements we have reached respect that devolution settlement. In a week in which we have seen a lot of debate about meaningful votes, it is a shame that the SNP colluded in a series of meaningless votes, three times voting on the same thing twice, which ate into the time available to debate these issues.

Galileo Programme

10.37 am

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the UK's future participation in the Galileo Public Regulated Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb): The Government have been clear that our preference is to contribute fully to Galileo as part of a deep security partnership with the European Union and that negotiations should be allowed to run their course. That includes UK involvement in the design and development of Galileo's encrypted signal for use by Governments, the Public Regulated Service.

On 13 June at the European Space Agency Council, member states agreed to proceed with the procurement of the next phase of Galileo. UK companies are not eligible to bid for those contracts. By forcing through that vote while excluding UK companies from the contracts on security grounds, the European Commission has put all of this at risk. The Commission also published slides setting out the EU's response to the UK's technical note on Galileo published on 24 May, which explained our requirements for future participation in the programme. The EU proposal does not meet UK defence and industrial requirements, and we could not justify future participation in Galileo on that basis.

The UK has explained that without full, fair and open industrial involvement, guaranteed access to the signal and full understanding of the system's technical characteristics, Galileo would not offer the UK value for money or meet our defence needs, and that we would be obliged to walk away, resulting in delays and additional costs to the programme that will run into the billions. The Government will need to consider the implications of the recent ESA vote, but we are looking at other options, including a UK global navigation satellite system.

Nia Griffith: The future of the UK's relationship with Galileo is extremely important, and yesterday's release from the Commission reveals the enormous gulf between the UK Government's position and the Commission's view. This matter must be dealt with urgently.

The strategic defence and security review highlighted the importance of Galileo for our armed forces, saying: "we will enhance the resilience of military users and key domestic resilience responders using new technologies incorporating the European Galileo system."

Having secure access to global positioning and navigation systems is vital for our armed forces, given the increasing threats to GPS integrity from cyber-attacks, jamming and spoofing. Will the Minister tell us what arrangements will be in place for the armed forces if the UK is excluded from the public regulated service, and what implications that will have for their ability to conduct planned operations?

The Commission's latest release is clear that the UK outside the EU cannot have the same relationship with the programme as we would have as a member state, but it does say that access to the PRS is possible for third countries if a specific agreement is in place. Is that what the Government plan to do, and if so, what urgent steps

is the Secretary of State taking to get such an agreement? How many times has the Secretary of State personally met or spoken to Federica Mogherini about the specific issue of Galileo?

We do not simply want to be third-party users of the EU Galileo systems; we want our industry to be at the heart of the design process. However, the Commission is insisting that working on the design and development of security-related and PRS elements is restricted to EU member states only. The UK space industry is worth nearly £15 billion annually to UK plc, with over 40,000 direct employees and 1,400 apprentices. What discussions has the Minister had with industry stakeholders about the impact of the UK dropping out of Galileo?

Finally, the Secretary of State and his Ministers have made repeated reference to a UK alternative to the Galileo system. Will the Minister tell us what steps they have taken to explore such an alternative, and what discussions about it they have had with key non-EU allies? We know that this would be an extremely expensive endeavour to undertake, so what contingency money has been set aside for the project and what advice has he received about a timeframe for delivery? Galileo and the PRS are of major importance to us, and I hope that the Minister will be able to provide us with some concrete answers.

Guto Bebb: I thank the hon. Lady for her questions. Indeed, it is important that we have a very strong cross-party view on this issue, because all Members of this House would find the idea that the UK is being excluded on security grounds to be completely unacceptable. The merest concept of the UK being considered a security risk should be challenged by all Members of this House, and I am sure the hon. Lady will join me in highlighting our disappointment that such a decision has been taken.

On the questions asked by the hon. Lady, at this point in time the PRS system under Galileo will not be in operation until the mid-2020s, and in the meantime we will be working under the current GPS system. The hon. Lady is absolutely right that the Ministry of Defence has made no secret of the fact that we consider the capability we will offer our military from Galileo to be increasingly important and crucial, and it is an issue of real concern that we will have to look at this in very great detail.

The hon. Lady asked whether the Secretary of State and Ministers are looking at this issue and talking to the industry. I assure her that the Secretary of State has had numerous meetings on this issue, and I have personally taken it up with every single counterpart from the European Union whom I have met over the past few months, including with the junior Defence Minister from Poland yesterday. The Department has communicated this very strongly to our counterparts, and we are disappointed that we have not as yet secured the agreement we need.

May I stress that the agreement we need is one that will be good for the security of Europe and for the security of the United Kingdom? I state again that the United Kingdom, in leaving the European Union, has made it very clear that we are not leaving our obligations to the security of Europe. Those obligations are unconditional and, frankly, we find it disappointing

[Guto Bebb]

that the European Union has not taken those guarantees and assurances in the spirit in which they have been offered.

On discussions with the industry, I applaud the hon. Lady for acknowledging the strength of the UK industrial offer on space. Indeed, only recently when I spoke at the defence space conference, I highlighted the opportunities we see for the future of the space industry in the United Kingdom. We are now having to look extremely carefully at the possibility of developing our own options.

I stress again that this Government would prefer to remain involved with the Galileo project, but given the strength of this industrial sector and the strength of what we can offer the Galileo project, I think it is really a case of the European Union doing damage to itself, while we are in a position to move forward, building on the strength and expertise of the industry in the UK, to ensure that we meet the requirements of UK defence and the wider defence sector. I assure the hon. Lady that we will not allow any flight of expertise from the space sector as a result of the decision taken yesterday.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): I hope we are planning on getting even.

Guto Bebb: I can understand my right hon. Friend's frustration, and I say again that I genuinely feel that the United Kingdom's exclusion on the basis of what I consider to be a false security case is unacceptable, but this is not about getting even. It is about doing the right thing for the industry, the United Kingdom and our defence capabilities. I would prefer to get the right decision.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): This is an extremely concerning situation and clearly demonstrates how shambolic the negotiations are. It is in the UK's strategic defence interest to maintain a UK-EU security partnership. We will not build or maintain trust by taking a high-handed approach to the negotiations. Back in April 2017, I asked a series of written questions about our commitment to Galileo. The then Science Minister, the hon. Member for Orpington (Joseph Johnson), replied:

"it is too early to speculate on the UK's future relationship with specific EU programmes".

Is it still too early to speculate? When I asked

"what contingency he plans to put in place in the event the UK is unable to access the Galileo or GPS navigation systems after the UK leaves the EU",

he responded:

"The UK's arrangements to access the encrypted GPS signals will be unaffected by UK exit from the EU."

What representations has the Under-Secretary made to the European Space Agency about future access to contracts and the encrypted signal? For the second time, I ask: what contingency plans are in place in the event the UK cannot access Galileo? No doubt we have the expertise here in the UK to develop our own system, but where does that leave UK-EU collaboration, which is critical to our future security?

Guto Bebb: I would again stress that it takes both sides to come together. The United Kingdom has been very clear that it wants to continue to be involved in and

to contribute to Galileo, but those requests have been rebuffed. Clearly, we hope that this situation can be resolved and reversed, but the good will that the UK has shown has not resulted in similar good will from the European Commission, which is a significant concern.

On the question about ministerial discussions, I can stress that those discussions have been across ministerial responsibilities. Defence has been involved, but others have clearly also been involved. In many ways, the frustration for Ministers is that although the bilateral discussions with counterparts in Europe have invariably been positive, it seems that the Commission sees this as a negotiating tactic. The United Kingdom has been clear that it will never negotiate on the basis of our security concerns. That is a key point we are highlighting. From a security perspective, we have always been committed to the security of Europe. It is a shame that the Commission does not share our good will.

On our obligations to industry, I entirely agree with the hon. Lady that we have the capability and capacity to develop our own system in due course. The Galileo system will not be online until the mid-2020s. We have had deep and meaningful discussions with the defence industry on alternative options, and I stress again that, if need be, the United Kingdom will respond and develop its own system, but we would prefer to ensure that the Galileo system works for the security of the whole of Europe.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): This is a classic example from the unelected Commission of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. I encourage my hon. Friend to do all he can to resolve this matter, but if we cannot, I would say to him, without fear, that the other options he mentioned should be considered very strongly and that we should work with British industry to develop our own systems.

Guto Bebb: I agree with my hon. Friend that we do not want the European Union or the United Kingdom to cut off their nose to spite their face, but we will not take any risks with the security of our armed forces or the capabilities they need. Our space industry is responsible for 6.5% of the global market. We have an ambition to grow that to 10%. Be in no doubt: our discussions with the space sector show that, although it is very disappointed with the Commission's decision, it is also very excited at the prospect of developing our own capability.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The European Commission's approach in this matter is counterproductive and, in suggesting that the UK could suddenly become a security risk after we have left, frankly insulting. If the current position holds, does the Minister share the concern some have expressed that some manufacturing capacity on space and satellites, which is currently located in the UK, might move to the EU?

Guto Bebb: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his very clear statement on the comments made about the UK being a security risk. I think that that is appreciated by all Members. Is there a concern about UK industry leaving as a result of this decision? Of course there would be concern, but the key point is to respond to those concerns. That is why various Government Departments, including the Ministry of Defence, have

been in constant communication with the defence sector. Indeed, if it were not for this urgent question I would be on my way to meet companies involved in the space tech sector in Oxford at this very moment. I will still be visiting them, but after this urgent question. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that the prospect of developing our own initiative is very much to ensure that the skills that are so crucial for the future economic prosperity of the United Kingdom are retained in the United Kingdom.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): The Chancellor is reported to have said that if we fail to continue in the Galileo programme we will build our own GPS system. Does the Minister have any idea of the cost and the timescale?

Guto Bebb: I thank my right hon. Friend for her very pertinent question. It is the case that the Chancellor has been very clear and across Government we have been very clear on this, but it would be too early for us to highlight the actual cost involved. She should have no doubt about the fact that the cost involved would be no greater than our current contribution to the Galileo project, and I think the benefits to the UK could be even greater. I assure my right hon. Friend that the Chancellor's support on this issue should be taken as a clear sign.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Surely the Minister understands the size—18 hugely expensive satellites and so many years of research and development—of the Galileo project? My contacts in Cambridge say it would be catastrophic for us to be excluded, not just because of security and defence but for international air travel and much else. He must not underestimate how damaging this is. It is a symptom of leaving Europe and European co-operation.

Guto Bebb: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of this matter, which is why he should also address his concerns to the European Commission. This will be damaging both to our partners in Europe and to the United Kingdom. We have done everything in our power to highlight the fact that we want to continue to contribute fully to the programme. Those efforts have been rebuffed thus far. That is a great shame and it is a mistake on behalf of the European Commission that places all our security at risk. I stress that we will continue to invest in our capabilities if that has to be the situation.

Mr Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend for his response to the urgent question and for seeking to build cross-party consensus to condemn the reaction of the European Commission, which is clearly undertaking protectionist policies in part because it sees the strength of the space industry developing in this country. EU-based companies are currently considering relocating some of their space capability to various regions around the UK to take advantage of the skills we have here.

The Prime Minister has been very clear to the EU that defence and security matters should not be affected by Brexit, and that we wish to have a continuing strong partnership with our EU nations. Does the Prime Minister intend to bring this matter up at the EU Council or at

the NATO summit in July to ensure that our partners in Europe recognise that we are making a very fulsome offer for continued security co-operation, including on the Galileo project?

Guto Bebb: I thank my hon. Friend and predecessor in this role for his question. I also thank him for his work highlighting the contribution of defence to UK prosperity. As part of that work, he highlighted the contribution that defence makes to the space sector in the United Kingdom. I would argue that our lead in the space sector in the European context is coveted by others. It is key that we again express our willingness to work with our partners in Europe, but if that is again rebuffed we should build on the skills and the developments of the industry in the United Kingdom and highlight the fact that we could still push this issue forward with our fantastic industry capability.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): Can the Minister confirm that the possible threat to the Galileo project and the future of the British space industry was fully considered during the EU referendum debate?

Guto Bebb: Many and varied issues were discussed during the European referendum campaign. It is certainly the case that nobody, on either side of the campaign, took the view that the democratic decision of the British people would be met by a decision from the European Commission that would threaten the security of the whole of Europe. Nobody thought that such a response was likely.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): It would be a shame if our defence and security services were not fully a part of the Galileo system, but we can get around that. We have a world-beating, world-class space technology industry in our country. Does the Minister agree that, if that industry were not involved in the Galileo project, the project would be the poorer for its non-involvement?

Guto Bebb: My hon. and gallant Friend strikes the nail on the head. He is absolutely right that this decision will be damaging for the capabilities of the whole of Europe. In view of the Prime Minister's statement on our willingness to co-operate on security issues, the situation that we are now facing is genuinely disappointing. Again, he highlights the fact that we have the capability, skills and expertise to develop our own system if that is what we have to do.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I declare an interest as a trustee of the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh. The Government have said in response to a written question:

“In the long term, we believe that”

a British global navigation satellite

“system could be operated for around the same annual cost as the UK's current contribution to the EU's Galileo programme.”

Could the Minister tell us: what are the short-term costs?

Guto Bebb: The written answer highlights the fact that our current contribution is about £200 million a year. The total billed cost would be estimated at about £4 billion. So in the short term we still want to ensure

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that we have an involvement with Galileo: that is still our aim. The Prime Minister will take this issue up, and it is clearly important that she does so. It should be noted that, thus far, every single satellite utilised within the Galileo system has been built in the UK, so I wonder whether this urgent question should be taken in every other Parliament in Europe as a result of the decision taken yesterday.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): A decision that would cut the UK out of Galileo would set very difficult precedents for our future ongoing partnership on security. Yesterday's decision was made by the European Space Agency Council. May I join my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne) in calling for this now to be raised at a higher level, such as through NATO or at this month's European Council?

Guto Bebb: I hear my hon. Friend very clearly. I have no doubt that the Department will ensure that our representations are made to the Prime Minister, and I am absolutely confident that she will be raising these issues at the NATO conference and at further meetings with the European Union.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): We know from the National Audit Office report that the funding gap in the Minister's Department is about 20 billion quid. What will it be if he has to set up his own Galileo system?

Guto Bebb: I now feel as though I am back at Defence questions and having to explain that the National Audit Office report on the so-called black hole was based on the worst-case scenario occurring in every single project, with no efficiencies whatsoever being generated. The truth of the matter is that we are increasing defence spending. There is an important message here: the United Kingdom is currently one of the few countries in the European Union that is meeting its NATO obligations and that is willing to put taxpayer-funded money into its protection. I know that that type of issue upsets the hon. Gentleman, but the reality is that we take the defence and the security of Europe seriously. [Interruption.] On the question of how much, we have a large and increasing defence budget—increasing above inflation every year—and we will be able to do this if we need to.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): Encrypted signals and encrypted signals intelligence are absolutely vital for our armed forces and other agencies to communicate safely and securely. Is not it the case that this flawed decision produces one beneficiary in national security terms, and that is Russia?

Guto Bebb: My hon. Friend makes a crucial intervention, and this decision will be welcomed in very few European capitals. However, the question depends on the unlikely situation of the United Kingdom not responding to the current situation by developing its own capability. My hon. Friend said that such capability is crucial for our armed forces, and I find it inconceivable that Parliament would allow such a situation to arise. I am sure there

will be cross-party support for any decision we take to ensure that that capability is available to our armed forces.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): This decision has immense implications for the security of our region, and it is frightening to think that our missile defence capability and our ISTAR capability could be damaged in this way. I commend the Minister for the tone in which he has responded to the debate this morning. It is imperative that that reasonable tone continues, as well as a recognition that Britain remains as committed as ever to NATO and the defence of Europe. This issue also has implications on further discussions that we will need on Permanent Structured Cooperation—PESCO—and the European Defence Fund. How does the Minister see our ability to let the Commission, and others across Europe, understand the grave implications for regional safety and security that this small-minded decision has led to?

Guto Bebb: I thank the hon. Lady for her kind words, and I commend her for her fantastic work on behalf of our armed forces and for her contribution to defence issues in this House. She rightly touches on the impact of this decision on the security of the whole of Europe, including the United Kingdom, and I hope that in bilateral discussions with colleagues in other countries, she will highlight the dangerous nature of this decision. She asked about the European Defence Fund. Bilateral discussions with my counterparts have indicated that they would like us still to be involved with that, and we have been clear that that is our intention. Does this decision throw doubt on that? I think the answer is yes. Will we carry on negotiating and discussing in a constructive manner because we believe strongly in the common defence of Europe? The answer to that is also yes and I hope the hon. Lady will continue to support us in our endeavours.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): British intelligence agencies, including GCHQ in my constituency, make an enormous contribution to European security. In those circumstances, for Britain to be threatened with exclusion on the grounds of security is unreasonable, unfair and bordering on the insulting. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister should make it crystal clear in June that, in forthcoming negotiations, security should remain inviolable and not a matter for negotiation?

Guto Bebb: First, I pay tribute to the workers at GCHQ, many of whom are my hon. Friend's constituents. I visited GCHQ last Thursday, and he is right to highlight the contribution that people there make to security not just in the United Kingdom, but across Europe and on a global basis. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend—I think the Prime Minister should raise this issue and highlight once more that we do not consider a threat to our security and that of Europe part and parcel of our negotiations to withdraw from the European Union.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): The UK's space industry is world class and world leading, and a good example of that is Clyde Space in Glasgow, which is a world-leading manufacturer of cube satellites. The CEO of Airbus, Tom Enders, has called on Britain and the European Commission urgently

to find a solution to this issue for the safety of the entire region. What reassurance can the Minister give to industry stakeholders that this issue will be resolved so that they do not move elsewhere, especially bearing in mind the huge time constraints on the procurement process for Galileo?

Guto Bebb: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that the Government argued strongly that UK companies should not be excluded from the current round of contracts offered through the Galileo project. We have met industry partners and representatives on an ongoing basis. I have done that as well in my role as the Minister responsible for defence procurement. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will continue to engage fully with this UK industry because we know how important the industry is for our future prosperity. We want to give confidence to that sector of our economy that there is a strong future for it in the United Kingdom. We have the technology and skills, and we will need to reassure the industry that the Government are fully committed to ensuring that we have the capability we need from the Galileo system in a UK context, if that is what has to happen. I stress, however, that our preference would be to have a reasonable response to our very fair request to the European Commission.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): What discussions have the Government had with non-EU NATO allies on the possibility of a NATO-wide scheme, which would actually suit Britain quite well?

Guto Bebb: I know for a fact that this issue has been raised with NATO allies, certainly by Defence Ministers. In terms of whether it is the way forward, we have always believed that NATO is a key component of our security, which is why we are one of the few nations within NATO that meets the obligation for a 2% spend on defence. Everybody within NATO understands the importance of having these systems in place. We understand the challenges to the current system that we are utilising, and I therefore have no doubts that this issue will be raised by representatives of this Government at the NATO conference.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): My constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), is absolutely right about how crucial the satellite manufacturing and space industry is to Glasgow, as is the world-class space research that takes place in the University of Glasgow and other institutions in the city. As well as discussions with industry, what discussions has the Minister been having with the university sector and research institutions about the impact on their contracts and research as a result of the possible withdrawal from the Galileo programme?

Guto Bebb: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. He is absolutely right to highlight the key importance of academia to this issue. While I have not been in contact with any universities on this matter, I am assured that the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation has. The university sector has a huge contribution to make to the development of the UK space sector, and I think that those discussions should be ongoing, as they have been over the past few months.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): This decision shows that there are key elements in the European Commission who are determined to punish the United Kingdom for Brexit, even if it is at their own expense. Our response to this decision has implications for the wider negotiations, so I urge my hon. Friend not to go back on bended knee, but to make it clear that, given that our good will has been rebuffed, and given our status as a security guarantor for the continent of Europe, unless this decision is reversed at the European Council, we will proceed forthwith to set up our own bespoke system.

Guto Bebb: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. It is certainly a huge disappointment that our straight offer on this issue, which was a very clear statement of intent to remain fully involved in the Galileo project, has been rebuffed. Time and again, Members—certainly on the Government Benches, and I think across this House—who were on different sides of the referendum campaign have been very clear that, while we have taken a democratic decision to leave the European Union, we have no intention of leaving or abandoning Europe. Those positions were made very clear in our negotiations on Galileo. It is a huge disappointment that they have as yet not been responded to in kind by our European Commission partners. I think that this issue will have to be taken up at a very high level. It has to be highlighted that the loss to the Galileo project from the UK not being involved should not be underestimated. But, if necessary, as I have said several times this morning, the United Kingdom will move ahead to develop our own system.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): Does the Minister fear that the decision is a precedent, or is it a mere blip with regard to future negotiations about the myriad agreements, particularly in science and defence, that are coming and will need to be discussed?

Guto Bebb: I sincerely hope that this decision will be reversed and, therefore, it will be a blip on the journey towards a sensible solution to the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. Again, we have made it very clear—the Prime Minister has made it very clear, as have Members across this House—that we are fully committed to security co-operation with our European partners. We want to be involved in the European Defence Fund. We want to remain involved in Galileo. We certainly want to continue to contribute to NATO in the way that we have over the years. Our messaging has been very clear on this issue, and it is hugely disappointing that the European Commission has responded in the way that it has. This issue will continue to be taken up by this Government, and I sincerely hope that good will will prevail.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Are there currently any non-EU member states that participate in Galileo and whose companies have access to contracts from Galileo?

Guto Bebb: My hon. Friend makes an important point, but of course, there has not previously been a country that has been so heavily involved in Galileo and committed to the project being threatened with exclusion. The key issue is this: do we have more to contribute to

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Galileo? The answer is yes. Do we want to carry on making that contribution to Galileo? The answer is yes. Do we have the capability to develop on our own if we need to? The answer, again, is yes. The decision is now clearly one for the European Commission. In my view, it made the wrong call yesterday—the wrong call for the security and prosperity of Europe—and I think it is absolutely essential that we move forward very strongly in partnership both with those countries within the European Union and with those partners within the system who are not currently in the European Union.

Rolls-Royce Redundancies

11.10 am

Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to make a statement on the announcement by Rolls-Royce of 4,600 redundancies over the next two years.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark): As the right hon. Lady has said, Rolls-Royce announced this morning that as part of an ongoing restructuring of its business, it intends to reduce the size of its worldwide management and support workforce by up to 4,600. As the company's main management base is in Derby, it has said that that is where the biggest reduction will be felt. Although the company will embark on a statutory consultation with staff and unions, it is obvious that the news will come as a blow to the workforce, and that this is a very worrying time for the dedicated and talented employees who did nothing to bring it on themselves, but who will be affected.

Rolls-Royce is one of our most important companies. It is a world leader in new technology, and plays a vital role in our industrial strategy. I spoke to Warren East, the chief executive, yesterday evening. Mr East explained that the company's view is that the job losses are a necessary part of a drive to make the business more efficient and therefore more competitive. The jobs are principally in management and corporate support facilities rather than engineering and operational roles. Rolls-Royce has informed me that the announcement does not reflect a reduction in growth by the company; indeed, it reflects the reverse. It has a growing order book amounting to more than £170 billion,¹ and Mr East told me that it would need more staff directly employed in both the manufacture of components and assembly to meet that demand. The company has told me that it will continue to recruit engineers, technicians and apprentices. It is continuing to invest in research and development. It invested £1.4 billion last year, and about two thirds of that investment was in the United Kingdom. Last year it filed 704 patents, more than any other single UK company.

When I visited Rolls-Royce at Derby just a few weeks ago, it was to break ground on the new test bed, part of an £150 million investment to ensure that the next generation of aero-engines will be built in Derby for many years to come. We will work closely with the company, the unions, the local enterprise partnership, councils and, of course, the right hon. Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett) and other colleagues to ensure that each and every worker is supported in finding new work. We will continue to support a company, and an industry, of which we can be proud, and our biggest contribution will be to ensure that everyone in Derby, and in Britain as a whole, is able to benefit from a growing, modern economy that creates good jobs now and will do so long into the future, so that when jobs are lost, people can find new ones to support themselves and their families.

Margaret Beckett: I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. I hope that he understands clearly the enormous economic and social impact that this

1. [Official Report, 25 June 2018, Vol. 643, c. 3MC.]

announcement will have—particularly, as he said, on the city of Derby, but throughout the east midlands and anywhere else in the country where manufacturing is considered important, and particularly where manufacturing excellence is highly regarded.

I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that he recognised the huge importance of a world-class company such as Rolls-Royce, especially as we approach our departure from the European Union. These are the kind of jobs, and this is the kind of industry, that we want for the future, because of its export potential and because of its potential throughout the world. However, will the right hon. Gentleman say a little more about what the Government can do to address some of the problems that will be caused as an inevitable consequence of the announcement? I heard the company's chairman say this morning that he hoped that most of the redundancies would be voluntary, and that the company would abide by agreements made with the trade unions, but that there might be some compulsory redundancies. What can the Government do to ease the situation?

I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State note the company's emphasis on the need for continued investment. I know that, as he said, it is continuing to hire engineering expertise and to maintain its apprenticeship programmes, and to do the things that we hope it will do for the future of the company and of our country, but I want to press him a little more on just how close a relationship the Government have with Rolls-Royce. I know that he visited the company recently, but I think that that was his first ever visit.

I am mindful of the fact that we have corresponded with the Department about the issue of investment in small modular reactors. The company invested substantial resources of its own money in that technology, without any corresponding commitment, even in decision making frankly, by the Government, which I know has been a great disappointment to the company, especially as this technology is thought to have great export potential.

The Secretary of State referred to the need for continued investment, and I note that the title of his Department includes the words "industrial strategy", which I welcome, but if there is an industrial strategy, what is it if it does not include a strong partnership with companies such as Rolls-Royce that might, one would hope, avert announcements like today's?

Greg Clark: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for bringing this matter to the House in such a timely way. She has a long record of engagement with what is not only a very important employer but a very important national force. It is important to stress the point I made in my statement, and which Mr East has emphasised: the company is expanding its production. It expects to employ more apprentices, technicians and engineers, and has a growing order book; it has a waiting list for orders to be placed. As the right hon. Lady knows, that is in the context of growth in manufacturing in Derbyshire and across the east midlands, and it is very important that that is supported.

The skills among the employees whose jobs are under threat are valuable. The fact that they may be in management does not mean that they are not highly valued, in an economy nationally and in the east midlands that has a great demand for those skills. We will work very closely through the rapid response service that the

Department for Work and Pensions provides to make sure that opportunities are offered, whether they are new jobs for existing employees or new opportunities to train in an expanding manufacturing sector in the east midlands. As the right hon. Lady knows, Infinity Park, for example, is continuing to attract new investment; just in recent days Airbus has announced an intention to establish an important facility there.

Our relationship with Rolls-Royce is very close, and it is at the heart of the industrial strategy; it is one of our most important aerospace partners. I have met numerous times with the management of the company all around the country. Since 2015 some £150 million of Government investment has been deployed in partnership with Rolls-Royce. It has been a major force in shaping our industrial strategy. Precisely for the reasons the right hon. Lady mentions, the industries in which it is engaged—aerospace, defence and the power sector—are some of the industries in which Britain leads the world, and we will do everything we can to drive that expansion forward.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for what he said about Rolls-Royce, but is it not true that it announced its restructuring programme in January and that that was followed by very good year-end results in March? Is it not absolutely necessary that as Rolls-Royce has growing revenues, it must now restructure itself so that it is simplified and has the agility and pace of production to remain one of the world's leading industrial technology companies?

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend is right to stress that it is important for any British company in an internationally competitive market to be efficient. The company has been very clear about its intentions as a growing company in a growing market. But having made a number of profit warnings over recent years, the management have been on a programme to make it more efficient. It is in all of our interests that this company, which is so important to the UK, continues to be successful around the world and to be at the leading edge of innovation, as it has been and as we are determined to see it be in future.

Chris Williamson (Derby North) (Lab): When I left school in Derby in 1972, Rolls-Royce employed around 35,000 people. Today, it employs just under 12,000. If these job losses go ahead, the workforce will be reduced to around 8,000. That is a huge reduction. The company made a £4.5 billion profit last year, and when the Prime Minister hosted a meeting with the aerospace industry in March, she talked about a successful collaboration with the industry. Indeed, the Secretary of State has talked this morning about the close relationship with the industry and with Rolls-Royce. But talk is cheap. Is it not time for the Government to legislate to have workers on the boards of companies so that there is somebody there to represent the interests of the workforce? At the moment, we are seeing expanding order books while the workforce is diminishing. Is not this a failure of shareholder capitalism, which basically sacrifices jobs on the altar of higher shareholder dividends?

Greg Clark: I understand why a Member with a strong constituency interest in the workforce there would be anxious and combative in defending their interests. I

[Greg Clark]

will ensure, as will the trade unions, that the interests of the workforce are strongly represented. It is not true that all the redundancies will be at Derby, although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that a proportion of them will be. It is important that the company should adhere to its agreement with the trade unions, and I will of course make sure that it does that. In terms of the hon. Gentleman's overall statement about the efficiency of companies, I think he should just reflect that his desire to overthrow capitalism would make it very hard for anyone to find work in any private company at any time.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the aerospace industry has gone from strength to strength under successive Conservative Governments? Looking more closely at Redditch, many of my constituents work for another engineering giant, GKN, and they want to know what the Government are doing through the industrial strategy to support and encourage the skills for the next generation of young people in engineering subjects, so that these companies can flourish in the future. Will he update the House on those plans?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that aerospace is one of the sectors in which our already strong reputation is growing. Through the industrial strategy, we are making a big investment in research and development and also in training, including retraining, so that an expanding industry can have access to the skills that it needs in the future. This will benefit her constituents and those of many others around the country.

Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett) for securing this important urgent question. This is deeply disturbing news, not just for the city of Derby, which relies heavily on Rolls-Royce for local employment, but for the sector as a whole. Despite Rolls-Royce making a substantial profit of £4.9 billion last year, this recent restructuring means that more than 4,000 workers will lose their jobs. This is on top of 5,000 job cuts already announced by the company after a series of rationalisation programmes. What discussions has the Secretary of State had with the company to ensure that it will honour previous commitments that there will be no compulsory redundancies?

Will the Secretary of State also outline what assessment the Government have made of the economic impact on local communities that are reliant on Rolls-Royce jobs? There is a real risk that redundancies of this scale will have a detrimental effect on the future of skills in a sector with a substantial skills gap. What action will he take to ensure that these vital skills are not lost? What measures will the Government take to directly support a reinvigorated local industrial strategy? Finally, will the Secretary of State tell us whether he has made any assessment of the causes and of the potential knock-on effect on jobs in the supply chain, and what steps he is taking to support the automotive and aerospace sector more generally?

Greg Clark: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her constructive questions. When it comes to redundancies, as I said to the right hon. Member for Derby South, there will be a statutory consultation. Rolls-Royce has confirmed to me that it will of course abide by its agreements with the trade unions and will seek to avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

As for the impact on the supply chain, it is significant that this news comes in the context of a company that is continuing to expand production and manufacturing and its use of components—the principal suppliers to the business. The job losses are coming from management support, which will of course have an impact on the local economy. We will be working closely with the local enterprise partnership to ensure that the opportunities that exist in Derby and the west midlands are taken up.

The hon. Lady will know that unemployment has fallen substantially in the east midlands, so good opportunities are available. For example, she mentioned the automotive sector, and Toyota at Burnaston, which is not too far away from Derby, has invested a quarter of a billion pounds in the next generation of vehicles. We will ensure that the employees who are not continuing at Rolls-Royce will have our full support. Vacancies will be drawn to their attention, and they will have help with skills to ensure that they have everything they need to enjoy prosperous careers in the future.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): I, too, recently visited Rolls-Royce's campus in Derby in my capacity as envoy for the Year of Engineering, and I saw all the good work and investment that is going on. That said, this is obviously unsettling news for those in the management function of the business, whose jobs are potentially at risk. What assurances has my right hon. Friend had, or what assurances can he seek, on the behalf of the management and business process apprentices employed by the business to ensure that they are not affected?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend raises an important point. The company has a firm commitment to apprenticeships, and I will emphasise the importance of continuity in the training offered to apprentices.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Any job losses are clearly a concern, so the potential loss of 4,600 jobs is a huge worry. I have constituents who work at the Inchinnan Rolls-Royce plant, so will the Secretary of State advise us of whether the restructuring will have any impact on jobs in Scotland?

While people often talk in general terms about having too many chiefs and not enough Indians, does the Secretary of State share my worry that it seems counterintuitive that Rolls-Royce says it will employ more engineers, continue to increase investment in R&D and expand massively while it is restructuring and downsizing the management? That does not sound quite right to me. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government will work urgently with Rolls-Royce, the unions and staff affected by the job losses to ensure that they can find alternative employment, if required, and that they get suitable retraining to find other jobs?

Will the Secretary of State advise the House on whether Brexit will have an impact on Rolls-Royce, in terms of the customs union? The company has already

said that it is thinking about relocating the jet engine design approval process to Germany from the UK, so could that have an impact on jobs? What impact will the rules of origin have on the company's manufacturing? What discussions has the Government had about the potential impact on Rolls-Royce's aspirations for small modular nuclear reactors?

Greg Clark: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his questions. It is too early to know the distribution of the proposed redundancies across the United Kingdom. As I said to the right hon. Member for Derby South, the management headquarters is obviously in Derby, so the expectation is that most of the UK job losses will happen there, but the company and I will keep Members up to date as the consultation takes place.

As for the combination of an intention to expand the production of aerospace engines and a growing order book with the need for fewer managers, that is not uncommon across competitive industries, and most industries are becoming simpler in their internal processes. That is not to say that the skills, commitment and loyalty of those who are affected are not extremely high and that they will not be in strong demand elsewhere, and it is important that we support that. We will provide all the help and assistance we can if retraining is needed.

The hon. Gentleman asks about Brexit, and Rolls-Royce has been clear that this is about making the company more efficient. It has no relation to Brexit, although it is fair to say that the continued ability to operate a just-in-time production system once we leave the European Union will, of course, be very important to the company.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): I represent constituents who work at Rolls-Royce both in Coventry and in Derby. This is clearly a sad day for those affected by this decision and their families, but I am heartened that Rolls-Royce is looking to expand the number of engineers at the company and to take on more apprentices. How will the Government work with companies such as Rolls-Royce, and with other manufacturing companies, to make sure we can bring through the next generation of engineers and bring them into our economy?

Greg Clark: My hon. Friend makes an important point. In fact, the demand for engineering skills is increasing right across the country, including in both the east midlands and the west midlands. Rolls-Royce itself plays an important role in training engineers. I met some of the young engineers in Derby, and they can look forward to a wonderful career in engineering.

Through the industrial strategy, as my hon. Friend is aware, we are placing greater emphasis on science, technology, engineering and maths skills in schools and colleges, and we are creating institutes of technology. With the aerospace and automotive sectors in the east midlands and west midlands, we are now creating more places for apprentices through those joint initiatives so that we can supply the growing order books, based on the skills that are needed.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I worked at Rolls-Royce when the company collapsed in 1971, and I can tell the Secretary of State that a lot of people at Rolls-Royce will be very worried indeed about their future. We have a plant just outside Coventry, as the

hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr Jones) mentioned. What will be the impact on, for example, the Ansty plant in Coventry and the Bristol plant, and on other plants across the country? Equally, this will have an impact on the supply chain, because I do not believe Rolls-Royce has 4,000 managers.

Greg Clark: The announcement was made at 7 o'clock this morning that there is a proposal to reduce the headcount. Rolls-Royce has specified that the reduction will be in the management and support functions, rather than in the engineering and operational aspect. When further information is made available, I will make sure the hon. Gentleman, as the Member for a constituency with a great interest in the matter, shares in that information.

It is important to emphasise that the aerospace sector is characterised by growth. The proposed redundancies at Rolls-Royce—I make no bones about it—are clearly devastating news for those who may be affected but, overall, aerospace, including Rolls-Royce in this country, is enjoying higher order books. We will work together to make sure that, including in the test beds we have established together, we are at the forefront of the latest technologies in the future, as we have been to date.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Rolls-Royce is a worldwide brand of which our competitors are clearly jealous. What extra assistance can my right hon. Friend or the Department for International Trade provide, as we leave the European Union, to increase the opportunities for Rolls-Royce worldwide?

Greg Clark: Rolls-Royce is already one of our most successful exporters. All around the world, my Department and the Department for International Trade work closely to support the company's export push. The industry is very competitive, and there is a requirement to be at the cutting edge of technology, so our investment in research and development is an important boost to that future international competitiveness. When it comes to trade promotional support, there is already a close relationship between the company and the Government.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Secretary of State has talked about the aerospace industry in this country doing well and growing, but he will be aware that BAE Systems is making people redundant at Brough. Will he say a little more about what he is doing to protect the home of the Hawk by encouraging orders for it from around the world?

Greg Clark: The hon. Lady knows—we have had previous exchanges on this across this Dispatch Boxes—that the future of the employees there depends on defence export orders. I think she would acknowledge that there is no one more vigorous than our colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, the Department for International Trade and my Department when it comes to meeting businesses and those who are in defence procurement to emphasise the good quality and importance of our aerospace industry right across the country.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): As my right hon. Friend knows, I am a big supporter of the value of the industrial strategy for midlands manufacturing, so what specific role does he see for Rolls-Royce within it?

Greg Clark: Rolls-Royce has a huge role nationally, but of course it also has a particular role in the east midlands. We see that in the number of people who acquire their skills, and in many cases their inspiration to go into careers in engineering and advanced manufacturing, from the experience of having Rolls-Royce in their midst. That is one reason why we have such a close partnership with it, as I said to the right hon. Member for Derby South. We have made £150 million of joint investment with it since 2015, which shows the depth of that commitment. The reason for that is not just the importance of the company succeeding, but its galvanising effect on the rest of the UK economy.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): Today's devastating news will affect a lot of families, and the promise of jam tomorrow may not satisfy them. There are also reports that Rolls-Royce intends to move some operations into Europe. Will the Minister confirm what discussions he has had with Rolls-Royce to prevent these moves as a result of our departure from Europe?

Greg Clark: As I said to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), Warren East has been clear that the proposals that have been made today have nothing to do with any Brexit discussions; they are about the efficiency of the operation. When we talk to those in the aerospace sector, as I do, we find that Rolls-Royce is prominent among them in emphasising the absolute importance of ensuring our ability to export free of tariffs and with a minimum of frictions, and that that is fundamental to the sector's ability to be as prosperous in the future as it has been to date.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The aerospace industry is one of the jewels in the British industrial crown, so will the Secretary of State tell the House what reassurances he has given the industry with regard to Britain's exit from the European Union?

Greg Clark: I have extensive consultations with all players in the industry. I listen to them, and make clear in our discussions in government and in our negotiations that what they require in precision terms to be able to operate the efficient system that they do at the moment must continue. As the hon. Gentleman says, this is a jewel in the crown of British industry. It is an industry where demand is expanding around the world. We have a wonderful opportunity to continue that success, and it is vital that we should be able to continue to trade with our European partners without any interruption to that.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Normally when the House is told of big job losses at a company it is because that business is in financial trouble, but Rolls-Royce is profitable and has a growing order book. It would seem that it is making these job losses in order to become more efficient. It would also seem from what the Secretary of State is saying that a lot of those who are, sadly, going to lose their jobs have very highly transferable skills. Will he ensure that the local enterprise partnership and neighbouring LEPs have the resources they need to place those highly skilled people in alternative employment?

Greg Clark: I will certainly do that. My hon. Friend characterises the situation well; this company has issued profit warnings in the past and has committed to take action to be efficient. These are the decisions of the management, but I think every Member of the House would acknowledge that it is important that our companies are competitive. He is right to say that the skills of the people employed in Derby, whether in management or in other supporting roles, are in great demand in the expanding economy there; unemployment has halved since 2010 in the east midlands. I will work with the neighbouring LEPs to make sure they have every support and that businesses that want to employ those people have every support in identifying what could be talented and welcome additions to their workforce.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Rolls-Royce is an iconic industrial asset for Britain, and its relationship with Glasgow goes back as far as the second world war. Even to this day it drives huge innovation in the city, from the Advanced Forming Research Centre to supply-chain companies such as Castle Precision and East Kilbride Engineering Services, all of which benefit from the huge industrial presence of Rolls-Royce. One difficulty that the company has had in recent years is the development of new products, particularly for the small airliner market, which is restricted because of this country's lack of capacity for long-term industrial investment through state investment banks. Will the Secretary of State consider how we can support industrial development in the longer term by developing such capacity in the UK through a state bank for new product development?

Greg Clark: Part of the reason for the development of the industrial strategy, which prominently includes the aerospace sector, is so that we can have the long-term support that is required. When I talk about support, I mean for research and development programmes, which can take many years to come to fruition. We are known as and have a reputation for being one of the best places in the world for that, and that is a deliberate policy objective. It is exactly the same with skills.

On what the hon. Gentleman describes as a state bank, we have various means, including the British Business Bank and UK Export Finance, which have been set up to support businesses in pursuance of our industrial strategy. Rolls-Royce is an active participant in that.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Given Rolls-Royce's announcement of nearly £5 billion profit for 2017, this news, or certainly the scale of it, will have come as a shock to Rolls-Royce workers throughout the UK, including those in Inchinnan in my constituency. My thoughts are very much with those workers and the affected families. In addition to what the Secretary of State said to my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), will he outline what his Department is doing to assist Rolls-Royce to ensure that no further jobs are lost?

Greg Clark: The plans that the company has set out today, as several colleagues have said, are part of a programme to improve efficiency to which it committed some years ago. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that for people who are employed there, the fact that the

company has an expanding order book and is continuing to invest in research and development and production will be small comfort, because they will be losing their connection with an employer for which I am sure they have been proud to work over many years. We will do everything that we can to make sure that those employees, whose skills are in demand, are matched with other employers who I hope and intend will be able to make use of their talents and give them a flourishing future career, such as they have enjoyed with Rolls-Royce in the past.

Business of the House

11.42 am

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): May I start by congratulating the Clerk of the House on his knighthood?

Will the Leader of the House please give us the forthcoming business?

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): I certainly share the hon. Lady's pleasure at the award to the Clerk of the House.

The business for next week will include:

MONDAY 18 JUNE—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill, followed by a motion to approve a statutory instrument relating to the draft European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Canada Trade Agreement) Order 2018, followed by a motion to approve European documents relating to EU trade agreements: EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, followed by a general debate on acquired brain injury.

TUESDAY 19 JUNE—Opposition day (14th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE—If necessary, consideration of Lords amendments to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, followed by a general debate on NATO.

THURSDAY 21 JUNE—Debate on a motion on the importance of refugee family reunion, followed by a debate on a motion on the future of the Erasmus+ scheme after 2020. The subjects of these debates were determined by the Backbench Business Committee.

FRIDAY 22 JUNE—The House will not be sitting.

The provisional business for the week commencing 25 June will include:

MONDAY 25 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Bill [*Lords*].

The shocking and heartbreaking scenes a year ago today at Grenfell Tower will stay with us all forever. That night, 72 lives were tragically lost, and the lives of so many were changed forever. The strength, dignity and determination shown by the survivors and the families of all those affected have been truly inspiring, and I pay tribute to them all.

Our overwhelming priority over the past year, and going forward, is to ensure that the survivors of this terrible event get the homes and the support they need and the truth and justice they deserve. A minute's silence will be held across the United Kingdom at 12 noon today in remembrance of all those who lost their lives and all others who were affected. We will not forget them.

Mr Speaker: Just before we proceed to questions, I wish to say this: I thank very warmly the shadow Leader of the House and then the Leader of the House for what they said by way of tribute to the Clerk of the House, Sir David Natzler. For those who do not know—many will be aware of this—David joined the House in 1975 and he has served with distinction and without interruption for 43 years, and we look forward to him continuing to serve us. In serving us, he applies his intellect and his energy to facilitate the House and he

[Mr Speaker]

does so with the keenest and most admirable spirit of public service. David, you are much appreciated in this place.

In reference to what the Leader of the House very appositely said about Grenfell, a lot of Members will want to take part in the minute's silence, and a number of Members will be taking part in commemorative activity much later today.

Valerie Vaz: I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the tribute to Sir David. We are used to using the "Sir" after his name, but now we will have to move it to before.

I thank the Leader of the House for the forthcoming business. I am glad that we are having another Opposition day, and pleased that she thinks the Opposition can fill in the gaps in the business of the House.

I have a gentle reminder to the Leader of the House. She may want to let the House know when we will have an updated draft of the list of ministerial responsibilities, as there has been a change in Home Secretary and another resignation by a Minister. We also have a Foreign Secretary who says that negotiations are in meltdown; that the Government lack guts; and that he wants the leader of another country to negotiate—that sounds like no confidence in the Prime Minister. We then have a Brexit Secretary who threatened to resign until he got his backstop—I thought we only had backstops in rounders. She may want to keep the list of ministerial responsibilities in draft form.

The Government said that the White Paper sets out their negotiating position, but there is no White Paper. The House of Commons Library has confirmed that no one has any information about the content or the title of the White Paper, except that it will be published after the meeting of the European Council on 28 and 29 June, which therefore means that it will be in July. It is like the emperor's new clothes: the Government are strutting about saying that we are negotiating, but there is nothing in it. When will the White Paper be published with content?

Will the Leader of the House confirm whether the subcommittees looking at the customs agreement, or a customs partnership, are still meeting? I ask that because she will know that the amendment that was agreed yesterday referred to a customs arrangement, so it seems that there is a name but no content.

The Prime Minister said at Prime Minister's Question Time that the Government have a position and that it needs parliamentary support. That is not the constitutional role of Parliament as I understand it. The previous Prime Minister, David Cameron, understood the role of Parliament. On 29 August 2013, he said with regard to military action that, even without a motion, it was very clear that

"the British Parliament, reflecting the views of the British people, does not want to see British military action. I get that, and the Government will act accordingly."—[*Official Report*, 29 August 2013; Vol. 566, c. 1556.]

So Parliament can direct the Government; this is a parliamentary democracy.

What is going on in the rest of the country? This week is Carers Week, and many hon. Members attended the event in the Attlee Suite. There are 6.5 million carers

in the UK, saving the economy £132 billion a year. When can we have a debate on the future of social care funding? I congratulate the founders of John's Campaign, who have been fighting since 2014 for the right of carers to stay with people with dementia. Nicci Gerrard's father, Dr John Gerrard, had dementia; his family faced restricted visiting hours and he deteriorated. Together with Julia Jones and Francis Wheen, they presented the chief nursing officer for England with a book of pledges by NHS acute trusts that allowed unrestricted visiting hours. It reminds me of the words of Margaret Mead, who said:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

They should be congratulated on their personal efforts.

Will the Leader of the House schedule a debate on students? There were 146 student suicides in 2016—the highest number in records going back to 2001. Perhaps she could combine it with a debate on the report on tuition fees by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, which found that the student loan book will grow to over £1 trillion over the next 25 years. Interest rates are set to rise to set to rise to 6.3%, but the Committee has suggested that they should be at the same rate—1.5%—that the Government use when they borrow. The report says that the system of fees and loans is "deeply unfair". For instance, nurses will pay back £19,000 more than lawyers.

May we have a debate on our early-day motion 1383 that we tabled on 12 June, praying against the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (Cooperation and Information Sharing) Regulations 2018, which seek to hand over large amounts of student data to various unaccountable organisations?

[*That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (Cooperation and Information Sharing) Regulations 2018 (S.I., 2018, No. 607), dated 21 May 2018, a copy of which was laid before this House on 23 May, be annulled.*]

As the Leader of the House and you, Mr Speaker, have said, today marks the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire. We remember the 72 people who lost their lives, the survivors and the families.

This Saturday is the second anniversary of the death of our dear friend and colleague Jo Cox. We know that a number of our colleagues in this House are facing threats to their lives, and we stand by them.

As England play Tunisia on Monday, I hope that the House will join me in remembering three generations of Walsall football club fans—Joel Richards aged 19, his uncle Adrian Evans and his grandfather Patrick Evans—who died in the attack in Tunisia three years ago.

On a happier note, there is still time to arrange an EqualiTeas event, to remind us of the journey that women have taken from behind the grille to the Floor of the House.

Andrea Leadsom: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for covering a wide range of subjects.

First, on the list of ministerial responsibilities, it will not be lost on the hon. Lady that her party appears to be dropping Front Benchers like flies. I gather that yesterday's total was six, which is a great shame, but not only that: there were also 90 rebellions against the Labour Whip. That demonstrates how very unfortunate

the Opposition are on the subject of fulfilling the will of the people in the referendum of June 2016. The hon. Lady will appreciate that Walsall voted overwhelmingly to leave, so she may consider whether she is fulfilling the democratic will of the people of Walsall.

I certainly join the hon. Lady in remembering her constituents who died in Tunisia. It was an absolute tragedy. In doing so, at this time of great excitement about football, I wish the England team great success in their adventure.

The hon. Lady asks about the White Paper. The Prime Minister said it all. We will bring forward the White Paper after the June Council. July comes after June; need we say more? The negotiations are well under way. As the hon. Lady will know, it is for the Executive—the Government of the day—to put forward proposals for legislation. It is then for Parliament to amend and, ultimately, approve or reject that legislation. That is how Parliament works. I am surprised that the hon. Lady has any doubt about that.

During Carers Week, I join the hon. Lady in commending all those who do so much to care for friends and family. She also mentioned the appalling issue of student suicides. The situation is utterly unacceptable. She will be aware that the Government are doing everything we can to look at the issue, particularly regarding what more can be done to prevent the harm that is being caused by appalling abuse on social media.

The hon. Lady mentioned threats to colleagues. Mr Speaker, as you and I said on Tuesday in response to a point of order, threats of violence to hon. and right hon. Members across the House are utterly unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I encourage any Members who are experiencing such abuse and threats to go to the parliamentary police service, who will monitor social media and take action where they possibly can to prevent this type of violence against Members.

Finally, the hon. Lady asked when there will be a debate on the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (Cooperation and Information Sharing) Regulations 2018. She will be aware that, as ever, business is announced on a Thursday in business questions. We have been doing that for some time, and it is the convention that when the Opposition request a debate through the usual channels with reasonable notice, that debate will be forthcoming.

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on illegal encampments? Yet again, so-called Travellers, which they absolutely are not, have turned up in public spaces and parks in Essex and areas such as Southend, causing havoc and at a cost to the council tax payer. I know the consultation is about to finish, but I hope the Government will look very carefully at the recommendation by our right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) to go for the Irish option.

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend raises an issue that is vital to lots of hon. and right hon. Members, particularly at this time of year when the pressure rises because the incidence of illegal encampments rises. He will recall, I am sure, that Members have had the opportunity to discuss this issue in three parliamentary debates in the last year. The Government are very concerned about

unauthorised Traveller encampments and their effect on communities, and the consultation, which I hope he has fed into, will remain open until 15 June.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the business for next week. I echo her sentiments about the victims of Grenfell, and I congratulate you, Sir David, on your very well-deserved knighthood.

There are weeks when you get a sense that the tectonic plates have shifted and things will never be the same again—and no, I am not referring to Scotland beating England at cricket. The people of Scotland have been observing this place very closely this week. They have seen this Government disrespecting our Parliament and treating its institutions with utter contempt, with 19 minutes to turn the devolution settlement on its head—19 minutes in which no Member of Parliament from Scotland was selected to speak. Those were amendments designed in the unelected House of Lords, and we the Members of Parliament elected by the people of Scotland have had no opportunity to debate them. What sort of democracy is on offer in this House?

I warned the Leader of the House about giving—*[Interruption.]* Mr Speaker, look at the Government Back Benchers braying and shouting, just as they did yesterday; it is no wonder the people of Scotland are appalled by their behaviour. I warned the Leader of the House about giving sufficient time for debate, and she singularly refused to listen. She has to take responsibility for what happened the other day. She is in charge of business. I do not want to hear anything about Labour Members taking up the time for votes. Yes, they have the tactical guile of the Foreign Secretary at an ambassador's ball, but they can vote on what they wish. It was she who designed that programme motion, and it was she who had to make sure that time was protected for debate.

Surely now the time has come for us to stop the practice of going round and round in circles for a headcount vote. Over two-and-a-half hours were wasted standing in cramped Lobbies when we should have been in this Chamber debating important issues to do with the repeal legislation. Nothing could be more useless and counterproductive, and we must end this nonsense.

Lastly, the people of Scotland are now watching fully the events here, and more and more of them are saying, "Enough." If this is the way Westminster treats Scotland, Scotland will make its own decisions about its own future.

Mr Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that the Leader of the House will want to respond fully to his inquiries, and the opportunity for that will arise shortly. However, it seems to me that it would be seemly for us to prepare for our one-minute silence.

We shall now observe a one-minute silence in respectful memory of those who died in the Grenfell Tower fire a year ago today. I had been intending to invite all present to join us in this commemorative silence, but it has not proved necessary to do so because everybody is so minded.

12 noon

The House observed a minute's silence.

Mr Speaker: Colleagues, thank you.

Andrea Leadsom: In the light of what happened at Grenfell, it hardly seems right to dive straight back into debate. Nevertheless, that is what we must do.

I thank the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) for his comments, and I of course accept his right to challenge in every way in this Chamber. I say to him that the Government's programme motion, which was approved by the House—by 321 votes to 304—provided six hours in total, with three hours for each set of amendments. As you said, Mr Speaker, there was no constitutional or procedural impropriety. It was up to Members, if they did not like the programme motion, to defeat it. There were 11 votes, which took about two hours and 40 minutes, leaving very little time for the devolution amendments the hon. Gentleman mentioned. It was of course a matter for the House to choose to divide on a number of issues that were broadly similar to one another, each of which was won by the Government with a double-digit majority.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the lack of debate in general on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. I say to him that, prior to the 12 hours of debate on the Bill this week, Parliament had collectively spent 258 hours debating the Bill, including a total of 15 hours on the subject of devolution, so it is simply not the case that there has been no debate on this matter. Across both Houses, 1,390 amendments have been tabled, of which 1,171 were non-Government amendments. There has been an enormous amount of debate, and there continues to be a huge amount of debate.

On the subject of the Sewel convention, I say to all SNP Members that we have followed the spirit and letter of the devolution settlement at every stage of the process. The devolution settlement itself envisaged situations in which the UK Parliament might be required to legislate without the consent of a devolved Administration. On this issue for the UK, we have sought to work closely with—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. This is rather unseemly. To be fair, the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) asked a question and the Leader of the House is in the process of answering it, so he should not be conducting a side discussion with some Government Back Bencher. *[Interruption.]* Somebody says it is “uncouth”. I am always rather gentle and understated, so I would not say that. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire is still doing it; it is a rather obsessive characteristic of his. Let us hear the reply of the Leader of the House.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman did tweet at 10.37 am to ask all his followers to watch the business question, so he obviously had something in store for us.

I would like to finish the point. The Government have tried very hard to reach agreement with all the devolved Administrations. Since the Scottish Government walked away from an agreement, they have offered no new proposals to try to bridge the gap. Their demand for a veto on how the UK internal market operates is just not acceptable, and that was never how devolution was intended to work.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): May I associate myself with the remarks about Sir David? It is a welcome recognition of his distinguished service

to the House. May I also say what a privilege it was to stand here and mark the deep sorrow we all feel about Grenfell? It sends a wider message to the wider world.

May I ask the Leader of the House for a debate on emissions reductions? If we were to be granted one, it might be helpful for Members to know that the all-party group on electric and automated vehicles, in partnership with AXA, will be demonstrating a pod in the space opposite Old Palace Yard on 20 June—next Wednesday—between 10 o'clock and 4 o'clock. The pod was produced by Westfield Technology Group, a British company, and can show us how to proceed towards the Chancellor's avowed target of having the first driverless cars on British roads by 2021.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise such a crucial issue of our time. I am pleased to say that emissions of toxic nitrogen oxides fell by almost 27% between 2010 and 2016. The Government have published a new clean air strategy that aims to cut air pollution and save lives, and of course we are currently passing legislation on automated vehicles that will place us at the forefront of clean driving. I am proud, too, of our commitment to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it in.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): The estimates day debates are forthcoming. We believe the dates will be something like 2 and 3 July. Applications for debate slots—there will be four over the two days—should be submitted to the Clerk of the Backbench Business Committee by lunchtime tomorrow. A time-sensitive application has also come in. The Government launched their tobacco control plan on 18 July 2017, and we hope there will be a Backbench Business debate on 19 July to debate its anniversary. That application is sitting with us at the moment.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Great Exhibition of the North, which launches on 22 June—next Friday—in Newcastle and Gateshead, with the great opening ceremony happening on the Gateshead side of the river. At the moment, however, we have a problem with rail services in the north of England. Many people wanting to get to the venues for the exhibition will have to rely on Northern Rail and TransPennine Express—I hope it stays fine for them—but the services are dreadful at the moment. Last Sunday, I travelled from Newcastle to Southport for a speaking engagement and it took me almost six hours. It can be done in two and half hours by car. We need urgent intervention so that people can actually get to the exhibition.

Andrea Leadsom: First, may I say good luck to all those taking part in the Great Exhibition of the North? It sounds like an amazing opportunity for local businesses and the community to come together. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Transport Secretary is doing everything possible to sort out the appalling situation with Northern Rail, and he believes and is reporting that the situation is improving. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that the great north rail project means an investment of more than £1 billion designed to deliver space for 40,000 more passengers and over 2,000 more services a week, but nevertheless there can be no excuses for what has happened in recent weeks,

which has been just appalling. I also heard his bid for a Back-Bench debate on tobacco on 19 July, and I particularly commend the Backbench Business Committee for this afternoon's very important debate on Windrush.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Further to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), and in advance of any future debate, in the light of the end of the consultation tomorrow, will my right hon. Friend encourage the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to come to the House to inform us about what support he has received for the so-called Irish option of making deliberate trespass a criminal offence?

Andrea Leadsom: I know my hon. Friend will have plenty of support from across the House for his suggestion, which originally came from my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois). I am sure the Minister will come to the House in due course, once the consultation is closed, with further ideas on what more can be done. I draw the attention of hon. Members to Housing, Communities and Local Government questions on Monday, where they may wish to raise this issue directly with Ministers.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): Six months ago, Carillion went bust and work stopped on the Midland Metropolitan Hospital. It still has not restarted. This week I received a parliamentary answer from a Health Minister turning down a proposal because it involved additional public capital input. Frankly, if Ministers think they will be able to finish this hospital without putting up more cash, they are living in cloud cuckoo land. May we have a debate or a statement from the Health Secretary to tell us when he is going to stop dithering and start building?

Andrea Leadsom: The right hon. Gentleman raises a very specific project. I can absolutely sympathise: we are all keen to see new hospitals and improved hospitals in our constituencies. Health and Social Care questions are next Tuesday, so he may want to raise the issue directly with Ministers then.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): As my right hon. Friend might be aware, today's newspapers report that Stracathro Hospital in my constituency is being considered for closure. That is of great concern to my constituents. Only recently, the Scottish National party Government in Edinburgh closed the mental health unit in Stracathro, which was of great use to my constituents. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that we can debate in this place the importance of keeping health services provided locally and indeed rural services as a whole?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend, who is a big champion for her constituency, raises another local hospital issue. As she rightly says, this is a matter for the Scottish Government and NHS Tayside. I understand that written assurances were given earlier this year by both the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and NHS Tayside's chief executive that there was no threat to her hospital. She might like to seek a Westminster Hall debate to discuss this further, or of course there are Health questions next Tuesday.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): When does the Leader of the House plan to allow this House to debate the Procedure Committee report into baby leave?

Andrea Leadsom: As I have said on a number of occasions, I am absolutely supportive of the need for new parents to have that essential time to form an early bond with their babies. I am very grateful to the Procedure Committee, which has tried to look at what is quite a significant constitutional change—[*Interruption.*] As the hon. Lady and other Opposition Members are pointing out, they are themselves members of the Procedure Committee. I am extremely grateful to them for their work on trying to address these issues. They will appreciate that this requires quite a significant constitutional change. It is important to ensure we have the right solution that provides parents with that opportunity to be with their babies. I intend to bring forward a general debate within the next few weeks to inform a broader range of discussion that will enable me to respond to the Procedure Committee's report. I believe that is due by 15 July.

Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): The Leader of the House has previously met my requests for debates on acquired brain injury and on knife crime and encouraged me in my campaign for nuclear test veterans, so mindful of my earlier question on Network Rail felling trees, may I turn her attention to the local authorities that, irrespective of emissions, in Newcastle, Edinburgh and Sheffield are felling thousands of trees, and the Campaign to Protect Rural England tells us that greedy developers are building on land from Howard's End to Watership Down? Will she ask the Environment Secretary to turn his brilliance, shining a light, on how we can build a sylvan future of hedges and haymaking, forests and fields? I want no less for the next generation—as I know you do, Mr Speaker—than Arcadia.

Mr Speaker: Not for nothing is the right hon. Gentleman regarded as a specialist and perhaps even a rarified delicacy in the House.

Andrea Leadsom: I love the way that my right hon. Friend puts his questions and tempts me to always deliver on his requests, which is a very clever way of approaching business questions. He will appreciate that the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is totally committed, as was I when I was doing that job, to improving our environment and to being the first generation that leaves our environment in a better state than we found it in. That means ensuring many millions more trees are planted and that we protect those precious trees, including those that are on Network Rail land. Housing, Communities and Local Government questions are on Monday. He might like to raise his specific point directly with Ministers then.

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Mr Speaker, although I know you did not hear the taunt shouted at my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) in this place on Tuesday, people in Motherwell and Wishaw did hear the word "suicide" yelled across the Chamber. The families and friends of the far too many young men in and around my constituency who have recently committed suicide were rightly appalled—as am I. My office is

[*Marion Fellows*]

arranging suicide awareness training for local parliamentarians, their staff and local organisations. Will the Leader of the House liaise with the appropriate House authorities to provide such training to all Members?

Andrea Leadsom: I am not aware of the specific circumstances that the hon. Lady raises, but I would say—and I am sure you would say, Mr Speaker—that language in the Chamber is a matter for the Chair. Nevertheless, Mr Speaker and I have both made clear that unacceptable language—threatening, violent and offensive language—should not be used at any time, let alone in the Chamber. What I can say to the hon. Lady is that cross-party a number of us are working on an independent complaints procedure that will change the culture in this place and ensure that all people who work here, regardless of their position and what they do in this place, will be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Mr Speaker: As I think the hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (*Marion Fellows*) knows—and I respect her sincerity and the force of what she has just said—I indicated earlier in the week that I simply did not hear the term used at the time. However, I emphasised, once it was brought to my attention, that I utterly deprecated it. It is not a term that should be banded about in the spirit of political polemics. As the hon. Lady says, it is something that touches a lot of people very deeply. I echo what the Leader of the House says: we should weigh our words carefully.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): May we have an urgent debate on the Home Office's very welcome but seriously overdue commitment to move to a fairer funding formula for the police? Back in 2004, damping was brought in, which means that many police forces such as Bedfordshire received millions of pounds less than the national funding formula says they should get. In Bedfordshire, that equates to 90 police officers. May I ask the Leader of the House to convey to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, as well as to the Home Secretary, the real anger on this issue of the people of Bedfordshire at the way their police force is underfunded by this unfair issue of damping?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend raises something in which many Members take a great interest. The Home Office will be looking again at the funding formula in the next spending review to provide all police leaders with the financial certainty they need. Following the 2018-19 settlement, the Bedfordshire police and crime commissioner has announced that she will increase officer numbers by at least 100 over the next two years. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will listen very carefully to all forces and reflect on all evidence before taking funding decisions.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Leader of the House will know that we had a fantastic year in Hull as the UK city of culture last year. However, despite a strong police presence in recent weeks, the scourge of individuals who are addicted to the synthetic drug, Spice, and walking round the city centre in a zombie-like state is causing real problems for

citizens who want to go about their daily lives shopping there. Today, the BBC is reporting that this negative publicity has resulted in businesses not investing in the city, including Pret A Manger not opening a branch. May we have a debate about what additional enforcement action we need, and also about how the cuts to public health budgets are affecting drug treatment services around the country?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady always speaks up for Hull, and I am always delighted to congratulate Hull on its success as the city of culture. She raises an incredibly concerning issue that is affecting many communities right across the country—the increased use of psychoactive substances. It is a major problem. Through the serious violence strategy, the Home Office, with police officers, are looking very carefully at what more can be done. All hon. Members will be aware of the recent spike in drug-related crime, which is a very grave issue. The hon. Lady may well want to raise the issue at Home Office questions so that she can discuss it directly with Ministers.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Next Thursday is the International Day of Yoga. We have a series of events for Members, including open-air yoga in Victoria Gardens and yoga in Committee Room 14—and, I believe, in a Committee Room in the House of Lords. You might choose, Mr Speaker, to exercise another sanction on Members who get excited in the Chamber on that day. May we have a debate in Government time on the beneficial aspects of yoga for health and wellbeing?

Andrea Leadsom: I cannot quite imagine the prospect of you, Mr Speaker, requiring hon. Members to stand on one leg, perhaps, or in other yoga positions in the Chamber in response to poor behaviour, but it would be quite amusing and I am sure the public would find it highly entertaining. My hon. Friend raises a very important issue. I know that many people find yoga incredibly relaxing and it is of great benefit to their general wellbeing. He may well want to seek an Adjournment debate so that he can promote it to Ministers.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): My Easterhouse constituent, Mr Tabogo, is currently in an immigration detention centre near Heathrow airport, with the idea of moving him back to Cameroon where he will face a military court. As a result of his being removed from Scotland, he does not have access to legal aid—a similar position to people in Northern Ireland. May we have a statement in Government time about this absolutely ridiculous situation?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman is raising, as he often does, a concerning constituency matter. I encourage him to take it up directly with Ministers, who seek to ensure that our immigration system is fair to those who want to come here and contribute to this country but is robust in dealing with those who are here illegally. If he wants me to take it up on his behalf, could he please write to me after business questions?

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): There is a rather arbitrary proposal by the Mayor of London to extend the low-emission zone to the north circular road. Without any exemptions, my

constituents in Chingford will find it very difficult to get to their hospital without having to pay vast sums of money to go back and forth and into local communities. We need to look at exemptions for local travellers. May we have a debate about this?

While we are on the subject of Chingford, with your blessing, Mr Speaker, I want to wish Harry Kane the greatest good luck. He is the greatest striker in the world and happens also to be a Chingford boy, thus one of our own.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend raises two very important points. I certainly join him in wishing Harry Kane the best of luck.

My right hon. Friend is right to raise the subject of the Mayor's plans for low-emission zones in London. I know that there are grave concerns about the Mayor's tendency to take credit for things that go well and blame central Government when anything is not going his way. It is for him to take action against the appalling air quality in certain parts of London, but it is also for him to facilitate the ability of innocent citizens to go about their daily business, whether for work or to hospital and so on. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that challenge to the Mayor.

Mr Speaker: As an Arsenal fan, I must say to the right hon. Gentleman that I hugely look forward to Harry Kane deploying his brilliance for England, much more than I ever look forward to him deploying his brilliance for Tottenham. He is a great player and a great representative of our country.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) and I have been campaigning for the visa cap on doctors that is affecting recruitment to North Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust to be lifted so that patients needing treatment can get it sooner rather than later. There is speculation that this change is about to happen. Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Government will come to this House shortly and announce that it is taking place?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point. We all want the excellent work of many immigrant medical professionals who come to this country and contribute so much to our NHS to be able to continue. I can assure him that this House will receive that announcement as soon as there is something to announce.

Chris Davies (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): This week, Guide Dogs for the Blind has led a very important and effective campaign in Westminster aiming to put an end to the problem of pavement parking and street obstructions. As this affects constituents right across the country, and certainly in Brecon and Radnorshire, may we have a debate on the perils of pavement parking and how we can stop this problem?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend raises a really important issue. We all know that parking on pavements causes serious problems for pedestrians, and particularly for anybody in a wheelchair, with a pushchair, or with a visual impairment. Local authorities already have powers

to prohibit pavement parking by making traffic regulation orders. They can also use bollards to physically protect pavements. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is gathering evidence on pavement parking and the effectiveness of the current regulatory frameworks, and it will consider what more can be done.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): May I refer the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1397?

[That this House congratulates South West Arts and Music Project (SWAMP) Glasgow on its recent award of £91,300 from the Scottish Government Empowering Communities Fund; notes that the organisation is an SQA Approved Centre using accredited outreach in gardening, film, music, digital and technologies, and demonstrates how the creative arts can enable and empower social change; further notes that SWAMP has empowered many young people in the South West of Glasgow and helped them find work, and that creative industry plays a key role in assisting young people into work; and wishes SWAMP continuing success in its new premises in Brockburn Road, Glasgow.]

The EDM congratulates South West Arts and Music Project in my constituency on a £91,000 grant from the Scottish Government. May we have a debate in Government time on the creative industries and their importance to the economy, particularly in finding young people employment?

Andrea Leadsom: I think that all right hon. and hon. Members would share the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for the creative industries and the benefits that they give to communities, and particularly to young people in finding work. He has raised the achievement of his community, and I congratulate them on that. We have Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport questions next week, and he might want to raise the issue with Ministers directly.

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): Two and a half years ago, 22-year-old Thomas Demaine was tragically killed in a car accident. His post-mortem revealed that he had an enlarged and dilated heart. He became one of 12 people under the age of 35 who die every week because of undiagnosed cardiac conditions. Before his death, Thomas attended Bodmin College in my constituency. Thomas's family are now campaigning for young people to have access to free cardiac screening. May I ask for a debate on this issue so that we can bring up the merits of introducing free cardiac screening for young people?

Andrea Leadsom: I am truly sorry to hear such a sad story. I commend my hon. Friend, and also Thomas's family and friends, for the work that they are doing to highlight this tragic issue. The UK National Screening Committee is looking at the evidence on screening for the major causes of sudden cardiac death in young people. An evidence review document will be developed and will publicly consulted on later this year.

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): Last week, I was honoured to receive an award from the road safety charity, Brake, because of my work, alongside many others in this Chamber, on pushing the Government to

[*Judith Cummins*]

implement tougher sentences for dangerous drivers. Will the Leader of the House answer a simple question that she failed to answer last week: on what date will this important legislation come into force?

Andrea Leadsom: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her award and pay tribute to all the work she has done to try to prevent dangerous driving from being the scourge that it is. She will appreciate that dangerous driving has been decreasing over many years; we are finding fewer deaths on our roads. I cannot give her a specific date, but if she wants to write to me, I can ask Ministers to provide a response to her directly.

Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that highland games season is now upon us, and from Drumtochty to Aboyne, Lonach, Braemar and Ballater, West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine boasts the best highland games in the country. I invite the Leader of the House to my constituency to attend the games, and will she grant a debate in Government time about the importance of these fantastic events to the economy of north-west Scotland?

Andrea Leadsom: Another outing to the highlands sounds like great fun, and I would be delighted to attend and take part—I am sure there would be some sport I could turn my hand to. I congratulate all those who take part in the fantastic highland games for which Scotland is known throughout the world, and I am sure my hon. Friend will find other opportunities to raise the success of those games in this place.

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House make a statement on the rising cost of fuel at garage pumps, which is having a big effect on working families?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that this Government sought to get rid of the fuel duty escalator that was put in place by the previous Labour Government, in order to save motorists from the rising costs of fuel that were built into the fiscal position that we inherited. We have done everything we can to ensure that people can afford to fill their tanks. This is about a global price, and it is difficult for us to intervene in that, other than through the tax measures we have already introduced. The hon. Gentleman might wish to seek an Adjournment debate so that he can take the matter up directly with Ministers.

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): Knaresborough in my constituency contains a specific clutch of shops that have been empty for years or even decades, impacting on the attractiveness of the high street. Persuading the owners to bring those shops back into use is difficult because they are listed buildings and incur no business rates as long as they are empty—they are simply decaying. May we have a debate to explore how to use the business rate system to incentivise or even compel shop owners to bring long-term empty units, particularly listed buildings, back into use promptly? I recognise that that could include a change of use.

Andrea Leadsom: I totally sympathise with my hon. Friend, and it is a huge shame to see shops standing empty on our high streets. Owners of empty shops

normally pay rates when those shops have been vacant for three months, which provides a clear incentive for owners to bring those shops back into use quickly. However, in recognition of the particular challenges faced by owners of listed buildings, currently no rates are payable on empty listed buildings. I strongly encourage my hon. Friend to raise this important issue directly during questions to Housing, Communities and Local Government Ministers on Monday.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): As the home of Manchester airport, my constituency is one of the most visited in the north of England. However, many of my constituents suffer the menace of unlicensed airport parking operators who use the streets outside their homes. Will the Government provide a statement on the measures they are taking to tackle rogue meet-and-greet airport parking companies?

Andrea Leadsom: That genuinely sounds like an appalling issue, although I was not aware of it previously. I can well imagine that if someone hands over their car in good faith while they go on holiday, and they get it back vandalised or damaged in some way, or illegally parked, that is pretty horrible. I encourage the hon. Gentleman to seek an Adjournment debate so that he can take the issue up with Ministers and see what more can be done.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): In Corby in east Northamptonshire a number of unwanted, controversial planning applications are in the system, despite the fact that housing targets have been more than exceeded, which has been tested by an appeal. May we have a debate next week on the need for developers to respect local wishes?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Government have made every effort to ensure that local views are heard through local planning frameworks. They have sought to put power into the hands of local people, defend the green belt, and ensure that although building more houses is a top priority, local wishes should be taken into account. Questions to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government are on Monday, and I encourage my hon. Friend to raise the issue then.

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab): The country is becoming gripped by World cup fever, but I confess I have mixed loyalties, having drawn both Mexico and England in different sweepstakes. May we have a debate on the role of the Football Association in encouraging grassroots and women's football? There has been a perverse decision to demote Sunderland Ladies football club by two divisions. That decision was based not on results or league position, but on financial criteria, which is a retrograde step in encouraging the game.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), is a keen footballer and would no doubt be delighted to hear from him directly. In this time of World cup football fever, he might like to raise that issue with the Backbench Business Committee and seek a debate that all hon. Members can join in.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that in the past three months, 48,000 adults in northern Lincolnshire have not accessed the internet. With more and more public services becoming available only online, it is essential that people have that access. May we have a debate so that the Government can outline their policies to ensure that people have both access to the internet and the necessary skills?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend rightly raises an important constituency issue, and we must ensure that provision and training are provided to people so that they can use the internet and take advantage of its enormous benefits. He will be aware that we are investing in science, technology, engineering and maths in schools, including through £84 million over the next five years for a comprehensive programme to improve teaching and participation in computer science. Questions to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are next week, and he might want to raise the backlog of training and education with Ministers.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): As the hon. Member for Scunthorpe (Nic Dakin) has already alluded to, the new Home Secretary appears to be making a series of piecemeal announcements outwith the confines of this House, indicating a degree of tinkering around the edges of the Prime Minister's toxic immigration policies. When will he come to the House to make a statement about his long-term immigration policies, and when will we get the chance to debate those policies properly?

Andrea Leadsom: I entirely reject what the hon. and learned Lady says about my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. He is showing absolute commitment to a fair immigration policy that welcomes those who come here legally to contribute to our economy, while at the same time being strict with those who are here illegally. That is what the people of the United Kingdom want. Since becoming Home Secretary he has come before the House on several occasions, and he will continue to do so.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I associate myself with your comments, Mr Speaker, and those of the Leader of the House and shadow Leader of the House about Grenfell Tower.

Three and a half years ago, two constituents in Staffordshire lost their lives in a terrible fire and explosion in a fireworks factory in my constituency. Court proceedings have now concluded, so may we have a debate or statement about what the Government propose to do to ensure better regulation and inspection of premises that contain large quantities of fireworks? At the moment, local authorities can inspect facilities that have up to 2 tonnes of powerful fireworks, but I believe that should be the responsibility only of the Health and Safety Executive or the fire and rescue service.

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend raises a serious issue, and I am sorry to hear about the experience in his constituency. As he said, the storage of less than 2 tonnes of fireworks needs a licence from the local authority, and storage of more than 2 tonnes requires a licence

from the Health and Safety Executive. Both those bodies may inspect storage facilities if they so wish. If my hon. Friend wishes to take the matter further, he could write to me and I will ask Ministers to respond to him directly. Otherwise, I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate.

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): I have raised this issue with the Leader of the House on a couple of occasions. This week we have been discussing huge matters of national importance, but my constituents and many other people across the country are plagued by the national disgrace that is the state of our roads. May we have an urgent debate to discuss how we can support local authorities such as Nottinghamshire County Council to sort out the state of our roads? Our roads are causing accidents and damage to people's cars, and although that may seem insignificant compared with some of the massive issues of national and international importance that we have been discussing, it is a national problem that many of our constituents are demanding central Government take more seriously.

Andrea Leadsom: I have every sympathy with the hon. Gentleman, and I completely agree. While we discuss many important matters in this House, issues such as potholes are a real scourge of many of our constituents' lives. I certainly know from my constituency that they are a big problem that people often raise with me on the doorsteps. I encourage him to raise the issue directly with Ministers at Housing, Communities and Local Government questions on Monday to see what more can be done, or to seek an Adjournment debate. A lot of money and investment is going from central Government into pothole funds, but I agree with him that it remains an ongoing problem.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): The Leader of the House must surely be more concerned than most about how the way in which we do business in this Chamber is perceived by the outside world. Whatever happened on Tuesday evening, our procedures failed democracy in this country. The problem was not because of the number of votes, but because of the archaic and cumbersome method by which we vote, so will she bring forward, in Government time, proposals to allow reform of the voting system and introduce a modern secure, electronic voting system, like in any other modern legislature across the world?

Andrea Leadsom: I respect the hon. Gentleman's view that he would like to see electronic voting in this place, and I assure him that it is something that the House keeps under review, but it is not a priority for now. When it comes to talking about stunts and embarrassments, perhaps he would like to comment on what the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) said in response to the hon. Gentleman's colleagues' stunt at Prime Minister's questions yesterday—he said that they responded appallingly and tried to disrupt the proceedings of this House in a very unfortunate and disrespectful way. I find myself agreeing with a Liberal Democrat about the behaviour of the Scottish nationalists—[*Interruption.*] I have answered the question, and the Scottish nationalists should consider their own behaviour in this place.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): A constituent of mine, due to errors admitted by the Department for Work and Pensions, recently had her tax credit stopped, and has now had her child benefit stopped. That is having a huge financial impact on the family. Will the Leader of the House find Government time for a debate on DWP errors and how they are having a real impact on families up and down the UK?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important constituency issue, and it is absolutely right that Members do that in this place. I urge him to take it up directly with Ministers in the DWP, who will be pleased to look at it.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): May we have a debate on the legacy of Charles Stewart Parnell? He, of course, along with his colleagues at the time, successfully used the Standing Orders of the House to frustrate Government business, which is an entirely legitimate tactic, to force them to take Irish issues seriously, including in a 45-hour sitting on the 1877 South Africa Bill. Given the way that Ireland has this Government over a barrel at the minute, it might just be that those tactics are of interest to hon. Members at the present time.

Andrea Leadsom: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman and some of his colleagues are unhappy about procedures in this House in recent days. What I would say to him is that there has absolutely been adherence to all Standing Orders, procedural conventions and rules on Divisions of the House, and there has absolutely been nothing untoward going on. There is not the need for a debate—*[Interruption.]* It is entirely disrespectful that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. We have to try to re-establish some seamliness of exchange. The hon. Gentleman asked a robust question, and I do not think anybody objects to that, but he should then listen to the reply, and to heckle the Leader of the House noisily as she replies is discourteous.

Andrea Leadsom: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There is no point saying anything further to the hon. Gentleman.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): As we have seen on our television screens last night and in the papers this morning, the Saudi-led coalition bombardment of Hodeidah has begun, despite all the discussions and talks behind the scenes. It is a war, of course, that the UK has personnel, arms and intelligence involved in and which will lead to what the UN estimates at a quarter of a million lives being lost, with 6 million people entering into famine. May we have an urgent statement from the Foreign Secretary as early as possible in this Chamber, and subsequently an urgent debate on this very topical matter?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman raises a very serious issue. He will recall that we had an urgent question earlier this week, when a Minister came to this House. When the Prime Minister spoke to President Trump about the matter, they agreed that there is an enduring requirement for a political resolution to the conflict and cautioned against any action that might

increase the severe humanitarian suffering in Yemen. We remain deeply concerned by the increasingly grave and distressing situation there.

What the UK Government have done is as follows: on 3 April, we announced an additional £170 million in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, which will meet the immediate food needs of 2.5 million Yemenis, coming on top of the £400 million in bilateral support since the conflict began in 2015. We want to continue to work with the UN to ensure that any civilian impact of this conflict is minimised.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): My constituents who work at MOD St Athan RAF School of Technical Training are concerned that little action is being taken to renew the lease. Their concerns are not only about job losses, but about defence security should the lease revert to the ownership of the Welsh Assembly Government, who obviously cannot provide the same level of security. May we have a statement from the MOD, please, about what steps the Defence Infrastructure Organisation or the defence school of technical training is taking in relation to the lease?

Andrea Leadsom: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question; it is obviously very specific to her constituency. The Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew), who is with me on the Front Bench, is happy to take that up in the Wales Office to help her.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): I join the congratulations to the Clerk of the House and thank him and his team for his professionalism and advice over the last few days, and particularly the Division Clerks, because they have been working three-hour shifts in a row.

I want to echo the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy Sheppard). The voting system in this place is not just archaic; it is unsafe. There are Members who are on crutches, Members who are pregnant and Members who are waiting on medical procedures being forced into small, locked, crowded, hot rooms for a ridiculous headcount that has undermined the procedures of this House and the opportunity for Members to debate. It has to be reformed. It has to be a priority.

Andrea Leadsom: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I do not think it can be counted as a small and confined place; nevertheless, it is a matter for the House as to the number of times it chooses to divide. We have seen an exceptional number of votes this week, but I respect his view and will always take into account the views of all Members across the House.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): When Royal Mail was a public company, we used to be able to question Ministers and FOI the company on its performance with regards to delivery times, the number of post boxes and its overall performance in delivering our mail. This is a national institution, but we now cannot do that. Could we have an urgent debate or statement on how we can continue to put freedom of information requests to companies that have been recently privatised?

Andrea Leadsom: I hope the hon. Gentleman is aware that there is a Minister for Royal Mail, so there is somebody to whom he can put questions. The rules around freedom of information apply right across the United Kingdom, and he will be aware of the fact that he is able to put freedom of information requests to many businesses and public sector organisations.

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I was out of this place for a few years and many things have improved, but one of the things that has not is the standard of IT receptivity and accessibility. I know that this is not the Leader of the House's responsibility, but will she talk to the House authorities to try to get a decent IT system in this place once and for all?

Andrea Leadsom: I think there will be a great deal of sympathy on both sides of the House for the hon. Gentleman's view. What I can tell him is that approval has been obtained from the Administration Committee for a "refresh of hardware"—it says here—for returning MPs, to start in October. That could be exciting news, but we must wait with bated breath.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Yesterday the indefatigable Effie McGachie, the president of Renfrew Community Council—of which I am a former member—announced her retirement after 36 years' service, 32 of them as chair. Will the Leader of the House join me in thanking Effie for her service to the town and wishing her well in her retirement, and will she schedule a debate on community councils so that we can reflect their importance in constituencies throughout the United Kingdom?

Andrea Leadsom: I join the hon. Gentleman in congratulating his constituent on all those years of service. He may wish to seek an Adjournment or Westminster Hall debate so that all Members can congratulate all those who do so much in our communities.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): My constituent Duc Nguyen was on the brink of deportation to Vietnam yesterday. It took the quick action of my office and others to prevent that from happening. It is unacceptable that a deportation attempt was made without sufficient solicitor and MP involvement, especially given evidence that Duc was a victim of human trafficking and would face a threat to his life if he were deported. May we have a debate in Government time on the deportation process in cases of suspected human trafficking?

Andrea Leadsom: It sounds as though the hon. Gentleman did a superb job in representing his constituent, and I congratulate him on that. He has raised a very important point, which is a constituency matter. As ever, when Members want to raise an important visa issue, they have the means to do so directly with Ministers, or through the MPs' hotline, to try to deliver the best possible response to their constituents. If the hon. Gentleman wants to take up a particular issue, I suggest that he seek an Adjournment debate.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): I recently visited the InS:PIRE project, which is a partnership between different disciplines in the national health service

and Citizens Advice. It is based at Glasgow University, and supports intensive care patients and their families. There is an issue with recognition of post-intensive care syndrome in the social security system, especially when it comes to employment and support allowance. May we have a debate about that, in Government time?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady has raised an important public health issue, as she often does. I encourage her to raise it directly during Health questions next week.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): A major healthcare provider in my constituency recently had to terminate the contracts of two dedicated, skilled professional members of staff because the UK Government had refused to grant them tier 2 visas so they could continue to work here. If they had wanted to work in London, their salaries would have been high enough and they would have been allowed to stay. Their dedication to returning to work in Fife is shown by the fact that they are both continuing to run up significant expenses to keep their homes in my constituency. May we have a debate in Government time so that the Secretary of State for the Home Department can be made fully aware of the direct impact of his Government's policies on the health of my constituents?

Andrea Leadsom: I think we would all want to pay tribute to the many people who have come from other countries to work in our health service, and who have done so much to support the health of the population of the United Kingdom. As the hon. Gentleman will know, discussions are under way about the issue of visas for immigrant healthcare workers, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will update the House as soon as he is able to do so.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): Will the Leader of the House consent to a debate on political party membership? She will be aware that it is a significant barometer of political engagement throughout the United Kingdom. It would be a timely debate for Scottish National party Members, because yesterday we enjoyed the new membership of 5,085 Scottish people.

Andrea Leadsom: I can only say that I personally found it a great shame that the Westminster leader of the Scottish nationalists lost his opportunity to vote yesterday, and, moreover, lost his opportunity to propose an urgent debate. Many of the hon. Lady's colleagues also missed their opportunities to put questions to the Prime Minister. The hon. Lady may feel that that was a good trade, but many people in Scotland will feel that their representatives at Westminster should be representing their interests in this place.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): On Saturday I visited my local branch of the Samaritans, and I pay tribute to the good work that they do in helping people in times of trouble.

I have been at the funeral of the son of one of my best friends, who committed suicide. I have been at the funeral of one of my early childhood friends, who committed suicide. My office recently had to help a constituent to get his son sectioned for his own safety because he was suicidal. I too want to put on record my disgust at the hon. Member for Bridgewater and West

[Alan Brown]

Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger) for shouting that suicide was an option for the Westminster leader of the SNP to consider. That was completely out of order. Will the Leader of the House make a statement about what is being done to educate Members in relation to their behaviour, and will she acknowledge that a complaints procedure in itself is not enough to change the behaviour of some people?

Andrea Leadsom: Let me first join the hon. Gentleman in commending the Samaritans for the amazing work that they do. Let me also convey my real sympathy and commiserations in respect of the awful suicides that are taking place throughout the country, and the two that he specifically mentioned. It is an appalling scourge. We are seeing an increase in the number of suicides, particularly among young men. I think we have already made it clear that all Members should be very careful in their use of language in order not to offend or upset those who are listening to us, but I also think we should all do everything possible to try to improve the work done in communities and in our mental health services to improve the mental wellbeing of young people.

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill: Sewel Convention

12.56 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I shall make a statement on the operation of the Sewel convention and its application to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill in relation to Scotland. These are serious times and serious issues. I have come to the House today with respect and ready for constructive debate, and I hope that that is the spirit in all parts of the House.

In 1998, Lord Sewel set out a commitment that there should be a parliamentary convention to recognise that when the UK Parliament legislated in a devolved area, it

“would not normally legislate...without the consent of the Scottish parliament”.—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 21 July 1998; Vol. 592, c. 791.]

Throughout the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, the Government have demonstrated their commitment to the Sewel convention and the principles that underpin our constitution. We have followed the spirit and letter of the devolution settlement at every stage.

The Bill is about ensuring that the whole of the United Kingdom has a functioning statute book on exit day, and about providing legal certainty for businesses and individuals throughout the country. From the outset, we have been clear about the fact that as a result of the UK’s exit, we would expect to see a significant increase in the decision-making powers of the devolved institutions. We have been clear about the fact that exit would provide an opportunity to bring powers home from Brussels, not just to the UK Parliament but to all the legislatures of the United Kingdom. We must remember that the powers in question were handed to the European Union through our membership in 1972, long before devolution existed in Scotland. Exit was neither anticipated nor provided for in the Scotland Act 1998 and the structure of the devolution settlement. So it is clearly fair to say—as Mike Russell, the Scottish Government’s own Brexit Minister, has said—that

“these are not normal times”.

Nevertheless, we have sought to respect the devolution settlements at every turn, and have recognised the strength of feeling across this House, as well as within the devolved Administrations, that the original measures in the Bill did not meet aspirations. No one could deny that the Government have come a long way from that original position. Discussions have been conducted at multilateral level through the Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiation) and the Joint Ministerial Committee (Plenary), chaired by the Prime Minister, and bilaterally between Administrations, and with extensive official-level engagement, and we have made significant changes to the Bill.

Those changes enabled the Welsh Labour Government to support the agreement, and gained the approval of both the other place and this House, and those changes have turned the original clause on its head. Now, all decision-making powers returning from the EU that intersect with devolved competence will pass directly to Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast unless explicit steps are taken to temporarily preserve an existing EU framework.

The inter-governmental agreement underpinning the new clause set out how those steps should be taken, with an emphasis on collaboration and agreement. Together, this means we are emphatically delivering on our commitment to give significant further powers to the Scottish Parliament.

The new clause also provides that in certain, limited cases the current arrangements we have under the EU will remain until we have implemented our new UK-wide frameworks. I want to stress that we have already agreed with the Scottish and Welsh Governments where this temporary preservation needs to be considered; the Governments are agreed that “freezing” is likely in just 24 of the 153 areas of powers returning to the UK from the EU. And to anyone who has sought to present this as seeking to take back powers from the Scottish Parliament, I repeat here that this Bill includes a specific provision that makes it clear explicitly that no decision-making powers currently exercised by the Scottish Parliament can be taken away.

These amendments strike the right balance between ensuring that exit results in increased decision-making powers for the devolved legislatures while continuing to provide certainty about how our laws will operate and protect our UK internal market, a market so vital to Scotland’s businesses. These amendments do not, and cannot, go as far as the Scottish Government want, because the Scottish Government want a veto over arrangements that will apply to the whole of the UK. But as Lord Wallace, the former Deputy First Minister of Scotland, set out when the Bill was being debated in the other place, this was not part of the original devolution settlement.

Our approach also helps to ensure the continued integrity of the UK market, which is so vital to the people and businesses of Scotland. At every stage, the SNP has disregarded the need to preserve this market and to ensure that there are no new barriers to working or doing business in the UK. The UK internal market is worth over four times more to businesses in Scotland than EU trade, and we must make sure that it is preserved as we leave the EU.

We have reached a point now where, as the Welsh Labour Government have clearly stated, these arrangements reflect and respect how the devolution settlements operate. The devolved legislatures will have a formal role in considering where existing frameworks need to be temporarily preserved. That is what we have delivered. However, Scotland has two democratically elected Parliaments, and it is only this Parliament, the UK Parliament, that can speak for the UK as a whole.

It is deeply regrettable that Nicola Sturgeon’s SNP Scottish Government were unable to sign up to the compromise solution brokered by officials from all the Administrations working together. But, as we all know, we can only reach agreement in a negotiation if both sides actually want to reach agreement. The Scottish Government’s position from the outset was that they would be content with nothing less than a veto. However, such an unreasonable position would fundamentally undermine the integrity of the UK internal market. That would harm business in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Despite the numerous attempts to find compromise, and the fact that one was reached with the Welsh Labour

Government, the SNP position has not changed. As a result, this Government, who represent the whole of the UK, could not responsibly accept its position.

We are now therefore faced with the reality that the Scottish Parliament has not given consent for this critically important legislation that provides certainty across the UK. That is not a situation that any of us would have chosen. It is not, however, a crisis, nor is it unforeseen. While the devolution settlements did not predict EU exit, they did explicitly provide that in situations of disagreement the UK Parliament may be required to legislate without the consent of devolved legislatures.

In any situation, agreement is our aim, and we will continue to seek legislative consent, take on board views and work with the Scottish Government on future legislation, just as we always have done. We on this side of the House have compromised. We have made every effort to reach agreement. We have sought consent. Now we are legislating in line with the Sewel convention to ensure the whole of the United Kingdom leaves the EU with as much legal certainty as possible. That is what people and businesses in Scotland need.

1.5 pm

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement.

On Tuesday, we had a situation where the Secretary of State for Scotland allowed his Government to ride roughshod over the wishes of the Scottish Parliament within the space of around 20 minutes. From where I stand, the Secretary of State has done nothing about the programme motion that we opposed, meaning that he was entirely complicit in the shambles we all witnessed on Tuesday night meaning that Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Members were entirely shut out of the debate.

The Labour party opposed this week’s programme motion for a whole host of reasons, one of which was the lack of time to discuss devolution. The Labour party forced the Government to have two days of debate on the withdrawal Bill, rather than the original 12 hours. In stark contrast, the Secretary of State voted for the programme motion and voted for Scotland’s voice to be silenced. And to blame this on the Opposition for voting on the Lords amendments is as ludicrous as it is misleading.

What happened this week is completely and utterly unacceptable. We have seen shabby and deplorable antics from the Tories when it comes to the time allowed for debate, and we have seen counterproductive antics from the SNP yesterday that further curtailed debate. The people of Scotland deserve better, and they simply want this mess fixed by the politicians they sent here to stand up for them before this shambles ends up in court.

As John Smith said back when he was creating the Scottish Parliament, there are two people sawing away at the legs that support the Union: one is the Scottish National party, which of course wants to destroy the unity that is the United Kingdom, but the other is the reckless Conservative party, which stubbornly clings to an unsustainable position and refuses to even debate, never mind seek any compromise or consensus, on these most critical matters that the future of our nation relies upon.

[Mr Paul Sweeney]

The Secretary of State was responsible for taking the Scotland Act 2016 through this place, he was responsible for inserting the Sewel convention into the legislation, and now he is the person responsible for trampling all over that convention that underpins the devolution settlement. The Labour party tabled amendments to clause 11 of the withdrawal Bill at every stage. The Secretary of State and his colleagues voted them down every time. These amendments would have ensured that the Joint Ministerial Committee had to report to this place and to publish the minutes of its meetings. That would have allowed people in Scotland to see exactly what has been going on behind closed doors. The Secretary of State voted that down. We proposed amendments that would have ensured that any common UK frameworks—frameworks that his Government seem to value so much—would not be forced upon the Scottish Parliament. The Secretary of State voted that down. We proposed amendments that would have ensured that the Scottish Parliament had to give its consent unless the matter related to international obligations, which the Secretary of State will know is entirely in line with the Scotland Act. Yet rather than allow us to even just debate that amendment, the Secretary of State allowed Scotland's voice to be shut out of the debate entirely.

The Secretary of State promised that he would fix the mess that his Government created, yet he has done absolutely nothing; he is Scotland's invisible man in the Cabinet. The leader of Scottish Labour and the shadow Secretary of State have both written repeatedly to the deputy Prime Minister asking for cross-party talks to find a solution. So far, those requests have been denied. One really does have to wonder whether the UK Government and the Scottish Government actually have any intention whatsoever of sorting this out for the people of Scotland. So I ask the Secretary of State: will he, here and now, accept the offer of a cross-party meeting to resolve this and uphold the devolution settlement?

Clause 22 of the EU withdrawal Bill allows for consequential amendments to be made, where it is appropriate. Has the Secretary of State explored that avenue and is he open to consequential amendments under that clause if a deal is struck between the UK and Scottish Governments? Can the Secretary of State tell the House what mechanisms are available to Members to debate the issue, given that there was no debate at all this week? Will he now agree to publish the minutes of all meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committee that pertain to the EU negotiations? Does he have any regrets about how this situation has been perceived in Scotland? Finally, if there is no agreement between the Scottish and UK Governments, will he resign, because it is very clear that he does not have the confidence, leadership or ability to fix this matter of critical importance to the future of our country?

David Mundell: I do have one regret, and that is that the once-proud Scottish Labour Unionist party has moved on to this nationalist territory. It was a real disappointment that Labour MSPs were willing to go along with everything proposed by Nicola Sturgeon. That is something to be regretted. When it comes to interpreting the devolution settlement, I am not going to rely on the hon. Member for Glasgow North East

(Mr Sweeney). I am going to rely on people such as John Smith, who was responsible for bringing it about, and on others who are now in the other place representing the Labour party and who accepted these proposals and amendments. They include Lord Jim Wallace, the former Deputy First Minister of Scotland, who stated clearly that the proposals did not in any way undermine the devolution settlement. And are the comments of the hon. Gentleman's Welsh colleague, the prospective First Minister of Wales, to be rubbished and dismissed? He stated that the amended Bill and the intergovernmental agreement did the things that they set out to do, in that they safeguarded devolution and the future of a successful United Kingdom. I do hope that the Scottish Labour party still wants a successful United Kingdom.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): I should just like to point out that I do not need a script; I make my own notes. My right hon. Friend said in his statement that the Sewel convention stated that this Parliament would not normally legislate in devolved areas without the consent of the Scottish Parliament. However, Mike Russell, Scotland's own Brexit Minister, stated that these were not normal times when he introduced the illegal continuity Bill in the Scottish Parliament. So either the fast-tracking of the continuity Bill was unnecessary, or the Sewel convention does not apply. Does my right hon. Friend therefore agree that the SNP should put its toys back in the pram and get back around the table?

David Mundell: In case this should arise in future questions, I do not intend to comment on references to the Supreme Court as that matter is ongoing. I agree with my hon. Friend's final point, however. It is vital that the Scottish Government and the UK Government should continue to work together, and I have been perturbed over the past 48 hours by the veiled threats from the Scottish Government that they would somehow withdraw from such discussions. These discussions are vitally important, and the people of Scotland expect their two Governments to work together. Negotiations are taking place at the moment between my colleague the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and her counterpart in the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. That is the sort of engagement that people want to see: the transfer of powers from this Parliament in relation to welfare and engagement with the Scottish Government as to how that is successfully done.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I have to say to the Secretary of State for Scotland: is that all you've got? Is that the best you can do? These are serious times for Scotland. I thank him for giving me advance sight of his statement, but I am deeply disappointed by its content. My very quick take on the statement is that it offers a wholly new interpretation—and, indeed, inversion—of the constitutional arrangements. Section 28(7) of the Scotland Act 1998 confirms that Westminster retains its unlimited sovereignty, and arguably it can never relinquish that, but the devolution settlement provides through the Sewel convention that the legislative power will not be used if there is disagreement and the devolved legislatures do not give consent. Today's statement effectively turns Sewel on its head by saying that, if there is disagreement—that is, no consent on a legislative consent motion—the UK Government can proceed to

legislate. This is an extremely serious development in UK Government thinking, and it risks the security of the devolution settlement. It also gives the lie to the assertion in the statement that the UK Government are “legislating in line with the Sewel convention”.

By their own admission in this statement, they are doing the opposite. Perhaps the Secretary of State can give us some clarity on what is happening here.

The Sewel convention is clear that the UK Government should not legislate on devolved matters without the consent of the Scottish Parliament. However, the Scottish Parliament—not the Scottish Government—has denied its consent. The Scottish National party, the Labour party, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens all said that they did not give their consent to what the UK Government were seeking to do, yet the Secretary of State comes before us today with excuses and attempts to save his own skin, knowing that he has totally shafted Scotland and the people of Scotland. Empty excuses are clearly all he has, having utterly failed in his role as Secretary of State to protect our devolution settlement or to stand up for Scotland as he should be doing.

The Secretary of State promised that Scotland’s Parliament would become the most powerful devolved Parliament in the world. Wrong. He promised us, in the Commons stages, that when the Bill came back from the Lords, there would be time to debate clause 11. Wrong. He told us that there would be a powers bonanza for the Scottish Parliament. [HON. MEMBERS: “Wrong!”] Even in June 2016, he pledged to protect Scotland’s place in the single market. [HON. MEMBERS: “Wrong!”] The Secretary of State has—[*Laughter.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) must be able to complete his contribution—

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Really?

Mr Speaker: Yes, really! [*Interruption.*] Order. What was that? Somebody chuntered from a sedentary position.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Surely not!

Mr Speaker: Surely not? Well, no—the right hon. Gentleman will be enabled to continue his contribution.

Ian Blackford: I would simply say to Conservative Members that the UK Government’s own analysis has indicated that a hard Brexit will damage jobs, yet what do we see? We see Conservative Members of Parliament laughing. They are laughing at the hardships that the people of Scotland might face.

The Secretary of State for Scotland downgraded devolution, ignored the Scottish Parliament and silenced Scotland when he supported the withdrawal Bill despite our Parliament—his Parliament—having rejected it. Will he now apologise to the people of Scotland for his series of broken promises? He has failed to protect devolution, he has failed to protect the Scottish Parliament and he has failed to protect Scottish interests. Having plunged Scotland into constitutional crisis, will he finally do the right thing by the Scottish people? If he has any dignity and self-respect, will he resign, and do it now? [*Applause.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Members must not become over-excited. We have a long way to go. There is a lot still to be done, and there are lots of questions to be asked. There is lots of debate to be had and lots of fun to be savoured—in a seemly manner, I feel sure.

David Mundell: After yesterday, I am not taking any lessons from the right hon. Gentleman on dignity. However, we have at least had some clarification on what guerrilla tactics are going to be used in this Parliament, including chanting in line with what he says. I actually respect the fact that he opposes Brexit. He is perfectly entitled to do that, but he is not entitled to ignore the views of the more than 1 million people in Scotland who voted for Brexit but who the SNP want to airbrush out of history. Nor is he entitled to ignore the result of the referendum across the United Kingdom as a whole. It is therefore incumbent on this Government to deliver Brexit, and that is what we will do.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman was not wilfully misinterpreting the Sewel convention, because the convention is not absolute. He set it out as though it were, but it is not. As I said in my statement, the Government will seek consent unless normal circumstances do not apply, and anyone would accept that the UK leaving the EU is not normal circumstances.

Sir Desmond Swayne: Which power is my right hon. Friend planning to take away from the Scottish Government and Parliament?

David Mundell: That is an excellent question, because I have twice heard the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) say that powers will be stripped from the Scottish Parliament. However, not one power that the Scottish Parliament currently exercises will be stripped. Over 80 new powers and responsibilities are coming to Holyrood and, yes, I call that a “powers bonanza.”

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for taking up my invitation in my point of order yesterday to make a statement to the House today. I want to ask him a serious question to try to take some of the heat out of the bluff and bluster from both sides of the House. As I understand it, the Scottish Brexit Secretary signed off or agreed with the proposals during meetings, but they were then vetoed by the First Minister. That suggests to me that a deal could be done and that compromises could be made by both sides. Will the Secretary of State now do everything in his power to get all sides back around the table to find the distance that they can go between compromise and getting a deal?

David Mundell: I welcome the hon. Gentleman’s acknowledgement of the statement, which was the right thing to do given that the opportunity to have a debate today had been declined by the leader of the SNP following yesterday’s stunt. I am still committed to getting agreement, and I welcome the recent interventions of Professor Jim Gallagher and Gordon Brown, who were genuinely looking for a settlement. We reached out to Michael Russell to see whether he was willing to engage with that process, but I am afraid that the clear message was that the Scottish Government’s position is as it was the last time we spoke and is as it was a year

[David Mundell]

ago and that there is no scope for compromise. I am always willing to talk, and if there is any prospect of getting an agreement with the Scottish Government, I am open to doing so.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): The only people who were silenced yesterday were the people of Perth and North Perthshire, Dundee West, Lanark and Hamilton East, Argyll and Bute, and Glasgow Central, because their elected representatives walked out on the opportunity to question the Prime Minister. I have been here only for a year, but I know there are many ways of representing our constituents in this privileged role of public office, and they happen in this Chamber, not outside for the TV cameras—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I said a moment ago when there was some chuntering from a sedentary position that the leader of the SNP must be heard, and the same applies in respect of the hon. Lady. Her question must be heard. There must not be an attempt to shout her down, and if there is such an attempt, it will fail—period.

Kirstene Hair: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, no matter how many hours the SNP were given to debate or how many powers were given back, an agreement would never be reached, because an agreement would damage the SNP's crusade for independence? It is always self-interest, never the interests of Scotland.

David Mundell: We can reach an agreement only with people who want to reach an agreement, and it is clear that Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP have a different interpretation of the current constitution from everyone else. It is also abundantly clear from the weekend and from many of the SNP group's antics that all they really want is to replace the existing devolution settlement with independence.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): There was really only one thing that we needed to hear from the Secretary of State today—I say this as someone who is fond of the right hon. Gentleman—and that was his resignation. He has presided over this crisis with an ineptness rarely demonstrated on something that required a delicate touch and real negotiating skill, and he has a litany of failed commitments and broken promises. He will be remembered as the Secretary of State who first reversed devolution. He has let our Parliament down, and he has let democracy down. For goodness' sake, man, just go.

David Mundell: That was an uncharacteristically quiet performance from the hon. Gentleman. I presume that it was aimed at achieving gravitas, but I will leave others to speculate as to whether he succeeded. I have not changed the devolution settlement, and the devolution settlement has not changed. The settlement, as achieved in 1998, was clear on the Sewel convention, and we are abiding by it.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of Scotland want, expect and deserve their two Governments to work together constructively in the country's best interests?

Does he share my deep concern about SNP Ministers' threats of non-co-operation? Does he also agree that the SNP will not be forgiven if it turns its back on its parliamentary responsibilities simply to pursue the campaign for independence?

David Mundell: Absolutely. It is abundantly clear from research and opinion surveys that the people of Scotland want their two Governments to work together constructively to deliver the best possible deal for Scotland and the rest of the UK as we leave the EU. I take seriously some of the comments that have come from Scottish Ministers about withdrawing from co-operation with the UK Government, but I hope that they have just been caught up in the excitement that SNP Members generated in the media yesterday and that, when cool heads prevail, they will come back to the view that it is best for the two Governments to work together.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I suspect that, on reflection, the Secretary of State would now accept that it was a profound mistake to structure the programme motion in such a way that there was no time to discuss these important matters, which have been the subject of long debate. I hope that the Government will go away and reflect on that.

Having said that, what prospects are there for discussions on the common frameworks, which are the source of the argument, given that everybody knows that, whatever their view on the interpretation of the Sewel convention, because of Brexit, which I and many other people regret, an agreement needs to be reached on how things are going to work in the United Kingdom once we have left the European Union?

David Mundell: I take heed of the right hon. Gentleman's wise words. This part of the dispute is totally incomprehensible to the wider public, because we are arguing about how we formally agree something that we have already agreed. We have agreed that there are 24 areas in relation to Scotland where common frameworks will be required across the UK. We have agreed that it will be necessary to freeze the current EU arrangements—what is happening every day just now—until new arrangements are put in place on a basis agreed between the Governments. I hope that we can now focus on that important matter, because the frameworks will make the difference to people in Scotland in terms of jobs and security in their day-to-day lives. That should be the focus, not dancing on the head of a constitutional pin.

Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): As Lord Sewel's Member of Parliament, I rise to speak because I am concerned for his welfare. All this talk of being turned on his head must be quite an experience for him. Given the exceptional nature and circumstances of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, does my right hon. Friend agree that this Government have acted in line with the convention of my constituent, Lord Sewel, in order to protect the devolution settlement, which only the Conservative party will do, and to maintain the integrity of our United Kingdom?

David Mundell: Obviously I agree with my hon. Friend. Some people have sought to interpret the Sewel convention as meaning "never" or "not at all" or "not in any circumstances," when the wording of the

convention is clear—it is “not normally.” As I have said in previous answers, no one would dispute that these are not normal times. Indeed, that was the reflection of Michael Russell when issues of this nature were being considered in the Scottish Parliament.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): Why is the Secretary of State misleading Members of this House and misrepresenting the views of the Scottish Parliament? He must surely know that the Scottish Government have no objection to common arrangements and that there has been no attempt to have a veto. In fact, the Scottish Government have sought to have a partnership, with a common agreed disputes procedure when differences might arise. Instead, his Government have insisted that common arrangements must make the devolved authorities subservient to the wishes of the United Kingdom Government. Given his misinterpretation of the facts, would it not be better for him to step aside and make way for someone who can better broker these discussions and seek agreement?

David Mundell: We have just heard from an expert in misinforming on the facts. His is not a fair or accurate interpretation of anything that has happened, but it belies the SNP’s fundamental view of the United Kingdom. Scotland is not a partner of the United Kingdom; Scotland is part of the United Kingdom.

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): I recognise theatre when I see it, particularly well-rehearsed theatre. Judging by today’s second performance, we could be in for a very long run. When the late, great David Bowie shouted from the stage, “Scotland, stay with us,” I agreed with him, and so did the majority of the Scots. We have stood shoulder to shoulder for generations, very successfully, and we have taken on the world. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should continue to stand shoulder to shoulder and back each other, even when it comes to matters like football?

David Mundell: There is one thing on which I agree with my SNP counterparts, which is on commending the Scottish cricket team for their momentous victory over England. My hon. Friend is right that we had all these discussions, on the nature of Scotland’s constitution and its relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom, in depth at the 2014 independence referendum. People voted decisively to remain in the United Kingdom on the basis that that was to be a once-in-a-generation choice. Let us not continue with this incessant debate and discussion about independence, but let us focus on using all the new and additional powers the Scottish Parliament will have for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): It happened at every stage of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill: on Second Reading we were promised that amendments would be tabled in Committee; then the Secretary of State promised us that amendments would be tabled on Report; then, on Third Reading, we were promised that after the Bill went to the Lords—where not only Scotland’s main party, the SNP, but all Scottish MPs have no voice—there would be time to debate and amend the Bill when it came back here. Nineteen minutes of one Minister speaking. The disrespect to Scotland is risible,

so what does the Secretary of State have to say about how he respected Scotland and protected Scotland’s voice in this Chamber?

David Mundell: The hon. Lady will know there was an extensive discussion about the length of time provided for the debate, and I have said many times already that I believe it would have been better if more time were available, but she conveniently misses out one word I said about the amendments, and that word was “agreed.” I wanted to table agreed amendments in this House—amendments agreed with the Scottish Government—and that did not prove possible at any stage of the Bill. Sadly, it does not prove possible now.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Would not an independent Scotland somehow retaining or reapplying for EU membership simply be in a position of returning to Brussels the 80-plus powers about to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament from Westminster?

David Mundell: That irony, and the irony that the SNP wants to go right back into the common fisheries policy, seems to be completely lost on the SNP, but it is not lost on the 1 million people in Scotland, many of them SNP voters, who voted to leave the EU.

Danielle Rowley (Midlothian) (Lab): The Secretary of State has talked a lot today about co-operation and working together. However, he did not answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney). The shadow Secretary of State and the leader of the Scottish Labour party have both written to the de facto deputy Prime Minister to ask for urgent cross-party talks to fix this deadlock, so will the Secretary of State push for those talks, and will he be in attendance?

David Mundell: As the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and I have made clear, we will have talks if there is something to talk about. Professor Jim Gallagher and Gordon Brown made a proposal last week, and we extensively examined that proposal, but it did not meet our requirement of preserving the UK internal market. Where a solid and concrete proposal is made, of course we are happy to talk about it.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The Secretary of State mentioned the Labour Government of my country in his statement, and their actions on the power grab will be remembered as the biggest sell-out in Welsh political history. As a former historian, I can assure the House that that is quite some achievement. Once the EU (Withdrawal) Bill becomes law, is it not the reality that, as far as the new UK internal market is concerned, Wales and Scotland will be rule takers—vassal countries?

David Mundell: Absolutely not.

Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con): Can my right hon. Friend fathom why the Scottish Government would not want additional powers post-Brexit? Surely it is far preferable for decisions to be made in Holyrood, with the best interests of the Scottish people at heart, rather than in Brussels, or am I missing something?

David Mundell: Yes, my hon. Friend is missing something: it is just all about independence.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): Where else can one Parliament unilaterally alter the competences of another against its will and in such a shoddy manner? Does not this episode show that the Sewel convention is worthless and that the British constitution is archaic, unfit for purpose and beyond repair?

David Mundell: The premise of that question is based on not accepting the United Kingdom's existing constitutional arrangements, which were the subject of a vote by the Scottish people in 2014 in which they agreed that Scotland should remain part of the United Kingdom.

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): Can my right hon. Friend confirm he still expects that the overwhelming majority of areas will be devolved to Holyrood immediately after Brexit, the result of which will be that the Scottish Parliament will have close to 100 new powers that it does not currently have? Those will be new powers for Scotland.

David Mundell: Only the SNP could turn the Scottish Parliament receiving over 80 new powers, for which it will have direct responsibility, into a power grab. This is what is happening: over 80 areas of power and responsibility are going to the Scottish Parliament. What people in Scotland want to see is the Scottish Parliament focusing on using those powers for the benefit of their day-to-day lives.

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): Tuesday was a low point in a long-running shambles for the devolution settlement. I have a lot of time for the Secretary of State, as I find him very constructive, but he is supposed to be Scotland's voice in the Cabinet and his contradictions at the ballot box show that he has no idea what is going on. How long does he think he will be able to carry on while the Government are clearly taking no heed of what he has to say?

David Mundell: I am clear on what my role is: to stand up for Scotland's place within the UK and the current constitutional arrangements. That is what I am going to continue to do. Of course SNP Members are not going to like that, because they do not like the existing constitutional arrangement and they want to change it, but I am not changing. I am sticking with that role of standing up for what people in Scotland voted for in 2014.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): The past few days have seen the theatrical best of this Parliament, so perhaps the opportunity should now be taken to see the political best. Would the Secretary of State therefore like to stand up and make an open invitation to talks, and then see what the answer is?

David Mundell: I have made it clear, as the hon. Gentleman will have heard, that my door is open, as is that of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, for discussions with anyone, but a constructive proposal needs to be on the table. At the moment, the position of

the SNP Scottish Government is not to change from the one they adopted a year ago. We investigated that as recently as Monday; given the constructive approach from Professor Gallagher and Gordon Brown, we reached out to the Scottish Government to find out what their approach was. It was exactly the same: they were not for moving, compromising or changing. Until we can see a situation where movement might arise, although it might be possible to talk I do not anticipate it being possible to reach agreement.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I thank the Secretary of State for providing me with prior sight of his statement. I also welcome the clarification that this is not a constitutional crisis, regardless of how much some Members might like to portray it as such. However, does he accept that the events of this week and the lack of debate on devolution have simply underlined the need for a proper, enduring dispute resolution process, rather than the current system? Surely that would be better than what we have seen from the Conservatives—blocking debate—and the self-serving, cynical hissy fits from the SNP, which do nothing for the people of Scotland.

David Mundell: I certainly agree with the last part of that question. Of course, intergovernmental relations and the arrangements between the devolved Administrations and the UK Government have been the subject of a lot of discussion and scrutiny. Even the Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), of which the hon. Lady is a member, has looked at these matters. I certainly agree that these intergovernmental arrangements need to be improved, and I want to continue to work to try to achieve that.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): Civic Scotland is also extremely concerned about this legislation. John Downie, director of public affairs for the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, has said:

“If this Bill goes ahead in its current form it will make a mockery of democracy in the UK, damage the economy and ultimately result in constitutional crisis.”

Has the Secretary of State written those people off as diehard nationalists? Are their views to be rubbished and dismissed?

David Mundell: I have been listening to Mr Downie for nearly 20 years; at that time, he used to lobby the Scottish Parliament when I was an MSP. Of course we listen to the views of anyone who comes forward, but I disagree with that interpretation. The Bill, as businesses across Scotland recognise, is about bringing certainty on the day when we exit the EU. It is about ensuring that people know what the legal position is, and that is universally welcomed by businesses across Scotland.

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): There is an important factor in the origins of the Sewel convention: the consent of the Scottish Parliament. As no agreement has been reached or consent given, will the details be published in the missing EU White Paper, which should have been published before any votes were taken in this House?

David Mundell: I hope that in my statement I clarified the constitutional position on the Bill. I would advise the hon. Gentleman that the EU White Paper he refers to will be published in July.

Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): This week, the Secretary of State's Government abandoned any pretence of a commitment to devolution. By refusing to recognise and respect the sovereign will of the Scottish people and the will of the Scottish Parliament, his Government decreed that only he will control the powers of the Scottish Parliament, it can have only what he says it can have and it will be this place that will decide. Yet just last week, his Tory colleague the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) said:

"if we allow devolved areas only to make decisions with which the Westminster Parliament agrees, there is not much point any more in any form of devolution".—[*Official Report*, 7 June 2018; Vol. 642, c. 458.]

Was he right to say that?

David Mundell: Again, the question is based on a premise that does not accept the current constitutional arrangement. I respect the fact that the current questioner and the likely remaining questioners will all have that position. They are entitled to it; they are entitled to argue for independence for Scotland. But they are not entitled to misconstrue the current constitutional arrangements within the UK. The Government have operated entirely within the Sewel convention in the actions they have taken. I want to see the devolved Parliaments doing things differently—doing the things in Scotland that are right for Scotland. What disappoints me is how little time the Scottish Parliament, at the behest of the Scottish Government, actually spends legislating for Scotland and bringing forward different and new arrangements that would be specific to Scotland's needs.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): During his statement the Secretary of State repeatedly spoke about respect, and he, the Prime Minister and other Ministers have repeatedly talked about their respect for the decision of the Welsh Assembly to grant consent to the Bill. If they are truly democrats, should they not accord equal respect to the decision of the Scottish Parliament not to grant consent? Or does their respect for democracy not extend to Scotland's Parliament?

David Mundell: I do respect the decision of the Scottish Parliament. I have made it clear that I am disappointed by it. I was particularly disappointed by the Scottish Labour party's approach to that decision. We respect the decision, but what happens next is determined by the Sewel convention and we are acting in accordance with that.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Secretary of State says that the situation is not normal, but he is establishing a new normal. He is establishing that this place can and will override the Scottish Parliament whenever, or if ever, the Scottish Parliament chooses to disagree. That is the opposite of the Sewel convention. The way he could demonstrate that he is not in defiance of the Sewel convention is by standing at the Dispatch Box now and confirming that the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will not be sent for Royal Assent until agreement is reached.

David Mundell: Of course there is still time to reach agreement, and we have indicated that if the Scottish Government came forward and set out agreement to what is proposed, we would welcome that. The hon. Gentleman, as a number of his colleagues have done to date—no doubt we will hear this further—chooses to misrepresent what the Sewel convention says. It is not an absolute term. It has not been utilised in this way previously; I would not want it to be utilised again. I would want us to reach agreement with the Scottish Parliament on issues such as these, and I give that commitment today that on all occasions that will be my approach and this Government's approach.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): By no stretch of the English language can the word "collaboration" encompass a 19-minute statement, all of Scotland's Members of Parliament excluded from the debate, and then a vote to override the wishes of the Scottish Parliament. This is a poor excuse for a Parliament and the right hon. Gentleman is fast becoming a poor excuse for a Secretary of State for Scotland. Will he stand up at the Dispatch Box and do what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) just asked him to do: confirm that the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will not be given Royal Assent until an agreement is reached?

David Mundell: I am sorry—as I am sure you are, Mr Speaker—that the hon. Gentleman has such a low view of this Parliament, because he seems to me to be an active contributor to it and to utilise his position as a local MP effectively. I cannot give him the undertaking that he seeks. I have said at the Dispatch Box more than once already that if the Scottish Government wish to proceed on the basis on which the Welsh Assembly Government are proceeding, I am more than happy to facilitate that. I am more than happy to have a discussion on any other constructive proposal on these issues.

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): Just after the Brexit vote in this very Chamber the Secretary of State confirmed to me that

"the Scottish Government will be at the heart of the negotiation process".—[*Official Report*, 6 July 2016; Vol. 612, c. 866.]

Yet here we are, after the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill debates, with no sign of how the UK Government will reflect the will of the Scottish Parliament. Does the Secretary of State not see that as anti-democratic and disrespectful?

David Mundell: We have moved to ensure that the Scottish Government are at the heart of the negotiation process. A new ministerial forum—co-chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith)—has been established, and it has met Scottish Government Ministers to discuss how they want us to approach certain elements of the EU negotiations. So yes, in policy areas in which the Scottish Government have an input in the process, we want to ensure that they are there and are heard, and that we work collaboratively and constructively, but we cannot agree with the Scottish Government's proposition that the Scottish Parliament should have a veto over measures that apply across the whole United Kingdom.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): Given that the highly respected former editor of the *Daily Record*, who was instrumental in the creation of the Better Together parties' vow, has now decided to support independence, does the Secretary of State agree that the Union is well and truly stuffed and the Secretary of State's tenure is well and truly over?

David Mundell: Mr Murray Foote is a good friend of mine, and he will stay a good friend. I have many friends who support independence, just as I have many friends who voted for Scotland to remain part of the United Kingdom. That is the basis on which the debates in Scotland should be conducted—a much more convivial and civil basis than they have been recently. The antics of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) yesterday do not help, because they agitate the political environment in Scotland, and, rather than enhancing the opportunity to debate issues, they reduce it.

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I agree with many of my hon. Friends that the Secretary of State is a nice man, and I respect him personally, but does he not see that his Government's complete distain for Scotland extends even to his position? He was sidelined during the Brexit discussions and had no place at the table to discuss the impact on Scotland. His paymasters hold him in the same contempt as they hold the Scottish people. When comes the point at which principle takes over for the Secretary of State?

David Mundell: I can agree that the hon. Lady is a nice lady, and I have always got on well with her, but beyond the initial part of her question I do not agree with her. My role is to be at the heart of the Government, ensuring that Scotland's issues and concerns are taken into account, not only on Brexit but on a whole range of other issues. I know that, like her colleagues, the hon. Lady does not accept the current constitutional arrangements, but I will continue to do my job of standing up for Scotland within the United Kingdom.

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): I am going to be a bit more conciliatory than some of my colleagues have been today, and would like to thank the Government's man in Scotland. I thank the Secretary of State for his insipid statement, I thank the Secretary of State for failing to show respect to the Scottish Parliament and I thank him for failing to engage in meaningful discussions, because people I could not reach during the Scottish referendum are now stepping forward in droves and engaging in this conversation. People who argued no to Vote 2014 are flocking to the indy cause; SNP membership is once again on the increase; and when the time comes, as it surely will, the Secretary of State will reap what he has sown. Is this the legacy that he wants for his tenancy?

David Mundell: The others on the SNP Benches have perhaps sought to hide it a bit more, but the hon. Gentleman did not: he is very clear that this is all about having another independence referendum. I am afraid that on that matter we are never going to agree.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): It was no surprise a few moments ago to hear the Secretary of State condemn walk-outs, given that 30 years ago his

party legislated to deny workers that right in every other workplace. He made no mention in his statement of anything about the views of civic Scotland. There has been an overwhelming negative reaction, such as that from the Scottish Trades Union Congress, to the current form of clause 11 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. Does he not agree with the STUC that in its current form clause 11 is devolution's greatest ever crisis?

David Mundell: I most certainly do not agree with that assessment. The feedback that I have received from civic Scotland and from ordinary people across Scotland is that they are sick and tired of this constitutional wrangling—of this dancing on the head of a pin to find something to have a row about. They want the two Governments to work together in Scotland's best interests and, particularly in the current circumstances, to get the best possible deal for Scotland and the rest of the UK as we leave the EU.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I call Carol Monaghan.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Good choice, Mr Speaker.

Given the recent assurances on the Northern Ireland border, will the Secretary of State make a commitment that if Northern Ireland gets a bespoke deal on regulatory alignment, he will be fighting to protect Scotland's interests and ensure that Scotland gets a similar deal?

David Mundell: My answer is actually the reverse, in the sense that we want an arrangement that applies to the whole United Kingdom. We are not going to have bespoke arrangements for different parts of the United Kingdom.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): In his capacity as Scotland's man in the Cabinet, the Secretary of State has been responsible for promises being made from the Dispatch Box on four occasions, and he has been responsible for those promises being broken on four occasions. In his capacity as the Cabinet's person in Scotland, he has been responsible for a situation that the BBC has said can fairly be described as a power grab and that *The Spectator* magazine has said no self-respecting Scottish Government could ever accept. In addition, as has been mentioned, one of the most arch Unionists of 2014 is now enthusiastically pro-independence, and in the 24 hours before the Secretary of State stood up to speak, 5,000 new people joined the SNP. If that is what he does when he is trying to keep Scotland in the Union, what on earth would he do if he was trying to persuade us to leave?

David Mundell: I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman's catalogue of events. I have been very clear, as I have said already in answer to other questions, that I wanted to introduce amendments to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill to the House, but I wanted those amendments to have been agreed with the Scottish Government. It was not possible then and it has not been possible now to reach that agreement, because the Scottish Government have adopted a position that is not in accordance with the current constitutional settlement. It is their view that the Scottish Parliament should have

a veto over matters that affect the whole United Kingdom. That was not part of the original devolution settlement and it is not part of it now.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): During Tuesday's 19 minutes and even in today's statement, we heard nothing from the UK Government on how they propose to reflect the views of the Scottish people and the views of all the democratically elected parties in the Scottish Parliament, save for the out-of-touch Tories. Does the Secretary of State think that that is an illustration of Scotland being a valued and equal partner in the Union? Why does he continue, right through the statement today, to try to portray this as the Scottish Government refusing consent, when he knows fine well that it is every single party in the Scottish Parliament, except the Tories?

David Mundell: As the hon. Lady, whose energetic contributions I always enjoy, would make clear, we have been seeking to agree an arrangement with the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government then take forward a recommendation to the Parliament in relation to legislative consent. They took forward a motion to decline not just this part of the Bill, but the whole Bill. I wish that it were otherwise, but I hope now that we can move forward to work with the Scottish Government on the issues which we have already agreed. We have agreed the 24 areas which it is likely will need common frameworks. That is where we should be now. We should be working with the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government and, hopefully in time, a Northern Ireland Executive to create those frameworks because it is those frameworks that will have the impact on the day-to-day lives of people in Scotland. That is what people in Scotland want to see. They want to see their Government focusing on the issues that matter to them, not on constitutional pin-head arguments.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): On Burns night, the Scottish Secretary told me in this Chamber that the Bill would be amended in agreement with the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government. He said that he took full responsibility for failing then. Will he take full responsibility for going back on his word now and resign?

David Mundell: The emphasis that the hon. Gentleman put on the words in those sentences is not quite correct because I wanted an agreement with the Scottish Government, but it is quite clear that that agreement will not be forthcoming on a basis that would be acceptable under the existing devolution settlement. We have rehearsed those arguments numerous times in answers to questions today. It is not acceptable that the devolution settlement be changed as part of Brexit to give the Scottish Parliament a veto over matters that would apply across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): A reminder: the Tory-friendly *Spectator* magazine said that no self-respecting party of any colour could give consent to the EU withdrawal Bill in its current format. As other hon. Members have said, much of civic Scotland agrees about the impact on devolution, yet, instead of showing any contrition whatsoever, the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box and tells us to like it or

lump it and does some SNP bashing for good measure. It is quite obvious that he cannot even differentiate between the SNP, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, so I ask him to show some backbone for once and resign.

David Mundell: When we brought forward the initial proposals, Members of this House, Members of the Scottish Parliament and others responded to those proposals, and I appeared before the Finance and Constitution Committee of the Scottish Parliament. We listened to what we heard from all of those, from civic Scotland and from elected representatives across Scotland, and we made very, very significant changes to the Bill. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) pointed out, we were extremely close to reaching agreement. Those in the room felt that agreement could be reached but, at the end of the day, Nicola Sturgeon and the Scottish Government did not agree with what was proposed. On that basis, we have not been able to conclude agreement. I regard that as regrettable. I would still welcome it if the Scottish Government came on board with the Welsh Government in relation to supporting the proposals if that is at all possible.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Thank you for calling me, Mr Speaker. My knees are now well and truly jiggered.

Is it not a worrying and disturbing interpretation of consent when one institution can impose legislation on another? Could the Secretary of State tell us exactly what his definition of consent is?

David Mundell: I set out in my statement the definitions and the operation of the Sewel convention. I understand that the hon. Lady does not support the existing constitutional arrangements in the United Kingdom and wishes to change them. That is, as I have repeatedly said at this Dispatch Box, a perfectly legitimate position to adopt, but what is not right is to seek to misconstrue the existing arrangements. The Sewel convention is clear and this Government have acted in accordance with it.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): In the 1990s, there was a referendum on devolution and every party, including my own, except the Secretary of State's party, campaigned for a yes vote. Scotland rose to the occasion after that yes vote, including the Conservatives. One of the proudest moments that all of us in Scotland had was watching those new MSPs for the first time process up towards the General Assembly of the Scottish Parliament. May I ask the Secretary of State, who was in that procession as a new MSP, with all those people looking on in pride, whether he ever thought that, 19 years on, he would be at that Dispatch Box starting the process of deconstructing the Scottish Parliament?

David Mundell: Perhaps it was apt to leave the most ludicrous contribution til last. This Government have delivered additional powers to the Scottish Parliament, so I do not know how the hon. Gentleman can make that statement, as Ministers today discuss the transfer of welfare powers, so that the Scottish Parliament can set up its own welfare system. Income tax powers have been introduced, which, regrettably, means that some of us have to pay more tax in Scotland than other parts of

[David Mundell]

the United Kingdom. This Government have presided over a significant increase in the powers and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament, but it will never be enough for the SNP. Ultimately, it does not support devolution and all it wants is another independence referendum.

World Cup 2018: FCO Preparations

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Select Committee statement

Mr Speaker: We now come to the Select Committee statement by the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat). I remind the House of the procedure, which is still relatively new. The procedure is that the hon. Gentleman, as Chair of the Select Committee, may speak for up to 10 minutes, during which no interventions may be taken. At the conclusion of his statement, I will call on Members to put questions on its subject and call on Mr Tugendhat to respond to them in turn.

2.8 pm

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am very pleased that we are following on from a matter so close to Scottish hearts we are now going to take on another one that is very close to Scottish hearts, which is, of course, England and the World cup.

This is a timely statement, because today, in only two hours, Russia is playing Saudi Arabia. I wish both sides the best of luck because, frankly, it would be hard to choose between them, although not as much luck as I wish the England team when we come up against Tunisia on Monday.

Before the tournament began, the Foreign Affairs Committee wanted to ensure that the Foreign Office was providing adequate support to the 10,000 UK nationals who are expected to travel to Russia. As a Committee, we are concerned about the history of violence by Russian hooligans, the current tensions between the United Kingdom and Russia, and particularly the expulsion of Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials working on the preparations for the games. That was why we launched this inquiry into the FCO's preparations for the World cup.

We wanted to explore the impact that the UK's reduced diplomatic presence has had on preparations for the tournament, and what the Foreign Office has done to keep fans informed of the risks and how to stay safe. We heard evidence of the hard work that has been taking place across Government and other bodies to prepare for the World cup. We would like to recognise the work of all those involved in the preparations, especially the officials who have remained in Russia, their colleagues who were expelled and those who had to leave.

The Committee concluded that Russia raises serious concerns as a World cup host. Russian hooligan groups have a history of violence at matches, as we saw at the European championships in France in 2016, when dozens of England fans were injured by co-ordinated groups of Russian supporters—many of them encouraged by members of the Russian Duma. Despite a Government crackdown on these groups, Russian authorities cannot control the hooligans who operate at the margins. Some minority groups face even greater risks. We refer particularly to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups—people in Russia who have suffered persecution and violence, often at the hand of the state. In the words of the Foreign Office, the state takes “little action to combat homophobia.”

Today, it is worth noting that the well-known campaigner, Peter Tatchell, appears to have been detained in Russia while campaigning for LGBT rights.

We received evidence of vile threats made towards LGBT football fans, warning them not to come to the World cup. Racist abuse is also common around football matches in Russia, and the FCO has warned travellers about the risks of racially-motivated attacks. Hooligan groups often have links to far-right politics. Although the United Kingdom recognises the risk to minorities, we are concerned that the FCO's approach in this area has been overly complacent. The Foreign Office Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), offered us only vague reassurances about the Russian state's commitment to protecting minority fans.

There is also a risk of attacks targeted against UK nationals generally. After the Salisbury incident, the Foreign Office warned travellers that heightened political tensions could lead to anti-British sentiments. It is also worth noting that, although of course the focus is on England, fans from across the United Kingdom will be going to support teams from across the world, so we are very conscious that these fans may be from any one of the nations. For these reasons, we remain concerned about the safety of all UK fans travelling to Russia.

Given the risks, we believe that it was wrong for the Russian Government to expel the officials leading on the preparations for the World cup. We are concerned that this will have hindered preparations and could put the safety of UK fans at risk. The safety of fans in the World cup is Russia's responsibility, and the advantage that it has as a police state is, of course, that it has many policemen. Russia could choose—and can act—to protect all. The Foreign Office and other witnesses told us that they had received adequate reassurances on Russia's ability and commitment to do that. However, it is the Committee's view that these reassurances are undermined by Russia's decision to expel officials before the World cup, and the general volatility of Russian-UK relations. Only recently, a message went out from a politician who is a supporter of President Putin, saying that violence is intrinsic to the Russian game. It should not be; it has no place in football. The reassurances are also undermined by many other politicians who have supported violence against the LGBT community and ethnic minorities.

There are plans for rigorous security measures and extra consular support in places where the England team will play on match days, particularly within stadiums and official fan zones. The Russian security forces are likely to take a paramilitary approach, using overwhelming numbers to prevent disorder. However, we are concerned for the safety of UK fans between match days, and for those who are not following England and who therefore may be at other stadiums.

We are also concerned for the planning of later games. I am sure that the House shares my confidence that England will progress from the group stage to the knock-outs and all the way to the final, but it was not clear to the Committee exactly what preparations had taken place for England matches beyond the group stage.

The Foreign Office told us that it would advise UK nationals not to attend the World cup if it could not guarantee their safety. Given the volatile state of UK-Russia relations, it is important that the Government are ready

to give clear and unambiguous advice to UK nationals if the situation changes while they are there. If the security situation deteriorates, the Government must be prepared to act fast and decisively, possibly advising fans to stay in a location, to reach the embassy or, indeed, to leave the country. That is why it is so important that the Government can communicate with fans during the tournament. However, at the time of this report's publication fewer than 9,000 people had signed up to the FCO's travel alert scheme, even though 150,000 UK citizens travel to Russia each year. It is a worryingly low number, suggesting that many fans may not yet have taken the opportunity to sign up. I urge all those who are travelling to do so.

We asked the Foreign Office why its advice website, "Be on the Ball", for those travelling to the World cup did not offer specific security information to LGBT or black, Asian and minority ethnic fans, given the extra risks that they face. We welcome the fact that, after our questioning, the Government agreed to add this advice and it is now on the website. However, the Government missed a trick by not having it on the "Be on the Ball" site in the first place.

Football fans should not be faced with a choice between missing a wonderful sporting occasion such as the World cup and travelling to countries with poor human rights records where there are high risks to fans. That is why, in principle, we welcome FIFA's recent reforms to the bidding process for World cup hosts that place human rights requirements on countries that host the tournament. We want to see what impact these reforms have in practice. Yesterday, FIFA members selected the United States, Canada and Mexico as the 2026 World cup hosts under the new rules, and we welcome the possibility of encouraging fans to visit.

We have asked the Foreign Office to report back to us in September on how far the new conditions have served to ensure that host countries respect human rights and on what more needs to be done. Russia is an exceptional nation to be hosting the tournament and we recognise the difficulty that this has placed on the Foreign Office, so we look forward to hearing what lessons have been learnt. In that report, we would also like the Foreign Office to reflect on how successful its preparations were and to consider lessons for other large-scale events.

We wish all football fans and their hosts an enjoyable World cup. We hope to hear good news from the Foreign Office when it reports back to us in September with its assessment of how the tournament went. Of course, I wish the very best of luck to the England team when they play Tunisia on Monday. I look forward to welcoming them home with the trophy.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the Chair of the Select Committee for his statement. I propose—with the concurrence of colleagues—that questions from the Front Benchers should come at the end, so we will take Back Benchers first.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): May I ask the distinguished Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee to reflect on the issues around future World cups? I was delighted to see that the Committee has asked the Government to produce documentation to go to FIFA and UEFA to see whether countries bidding for these major sporting events, including the World cup, are

[*Ian Murray*]

indeed suitable to host them. I also wish England all the very best in the World cup, partly—or maybe mainly—due to the fact that I have put some money on them. That is my Scottishness shining through. Will the Chair of the Select Committee reflect on whether the Government are doing enough to make the case—not just to UEFA and FIFA, but to other international bodies of major sporting events—that we should not be granting these major, worldwide events to countries that have problems with LGBT rights, black and ethnic minority rights, rights for women and so on?

Tom Tugendhat: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Although we did not look specifically at FIFA's awarding procedures for these games, we know that they are mired in controversy. We hope very much that this tournament and the Qatar award will be the end of a process that has left a stain on an international organisation that should have our full support.

The hon. Gentleman is of course right that FIFA does not stand alone on this. The International Olympic Committee, the FIA and many other international sporting bodies are set apart from the international order, in the sense that they do not really answer to any national Government. Indeed, when they arrive in a country, they often stipulate legal changes that have an impact on the host community. It is therefore even more important for host nations to be responsible nations and to recognise that civil rights are human rights that must apply universally.

That is why I repeat my deep concern at the report of the arrest of Peter Tatchell, a man who has campaigned for human rights and civil rights for many years. In a recent interview on Nick Robinson's podcast, he said that his political motivation was one of love—love of his fellow man—and surely that should be reflected at international sporting occasions such as the World cup.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement and commend his Committee for its report. The report makes clear that the Government think that 10,000 British fans will travel to Russia for the World cup. My understanding is that some 1,300 travel bans have been issued to known football hooligans from this country, 11 of whom are from Northamptonshire. The report states on page 5 that the Russian authorities have published a list of only 450 Russian fans who are banned from attending official sports competitions. Given the relative populations of Russia and the United Kingdom, does he share my concern that the Russian authorities do not have the same grip on potential hooliganism that we do in this country?

Tom Tugendhat: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is absolutely right. As usual, in his assiduous reading of Committee reports, he has put his finger on the heart of the problem. In reality, we have very little confidence that the Russian authorities wish to either deter hooliganism or stop others from encouraging it, as we have seen politicians do. This is a matter of great concern, because as we have seen time and again, Russia's form of justice is not one that we recognise in this country. The potential harm to fans travelling from the UK or anywhere else in the world is very real, and the willingness to deter it seems to be very low.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): I am grateful to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee for his statement, and I extend my best wishes to the UK embassy team in Russia, who undoubtedly have a huge job ahead of them over the next few weeks. Having seen what they did in Ukraine for the one-off football match, I am sure that they will be putting lots into it. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of what extra resources the embassy and consular teams in Russia were given by the FCO, and can he adumbrate that if so?

The hon. Gentleman talked about the FCO not putting advice on the website for LGBT travellers until it was asked to do so. Why was it not forthcoming in doing that in the first instance, given the obvious dangers that such people may well face? Will he facilitate through his offices and resources any post-World cup briefings with the Foreign Office and perhaps the Russian embassy, our embassy teams out in Russia and organisations such as FIFA and UEFA?

Tom Tugendhat: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his extremely well-made points. We have looked at the resourcing, and there was an increase in resourcing for the embassy in Russia. We welcome the efforts of the Foreign Secretary in doing that, but he was—one must be fair to him—restricted by the expulsions that followed the attempted murder of two people in Salisbury, which has hindered the FCO's ability to support so many fans. However, that should not be an excuse, and it is not.

We look forward to hearing what the Foreign Office tells us afterwards and to hosting various groups—UK, Russian and international—that have been involved in this, to hear how the World cup went and how such events can be improved. As with all Select Committee proceedings, the hon. Gentleman will be enormously welcome to attend that. As he knows, his hon. Friend the Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins) is a strong advocate for those interests on the Committee.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I congratulate the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee on his statement and the report, but may I express my disappointment that the English football team have not joined Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in boycotting the World cup in Russia? May I also invite him to congratulate the Welsh women's football team, who defeated Russia 3-0 earlier in the week? If they get a result against England later in August, they will qualify for the women's World cup.

Tom Tugendhat: I find it difficult to add anything other than congratulations to the Welsh women on defeating Russia. I firmly anticipate that the English men will emulate that in their very best traditions as soon as they get the chance.

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): I thank Committee members and the Chair for putting an excellent and comprehensive report together. Despite the expulsions that have taken place, is he comfortable that there are sufficient consular staff to meet the needs? If not, will he have discussions with the FCO team to ensure that there are? I hope that the England team will do excellently and come back with the cup.

Tom Tugendhat: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. He raises some important questions on staffing numbers for the consular support being offered to fans. The Committee has highlighted the mobile consular sections—the mobile embassies, if you like—that will be going to England games. We have also recognised that those will not be going to all stadiums, and therefore fans from the United Kingdom supporting other teams will find it hard, or rather harder, to access assistance. We have been assured by the Foreign Office that staffing is adequate, and we look forward to seeing the report afterwards that evaluates where staffing was best placed and whether it could be improved.

The Minister for Africa (Harriett Baldwin): May I add my very best wishes to the England team? In the format of these proceedings, I will ask some questions on this timely and excellent report.

Can I confirm that the Select Committee have been informed that Russia recently issued temporary visas for UK consular and liaison staff and UK police officers, which means that British embassy officials and UK police will be in every city in which England play? Additional staff will be based in Gdansk, Riga and Vilnius, where some British fans will be based.

Does the Chair of the Committee acknowledge the fact that there will be 24-hour assistance for fans travelling from the UK, from the British embassy in Moscow or the Foreign Office switchboard in London? Does he agree that the “Be on the Ball” website has been updated to reflect his Committee’s recommendations, and that it is a very informative source of detailed information for anyone thinking of travelling to Russia? I hope he will join me in urging colleagues to point any constituents who are thinking of travelling to Russia to that website.

Finally, I encourage all Members who are interested in this topic and have constituents who are travelling to Russia to acknowledge that since we last publicised the number of people who have signed up to Twitter travel alerts, it has increased substantially to more than 11,000 people? That is the best way to get regular updated advice. We continue to believe that about 10,000 British nationals will travel to Russia for the World cup. Will the Chair join me in repeating the recommendation that people sign up to that, and also do not forget to buy their travel insurance?

Tom Tugendhat: The Minister has made some extremely valid points. The fundamental point she makes is that it is not just up to the FCO. Everybody has an individual responsibility to make sure they are plugged into the systems being offered by Her Majesty’s Government, and it is essential to do that in advance. The first thing to do is to register for travel advice alerts and check the information available on the “Be on the Ball” website.

Sewel Convention

Application for emergency debate (Standing Order No. 24)

Mr Speaker: In a moment, I shall call Ian Blackford to make an application for leave to propose a debate on a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration under the terms of Standing Order No. 24. The right hon. Gentleman has up to three minutes—

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I think the point of order will have to come afterwards. Forgive me—I do not wish to be unkind to the hon. Gentleman—but I am two thirds of the way across the road, and it is arguably hazardous—[*Laughter.*] I am saving him up, because I think he can wait.

The right hon. Gentleman has up to three minutes in which to make his application. I call Mr Ian Blackford.

2.30 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and if we can help you across the rest of the road, we would be happy to do so.

I seek leave to propose that the House should debate a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration—namely, the validity of the Sewel convention. This week, during the proceedings on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, Scotland’s voice was silenced. This Government pressed ahead with their power grab to keep Scotland’s powers in London, not in Scotland. This Government pressed ahead in direct opposition to Scotland’s elected Parliament. This Government downgraded devolution and defied the will of the Scottish people. That is an absolute democratic outrage.

The UK Government have agreed to amendments that severely curtail the authority of the Scottish Parliament in several vital devolved areas. However, legislative consent from the Scottish Parliament was required, and was accepted by the Government to be required, in order for the Bill to proceed. That consent has not been forthcoming. The Scottish Parliament voted, by 93 votes to 30, not to consent to the withdrawal Bill. The Sewel convention established the long-held practice that the UK Government cannot legislate in devolved areas without the consent of the devolved Parliament.

The First Minister of Scotland, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have made it clear that the lack of a consent motion would have been fatal to the passage of any changes to the devolution settlement. Legislative consent motions are one of the hallmarks of devolution. By proceeding, the UK Government have blatantly ignored a central pillar of the relationship between the Governments and the Parliaments of these islands. This unprecedented move means that the very nature of devolution could be changed forever. What does the failure to grant legislative consent mean if Westminster is prepared to ignore the sovereign will of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people?

Mr Speaker, due to no fault of yours, the time restrictions placed on the Bill virtually eliminated the amendments on devolution from the debate. It is imperative that we have an emergency debate as soon as possible to examine the seriousness of this matter. We are in

[*Ian Blackford*]

uncharted territory. The people of Scotland must know when this Government will act to recognise and respect the will of their elected Parliament. While we were unable to get a vote for the House to sit in private yesterday—Mr Speaker, I want to make it clear that the SNP's issue is with the UK Government, not with you—I trust that you will give your consideration to this most urgent matter.

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asks leave to propose a debate on a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration—namely, the validity of the Sewel convention. I have listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman in making his application, and I am satisfied that the matter is proper to be discussed under Standing Order No. 24. Does the right hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House?

Application agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has obtained the leave of the House. The debate will be held on Monday 18 June as the first item of public business. The debate will last for up to three hours, and it will arise on a motion that the House has considered the specified matter set out in the right hon. Gentleman's application.

Ian Murray rose—

Mr Speaker: I will take the point of order—now that I have successfully crossed the road.

Ian Murray: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am delighted that you managed to get to the other side. With regard to the Standing Order No. 24 application we have just heard, I seek your guidance in the interests of the House. Will you look at the application and see whether there are any Standing Orders that would allow Members to add their names to it in case the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (*Ian Blackford*) is indisposed come Monday? This is the second Standing Order No. 24 application we were due to have from the right hon. Gentleman in two days, and if the subject of this debate is indeed so urgent, perhaps we should have had it more urgently than Monday.

Mr Speaker: I note the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. My understanding—I will interpret his point of order literally and strictly—is that an application is made in the name of a particular Member and cannot be appropriated by another Member. In that sense, and this is a serious point, it is in a different category from an amendment to legislation or a new clause, which might commonly have a number of lead signatories, meaning that in the absence of one, it can be adopted, moved and spoken to by another. That is not the case in relation to a Standing Order No. 24 application, but it is perfectly open to the House to change the procedure if it wishes.

In response to points of order on Tuesday evening, I made the point that it is very common for people to complain about a procedure—including about a Standing Order, as in this case, or a programme motion—when and only when it adversely affects them. I said that there was merit, if people wanted change, in their seeking change during what might be considered as peacetime,

so to speak—I think I used that expression—as opposed to waiting for a situation of conflict and then saying, “Oh, this is all very unsatisfactory.”

Inevitably, procedural change is not achieved overnight. I will leave on one side the hon. Gentleman's little teasing or ribbing of the leader of the Scottish National party Members. I do not in any way take exception to that; I take the hon. Gentleman very seriously. My honest and sincere advice to him is that if he and others feel that the Standing Order should be more broadly drawn, their best recourse is to write to the Chair of the Procedure Committee to invite consideration of that matter. That would then elicit a response, and matters can flow, or not flow, in one direction or another thereafter.

I know that that is a rather dry response to the hon. Gentleman, but these issues can and probably will arise from time to time, and the Standing Order No. 24 procedure is now being used more frequently than it was in the past. Is that something I regret? Absolutely not. It is a very legitimate mechanism to be used. It is not for me to solicit applications, any more than it is for me to solicit urgent questions. I generally find these days that Members require no particular encouragement. There are plenty of such applications, and it is my privilege to look at them, and then, in the case of a Standing Order No. 24 application, to submit it to the House.

Ian Blackford: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Earlier this week I asked what options are available to us in this House to ensure that the Government understand the real concerns among the people of Scotland at the unprecedented power grab, and how we could make sure that our voices are heard. In response, the hon. Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset (*Mr Liddell-Grainger*) shouted, “Suicide”. I have to say that, in the opinion of many of my colleagues, that is intolerable behaviour. Suicide is a serious matter, with almost 6,000 people taking their lives across the UK in one year. I contend that this behaviour is not fitting for a Member of Parliament and should not be tolerated by the House.

I understand that when this matter was raised with you, Mr Speaker, by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (*Joanna Cherry*), you said that you had not heard the comment. However, the comment can be heard very clearly on the video of the sitting, which I have taken the trouble to watch. Will you advise me what options are open to the House to deal with the disgraceful behaviour of hon. Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset? I have told the hon. Gentleman that I would be raising this matter.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Off the top of my head, I am not entirely sure what recourse he has. I have just been advised by a Government Whip that the Member concerned, who is not present at the moment, maintains he was referring to political suicide. I would say that this whole matter underlines the importance of our using language with great care. If somebody uses a word apparently without qualification or political spin but in its raw form, it can cause great offence. None of us—least of all your Speaker—wants to suppress, distort or constrain debate. That said, it is very important that we speak passionately but responsibly, and we probably could all usefully be reminded of the principle encapsulated in the precedent recorded in

“Erskine May” that moderation and, where possible, good humour in the conduct of parliamentary debate are much to be encouraged.

I have weighed my words carefully in responding to the right hon. Gentleman, because I have no desire to pick an argument with the hon. Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger). I was not here and I did not hear it, and I do not want to get into a retrospective spat with him about it. He is an honourable Member, and no doubt he said what he did in the spirit of the moment and sincerely. I repeat that we should all take care. The seriousness of the matter that the right hon. Gentleman has raised is not in dispute, but I hope he will accept it if I say that we all have to take care, the Chair included.

It is probably quite risky for anyone to assume perfection. Over the last 24 hours, some Members have been critical to me—in some cases on the Floor of the House—of the right hon. Gentleman’s conduct and that of some of his own Members. These are, to some extent, matters of opinion. Procedurally, how he chose to operate is a matter of record, but when there are aggressive exchanges across the House, we probably have to remind ourselves that passion and disagreement should be able to co-exist with respect for one another. That means speaking one’s mind—in some cases, extremely strongly—but then also listening to what the person whom one is challenging, questioning or castigating has to say by way of reply. I hope he will accept that that is a fair response to the very proper and legitimate point he has raised.

In case anyone has beetled into the Chamber since the right hon. Gentleman’s application, I remind colleagues that his application for the SO24 debate has been successful, and that that debate will take place on Monday, as the first item of public business, for up to three hours.

Backbench Business

Windrush: 70th Anniversary

2.43 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House notes the 70th anniversary of the arrival of HMT Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks carrying passengers from the Caribbean; further notes the critical role those passengers played in the post-war reconstruction of the UK, and in particular their work to support the establishment of the newly created NHS; and recognises and celebrates the significant social, political and cultural contribution that those passengers and ensuing generations have made and continue to make to communities across the UK.

I am grateful to the Backbench Business Committee for allocating time for this debate and to the many colleagues from across the House who supported my application.

Today is the first anniversary of the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, and I want to say at the start of this debate that my thoughts—and those of every Member, I am sure—are with the families of the victims, the survivors, members of the emergency services and all those for whom the last year has been marked by the trauma of that dreadful fire.

On 22 June 1948, HMT Empire Windrush arrived in Tilbury docks from the Caribbean carrying 1,027 passengers and two stowaways. More than half the passengers came from Jamaica, and there were many from Trinidad, Bermuda and British Guiana. There were other nationalities too, including Polish passengers displaced during the second world war. The passengers were responding to advertisements in local newspapers, including *The Gleaner* in Jamaica, for jobs in the UK, with an opportunity to travel on the Windrush for £28.

The UK was desperate for labour to help rebuild following the devastation of the second world war. The ship’s records reveal that the passengers had a range of skills: they included mechanics, carpenters, welders, engineers, cabinet makers, housing domestics and scholars, and there was a hatter, a judge and a potter, along with many other skilled workers. There were also dozens of airmen who had volunteered to serve in the RAF during the war and had played a hugely significant role in fighting fascism in Europe, including Samuel Beaver King—Sam King—who became the first black mayor of Southwark.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. In the London Borough of Ealing, on the other side of London, we have had a Windrush physical memorial and events for kids in schools since 1998. Does she agree that the word “Windrush” is meant to be a celebration of the kinds of achievements she is talking about, but that it has now turned into one we associate with tragedy because of failures in the Home Office? We see it week in, week out in our surgeries—for example, in the applications that take so long to be processed even when people have paid for priority service. Does she agree that now more than ever the words of Lord Reid from our side—that the Home Office is not fit for purpose—apply?

Helen Hayes: I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention and will come later to exactly those issues, which she raises so powerfully.

Sam King said of his decision to join the RAF:

“I as a young man volunteered to contribute and fight Nazi Germany and by the Grace of God we won. It was a close thing, for example during Dunkirk a lot of people don’t realise that Britain stood alone, for nearly two years against tyranny... we as part of the former British Empire volunteered and contributed and I am glad I did that.”

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I am drawn to the hon. Lady’s speech and delighted to be here to hear it. What she says is quite true, but of course Britain did not stand alone, and does not stand alone now; we stand alongside our brothers and sisters, who have grown up with us and with whom we have grown up, who came from all parts of what was once the empire and is now the Commonwealth and who have enriched our lives and our culture every day since our contacts were first built. The Windrush generation are not a foreign generation but our own generation and very much part of us. It is to that spirit of unity that she is speaking, and it is one of pride, not shame.

Helen Hayes: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, and I agree entirely with his comments.

Windrush passengers from the Caribbean travelled as British citizens as a result of the British Nationality Act 1948, which created a new category of “citizen of the United Kingdom and colonies” for anyone born or naturalised in either the UK or any of the countries subject to colonial rule. Writing on the 40th anniversary of the Windrush voyage, Sam King described the mixed feelings of the passengers as the ship left Jamaica:

“In the cool afternoon breeze as the sun tilted towards the west, the ship gave out three or four mighty blasts and eased out of Kingston Harbour heading for the Mother Land. About half the immigrants would not look back. In their hearts they were leaving the ‘Rock’ to start a new life in England where, once settled, they would send for their children, brother, sister, mother and father. The other half gazed at the azure sky, the sparkling sea, the majestic Blue Mountain, the beautiful horizon as they disappeared from view, and pledged to go back to the ‘Yard’ within the next five to ten years.”

The arrival of the Windrush at Tilbury docks was captured by Pathé on a news reel, interviewing some of the passengers about their plans, including calypso singer Aldwin Robert, also known as Lord Kitchener, performing his specially written song “London is the Place for Me” on deck, capturing the optimism of that moment.

About 200 Windrush passengers found temporary accommodation at the Clapham South deep air raid shelter, from where they found their way to the nearest labour exchange, on Coldharbour Lane in Brixton in my constituency, to look for work and permanent accommodation. Many found accommodation from Jamaican landlord Gus Leslie, who had bought property in and around Somerleyton Road in Brixton, and they settled in the area.

The Windrush passengers found London still devastated by the war—undeveloped bomb sites were everywhere, many properties were still damaged and rationing was still in place—but the new arrivals found work. Many passengers were responding specifically to the call for nurses to work in the NHS, which was formally established in July the same year. In my constituency, they went to

King’s College Hospital, further down Coldharbour Lane from the labour exchange. As we also celebrate the 70th anniversary of our NHS this summer, we must pay tribute to the enormous contribution the Windrush generation made in both building and sustaining our NHS.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the speech she is making. She notes the contribution made by the Windrush generation in her constituency and in London, but I am sure she will also want to recognise their contribution right across the country, including by the families who moved to my city of Manchester.

Helen Hayes: My hon. Friend is exactly right. Many nurses trained in London and were then placed in hospitals all around the country. They were part of that outward move from London to all over the country, where they indeed made, and continue to make, such an important contribution.

Windrush passengers also found work on London transport and in the construction industry. Some rejoined the armed forces and many were entrepreneurial, setting up stalls and shops in Brixton market and elsewhere.

The lives of Windrush passengers and others from the Caribbean who followed them to Brixton were captured by commercial photographer Harry Jacobs, who set up shop on Landor Road close to Brixton town centre, providing photographic services so that people could send images to their loved ones back home. Many of Harry’s photos are currently on display in Lambeth Town Hall as part of the Windrush 70th anniversary celebrations. They capture, in a very poignant way, the hopes, dreams and achievements of people in the process of making a new life in their new home of London: a woman in her nurse’s uniform; families dressed in their Sunday best, showing off their prize possessions; the first image of a new baby or a new spouse.

In marking this important 70th anniversary, it would be easy to present a sentimental view of the Windrush generation, focusing only on their significant contributions to Britain, but that would not do their experience justice. The thing which makes the Windrush story so remarkable and so humbling is not just that those passengers came to the UK to work in the aftermath of the war, but that they did so despite facing many challenges: the experience of being far from home in an unfamiliar country with a colder climate and, worse than that, widespread racism, the most clear and ugly illustration of which was found on the signs on the doors of boarding houses reading, “no blacks, no dogs, no Irish”, and which in many situations ran much deeper, often resulting in daily discrimination and humiliation. It is devastating to read the words of John Carpenter, who travelled on the Windrush aged 22, speaking in 1998:

“I know a lot about Britain from school days, but it was a different picture from that one”.

He went on:

“They tell you it is the ‘mother country’, you’re all welcome, you all British. When you come here you realise you’re a foreigner and that’s all there is to it.”

Despite these hardships and injustices, the Windrush passengers and those who followed them settled in the UK and put down roots, often clubbing together to buy

property in order to circumvent the racist landlords, establishing businesses and setting up churches. Sam King became a postal worker. He was elected to Southwark Council and became the first black mayor of the borough, an achievement that was also very brave since he faced threats from the National Front which was active in Southwark at the time. Sam was also instrumental in establishing the Notting Hill Carnival and the *West Indian Gazette*, and he later established the Windrush Foundation with Arthur Torrington, who still runs it today.

In my constituency, the Windrush generation helped to forge the Brixton we know today, bringing food, reggae, jazz, calypso and Soca music, stories and songs, and working in many different public services and businesses. In doing so, they made a huge contribution to a community where everyone is welcome, where difference is not feared but celebrated. Talented young people from Brixton recently designed a beautiful logo commissioned by Lambeth Council to mark the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush. It is based on the pattern of human DNA. The Windrush generation and subsequent migrants who have come to this country from all over the Commonwealth sparked the emergence of modern multicultural Britain. They are all part of the UK's 21st-century DNA.

I am glad today to see Members in the Chamber who I know will speak of their families' own direct experience of being part of the Windrush generation, including the shadow Home Secretary—my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott)—my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler). It is not my role to do that, but, on behalf of my constituents in Dulwich and West Norwood, to pay tribute and to say thank you to those 1948 pioneers, and those who followed them, for helping to create the diverse and wonderful communities that I am so proud to represent—for helping to make Lambeth and Southwark, and communities across the country, some of the most open communities anywhere in the UK.

But saying thank you is not enough. It is a shameful fact that the injustices experienced by the original Windrush passengers have sadly not been consigned to the past. This has been seen most recently in the Home Office's appalling systematic denial of citizenship rights to British citizens from the Windrush generation—the ultimate insult to those who came here responding to a call for help on trust that the mother country was their home. It is seen in racial inequalities that still extend through income and employment, educational attainment, physical and mental health, and the criminal justice system. It is seen in the horrific racism that is still to be found in the online spaces of social media. We need look no further than the Twitter timelines of some of my hon. and right hon. Friends here today for evidence of a problem that requires urgent action to address it.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I welcome the powerful tribute that my hon. Friend is making to the Windrush generation and the source of pride that the Windrush generation should be, right across the country. She has raised the injustices faced not just in the past but, outrageously, still today by some from the Windrush generation. She will be aware that the Home Affairs Committee is inquiring

into the Home Office's treatment of these people. Will she join me in supporting an urgent hardship fund for those in the Windrush generation who are being so heavily affected? This has been called for in our interim report and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy).

Helen Hayes: I thank my right hon. Friend for her intervention. I am delighted to wholeheartedly support the call for action that she and her Select Committee have made. I have seen myself, through very many constituency cases, the hardship that this Government's approach is causing. There is a need for urgent action in the interim as well as for compensation in the longer term for all who are affected.

As we acknowledge and celebrate the enormous contribution of the Windrush generation to the UK, we must commit to an enduring legacy of this anniversary which addresses injustice and roots out racism wherever they are found. To this end, I have some asks of the Government that I believe will help to turn the tributes of our words into a lasting commemoration.

First, I hope that the Minister will know of the work of the Black Cultural Archives, based on Windrush Square in my constituency. The BCA was established in 1981 by Len Garrison, who had come to the UK from Jamaica as a child in 1954. Len Garrison was an educator who believed that, in his words,

“collecting and structuring the fragmented evidence of the Black past in Britain as well as in the Caribbean and Africa is a monumental task, but it is a major agenda item in”

the

“last decade of the 20th century”

to create a

“better basis for achieving a fully multicultural British society.”

The BCA has an extensive archive documenting the history of black people in the UK, from the African Roman emperor who was stationed at Hadrian's wall—Septimus Severus—to black Georgians, the Windrush generation, and much more. It is a national resource that is critical to our understanding as a society, and vital for the sense of place and belonging of many black British people. Unusually for a national archive, the majority of the BCA's core funding is now provided by the local council, Lambeth. This is neither appropriate nor sustainable, particularly in the context of local authorities' shrinking budgets. The BCA needs stable core funding from the Government, commensurate with its national role, to enable it to do the work of outreach and interpretation and to secure it for the long term. I therefore call on the Minister to work urgently with ministerial colleagues in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to identify and confirm core funding for the BCA as part of the Windrush 70 commemorations.

In the climate of uncertainty forged by Brexit in which we are currently living, and which in some areas means that we are seeing an increase in intolerance and hatred, we need to be proactive and assertive in our celebration of the contribution that migrants have made, and continue to make, to life in the UK. I therefore call on the Government to designate 22 June as Windrush Day—an annual event to remember our debt of gratitude to those who answered the call to come and help rebuild the UK, and whose contribution to our economy, public services and communities enriches the UK immensely. It should be a day to celebrate both our diversity and our common humanity.

[Helen Hayes]

There is much more still to do to ensure justice for the Windrush generation from the Home Office. Much has been said about the scandal in this Chamber in recent weeks, and there is more to say. Today, however, I will simply say this: justice for the Windrush generation is to be found in confirmation of the citizenship that they have always had, and in financial compensation for the hardship and indignities they have suffered. It must also be in a resetting of the dial for both our collective narrative and Government policy on immigration. We must reassert the British values that do not treat others with fear and suspicion, and instead welcome those who come to the UK to seek safety or contribute their skills, wherever they are from.

Finally, wherever inequality is still rooted in race, we have more to do. We must with urgency address the terrible increase in knife and gun crime that disproportionately affects young black men, and we must ensure that all our schools are properly funded and that there is equal access to the best universities for young people from all backgrounds. The disproportionate incidence of mental ill health among BAME communities must be addressed, and there are many other areas to address.

The recently published report by the Women and Equalities Committee on the Government's race disparity audit highlighted a woeful lack of data collection on race and ethnicity. That makes it difficult to analyse and reach conclusions on the actions that need to be taken to address race inequality. We do know, however, that the austerity of the last eight years has been bad for advancing equality. Therefore, my final ask of the Government is that they ensure that public services that play the greatest role in increasing equality and tackling disadvantage—schools, housing, policing, youth services and the NHS in particular—are funded properly to enable them to keep on doing so year on year. The Windrush generation are extraordinary for their resilience, dignity, commitment and creativity, and Britain is indebted to them. Let us make this 70th anniversary into a lasting legacy by continuing to build a just, tolerant and equal society.

3.2 pm

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I am deeply honoured to follow the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes), whose passionate and fluent speech addressed so many of the questions that affect the way we are building our society today. Of course I will not agree with every one of her remedies, but the fact that she is bringing together a pluralist and multicultural society, and expressing that with such warmth and feeling, is a great credit not just to her and her party, but to the whole House and our whole nation. The voice that she expresses is clearly not just her own, but one of the British people more widely, and I am grateful that I have the opportunity to follow her.

We are talking today not about a foreign generation or distant people but about ourselves. It may seem odd for me, with my background, to say so strongly that the Windrush generation are my generation, but they are. Just as they migrated from other parts of the world, so did my family. My grandfather came from Austria in the 1920s. He was a refugee in so many ways—in that case from a collapsing state: the Austro-Hungarian empire—and

he travelled and found sanctuary here. In many ways he could have been called an economic migrant because that is what he was, as were many of the Windrush generation. What he brought with him was the energy, enterprise, imagination and creativity that helped to build the structures that allowed us to win the wars. He was not alone, and he was not dramatic or unique in that in any way—except that he was my grandfather, of course. He was part of a much wider generation.

Today, in focusing on the Windrush generation, we focus predominantly on those who are of Caribbean origin, but that is where I would like to expand this conversation. This debate is not just about one people; it is about the whole of the United Kingdom, and our United Kingdom is just that—united—because it is united from peoples around the world. Whatever we may think of the legacy of empire, the richness that it has given these islands is quite remarkable. We have here, even in this city, hundreds of different nations represented. We have many different languages spoken, and like all the best investment schemes, diversity is the strongest form of success. Today, in this United Kingdom, we have the diversity that ensures the richness and depth of our success.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): While it is true that one of the better legacies of empire is the diversity of our nations and cities, does the hon. Gentleman not accept that a place does not need to have been an imperial power? In certain parts of Canada, for example, the diversity and richness of cultures is at least as much as we find in a place like London, and it has never attempted to be a colonial power over anybody.

Tom Tugendhat: The hon. Gentleman is, of course, right, although one would be hard-pressed to say that Canada was not the legacy of empire. After all, the fact that there are so many Scots in Canada is a legacy of the English and French empires that stretched into Canada 200 or 300 years ago, but I appreciate the point he is making.

To come back to talking about the United Kingdom, when we look around the United Kingdom, if we focus solely on the Afro-Caribbean community, important though it is, we miss the wealth that we get from so many others. I would like to highlight some of the communities that are not normally touched on when we talk about the Windrush community, but are just as much a part of that generation. I want to talk about the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Indian communities. The subcontinent that for years—for generations—was seen as so remote brought with it, when it came to these islands, the heat, wealth and imagination of its people. It brought with it not only the spice that we now enjoy so much in our food, but the technology and imagination that its people have brought to all parts. If one looks today at Birmingham, one sees the imagination and creativity that is evident across that city. If one looks at some of those businesses that started from nothing and listens to some of the children and grandchildren of those migrants who came with £1 in their pocket, thinking that £1 might take them a little bit further than a week or two—only to realise that it would not even get them the train ticket to go to see their cousin who lived up country—one sees that the people who arrived here came with a drive and a determination that has really transformed not just us, but the world.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): I apologise that I was not here for the opening of my hon. Friend's remarks due to Parliamentary Private Secretary duties. Does he agree that there is also the entrepreneurial spirit that many brought from the Indian subcontinent? For example, I opened the National Federation of Retail Newsagents conference in Torquay on Monday, and we see the impact in that industry, in particular, of the many entrepreneurial people who came to this country from the Commonwealth.

Tom Tugendhat: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will not know this, but I was a beneficiary of that entrepreneurial spirit. When I was learning to be a journalist, one of the papers that I worked for was *Eastern Eye*, a newspaper that was started by a couple of brothers in their bedroom, as it were, and is now an important voice for a major community in our country.

We are focusing on the Windrush gift to the United Kingdom, but there is a much wider gift here—a gift to the world of those people. Just as our own people, whether they come from these islands 1,000 years ago or come from these islands 10 years ago, have demonstrated the drive and energy to transform this part of the world, the connections around the world have also been transformed. This is where I think we have to focus now as a people, because too many countries today are looking inwards. Too many are seeing the borders, whether they be land or sea. They are seeing those borders as boundaries, and of course, they are not. Those borders are merely the front door to the rest; the front door to the other; the front door to our friends.

That is what we must start thinking about today as we change our relationship with our European friends, and as we change the way in which we interact around the world. We should be looking at the Windrush generation, and, of course, at all the generations, whether they are, like mine, emerging from a broken central Europe, or, like others, emerging from the heat, the sun and the light of the tropical climates from which so many came. Wherever they came from, we need to remember that the links that now tie this House of Commons, this people and these islands to the rest of the world are in no way a drag, but are, in a very fundamental sense, an enrichment.

This must be our new strategy. This must be our new approach: not just looking at the past, but looking at the future. If we can use these links of history, blood and understanding, reinvigorate them, and transform them again into the links that we all want to see—links of enterprise, energy, trade and culture—we shall have an extraordinary future for ourselves, built on a legacy that we all share, built on an enterprise that we all share, and built, fundamentally, on the memory that we are one people, one United Kingdom, and together we have a glorious future.

3.11 pm

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): For, I hope, very obvious reasons, I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate. In so doing, I think of my parents, who are no longer with us, of my brothers and sisters, and of so many aunts and uncles. I think of the life that we all lived in Dongola Road, Tottenham, in the 1970s and 1980s. I mention Dongola Road because at the top of the road lived another family, briefly.

It was the family of our former colleague Paul Boateng. As I summon up those memories, I am so grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes)—my dear friend—for initiating the debate, and for giving Parliament a moment to reflect on a most exceptional generation.

Today I want to remember the contributions of the 492 West Indian immigrants who arrived at Tilbury docks on 21 June 1948, and the 524,000 Commonwealth-born people who followed them until 1971. My own father arrived in 1956, from Guyana, and my mother arrived in the late 1960s. It is important to remember, when we think of those families arriving here, that when they arrived they were very young. My father was only 24, and he was actually at the older end of the scale among those who were on the boats. He produced my older brother just two years later, in 1958. I reflect, now, on what it means to become a parent in one's mid-20s, in a new and strange country, juggling work, schools and health visitors: all those new things. In paying tribute to these people, we should reflect on how challenging that must have been at times. I hope that we also think about the first-generation immigrants who still come to our country, of how they manage to get by, and of the circumstances in which we support them.

Today, of course, I also want to think about the thousands of nurses who came to Britain before 1971, to form the backbone of our national health service—women like my aunts, whom I watched working late nights and early shifts with incredible pride and dignity; women who toiled for all Britain's sick and injured. I think of the thousands of transport workers who were recruited directly from Bridgetown and Kingston, and who for 70 years worked as bus and train drivers, and cleaners and wardens, in Britain's stations and on Britain's streets. And in thinking of those transport workers, I think of my own mother, who did her own stint at London Underground, and of many occasions meeting her at Camden Town tube station, where she was based. I think of course also of Lord Bill Morris, elected general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, the first black general secretary of a trade union in Britain, who found his home in the movement after arriving in 1954—a British trade unionist for all British workers. And I think of great writers who have shaped our nation: people such as Andrea Levy and Zadie Smith, who have given us such moving insights into British life. And I am not sure that I would be able to be a politician were it not for the tremendous work of the scholarly Stuart Hall and CLR James, defining leaders in British political thought, but also the work of those who have been a little more of the street and the frontline: I think of my predecessor Bernie Grant and Linton Kwesi Johnson, whose language and tone always chimed with me.

Today I think of the descendants of the Windrush generation, whose parents and grandparents were told that there was no space under the British flag for them and that there was "no black in the Union Jack." We tend when we celebrate to look at the positive, and nothing is more positive than Jessica Ennis, Daley Thompson, Linford Christie, Kelly Holmes or Colin Jackson draped in the Union Jack. And as I say that, of course our hearts are with Sterling, Smalling and Danny Rose, who will step out on Monday in the 2018 World cup sporting white, red and the three lions on their shirts.

[*Mr David Lammy*]

But while reflecting on this great contribution there must also be a moment to think about the uncomfortable truths—the tough and the hard times—and to think about the struggles of those communities. As I stand here as the Member for Tottenham in London, I want also, as has already been touched upon, to think about communities in St Paul's in Bristol, Chapeltown in Leeds, Handsworth in Birmingham and Moss Side in Manchester, and historical black communities in Tiger Bay in Cardiff and of course in Liverpool. These people formed the fabric of British society and today we remember them and thank them.

But we also remember the troubles that led up to the Notting Hill riots, the Brixton riot and the Tottenham riots, in which PC Keith Blakelock lost his life. We think also of the great injustices that lie behind parts of the pain and the stain on this country: the stain of the murder of Stephen Lawrence and those young people who lost their lives in the New Cross house fire.

Those on board HMT *Windrush* were invited here as a result of a Britain crippled by war: a Britain facing chronic shortages of staff; a Britain with a dream of healthcare for all but no way of making that happen. It was a Britain whose hospitals were barely functioning, whose trains were barely running, whose streets were reeling from the destruction and devastation of German aeroplanes that bombed this country, a Britain in desperate need.

Britain called, and they came. It is important to recognise why they came to the mother country, as they called it. They came because they wanted to take part in building Britain's future, but they also came because there was little future left for them in the Caribbean. Like in Britain after the second world war, the homes of those on board the *Windrush* and the many boats that came after it had also been destroyed by a foreign power—a foreign power had left much of the Caribbean in a sorry state. Unlike in Britain, however, the siege of those countries had lasted for 300 years. Three centuries of colonial rule had stripped the Caribbean of much of its wealth and resources, and left behind an unsustainable plantation economy. Under the British, the French, the Dutch, the Spanish and the Portuguese, the Caribbean region and Latin America and south America had become little more than a warehouse from which to extract profit.

In 1948, the societies that had once been made up of slaves and their owners were instead made up of rich planters and landless, low-wage labourers. People in the Caribbean had been emancipated from slavery in 1834, but they had achieved their emancipation in name only. Ten years before HMT *Windrush* arrived on British shores, labourers in Barbados were earning the equivalent of just £3.50 a day. Half the workforce worked in manufacturing and agriculture. Many were employed on sugar plantations and forced to work for extremely low wages. They worked in unbearable conditions, their children were suffering from malnutrition and they faced an influx of disease.

In Jamaica, searing unemployment ravaged society. Britain had closed sugar plantations in favour of cheaper labour elsewhere, and the consequences were devastating. Labour riots were commonplace as people became increasingly frustrated by the destitution that they faced.

In Guyana, society was reeling from the Ruimveldt riots in the earlier part of the 20th century. Again, much of the economy was crippled, and people were working in bauxite mines and on sugar or rice plantations for very poor wages and in very poor conditions. People were rioting as a consequence. We cannot forget that Britain's development was grounded in the underdevelopment of the Commonwealth. Britain's industrial revolution relied on the deindustrialisation of India, and its profits were built on the exploitation of Caribbean plantations and on the backs of Egyptian cotton farmers and Barbadian sugar producers.

We cannot forget that those on board the *Windrush* came to Britain filled with the promise of the British motherland, yet this was the same Britain that had promised away all their riches and resources. It was the same Britain that has never faced justice for the crime of slavery, and that stole 12 million people from their homes in the dead of night and carted them like cattle across the ocean and into slavery. This had never before been seen in the world. Britain was still paying off its debts to slave owners in 2015, but it has never paid reparations to those who are the descendants of slaves.

This is the same Britain that, sadly, has recently failed the *Windrush* generation. It had failed them previously, and it has failed them again today. Many of the *Windrush* generation have once again been made destitute by the British state. They have had their rights stripped from them, and they have been thrust into despair and desperation. The injustices that the victims face today have a long history, and it is a history that Britain must never forget. I do not say that to evoke guilt. This is not really about guilt. If you do not know where you are from, you do not know where you are going. If you just teach your young people the very best bits of history and do not examine the tougher bits, as the modern nations of Germany and Japan have had to do, you will make the same mistakes over and over.

I am so proud to be a parliamentarian in this great nation, and it is the privilege of my life to speak in this Chamber, but I worry that the “great” in Great Britain is too often predicated on an inability to examine the truths of parts of Britain's past. The heart of that past is colonial, and as we think about the *Windrush* generation we do not just think about the fact that they landed in 1948; we think about the umbilical cord between Britain and these people, because they were brought from Africa. The surname I have is not the surname of my ancestors; neither is Diane Abbott's and neither is Dawn Butler's. Those surnames were given to us by our slave masters. The language that we speak is a language we learned, because our ancestors lost their language and their culture. That is at the heart of the Caribbean tradition. It is an area of tremendous hybridity. In the Caribbean—I might say the same of Latin America—there is a meeting of the world's people that is best explained by the carnival of Trinidad or the reggae of Jamaica. That is the area that I know.

Many of the *Windrush* generation have once again been left destitute in recent times. The injustices that the victims face today have a history that we must remember. The story began in the 1700s and today, most painfully, we have been forced back across the Atlantic by the British Government in unlawful deportations justified by the “hostile environment.” That environment told *Windrush* citizens that they have no right to the British

public services to which so many of them had dedicated their lives and to which their ancestors had contributed. The nurses who toiled in our hospitals, the train drivers, and the other public sector workers upon whom Britain relied were told that their contributions were null and void, and that they should leave this country immediately. Seventy years on, the Government thanked the Windrush generation for their service to this country by throwing them into detention centres and deporting them.

Those victims have still not seen justice, and the Government's response to the crisis continues to be inadequate. Why is there still no hardship fund for the Windrush victims? Why are innocent British citizens who have been made homeless and jobless by the Home Office being forced to wait months for compensation? People have been pushed into rent arrears and debt by the Home Office, but they still have no financial support. Why are they still being punished for the failures of the British state? Why have 32 of the 63 Windrush citizens unlawfully deported as a result of the Government's hostile environment policy been refused their right to return to Britain? Why has the Home Secretary decreed that they should be exiled abroad instead of facing British justice in British courts as British citizens?

Why has my constituent Oliver Hutchinson, who arrived from Jamaica in 1970, still not seen justice? He is a citizen by right, but for all of his life he has lived in fear of immigration enforcement and has been unable to get a job, access benefits or even have a stable home. He was arrested recently at a routine appointment with the Home Office on a bench warrant that was 20 years old.

Why has the Windrush taskforce, which has been specially appointed to support victims of the scandal, delayed its response time? Why are hundreds of victims who have contacted the taskforce regarding their citizenship still waiting for an appointment at the Home Office?

Above all, today I think of the victims of this crisis, victims who are still facing desperate uncertainty, and the Government's subsequent response. I think of Oliver Hutchinson; of Balvin Marshall, a British citizen made homeless and jobless by the hostile environment; of Rosario Wilson, whose grandfather arrived in Britain in the 1950s and who has spent thousands of pounds trying to prove his citizenship; and of my 27 constituents with ongoing cases and the thousands of other Commonwealth-born Britons who live in fear and uncertainty.

I say to the Secretary of State, who has said of those Windrush citizens with criminal records who have been sent back to the Caribbean that he has no intention of bringing them back, that that is unacceptable. It is unacceptable because they are British citizens first. This country has had no such debate on the deportation of criminals. This country stopped deporting criminals to parts of the Australian Commonwealth in 1868. How can it be that, with no debate and no discussion, it has been deemed acceptable once again to deport British citizens, even if they have a criminal record, back to the Commonwealth?

Can I say how badly this has gone down in the broader Commonwealth and how sad and embarrassing it was that we had this discussion and this debate during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting? This is not what the Commonwealth expects of the mother country. It has been a very painful episode indeed.

As we commemorate this epic contribution and we think of the joys and the heroes, I thank God for people like Trevor McDonald and Moira Stuart entering my household on Dongola Road and lifting the spirits of my family and my cousins over so many weeks, months and years. As we think about all those great sons and daughters of this great region, let us also think of what further contribution we can give to these people, people who—I hope my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) will allow me to say this—in some ways contain a little fragility because of that slave history.

There was no reparation for those slaves, and the Caribbean nations have been united in wanting to put the issue of reparations back on the table at the United Nations as they think of their futures. Why do they do that? It is because, as they celebrate so many years since independence—Guyana celebrated 52 years of independence just a few weeks ago—and they look forward to the future, they think about the economies they inherited and they think about all they have achieved but, frankly, there is a sense in which they were abandoned. It is important that this country hears and listen to those calls for support, particularly against a backdrop of the Government making it clear that they wish to enter into trade negotiations with those countries once again. Let us consider: what do reparations look like for those Caribbean nations? How do we make that work? What dialogue do we as a country need to have with those people?

Can we also think about our heritage in this country? In the last few years we have seen the birth of the Black Cultural Archives, based in south London; the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool; and organisations such as the Stephen Lawrence Centre and the Bernie Grant Arts Centre. Many of these organisations are struggling today. Frankly, they are struggling for a handout from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. What they should have got was a proper endowment, from which they could derive interest, that bought them security so that they could continue to make a contribution to this country. As we think about those landing cards that were destroyed, let us redouble our efforts on behalf of organisations such as the Black Cultural Archives.

Finally, let me say that we are having this debate against probably the most depressing backdrop possible, having seen the murder of 78 young lives here in the city of London. May I say most gently that there is something that connects these murders at this time with the sorts of crime that we see also in African-American societies and, sadly, in parts of the Caribbean, particularly in Trinidad and in Jamaica. That story is a story of dislocation. It is the story of a lack of fatherhood and role models, and it is a story that begins with those plantations. If you take a black man and you say to him that you can move him across the country to another plantation and strip him from his family, so that he does not own himself or his relationship with his wife or with his children, you create a phenomenon that is very real in those communities: the phenomenon of the babymother, where it is not my wife or my husband, but my babymother or my babyfather. That legacy lives on in our communities. It is a community that has been way too accustomed to violence. This is the dislocation of not seeing those role models in front of you and never hearing your history,

[Mr David Lammy]

and this is about how that affects generations years and years later. We are a community of tremendous resilience, but we cannot all be resilient. So in thinking also of that more painful legacy, let us think about the renewed support that this country needs to give.

3.38 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): I really do not know how to follow that outstanding contribution from the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). When we remember where he has been earlier today and what he has had to put himself through over the past couple of days, we can see that it was an indescribably superb contribution. I hope Members will not expect me to reach anything like either the depth of knowledge or the eloquence he was able to deliver.

Let me also commend the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) for securing the debate and for her initial contribution, because she put the whole thing into context: possibly the most important thing we need to remember about the Windrush generation is that they came to the UK because the UK begged them to come. There was none of this nonsense we see now about how somehow we are doing people a huge favour and we have been a wee bit too kind in letting them in. The Windrush generation were begged to come. They were pleaded with to come. It was their duty to uproot themselves from everything they knew and travel halfway around the world to a place they had only ever seen on postage stamps and posters to do a job that the UK simply did not have the people to do.

At that point the United Kingdom incurred a permanent and non-removable debt, not only to the Windrush generation but to their children and grandchildren, and to generations to come, because had the Windrush passengers not come here, these islands would have taken decades to recover from the devastation of the war—and that was only their immediate contribution. As was said earlier, all the population centres where the Windrush generation eventually settled are what they are today because of the Windrush legacy. That is particularly true of London, but also of other great cities, such as Manchester and Cardiff. North of the border, there is a significant West Indian tradition in parts of Glasgow, not from the Windrush time but from times before and after it.

It is intensely sad that the racism experienced by so many of the Windrush passengers 60 or 70 years ago, which the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood referred to, has not gone away. It is perhaps a bit less obvious and less frequent—although I know perfectly well that there is a lot of racism that I do not experience, for obvious reasons—but it is still there. Only last week, Louis Smith, as proud an Englishman as many others present—I nearly said as proud an Englishman as me!—who has won world and European gymnastics championships for England and a string of Olympic gymnastics medals for Britain, was a passenger on a train, sitting in first class, which meant that he was entitled to free tea, coffee and biscuits when the trolley came around. The guy with the trolley was entitled to check that everybody in first class had a first-class ticket. He went through the entire carriage and checked the tickets of the two black men, but he did not check the tickets of any of the white men. We can perhaps

take a tiny bit of comfort from the fact that it was a white guy sitting beside Louis Smith who first noticed and challenged it. Quite properly, the rail company issued an immediate apology and promised to investigate. Imagine, in this day and age, anybody in any employment at all thinking that it could be remotely acceptable to assume that somebody was more likely to be dodging their fare just because of the colour of their skin.

Today I saw a couple of tweets from ScotRail, the main rail service provider in Scotland. Somebody had tweeted ScotRail to express concerns about the safety of the train on which he was travelling, because he had just discovered that a Pakistani was driving the train. I am proud to say that ScotRail responded by telling him to get off and walk. If that person can be traced and identified, I am sure that it will be a long, long time before they are made welcome on any of ScotRail's services. The fact that such naked racism can still find a place in our society is something that we should all be deeply ashamed of and deeply worried about, because we know where it can lead.

Tom Tugendhat: The hon. Gentleman is making the extremely important point that, of course, racism is sadly not dead in our society; in fact, it is not dead in any society in the world. It is a blight on the minds of humans who seek to divide rather than to unite, and it is a great tragedy that we as humans have not been able to overcome it. Is there not, though, a moment of pride—the hon. Gentleman speaks of it quite rightly—that ScotRail did not react as its predecessors may have done in the '30s, but saw what had happened for the sin and the wrong that it was? Is it not also right that although the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) spoke so passionately, truly and rightly about the horrors, immorality and wrongs of slavery, we should also be proud that for all the sins and errors that this country committed in allowing slavery and ever tolerating it, it was this country—this House—that abolished slavery for the first time?

Peter Grant: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comment. The first place that made slavery illegal was actually Scotland, not England, but we will not argue about that.

Tom Tugendhat: I stand corrected.

Peter Grant: None of our countries can be proud of the fact that slavery was there to be abolished in the first place. In fact, I said in a Westminster Hall debate not that long ago that although I was born just inside what is now the boundary of the great city of Glasgow and consider myself to be part Weegie—by birth if not by residence—and although I am intensely proud of a lot of what Glasgow is, I can never forget the fact that Glasgow became the second city of the empire based on slavery. Where do we think the sugar was produced so that ships were needed to bring it across the Atlantic ocean? Why do we think a lot of ships were needed to bring cotton into the mills of Manchester or anywhere else? The people who produced that cotton were not given a living wage or any kind of decent working conditions. They had no choice about where they worked or what hours they worked. They were not treated as human beings; they were treated as possessions. Sometimes the machines that they were working with were treated with greater care than they were.

It was the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those human possessions who then answered the call and came over to Britain to help put us back on our feet after the war. That was a remarkable gesture, because slavery was recent enough for them to remember it. Some of the older generation who they were living with would have been slaves in their younger days. They were enslaved by the white folk. They were enslaved by the mother country—or their near ancestors were—yet they still answered the call for help and came over to help sort things out. That is something that is simply impossible to comprehend.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. It is easy to say that this country has abolished slavery, but we do live in a country with modern slavery. It is important to keep that in mind.

Peter Grant: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for correcting me on that point.

Earlier speakers have mentioned some individuals who made an incalculable contribution to making London what it is, to making England what it is and to making the islands of Britain what they are. I want to mention someone who, in some ways, has nothing to do with Windrush, but whose story illustrates something quite important. His name was Andrew Watson. He was born in Guyana of a Glasgow father and a Guyanese mother. His father was almost certainly an administrator on a plantation, but probably not a slave owner, although I cannot be too sure. His mother had certainly been a domestic servant at best, and she may well have been a slave. Andrew came over to the UK with his dad—we think it was after his mother died or when she became too ill to look after them. As his dad was very wealthy and well connected, Andrew had a privileged upbringing. It was the kind of privileged upbringing that very, very few Caribbean people living in the United Kingdom at that time could ever have dreamt of.

Andrew was also an exceptionally talented footballer. In 1881, he won an international cap for Scotland. He was the first black person ever to play for Scotland. I wish that we could have him back now. He played only three games for Scotland, and the results were Scotland 6, England 1; Scotland 5, Wales 1; and Scotland 6, England 1. If only we could have him back now. The reason why he stopped playing was that, for employment purposes, he had to move down to London, and the rule was that if a player did not live in Scotland, they could not play for Scotland and if they had played for one country, they could not play for another.

Andrew was the first black player to win a major trophy in any area of Great Britain. He was in London for part of his career. He was the first black player ever to appear in what we now know as the FA cup. Ninety-three years after Andrew Watson, the second black player turned out to play for Scotland. I remember him—I remember watching Paul Wilson of Celtic on the telly when I was a teenager. I was surprised to hear that Paul Wilson was the second black player to play for Scotland, because I only saw the colour of his jersey; I did not notice what colour he was.

It is a sobering thought that Andrew Watson did not experience any kind of racism. People noticed that he wore a different colour of boots to the rest of the team—in those days players had to buy their own boots,

and his dad bought him a different colour from the rest of the team—but he does not appear to have suffered from any kind of racism at all from the press, from supporters or from his colleagues. Paul Wilson experienced racism when he first turned out for Scotland, and experienced it regularly when he played for Celtic, as indeed did the first generation of black players to play anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr Lammy: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I am hugely appreciative of the fact that he has put on the record the link between Scotland and the Caribbean region. I took a DNA test not so long ago and it turns out that I, too, am a Scot. I am very well aware of my connections to the Blair family, and so potentially a former Prime Minister, and also to the Laing family, and so potentially a Madam Deputy Speaker.

Peter Grant: I knew there was something special about the right hon. Gentleman that I just could not put my finger on; all is now revealed. He might well find that he has more Scots blood in him than I have, because the more I look back at my ancestry the more I discover that a lot of it is actually from Ireland—Northern Ireland, rather than the Republic.

I am of immigrant descent. We all are. My ancestors may have come to mainland UK a few years before the ancestors of some hon. Members, but we are all immigrants. There is nobody left in the UK who can claim to be 100% indigenous English, Welsh, Scots or Irish. We would do well to remember that, because the question is not about who is an immigrant, it is just about how long we have been an immigrant for.

Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): The last point that the hon. Gentleman made is, in a sense, the most profound. It is about not where we come from, but the shared identity that we enjoy when we are here. The Windrush generation in particular were deeply patriotic, and remain so. These were people who were actually proud of Britain's history. Of course, they understood that it was a mixed history, but they were proud of it. As the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) knows very well, I chair the British Caribbean Association and I have formed close friendships with those people—people who called their children Milton, Nelson and so on. How many white British people have ever done that? That was a measure of their patriotism.

Peter Grant: I am grateful for that intervention. My name is actually French—Norman—so my ancestors came over at some time along with the Norman conquerors and I have been trying to keep up with the tradition of upsetting the English ever since. That is not completely true, of course.

The right hon. Member for Tottenham makes an interesting point. It is possible to tell a lot about somebody's background from their name, but sometimes that background has been broken. Sometimes the link has been deliberately broken to try to turn somebody into something that they are really not.

The important point about identifying with and celebrating a culture—being proud of who we are and where we are from—is that it does not all need to be one place and one time. It is perfectly possible to be proudly Jamaican and proudly English at the same time; it is

[Peter Grant]

perfectly possible to be proudly Scots and proudly Canadian at the same; and it is perfectly possible to be proudly Scots and proudly English at the same time.

Although it is vital that the contribution of black culture—however we define it—to the life of these islands is remembered, celebrated and taught in all our schools, we also need to understand that how we define black culture is no more static or set in stone than how we define any other kind of culture. When people are celebrating black culture in 50 years' time, they will be doing it in a way that none of us would recognise. When they look back at celebrations of black culture today, they will not recognise it any more than they would recognise Italian culture, German culture or any other kind of culture.

The identity that people hold is up to each person to define for themselves. If we try to put people into boxes by making them exclusively black, white, brown, yellow, European or American, we are not doing them any favours. In fact, we are not doing anybody any favours, because the great benefit of the diversity that exists in humanity is the fact that each and every one of us is unique. None of us is 100% pure-bred anything. That is just as well because, as any dog breeder or horse breeder will say, pure breeds do not live very long. Pedigree dogs tend to be very unhealthy. Give me a good mongrel that is a mix of so many breeds that they can never be disentangled; that dog will probably outlive its master by quite a few years.

Although not many in the Windrush generation eventually found their way to Scotland, parts of the country do have some significant groups of people who are of West Indian and Afro-Caribbean descent. Scotland has had large waves of immigrants throughout its history. It is interesting to look at the ways in which the experiences of other immigrant movements into Scotland have been similar to the experiences of the Windrush generation, and the ways in which they have been different. Sadly, one way in which these experiences have been all too often similar is in the racism and discrimination that immigrants have faced.

As I mentioned, a lot of my ancestors came over from Ireland, as did a lot of the population in the west of Scotland. It is one of the things that Glasgow very much has in common with Liverpool. The racism that they experienced was turned into sectarianism because they identified as being Irish and therefore Catholic, even though they were not necessarily Catholic. That kind of racism in the guise of sectarianism still poisons too much of our society in central Scotland today. We could do with being rid of that, just as we could do with being rid of other forms of racism.

We have also experienced immigration from the other side. By far the biggest export that Scotland has had in the last 200 years has been our people. I remember going to the railway station on a number of occasions when I was a wee boy to see off another of my mum's wee sisters with her family, as they took the £10 journey to Australia and became Australian citizens. I am delighted to say that the traffic was not all one-way and that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) made the journey in the opposite direction.

That is the way things are, and it is the way they should always be. When we celebrate the huge benefits that were brought to these lands by one single big—in fact, not particularly big—migration of people, we should perhaps stop to think about the fact that migration benefits the places that people move to. I cannot think of any instance where migration has not benefited the place that people moved to. That is why I have some concerns about not only the view that the Government are taking towards migration but the direction of travel in which they are taking us in relation to the free movement of people.

Mr John Hayes: I think the hon. Gentleman needs to be clear that the people I described earlier—those patriots who called their children Milton, Winston, Gladstone and so on—take a very similar view of illegal migration, because they took the trouble to come here on an entirely proper basis. Outrage is felt by people in this House and others on behalf of the Windrush generation because they were legal migrants who should never have been treated in that way. They are Britons in the same way that all the rest of us are. We should not assume for a moment—I know you would not, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I hope the hon. Gentleman will not either—that those people do not take a robust view on illegal migration and understand the need for controls on migration as a whole.

Peter Grant: The great shame of the experience of the Windrush generation is that for far too many of them, assumptions were made about their legality or illegality based on nothing better than the colour of their skin or the accent with which they spoke, just as that ticket collector on the train made assumptions about the likelihood that the black guys were more likely to be dodging tickets than the white guys.

I cannot imagine my country without waves of immigration. I am delighted that in any school in my constituency that I go to, there are welcome signs up in 10, 15 or 20 languages, each one of which is the home language of one of its pupils or staff. I am delighted to live in a country whose national colour only exists if we take lots of different colours and mix them together. A tartan scarf made of a single colour is not tartan, and for me, a Scotland, an England and a United Kingdom where everybody was the same simply would not be the great countries that they are.

To those from the Windrush generation who are still alive, I say thank you, and I also say sorry, because the Parliament that I am part of and the Government that I am supposed to hold to account have done you an injustice that would be shameful in any circumstances, but when set against the contribution that you have made to so many cities and regions of these islands, to have treated you and your descendants in that way is a stain on the reputation of these nations that will take a long, long time to clear.

3.58 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant). I congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) on securing this debate and giving us the chance to reflect on the enormous contribution of the Windrush generation. I also want to pay tribute

to my colleague in the other place, Baroness Benjamin. She is a member of the Windrush generation who has been a leading voice in both Parliament and the community.

The treatment of the Windrush generation is a stain on our society, as the hon. Member for Glenrothes said. Our hearts reach out to those who have been subjected to terrible injustice and who have been separated from family, refused the right to return home, denied healthcare or lost a job as a result of serious failings of the Home Office. There is no question but that these people deserve to be called British citizens and to be British citizens, and to question their identity and legitimacy was callous.

I believe that there is a much deeper malaise at the heart of the Windrush scandal, which is due to this country's current uneasy relationship with immigration and a Tory Government who have gone all out on the "hostile environment". Interestingly, however, the Government got it completely wrong in what they believed would be the popular response of our non-immigrant communities to such concerns. When the public heard about the plight of the Windrush generation, their immediate response was one of compassion and outrage. This is the tolerant and open Britain we live in, that we need to foster and that we need to protect.

Today, people across the country are sincerely and deeply mourning the 72 people who lost their lives in the Grenfell tragedy, many of whom were not born in this country. People respond to individuals as soon as they make a connection with them. It is the dehumanisation of immigration that has made this subject so toxic.

Mr John Hayes: Inasmuch as we can gauge what different groups of the population feel about EU migration and the open borders we have endured with the European Union, the evidence suggests that minority communities—black and Asian Britons—feel just as strongly about this as white Britons. They do not take a more, as she put it, "liberal" view—I always use that term pejoratively—than any other Britons. They are proud to be here, and they understand that we have to have borders.

Wera Hobhouse: The point I am making is that people always talk in the abstract about curbing immigration, but as soon as they talk about individuals, they very quickly change their attitude. During the many discussions I have had and still have about the benefits or otherwise of leaving the EU—I thank the right hon. Gentleman for raising that subject—people only ever talk about the need to curb immigration in the abstract. However, as soon as they mention a neighbour or a friend who is an immigrant, the tone immediately and totally changes.

I am an immigrant—a first-generation immigrant—and I fully recognise that my skin colour makes a big difference; I cannot compare the discrimination I have faced with the suffering of Caribbean immigrants. *[Interruption.]* I wish the right hon. Gentleman would listen. However, the recent Brexit debate has turned attention to European immigration, and suddenly—*[Interruption.]* I wish he would listen. Suddenly, I understand what it means to be the target of anti-immigrant feeling, and it is not nice. People talk about curbing immigration only in the abstract, and I must say that I have never faced open hostility—except twice in a political debate—during the 30 years I have lived in this country.

I believe that it is the responsibility of politicians like us to encourage the inclusive and tolerant attitudes of our citizens. It is the irresponsible politicians who stir up and undermine the cohesion of our communities, including those of newcomers from the EU as well as black and minority communities. We must foster cohesion, not do the opposite, and we should not blame immigration for rising inequalities, job insecurity, the poor availability of housing or poor public services.

The Windrush generation fell foul of quite a lot of this malaise and of anti-immigrant feeling, but they are not the first to have suffered in that way. Only if the Government now completely change their attitude to immigration and stress the huge benefits of our immigrant populations—their hard work, their contribution and their loyalty to our country—can we make amends and the Windrush generation can feel fully vindicated.

On the 70th anniversary of Windrush, the Government must guarantee that every member of the Windrush generation will receive the support they need to claim their rightful citizenship and to live in their rightful home. The same must apply to all those who have fallen victim to discrimination, including Commonwealth citizens—the Kenyans, Australians, Indians and Pakistanis whom we have heard about today. Such people, and I include European immigrants, have established their lives here and put their trust in the UK Government to protect them. We should celebrate not bemoan the fact that many want to live in this country and call it their home. We should be proud of the open and tolerant society we have and that has welcomed so many in the past.

Mr Hayes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Wera Hobhouse: I have nearly finished my speech.

I call for the "hostile environment" created by the Government, which led to the Windrush scandal, to come to an end. By officially recognising 22 June as a national Windrush day, we can give people from all backgrounds a reason to celebrate their unique identities, histories and rightful home in UK.

4.5 pm

Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab): It is a privilege to contribute to this debate and to add to all the great speeches today. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) for securing both this debate and the Speaker's apartments for next week's Windrush celebrations, organised in conjunction with Jamaica National Bank and *The Voice*. I agree with what she said about the Black Cultural Archives and making sure that the Black Cultural Archives receives funding, and about 22 June being Windrush Day for us to celebrate. I would also like to pay my respects to the survivors of Grenfell. I will be on the silent march with my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) after this debate.

I would like to paint a picture of an expat from Jamaica named Jeff. When he landed, he had his hat, he was pressed and dressed, as they liked to say—his clothes were very smartly pressed—and he walked with his grip, which to everybody else is a suitcase. When he landed, he was shocked by the smog that confronted him, that all the houses were so close together he thought they were factories, and that there were no front or back gardens, which was very different from the green, green grass of home. And this was his mother

[Dawn Butler]

land. As he passed the houses and the signs that read, “No blacks, no Irish, no dogs”, he made his way to a shared house in east London owned by a Jewish family who were great allies of the Windrush generation.

That expat was my father. His first job, which he got almost immediately, was working in a Matchbox factory making little toy cars. The factory no longer exists, but there might be some cars in the loft still that are worth some money. When that closed, he worked for London Underground. All that time, he also worked as a gigging musician. He used to tell me about singing in pubs where black people were not welcome or were scared to go.

My dad contributed greatly to this country, not only in the work he did but in breaking down so many societal barriers. Once he had made enough money, he rented a room and sent for my mother. She came to this country and was surprised at a number of things: that food was cooked without seasoning, that English people only bathed once a week and went to bath houses, and that children did not have school clothes, playing-out clothes and church clothes, which were an absolute must in a Jamaican household.

The contribution of the Windrush generation is vast and varied. They were proud not only of how they dressed but of how they were as a community, and they were proud of their mother land, as they called it. They did not know the Jamaican national anthem, because they came before Jamaica became independent. They only knew the British national anthem.

Can we imagine this generation of people, who came to this country to rebuild it with such pride not only in how they looked but in how they conducted themselves, now feeling, in 2018, surplus to requirements? After giving this country the best years of their lives, they have been told that they need to go back, that they are illegal or that they are no longer wanted. It is heartbreaking when I hear the stories of people who come into my surgery in tears, clutching as many bits of paper as they can find. It is heartbreaking when I receive emails from teachers saying, “I remember teaching the children of the Windrush generation. Is there anything I can do? Will the Government accept my evidence to prove that these people were here as British citizens?” And it is all the more heartbreaking because it was the Prime Minister who created the hostile environment. The Prime Minister was previously the Home Secretary and therefore shoulders full responsibility for the hostile environment.

Tom Tugendhat: I take the hon. Lady’s point and I hope she will take this in the spirit in which it is meant. I share passionately, as she knows, a desire for this situation to be addressed. I have written about the policy and I have condemned it very vocally, but one must recognise that this came out of a period when both parties were doing the same thing. I do not say that with any joy, but I think the shame is shared. It is certainly not with any joy, I am sure, that she will recognise that Home Secretaries under her own party also spoke about a hostile environment. Sadly, it is something the whole House has to bear, not just one party.

Dawn Butler: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and I take his point that parties spoke about a hostile environment. The big difference is that

the Prime Minister, as Home Secretary, not only spoke about it but created policies that ensured a number of people then became complicit in creating the hostile environment: doctors, nurses, teachers and landlords. It is unusual, rare and dangerous that somebody in authority instructs people to create a hostile environment for their own citizens. We have to be very mindful of that.

It could just be a coincidence, Mr Speaker, but my decision to sit on the Back Benches and speak in this debate today has created a flurry of activity in my office. My office received a call from the Prime Minister’s office with regard to several letters I sent to which I am still waiting for a response. As I say, that could just be a coincidence. For the record, I would like to raise in the Chamber some of the points I have raised in those letters to which I am still awaiting a response.

It is very important that we know how and when cases will be expedited, what new pathways will need to be created and whether the cost of fast-tracked naturalisation—it can cost about £2,000—will be waived. We have been assured that it will. The “Life in the UK Test” also needs to be waived. The people being victimised at the moment are ageing. They are of pensionable age and they need access to healthcare. Some of that is being denied, so we need a clear timetable for when all of this will be achieved, as well as a clear timetable for compensation.

The other issue I raised in my letters is whether the Prime Minister was warned that her decision to tighten immigration controls and have a hostile environment would harm Commonwealth citizens who were here legally. I am yet to receive a response. I need to receive that response. It is very important, and not just because I am a daughter of the Windrush generation. Martin Luther King said that if you are not opposed to a system of detrimental actions or incarcerations, you then become complicit in it. I do not want to be complicit in the actions of this Government who have created legislation that is institutionally racist.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) spoke about the injustices of slavery and the people who were enslaved. I wholeheartedly agree with everything that he said. The Labour Government will create a slavery educational trust based on the Holocaust Educational Trust—because the international slave trade was the African holocaust. We have heard lots of contributions about slavery and enslavement, and how it ended. We need more factual talk, discussion and education on the issue. A slavery educational trust will enable that to happen and quash some of the misunderstandings and misnomers.

I do not think the Prime Minister is a bad person, but I do wonder whether she really understands the emotional and generational trauma that she has created with not just her words but her actions on the hostile environment. It pains me to highlight that these policies are institutionally racist, but they are. As the Prime Minister and her Government work through the race audit that she has instructed civil servants to deliver, I hope that she will also implement section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, which talks about the socioeconomic duty of Government.

As we celebrate, thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood, the 70th anniversary of Windrush, we need not just to appreciate but to compensate. Martin Luther King said, “The time is always right to do the right thing.” I hope that the

Minister will go some way towards talking about the right thing that this Government will do. I also hope that the Prime Minister will reflect on her hostile environment policies and do the right thing.

4.17 pm

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): It has been a real pleasure to sit here and listen to the many excellent contributions made today. I particularly commend the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) for securing this debate and for setting out very movingly some of the experiences of the Windrush generation and their descendants. I want to celebrate another outstanding speech by the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), which was, yet again, brimming with humanity, compassion and, quite rightly, anger. In his typically eloquent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) challenged definitions of identity and reminded us that in the end we really are all Jock Tamson's bairns.

The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) made a very good contribution in which she pointed out that focusing on immigration statistics is dehumanising. We should be hearing the stories behind those statistics to truly understand the situation. We all have a responsibility as MPs to celebrate the enormous contributions made by immigrants to our society, and not to harass them constantly. I thank the hon. Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler) for sharing with us the experiences of her father, illustrating better than any number of speeches what matters in this debate—the people behind the figures.

There is a real irony, as has been mentioned, in the fact that Windrush is such a poetic word and yet has now become the byword for a record of racism, intolerance, injustice and lack of compassion. People in general do not really want much. They want somewhere safe and comfortable to live, the means to put some food on the table and to keep the heating and lighting on, and the reassurance that they are not about to be lifted from their comfortable house and flung away to a country they have never known or have not lived in for decades. Arming them with a wee booklet that says, “Try to fit in; pretend you're from there” is not exactly a substitute for assuring them of a right to live here. Denying people healthcare—that has been mentioned already—and the opportunity to secure a tenancy on a house, have access to education or the right to work, just because they or their parents did not keep their payslips going back 50 years, is simply repugnant. It is not good Government policy, it is not good social or economic policy, and it does not achieve anything other than turning people into outsiders in their own communities. It is xenophobic, racist and it should end.

I was born in a Commonwealth country, but I have had none of the problems that other people report in our surgeries or in emails and letters. Perhaps that is simply because I am white and Australian, or because my English father passes on his rights to me—a privilege not extended to some people who were born here because their families chose to move here. Whatever the reason, I do not get the hassle, and I do not suffer the prejudice that others receive on what often seems like a daily basis. Such prejudice is simply horrific and can easily be described as base mob thuggery, but the horrific part is that the Government are the gang leaders. I applaud the

Government for the small steps they have taken to address the issues faced by the Windrush generation, but they do not go nearly far enough. I encourage Ministers to gather their courage and plough on with getting a fair deal for people who have built lives here and contributed to society and the economy, as well as to Government coffers.

For me, the line in the sand is this: the old Immigration Act 1971 should go. Its arbitrary cut-off point has no sense—January 1 1973 has become an immigration shibboleth, and a new totem for staying tough on immigration. It is ludicrous. I have constituents—I am sure we all do—who arrived here with the same ideas as the Windrush people. They came to build a life and contribute to the economy. They had families, paid taxes and made this country a better place. However, because they arrived after the magic date, they are now in limbo. Many of them will be buried in graveyards on these islands without ever having officially become a citizen. They have children who are now adults, and those adults now contribute to society, paying taxes, driving the economy, and making their contribution to the patchwork that is society. They were born and educated in the UK; they work and bring up families in the UK, but they are not citizens of the UK. They may tend the graves of their parents in the land their parents adopted—the only land they have ever known—but they have fewer rights of residence than their parents did when they first set foot in the UK. It is a strange and unusual policy.

Leaving aside the daft hoops and labyrinthine processes that the Government have invented for people who need to prove that they have lived here long enough to be regarded as “one of us”, the arbitrary date is nonsense and exists only because that is the day some outdated legislation came into force. It is the new pale, and those who are beyond it, through no fault of their own, are regarded as “other” by the machinery of state. They are regarded as a problem to be addressed, or as an annoying inconvenience by the state that should be protecting and nurturing them, and utilising their talents.

The response is always that there must be a cut-off point. I disagree, but I hear the argument, so let us have a cut-off point. Let us make it the same as that for EU citizens. If someone can show that they have been living here legally for five years, they can be a citizen. Let people show that they have contributed to society in some way—perhaps by bringing up a family, volunteering, paying taxes or keeping a home for someone else who does those things. There should not be a fee for someone to become part of their adopted country. While we are at it, let us get rid of the stupid tests that people are forced to go through as if they are appearing in a theatrical farce. It is time to step up and sort out this maelstrom of stupidity, so I urge the Minister: let us have a bonfire of these immigration vanities, and let us have some decency for people who are part of the fabric of our communities. Let Windrush stand for something other than prejudice and mistrust; let it stand for the time when sense prevailed and humanity became the underpinning element of immigration policy.

4.24 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I am proud to stand at this Dispatch Box and bear witness to the Windrush generation. I congratulate

[Ms Diane Abbott]

my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) on her excellent speech, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler) on their good speeches.

Nearly everyone in the Chamber this afternoon has seen the evocative newsreel footage of the men and women from the Caribbean who sailed to Britain on the Empire Windrush in 1948. Who were those people? I ask the House for a moment to put themselves in the shoes of those men and women. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham pointed out, they were young. Many of them may have looked a little older than they were, but that was because they were all wearing their Sunday best—the hats, the bonnets, the tailored suits, and the frocks—and they came to Britain so full of hope and enthusiasm. As many Members have said this afternoon, they genuinely thought that they were coming to the mother country.

Nowadays there is a narrative around migrants that claims that they do not understand or appreciate British culture, but I am glad to tell the House that no group of migrants was more enthusiastically British than the Windrush generation. Historically, the people of the Caribbean venerated the British royal family. They saw them as their protection from cruel local colonialists.

Peter Grant: When the right hon. Lady refers to a British culture, would it perhaps be more accurate to recognise that there is not such a thing as a British culture? There are lots and lots of British cultures. All of us are deeply attached to some of them. Nobody can be fully conversant with all of them and it is perhaps time to realise that all of our many cultures deserve equal treatment.

Ms Abbott: At one and the same time, the Windrush generation were both anti-colonialist but deeply respectful of a range of British institutions, including royalty. It may surprise some Government Members, but if someone meets a West Indian who was educated in the West Indies between the war and asks them to recite some poetry, they will promptly and with enthusiasm recite a piece of Keats or Shelley. That was the nature of the education.

Mr John Hayes: I am in an embarrassing position because I am having, for the second time in a week, to wholeheartedly and enthusiastically agree with everything that the right hon. Lady says—it is doing me no favours on these Benches, I can tell you. She is absolutely perfectly right about that combination. What she just described is one of the most profound things I have heard in this debate, leaving aside what my great friend, the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), said. The right hon. Lady and I will perhaps disagree about this, but that is why it is so important to discuss the Windrush issue for its own sake. One of the risks of conflating it with the wider debate about EU migrants and so on is to miss the subtlety of the points that she is making.

Ms Abbott: The Windrush generation were both anti-colonialist and devoted to the royal family. As the years turned into decades of their settlement in the UK, their relatives all over the Caribbean had treasured photographs,

in pride of place on their mantelpiece, of that generation together with their children in their Sunday best, posed against a country house background in an inner-city photographic studio. These photographs, treasured wherever people find them, were testimony to the growing prosperity of the Windrush generation.

As the House has heard, over 1,000 passengers arrived that day. They included a group of 66 Poles whose last country of residence was Mexico. The Poles had been granted permission to settle in this country under the terms of the Polish Resettlement Act 1947, which reflected the Polish contribution to the allied war effort. I will return to that point later, but the Polish settlement shows that there was a time when we were very clear, as a political class, who our true friends are, a time when we recognised our obligations of friendship, and a time when we recognised the valuable contribution that people from other countries make to our society and economy.

I stress that “the Windrush generation” refers not only to the 1,000 people who came off the Windrush but to all the people from the Commonwealth who entered this country between 1948 and 1973. However, the original Windrush generation are passing. Every week I hear of the death of a member of that generation who was a pillar of the community in my younger years. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood referred to Len Garrison, but there were many others who were so active and offered such leadership in the 1960s and 1970s.

Let us talk briefly about what the Windrush generation did and contributed. As the House has heard, they came to address a labour shortage. Very many came to work in the national health service, and they helped to build our national health service in its earliest years. My own mother was a pupil nurse, recruited in Jamaica. It was hard, back-breaking work. The nurses often found themselves working the night shift, or the early shift. Very occasionally, patients would refuse to be tended by a black person, but many more appreciated their care and nursing skills. Those women were so proud of their service in the NHS.

Many Windrush-era persons, whether from the Caribbean or elsewhere in the Commonwealth, came to work in transport. There was, for instance, Bill Morris, who rose to lead one of our largest trade unions—the Transport and General Workers Union, as it was then—but who had begun as a bus driver. It is no coincidence that Britain now has both a London Mayor and a Home Secretary whose fathers were bus drivers. Many other members of the Windrush generation worked in manufacturing and light engineering. Some of the most well-established Caribbean communities in London are in parts of London where, after the war, there were ample jobs in light engineering and in factories: areas such as Park Royal, Willesden and Brent, and Hackney Marshes, where the Metal Box factory was.

I must touch on the contribution of the Windrush generation to culture and music. Most people know about the Notting Hill carnival, but if there is a kind of music that I associate with my childhood, it is not just my mother’s beloved Harry Belafonte records, but ska, rocksteady, and the output of Trojan Records. I cannot end this section of my speech about the Windrush contribution without reminding the House of the earliest Members of the Houses of Parliament from the Caribbean: Sir Learie Constantine and Lord David Pitt.

The children and grandchildren of the Windrush generation are also part of this issue. In fact, anyone who came here from the former colonies—from the Commonwealth—before 1973 is here legally, and, in effect, part of the Windrush generation. That applies no matter what part of the Commonwealth they came from—the Caribbean, Africa, India, Bangladesh and many more besides—and it also applies to their children and grandchildren. Many of those people, however, are experiencing difficulties because the immigration department is saying that the immigration position of their parents and grandparents was not resolved.

Now, sadly, I turn to what happened to that Windrush generation after a lifetime of working hard, paying their taxes, bringing up their families, and contributing to a strong and stable society. They were treated shamefully. What was worst for many was not just facing material issues, but being flung into uncertainty and treated like liars. I have convened meetings with them, as has my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham, and they have told us that it is being treated like liars about which they feel most bitter. The Home Secretary says that 63 people have been deported, but the final total could be much higher. Our own citizens were deported.

We also still have no information on how many of the Windrush generation have been wrongly detained at immigration detention centres. I know that some have been, because I met them when I visited Yarl's Wood earlier this year. The Government have provided no answers on how many people have been bullied or threatened into so-called voluntary removals. They admit that some people have been excluded—prevented from returning to their homes and families when they had just been on an overseas trip, perhaps for a wedding, a funeral or a family holiday. The Home Office still cannot tell us how many of those people there are and what it is doing to address their plight.

There are also those who were made unemployed. Perhaps their employer got taken over by a bigger employer and suddenly, after years of working happily, they were asked to produce paperwork that they simply did not have. Others have lost their homes because of the effect on housing benefit, have been refused bank accounts—although I welcome the fact that the Home Secretary has moved to end the closure of bank accounts in that way—or lost their driving licences, and some, most shamefully of all, have had to pay for medical treatment and were refused treatment for conditions such as cancer. The list of outrages goes on, but the actions the Government have taken to correct them have been a little short-term.

Here I want to address an important issue. All too often when we debate the Windrush generation, Conservative Members start talking about illegal migrants, and some of us think it is wrong to talk about the Windrush generation and illegal migrants in the same breath. Let me say this very slowly for Members who refuse to accept it: the Windrush generation was not illegal. The whole problem of the Windrush scandal is that those who were legally here were treated as if they were illegal. There is a reason why they were treated as if they were illegal. It was not an accident or an aberration, and it was not incompetent officials: it flowed directly from Government policy. It is the essence of the hostile environment.

Let me stop here to make a point. Conservative Members have said that Labour Ministers and Labour Governments talked about a hostile environment. I have news for Members opposite: the Labour party is under new management, and they will not hear from the current leadership some of the things they heard in the past about migration.

A whole string of non-expert agents, landlords, employers, NHS staff and others have been asked to identify people they suspect of being illegal immigrants. The person under suspicion then has the burden of proof placed on them: they must prove otherwise, requiring a series of documents stretching back decades—four for every year. Many of us in this Chamber would struggle to provide four documents for every year we have lived in this country.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): I could not understand why the Government or their agencies could not say, “If you’ve been paying tax or national insurance contributions for more than five years, the burden of proof should be totally reversed and it should be assumed that you are fully entitled to have all the rights of residency and citizenship in this country.”

Ms Abbott: That is an excellent point, and many of the Windrush generation people I have met or tried to help have been completely frustrated by the fact that they had a whole ream of paper showing that they had been paying tax for all these years, but still the Home Office rejected their claim that they had been legally here.

I am afraid to say that this is a product of a system put in place by this Government, and if anyone doubts that, they have to answer this question: who was it who said we would deport first and ask questions later? Was that not announcing in advance that people who were entitled to be here may well be deported and treated as if they were here illegally, and then they could appeal? Anyone who has ever dealt with Home Office appeals procedures must know what that means: the chances of the removal decision being overturned are vanishingly small. Of course, it was the Prime Minister who said we would deport first and have appeals later. Why she was speaking in that mode I cannot say, but some say it was all about chasing UK Independence party votes.

In any event, the Windrush scandal was the consequence. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central has, I think, written to the Prime Minister asking whether she was warned. She was warned: I warned her here in this Chamber when we debated the Immigration Act 2014 that the consequence of an Act designed to catch illegal immigrants in its net would be that people who just looked like immigrants would be caught up, and that is what we are seeing with the Windrush scandal.

Looking ahead, the new Home Secretary clearly does not want to go the way of his predecessor, and he clearly wants to put the scandal behind him, but it is a product of policy, not accidents, and that policy will continue to generate scandals for the waves of migrants who came after 1948, all the way up to 1973, and it will draw in broader and broader categories of people from the Commonwealth. This policy will continue to do that until it goes.

The Windrush generation came here to see the mother country. Some came to rejoin the RAF. Others just wanted new and more prosperous lives for themselves

[Ms Abbott]

and their families, and they were what are now sometimes called economic migrants. In coming here, they enriched this country in so many ways: culturally, socially and economically. In our own cafeteria here, one of the most popular dishes, week in and week out, is jerk chicken with rice and peas. I could never have imagined that I would live to see that.

In general, a more diverse society is a more interesting one, a more challenging one and a more prosperous one. There is, however, an unfortunate aspect to this history, as some of my hon. Friends have mentioned. Despite being invited here—my own mother was recruited in the Caribbean—the Windrush generation did not always receive a warm welcome. There is an unfortunate history in this country of sometimes defaulting to seeing categories of good immigrants and bad immigrants. For a long time, anyone from the Caribbean tended to be treated as a bad immigrant, with all the stereotypes that were ascribed to black Britons. I have lived long enough to see things move on, however, and we now sometimes hear people who are happy to say the most vile things about Muslims and eastern Europeans exempting black people from their vitriol. History takes some surprising turns.

The Windrush generation—including people from the Caribbean as well as people from Poland by way of Mexico, and all the people from other countries who got off that ship in 1948—came here for a better life for themselves and their families, and they all made a contribution to our society and our prosperity. We were literally better off because of them, and that is what their modern-day counterparts are also doing.

Before moving to a close, I want to mention someone who has not received enough public tributes. Patrick Vernon is a social historian and grassroots campaigner, and he has led the campaign for a Windrush Day. I also want to add to what my hon. Friends have said about the importance of establishing a hardship fund. I have met members of the Windrush generation who have had to live off the charity of friends and family and who have run up debts because of all the uncertainty about their immigration situation. We really need a hardship fund to be put in place now. Those people cannot wait for the conclusion of the consultation on compensation. We also need to look at the workings of the Windrush taskforce, to see whether it is meeting the targets that it set itself to resolve cases. Some of the cases that I and my hon. Friends are dealing with seem to suggest that that it is not. Again, I join other hon. Friends in calling for an official Windrush Day.

Everyone in this House thinks fondly of their parents, but I can speak with confidence on behalf of myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham when I say that if it were not for the courage, the hard work and the vision of our parents, none of us would be in this Chamber this afternoon as Members of Parliament. The Windrush generation has had a number of important effects, but none has been more important than forcing people to look at migrants as people—people with families, people with histories and people just like other people. If we could only extend the humanisation of the debate on migration from the Windrush generation to migrants of all generations and all times, we would

achieve what I am committed to seeing—namely, a very different type of conversation on migration. We could achieve a change in the debate on migration. It should not have to take 60 years for people to recognise the contribution of a group of migrants to this country. I stand here bearing witness, and hoping for a better future when we come to discuss issues around migration.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): I call Nigel Adams.

4.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Nigel Adams): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is a great privilege to be at the Dispatch Box for the second time in front of your good self. I thank and commend the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) for securing this fantastic but vital debate. It has been incredibly powerful, and I congratulate all right hon. and hon. Members on sharing stories and memories of their families and those of their constituents. We have had passionate, brilliant and moving contributions not just from the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood, but from my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) and the hon. Members for Glenrothes (Peter Grant), for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) and for Brent Central (Dawn Butler). We also heard, yet again, an incredible speech from the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy). I hope to be able to address some of the points raised in the time that is left.

Seventy years ago, in 1948, Britain had just emerged from an exhausting, destructive but victorious second world war. The country was making key decisions about its future direction, its prosperity and its position in the world. We rose to the challenge in that year by creating the national health service and by hosting the global community at the London Olympic games.

Damien Moore (Southport) (Con): I had the opportunity to learn about the Windrush generation at university. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should give children in schools the opportunity to learn about the contribution that that generation made to this country in getting Britain back up off her knees after the second world war?

Nigel Adams: That is a very fair point. It is incumbent on schools and on teachers to ensure that the Windrush generation is included in the curriculum, because children could learn an awful lot as a result.

As has been discussed today, another seminal and momentous occasion took place as the United Kingdom welcomed the HMT Empire Windrush at the port of Tilbury on 21 June 1948, and what followed the day after has been subsequently and regularly debated in this House. While it should be recognised that black British history does not start with the Windrush, the arrival of 492 West Indians, many of them ex-servicemen and women, has become synonymous with the first wave of mass migration and the beginning of modern British multicultural society. Those people include Alfred Gardner, who lives up the road from me in Leeds. I understand that he is still going strong at the great age of 92, and I am sure that the whole House sends Alfred its best wishes.

Many from the Windrush generation left their homes to answer the call to come to a strange, foreign and cold land in order to help rebuild the mother country. The welcome for many from that community, and many other communities that followed, was mixed at best. I would not do this debate justice if I did not mention and recognise the struggle to adjust and to put down roots, with many arrivals receiving a hostile reception. A well-documented phrase present outside many houses at the time was “no blacks, no Irish, no dogs”. As a white man brought up here, it is difficult for me to understand how terrible the Windrush generation would have felt as they walked the streets of London and other cities looking for accommodation. Many people have stories about that and other appalling discriminatory times in the UK. The unique challenges for acceptance, integration and recognition were most noticeable in the Notting Hill riots of 1958, the Race Relations Act 1965 and the Scarman and Macpherson reports, to name but a few, and this struggle has come to symbolise part of the story.

Mr John Hayes: Earlier I mentioned the British Caribbean Association, with which a number of Members will be familiar. The association was formed following those riots in Notting Hill in the year of my birth, and it was formed precisely to foster good relations between the indigenous people and those incoming people—people with very much the values the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) tellingly identified in her speech. The welcome those people deserved but did not get does not mean the Government should now take an approach of unrestricted immigration, and it certainly does not mean conflating the Windrush issue with illegal migration. The right hon. Lady is absolutely right that that conflation is very unhelpful, and very unhealthy, too.

Nigel Adams: My right hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point, and the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) made it, too. Conflating the two issues is deeply damaging to this debate, and we all have to be mindful of that.

Nevertheless, the enduring spirit of the Windrush generation to overcome this struggle, hardship and adversity must not be understated or dismissed. This is part of our history, and we should all be proud of the patriotic, courageous men and women who, in spite of adversity, helped to rebuild this country after the war and have therefore enriched us not just economically but culturally and socially.

Several hon. and right hon. Members have rightly mentioned the Grenfell tragedy, which is particularly important today. The Grenfell fire was a terrible tragedy that should never have happened, and today is a time for reflection. My focus, and I am sure the focus of everyone in this House, is firmly on the community who were affected. Today we all remember those who lost their lives and the families and friends who lost loved ones on that terrible day. It is incredibly important that we respect the privacy of the community at this time.

The hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood, in her brilliant speech, asked whether we would be announcing an annual Windrush Day, which the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington also mentioned. The United Kingdom has long been a

country of inward and outward migration. Post-war immigration, including of people on the Empire Windrush who were at the forefront of that migration, means we are now a richly diverse society. Members of our minority communities have made an enormous contribution to our social, economic and cultural life, and this should be celebrated.

To make sure that we commemorate the Windrush anniversary in the appropriate way, my colleague Lord Bourne has met key figures from community groups over the past few months to decide how best to celebrate it. We thank all those stakeholders for the excellent meetings and for the work they have done together. We are keen to continue these engagements to ensure that our work on the Windrush celebrations extends beyond the 70th anniversary and to ensure a lasting legacy of this celebration of British history.

It is important that we celebrate the contributions of the Windrush generation and their descendants each year, as they are part of what makes us the wonderfully diverse country we are today. Further information will be announced very shortly.

The hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood went on to mention the Black Cultural Archives and the funding difficulties it has had. She asked whether we will work with colleagues in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on tackling this fantastic facility’s problems. The financial difficulties of the Black Cultural Archives are well known to us, and we agree that more should be done to protect these vital archives. I am pleased to confirm that my colleague Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth has been speaking to colleagues at DCMS on this very issue.

My neighbour the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), who is no longer in her place, asked about her Select Committee’s interim report on the hardship fund for the Windrush generation. We recognise the hardship that some of that generation have suffered, through no fault of their own. Sadly, that Select Committee does not scrutinise my Department, but I assure her that the relevant Department will respond in due course.

The right hon. Member for Tottenham gave a typically passionate and eloquent speech, in which he touched on the shameful practice of slavery. The transatlantic slave trade caused extreme suffering to millions of people, who lost their liberty and were forced to work as slaves. We have expressed our deep sorrow for what happened and fully recognise the strong sense of injustice that remains. We firmly believe that we should always remember history, no matter how difficult that history can be. He also went on to mention the hardship fund for the Windrush generation. He is absolutely right to say that we should design a compensation scheme that effectively addresses the issues faced by the Windrush generation, and to do that we have to listen. The Home Office has completed the call for evidence, which has given individuals and community groups the opportunity to share their stories and experiences.

The hon. Member for Glenrothes had the tricky job of following the right hon. Member for Tottenham, but he made a terrific speech.

Ms Abbott: I understand about the arrangements for compensation, but what about a hardship fund now—an interim hardship fund?

Nigel Adams: We have only a couple of minutes, but I can say to the right hon. Lady that I understand the Home Secretary has written to the right hon. Member for Tottenham to say that the hardship scheme remains under review. I am sure the Home Office will be coming forward with more on that. As I was saying, the hon. Member for Glenrothes made a fantastic speech, referencing his family history.

At this point, I wish to turn to the recent immigration issues faced by the Windrush generation. I would not want anyone who has made their life in the UK to feel unwelcome or be in any doubt about their right to remain here. I wish to conclude in order to give the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood enough time to finish off the debate, so let me turn to what the Government have been doing to celebrate the Windrush generation, as it is also vital that we show our appreciation for what they have achieved.

Lord Bourne responded to a debate in the House of Lords in January to answer the question of what we are doing to support the 70th anniversary. As he said, he has set out to work with stakeholders across the country to ensure that the Government celebrate the anniversary in the most appropriate way. He has done exactly that, meeting the relevant stakeholders. There will also be a suite of events taking place across the country in areas with prominent connections to Windrush, including Hackney, Tilbury and Lambeth.

So in this year of seminal commemorative events, Windrush 70 stands alongside NHS 70 and Vote 100 as a hugely important reminder of the progress and achievements this country has made over the past century. The contribution of the Windrush generation and their descendants to Britain cannot be overstated—we would be much diminished as a country without their presence, and it is vital that we fully recognise the importance of Windrush communities to Britain's history and present.

4.58 pm

Helen Hayes: I wish to thank Members from across the House for contributing to this debate, but I am particularly grateful to my right hon. Friends the Members for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) and for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler), because their contributions have been not only representation but very powerful testimony.

We are about to embark next week on a fabulous series of celebrations across the country for the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush. The debate today has set the context for those celebrations very well. It is a context not of sentimentality but of immense gratitude, held in tension with a sense of the injustices, both of the past and of the present.

It is, however, a matter of regret to me that some Members have made mention, again and again, of illegal immigration in this debate. Sometimes, in seeking

to draw a distinction repeatedly it is possible to achieve the opposite. This debate was never intended to be, in any way, shape or form, about illegal immigration; it was a debate about celebrating the contribution of the Windrush generation. I welcome very much the encouraging comments of the Minister about Windrush Day and the Black Cultural Archives. I look forward to progressing those ideas with him and, I hope, to hearing more positive announcements next week. Once again, I thank Members, as we enter a period of genuine celebration of, and gratitude for, the contribution of the Windrush generation next week.

5 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

PETITION

MenC vaccine

5 pm

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): My constituent, one-year-old Kia Gott, was diagnosed with meningitis C in September 2017 and has spent the past nine months in hospital. Her case was described by doctors as “one of the worst cases of meningitis”

seen in 25 years. Kia lost all four limbs, may have lost her sight and hearing, and possibly has brain damage. I am pleased to say that Kia is making good progress and has recently returned for a home visit. Her parents, Vikki and Paul, are determined to ensure that no other family faces the awful situation that they have lived through, and are campaigning for a reinstatement of the MenC vaccine for all babies at 12 weeks.

I present this petition on behalf of the 109 people who signed it on paper and the further 5,850 who signed it online. I do so in tribute to the bravery and resilience of Kia's parents. I hope the Government will listen to their request and give it proper consideration.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that in March 2016 the Joint Committee of Vaccination recommended that infants aged twelve weeks no longer require the vaccination against meningococcal serogroup C (MenC) due to the success of the immunisation programme that started in 1999; further that from July 2016, the MenC vaccine for twelve week old babies was discontinued from the NHS childhood vaccination programme and further declares that there was a baby girl in Bradford recently left fighting for her life after contracting MenC at the age of ten months and that one case of MenC is one too many.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to reintroduce the MenC vaccine for babies aged twelve weeks.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002155]

Sound Reading System and Literacy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Paul Maynard.)

5.2 pm

Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to have the opportunity to discuss in the House the sound reading system and describe its promise for improving literacy. The sound reading system was developed in my constituency of Oxford East, and it has shown remarkable results when it comes to enabling children and adults to read, often for the first time. However, its sustainability is in doubt, which is why I am so grateful to the Minister for lending her ear to this Adjournment debate.

There are still worrying levels of illiteracy in Britain and worldwide. Because of the central position of English as a lingua franca, difficulties with literacy in this country are exported beyond our shores. Globally, one in five people cannot read enough to understand a bus timetable or a recipe. Literacy is not only a problem for developing countries: in England, one in seven adults lacks basic literacy skills. Worryingly, the problem appears to be getting worse. A 2016 OECD report indicated that England is the only developed country where late-middle-aged adults perform better in literacy than young adults. In addition, the gap between the highest and lowest-performing readers in England is stark, and the eighth worst of the OECD countries.

I am sure we all know of friends or acquaintances who are clever people but who, for whatever reason, never learned properly to read and have gone to great lengths to try to conceal that in adulthood. Illiteracy imposes a huge cost on society; indeed, it has been estimated that low levels of literacy cost the UK public purse £2.5 billion every year. Of course, the most significant impact is on those who are not fully literate. Language really is power, and those who cannot read properly cannot participate properly in society. It is therefore essential that we take every opportunity to ensure that everyone gets the chance to learn to read and that we do not squander chances to build literacy.

That is where the sound reading system comes in. Remarkably, it has a 100% success rate. That's right—100%. There are surely very few educational interventions that have had such a proven impact. Children and young people make, on average, two years' worth of gain in three to four months of tuition under the sound reading system. That is enough catch-up to get back on to the literacy track.

The sound reading system stems from a very simple insight: that written language is confusing to those who are learning how to read and write it. It then develops a straightforward, logical system to ensure that learners are fully conversant with all different variations of language sounds, what they look like on paper and therefore how they can be written, at every single stage of the learning journey.

That appears very obvious, but it actually contradicts how phonics are often taught, which can lead to the phonic system often causing confusion rather than illumination. Fiona Nevola developed the sound reading system in Oxford with Professor Diane McGuinness, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Florida University and author of much academic research into reading.

Fiona showed me the detailed progress that just one child in Oxford had made with the sound reading system, which highlighted how and why they had previously been struggling at school. One very simple example is the confusion that so many children, and indeed adults, have between letters that look very similar—such as b, d and p. Just that type of confusion often leads to labelling children as having problems, rather than ensuring that these letters and their sounds, in different contexts, are fully understood and shifting too quickly on to other sounds. That can begin a downward spiral for many children.

Current systems, whether they use un-contextualised sound cards, memorising whole words, or exposing children to reading texts without specific sounds having been taught and understood already, go directly against the grain of how human beings actually learn. It is for that and other reasons that the philosopher Steven Pinker stated that McGuinness's work was “part of the solution” to that

“story of needless misery and waste”

that is modern illiteracy. Similarly, the Dyslexia-Specific Learning Difficulties Trust calls the method “remarkable”.

As I mentioned, the success rate of the sound reading system has been total because it builds understanding from the very beginning and therefore it also works fast. It has been used to teach people to read who were previously believed to be unteachable in primary schools, prisons and community education, in Scotland, England, Namibia and Israel. Teachers who have been trained in the sound reading system have testified to its enormous impact on their pupils' reading and writing abilities. After being trained in the approach, one teacher with 20 years' experience said:

“My practice has changed forever...In my experience the strugglers complete other phonic programmes with significant barriers because much of the code has not been adequately revealed or mastered. I also believe that if the whole alphabet code is not revealed, rote learning is inadvertently encouraged. This programme ensures vital knowledge of the code is fixed into memory and strugglers are taught effective strategies to ensure success”.

Many parents have also noted the impact of the programme on their children. One Oxford parent wrote last week that her young son was now learning to read using the sound reading system after having had many previous difficulties, which included anxiety after finding that the phonics programme at his school “didn't make sense”. The sound reading system programme has helped him immensely, his mother said. There are many other testimonies that I could mention here, but I will not owing to the pressure of time.

Despite the very strong success of the sound reading system, its use is at risk of decline for one simple reason—it is not commercial. Many of us will be aware of different approaches to phonics, which rest on the sale of different materials. Indeed, as a parent of young children, I have used some of them myself. The founders of the sound reading system took a totally different approach. They felt that pushing particular materials would only lead to confusion if it were not backed up with intensive training for the teachers who were going to use these materials with learners. Despite the simplicity of actually teaching the method, the attention to detail is crucial. It is that detail, based on proven research, that matters. The method cannot be fudged and combined with opposite approaches.

[Anneliese Dodds]

Although hundreds of teachers have been trained in the sound reading system, and continue to be trained in it, its continuation rests pretty much on a shoestring. It is supported only by a small trust. That trust, Our Right to Read, was initially managed by Diane McGuinness and Fiona Nevola, but it is now largely driven by Fiona Nevola, my constituent.

There has been a lot of political support for the use of the sound reading system. David Cameron expressed interest in the model when he met those involved in it. Insights from it appear to have informed reviews of how to build literacy. For example, I note that the Rose report, published in 2006, states:

“It is no surprise to find that the main ingredients for success in the teaching of beginner readers are: a well trained teaching force; well designed, systematic programmes of work that are implemented thoroughly”.

However, that commitment to systematic programmes has not translated into practice in many British schools and other educational settings, where a hotch-potch of different approaches is often used, leading learners into confusion and disillusionment. That disillusionment affects learners’ confidence and abilities, and holds many back into adulthood.

The parallels between the sound reading system and another innovation—the daily mile—are striking. Both are inexpensive, non-commercial innovations, both have extremely positive outcomes and both are impelled through the enthusiasm of their founders. But in both cases, although politicians have expressed strong support, that has rarely been translated into concrete action. That action now has to come from central Government. In my experience—and, I am sure, the experience of other Members in this Chamber—local authorities often lack the tools and resources to ensure appropriate training for teachers and the diffusion of innovation. Of course, the system has become much more fragmented with the development of academies, academy chains and so forth. We need action from central Government to ensure that the approach is disseminated. The sound reading system could have a radical impact on British children’s ability to read and write, but its dissemination and diffusion will not just occur on the wind; it will happen only if it is backed up with proper resources.

I understand that the letters and sounds programme was developed by the Department for Education and Skills, and put into all schools in 2007, but it is unclear exactly what the future of this programme is and whether the Department envisages properly supporting more encompassing programmes such as the sound reading system to ensure that children have the benefits of its much more holistic approach. I hope that the Minister will inform us about the future of these phonic approaches and will explain what we can do properly to back the sound reading system—an impressive literacy programme from Oxford—so that we can get to grips with eradicating the scourge of illiteracy from our country. I thank her for listening to my argument.

5.12 pm

The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills (Anne Milton): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate.

English—literacy, in particular—is an essential foundation for success in education. I am very happy to lend my ear to this critical subject. The hon. Lady rightly pointed out that the literacy rates in this country are not as good as they should be. I think that slightly less than 25% of adults have the literacy skills of an 11-year-old or below. As the hon. Lady said, it is important to consider the impact of that. People who do not have literacy skills are excluded from so much of the world around them. In fact, all the important messages that we want to get to people about a huge number of things, including health and jobs, are simply lost.

It is vital that children learn to read from an early age. This is the key to understanding the rest of the curriculum. Children who struggle with language at the age of five are about six times less likely to reach the expected standard in English at age 11 than children who had good language skills at the age of five, and they are about 11 times less likely to reach the expected standard in maths. For that reason, we have strengthened the national curriculum to focus on developing reading and writing ability and put phonics at its heart. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for School Standards, who is passionate about this and has done so much work and driven through so much change.

Phonics is an important approach to the teaching of reading and some aspects of writing. It involves developing phonemic awareness by connecting the sounds of spoken English with letters or groups of letters. I am sure that the hon. Lady knows much of this, but it is important to put it on the record. Synthetic phonics taught in a systematic way is the most effective method of teaching reading to all children. Combined with a language-rich curriculum, synthetic phonics has been shown to develop positive attitudes towards literacy, which is so important for children. The national curriculum requires the teaching of systematic phonics alongside pupils developing a wide vocabulary, speaking and listening competently and reading widely and often.

I think it is fair to say that since 2010, the Government have turbo-charged the effective teaching of phonics. We have placed it at the heart of the curriculum, and we introduced the annual phonics screening check in 2012 for pupils at the end of year 1. Pupils have been doing the 2018 check this week. We provided £23.7 million of match funding for resources and training for 14,000 schools between 2011 and 2013—the hon. Lady rightly pointed out the importance of training teachers to do this—and we have incorporated phonics into the teachers’ standards, which are the baseline expectation for teachers’ professional practice.

In “Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential”, published in December 2017, we set out our key ambitions for improving social mobility, including closing the word gap in early language and literacy. By the age of three, disadvantaged children are on average already almost a full year and a half behind those from a more affluent background in their early language development. We have made a good start: by 2020 we will be spending around £6 billion on free entitlements, tax-free childcare and childcare support, which is more than any previous Government.

We have already seen progress, with those labours coming to fruition. For example, there is near universal take-up of the 15 hours for all three and four-year-olds; 71%—just short of three quarters—of eligible two-year-olds

now take up the entitlement, up from 58% in 2015; 71% of children achieve a good level of development, up from 60% in 2014; and we have closed the gap between children in receipt of free school meals and their peers by two percentage points since 2014.

This week, pupils across England will be taking the light-touch phonics screening check, and we have used that check to measure the improvement over time in pupils' phonics success. Since its introduction, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of year 1 has steadily increased, with 81% of pupils meeting the expected standard in 2017, up from 58% in 2012. I am giving the hon. Lady a lot of figures, but I think they are important because they show that progress is being made. It has to be said that all this is delivered through the very hard work of our good teachers.

An additional 154,000 children are on track to become fluent readers. In 2017, the great majority—89%—of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of year 1 went on to reach the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 1. Getting those fundamentals right at an early age is critical for progressing to reading fluently and for pleasure, which is particularly important to me. Reading well is a good indicator of success in later life.

The results of the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS—put the success of our increased emphasis on phonics and our continued focus on raising education standards on a global scale. England's nine-year-old pupils achieved their highest average score since PIRLS began, and we rose up the rankings from joint tenth in 2011 to joint eighth. That is to be commended. The pupils who took part in the study are the first to be assessed since Government education reforms in 2010 that saw the introduction of the more rigorous, knowledge-rich primary school curriculum introduced in 2014.

However, despite the very real and measurable progress, more must be done and, backed by a £26.3 million investment, we are creating a national network of 35 English hubs, and a centre of excellence for literacy teaching to improve literacy across England. It is up to schools to choose the approach and programme that is right for them and their pupils within this framework. I understand that the sound reading system, the programme championed by the hon. Lady, incorporates training alongside its teaching materials, as she described so well. This is good, and indeed, a number of the more widely used phonics programmes do this. A wide range of commercial products is available, and schools should choose the product that best meets their needs and those of their pupils.

Anneliese Dodds: I am grateful to the Minister for her very helpful remarks. However, the point I was trying to make about the sound reading system is precisely that it is not commercial. It does not have the commercial firepower behind it that is needed for its dissemination, yet it produces incredibly strong results. What more can we do to promote not-for-profit approaches, such as the sound reading system?

Anne Milton: There are a number of imaginative ways of promoting the success of not-for-profit systems, and in holding this debate the hon. Lady has taken one

of the first steps. There are 650 Members in the House, and as I always say when talking about apprenticeships and skills, those 650 people can spread good practice and good work. Members of Parliament have good access to their local schools—we all enjoy going into our primary schools—so that is an opportunity to promote the sort of products the hon. Lady is talking about.

As I was saying, there is wide range of commercial products, but I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for School Standards is very happy to meet the hon. Lady's constituent to discuss her phonics programme. I am sure he will be extremely interested to do that. The Government have to be careful not to endorse specific publishers or products, but as long as this programme meets the core criteria, there will be plenty of opportunities for the hon. Lady to promote its benefits.

I mentioned earlier that we initially turbo-charged phonics with over £23 million of funding between 2011 and 2013, but let me add a word about resources. This tends to be rather sterile ground, but it is important to say that a number of initiatives are going on. We provide funding to make sure that schools across England are supported to teach phonics. In response to the 2015 screening check results, the Government have since funded Ruth Miskin Training and the University of Reading to deliver 36 events to share best practice in the teaching of phonics.

The most recent roadshows—late last year and early this year—were held in areas where the results in the phonics screening check were low and in the 12 opportunity areas. The roadshows incorporated practical observations of phonics lessons, and the provision of theory and advice about how best to organise, structure and approach teaching systematic synthetic phonics most effectively. This is very important in areas—the opportunity areas—where there are more children from disadvantaged backgrounds, because if we do not get this right at an early age, all we will do is embed the inequalities we are seeing not only in schools, but in communities, and which children take with them throughout the rest of their lives.

In 2017, we funded nine phonics partnerships, where schools excelling in systematic phonics teaching work with partner schools to spread good practice. These funded partnerships showed an improvement in nearly 80% of the schools that were supported. We are currently inviting applications from eligible schools for them to apply to lead phonics partnerships for this financial year to support effective phonics teaching in schools. We also plan to fund another 20 partnerships during this financial year.

In addition, funding for improving the teaching of phonics has been made available through the teaching and leadership innovation fund and the strategic school improvement fund. Ruth Miskin Training, through a project worth £1 million, is delivering a whole-school literacy professional development programme to support systemic synthetic phonics teaching in priority schools over the next three financial years.

To date, we have also funded a total of 17 strategic school improvement fund projects that include phonics. These projects have been awarded nearly £6 million in grant funding. For example, since December 2017, the Excalibur Teaching Schools Alliance has upskilled 22 teachers to become specialist leaders of education in

[Anne Milton]

phonics who have been matched to support 104 phonics champions in 52 schools. As a result, it is expected that, by June 2019, 85% of reception and year 1 children in the supported schools will achieve the expected standard in phonics.

As I say, the Government do not endorse specific products. My main responsibilities are apprenticeships and skills, and I am also involved in the introduction of the T-levels. I have seen a lot of young people who need to be given a second, a third, sometimes a fourth, sometimes a fifth chance, and it is not just young people; it is young and older adults for whom school simply passed them by, in large part, in my view, because they missed out on those critical early phases in their education. It did not matter what history, geography or science they were taught—if they could not understand, if they did not have those basic literacy skills, everything someone attempted to teach them thereafter was completely lost.

For me, this is definitely about social mobility. Learning to read and write is probably the best springboard from which to launch a successful career and open up opportunities that perhaps a person's family and those living around them did not have. My right hon. Friend the Minister for School Standards is doing his bit at his end to make sure that in 16 years the Apprenticeships and Skills Minister—it is unlikely I will still be in that position, but you never know—will have a much easier job and will be able simply to pick up these excellent young people who have achieved at school and understand the world around them. I was previously public health Minister, and I remember negotiating at the Health

Council of the European Union on front-of-pack food labelling. We have an obesity problem in this country, and all that information is utterly lost to far more adults than it should be simply because they cannot read the information on the pack in front of them.

In conclusion, our support for the effective teaching of phonics in early-years settings and schools is based on a firm body of evidence, and it is working, as is shown by the phonics screening check and the PIRLS results, but there is more work to be done. That is why we are setting up a national network of English hubs supported by a new centre of excellence. This will enable schools that need support to get it in a way that works for them, complementing the national funding I have described. Schools can work collaboratively, sharing experience, knowledge and expertise with the support of high-quality, evidence-based resources. That is key to improving pupils' literacy and enjoyment of reading across the whole of their school careers, from early years into adulthood.

Finally, I congratulate the hon. Lady on raising an issue that possibly does not get as much attention as it should in the House. The impact of being unable to read and write is perhaps lost on many Members as we talk about the sort of subjects we have discussed at length this week, but it is critical if we want to make sure that, whoever you are, whatever your background, wherever you come from, wherever you were born, whoever you know, you have the same opportunities in life as those of us who have possibly been more privileged.

Question put and agreed to.

5.29 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Thursday 14 June 2018

[JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

Brexit: Trade in Food

1.30 pm

James Gray (in the Chair): We start the afternoon in this great Chamber, Westminster Hall, with a debate on the recent report by the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs entitled “Brexit: Trade in Food”. It is normal on these occasions for the Minister to be present at the beginning of the debate, although that is not required under Standing Orders. I suspect he may be approaching the Chamber quite quickly. There being no further intelligence on where the Minister might be, I know the Parliamentary Private Secretary will take a keen interest.

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): The PPS can do it!

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. I know the PPS will take a keen interest in how the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee approaches the motion.

1.31 pm

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Third Report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Brexit: Trade in Food, HC 348, and the Government response, HC 1021.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. As you have said, let us hope we see a Minister in the very near future.

Before we begin, it is one year since the disaster of Grenfell Tower, and I want to remember those whose lives were devastated when they lost their loved ones and their homes. We should all reflect on that.

I welcome the Minister’s announcement in the Chamber last night that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will bring forward two Bills on sentencing and animal sentience, as recommended by our Committee.

The British public voted to leave the European Union in 2016 so that we could take back control of our money, laws and regulations. Farming is a prime example of that. For 40 years, all our policies have come from Brussels, but now we will be able to decide a new farming policy for ourselves. I chaired the agriculture committee of the European Parliament, and in trying to deal with 27 countries, from Finland in the north to Spain in the south, it can sometimes be difficult to come up with a policy that suits everyone. We have a bright future, provided we embrace what will be good not only for the environment, but for farming and food production in this country.

We need to know exactly what impact Brexit will have on our agricultural sector. That is why the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee held an inquiry on Brexit and food, which we published on 18 February.

My Committee spoke to many people—farmers from all sectors, academics and other food and farming professionals—and they all agreed that trade is crucial to the farming industry. As a rural MP and a former dairy farmer, I know more than most how important that trade is. *[Interruption.]* It is good to see the Minister arriving. I will allow him to take his seat. It is all right, Minister. It is usually me who is late, not him.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George Eustice): I must give my apologies for missing the start of the debate. The reason is that I thought a debate of such importance should be in the main Chamber. I was hovering outside the wrong Chamber, but I am here now. I apologise for missing the first few minutes.

Neil Parish: That is a very good apology. The Minister elevated our debate to the Chamber when we are actually in Westminster Hall. I appreciate his explanation and thank him for arriving. I am sure his officials will fill him in on the start of my speech.

We have a great farming industry and high-quality products, and it is important that that is supported over the coming years. Continued trade with the EU is essential to ensuring our farming sector thrives after Brexit. We must have an outward-looking, global Britain. That will be key to seeing our agricultural sector flourish, but we must also maintain a good share of our home market and home production. I feel strongly about that. We buy 70% of our food and drink imports from the EU, and we sell 60% of our food and drink exports back to the EU. We can see that trade to the EU is extremely important, and that that means that a farming-focused free trade agreement with the EU is essential. We have always sought reassurance from Ministers that as the deals are done, DEFRA, DEFRA Ministers and the Secretary of State will be at the forefront.

If we do not reach a free trade agreement with the EU, our agricultural goods might well be subject to tariffs once we have left. EU tariffs are high. Tariffs on dairy products are over 30%, and they can be as high as 80% on frozen beef. Reverting to World Trade Organisation rules would be even worse, as tariffs there are far higher for agricultural goods than for many other products. In addition, all countries must be treated equally under WTO rules. For example, Irish beef would need to have the same tariff as Brazilian beef, which could be devastating not only for us, but for Ireland. That is why our report recommends that the Government undertake work as a matter of urgency to evaluate the impact of any deal that they negotiate.

We are calling on the Government to publish a sector-by-sector analysis on the impact of Brexit so that we can better understand how tariffs will affect our farmers. For instance, in the dairy sector we import a similar amount to what we export. We are often importing yoghurts and cheeses, and we have the ability to produce more of those ourselves. We could therefore reduce the need for imports, as we could in other sectors, such as the pig and lamb sectors.

We export some 40% of our lamb, and import some 35%. On the face of it, we could say, “That’s okay. Stop the exports and the imports and we can eat all our own lamb,” but in reality we are exporting fifth-quarter joints and importing legs of lamb from New Zealand.

[Neil Parish]

We can see that the trade in lamb backwards and forwards, and with France in particular, is incredibly important.

The Secretary of State assured us on the sector-by-sector analysis yesterday in Committee, and I seek your assurance, Minister, that that work is under way and will be published. In my view, it should have been done already. We have seen, rightly in many respects, many more extra staff being taken on in DEFRA, but I have to say bluntly to you, Minister—

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. It is not me that the hon. Gentleman is addressing, but the Minister. You are speaking to “him”.

Neil Parish: I beg your pardon, Mr Gray. I say to the Minister, what is happening with the sector-by-sector analysis? When can we expect the analyses to be published? In all the evidence we took for our report, we found that the trading arrangements affect different sectors in very different ways. We need to know exactly what those trading arrangements will be to ensure that we maintain our food production.

A farming-focused free trade agreement is not the only way that the Government can support farmers. I am sure that you, Minister—

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. I do not mean to be stiff and pompous, but the reason for the convention is that referring to all other Members in the Chamber in the third person removes the directness from the debate. It is not “you”, but “he” or “the Minister”.

Neil Parish: So I can say “Minister”?

James Gray (in the Chair): It is perfectly reasonable to say, “As the Minister will know,” or, “As I hope the Minister will say in replying to the debate.” It is not in order to say, “As you know, Minister,” or, “As I hope you will say in your reply.” You may not use the word “you” apart from when you are referring to me, and I have no part in the debate beyond chairing it.

Neil Parish: Thank you, Mr Gray, for that clarification.

Farmers offer vital support to the rural economy, with the food and farming industry generating more than £110 billion a year, and employing one person in eight in the country. Food and drink, much of it produced in this country, is a vital industry, and the way our food is produced is so important for our natural environment, as we can see in many parts of the country.

The Secretary of State was in Exmoor and Devon last week, where the farming of sheep and cattle produces that lovely landscape with many natural features. Within those natural features is a managed farm landscape, which is why the profitability of food and agricultural production is so necessary. We can look at environmental payments, but they will not be able to replace the profitability of agriculture and food production entirely. The two need to go hand in glove, which we are really keen to see happen.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): As a member of the EFRA Committee, I apologise for not being able to stay for the whole debate; I am on the Ivory Bill Committee, which sits again at 2 pm.

I entirely support what the Chair of the Select Committee says about the need for much greater clarity and strategic direction from the Department, but it is also important that we hear a lot more from the Department for International Trade and the Department for Exiting the European Union. I asked about rules of origin and their impact on the food sector this morning and got a very disappointing response. Does he agree that all three Departments need to send a clear message to farmers and food producers about what the future holds for them?

Neil Parish: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention and for the excellent work that she does on the Select Committee. She makes a very good point about geographical indicators. Interestingly enough, when the Secretary of State visited Exmoor and Devon last week, there was talk of giving protected geographical indication status to Exmoor, where we can sell lamb from both sides of the border—from Somerset and from Devon.

All those things are intricately linked to the need for a future food policy, so that people know where their food has come from and so that we can market it better and, hopefully, get a better price for the producer. That money can then be linked back to the landscape. I cannot emphasise enough that the landscape and the food production, especially in certain parts of the country such as big livestock areas and more marginal land, are intricately mixed.

We must also ensure that we have high-quality vegetable production. Where we can produce organic vegetables, we should; where we can produce vegetables with fewer pesticides and fungicides, we should. We must be very positive about a food policy. I am worried that in the recent Command Paper on health and harmony, the only real talk of food production was very much at the high end. The high end of food production is great—from local restaurants, to tourists buying food and to everything linked to the countryside. However, we also need affordable food that the whole population can eat.

At least 90% of our food business goes through our major retailers, and people often buy on price. As we move forward, we have to be assured that our vegetable production not only is of good quality, with high welfare standards, but comes at a price that the average consumer can afford to—and will—pay. Whatever we buy in life, it is a choice, so not only do we want to have good, high standards, but it needs to be affordable.

We have a managed landscape with many natural features, as I said. The onus is on the Government to engage more closely with the industry to provide the food and farming sector with greater clarity. Tit-for-tat tariffs will do more harm than good—just look at the situation in America. The Americans have started putting tariffs on steel and aluminium. That might well help the steel and aluminium industries in America, but it will drive costs up for the industries in America that need to use those products. Food, a commodity and a manufactured product, does not need tariffs on it. In the end, that will only create more costs and could well lead to higher prices to consumers. I do not believe that those tariffs will ever come back to the producer.

It is imperative that we have a farming-focused free trade agreement with Europe. I repeat what has been said day in and day out in this House: two years since the referendum, all sectors—not just the farming sector—

need some clarity on the direction in which we are going. People in all lines of business need to make investments, but those in the beef and dairy sectors in particular need to have a long-term view of where the world is going in order to make investments.

John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab): On that point, it is worth mentioning Northern Ireland, which the Select Committee considered. There is a particular need for as much certainty as we can give regarding Northern Ireland, because I think 45% of all sheep produced there go south of the border. We made a specific recommendation on Northern Ireland, as any change in trade arrangements could be more disruptive there than anywhere else in the kingdom.

Neil Parish: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. He is also a very good member of the Committee. He raises a good point regarding the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The lambs go south and the pigs go north to be processed—and the milk goes round and round in circles, as far as I am aware. A lot of processing goes on across the border. If anywhere in the whole of the United Kingdom is essential, it is that border, for obvious political reasons—reasons of peace and many others. We must get that border right. I am sure it is not lost on the Minister that we need to do more regarding that border.

The various systems we are putting in place are interesting. I am quite happy for the Government to look at having a new system. It does not have to be the single market and the customs union, but we have to ensure that the new system we devise is recognised by the EU, because the Republic of Ireland, obviously, is an EU member state. Those are the great challenges, and I am sure that that is not lost on the Government.

If tariffs were imposed, I believe that consumers would suffer. Tariffs would also make it more difficult for our farmers who produce food to our world-renowned high standards to compete and properly export, inhibiting the building of “Brand Britain”, which is going to be even more important in the future than it has in the past. We will be able strongly to market not only regional produce, but the British product. We have only to go back to horsegate, when horsemeat was being put into burgers because it was a lot cheaper, and look at the food cycle, the provenance of food and the food processing industry, to find that food travels all across Europe. Provenance, branding and the confidence that the world—and those in our own country—has in our products are going to be more important than ever.

As I said, the Government have struggled with their post-Brexit policies. I am hoping that we are seeing some clarity; we have had some interesting votes this week. I believe that will bring forward a clarity, so that we can move forward; the industry needs to have confidence to invest and to address the opportunities and challenges that Brexit will offer. We must go into this with our eyes open.

That is not all. We have dealt with the cross-border situation in Northern Ireland; investing in an IT system to support a more efficient export certification process could minimise delays, and we need to make sure, whether through the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, the Food Standards Agency or

our veterinary services, that we have the necessary personnel to be able to get the licences up and running quickly, especially if we are going to have a change in the system as we cross the border. It is very important that we move quickly where we are talking about perishable products, which include not only agricultural products but fish.

It is possible to design a bespoke support system that encourages greater productivity and further strengthens our animal welfare standards, which are already among the highest in world. To do that, we need clarification from our Government. It is good to have very high welfare and environmental standards, but the quid pro quo is that the standards of imported products should maintain our high standards, through the free trade arrangement with Europe—which should not be difficult because our standards are currently the same—and free trade arrangements with other countries across the world. Otherwise we will put our producers and farmers out of business.

Our food and drink sector needs a reinforced trade deal. “Brand Britain” must become a national advertisement to the world, showing what an outward-looking, open nation we are. The new farming policy we call for in the Select Committee report is about creating a “Brand Britain” that delivers high-quality food that is affordable for all. British agriculture should be front and centre of all our negotiations, not left to feed from the crumbs under the table.

1.54 pm

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): I thank the Chairman of the Select Committee and its members for the work that they have put into the report over the past few weeks. The food and drink sector is enormously important across the UK. Mr Gray, I hope you will forgive me if I focus a little on the Scottish food and drink sector, which has grown enormously and very successfully over the past few years. It is a huge and very important employer, not least in rural communities, and the excellence of its products is increasingly recognised throughout Europe and elsewhere in the world.

The fishing sector in my own constituency is not quite what it once was, but it is still there, with fishermen working exceptionally hard producing fine produce that is then sent off around Europe from the quaysides in places such as Pittenweem. A large agricultural sector produces some of the finest food and drink, which makes its way to destinations throughout the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

There are other successful food and drink industries, including a growing number of whisky distilleries, which complement yet further the fantastic, vibrant food and drink sector in North East Fife. I recently visited a newly opened gin cottage, Darnley’s Gin, near Kingsbarns, which I would heartily recommend to people if they make it up as far as St Andrews. I recommend that the Select Committee visit it at some point, if it ever gets the opportunity. We cannot overstate how valuable such industries are and, as I have said, they are particularly important in rural communities.

The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) said something enormously important about clarity in the Government’s plans to leave the European Union. The Committee is right to seek greater clarity,

[*Stephen Gethins*]

regardless of what side of the debate people may have sat on. The EU is Scotland's biggest overseas export market for food and drink—69% of food exports go to the EU, which is worth three quarters of a billion pounds. In Pittenweem, for instance, the lorries take the food products and they arrive in restaurants in Spain, France, Belgium the very next day. That is where customs checks become exceptionally important, and I know that is something that the Minister will want to touch on.

Fresh food and drink processes are where the customs union really comes into its own, and I wonder whether the Minister can give us some clarity. We are seeking clarity for something that may happen not in the years to come but in the months to come. In a sector that is already planning for next year—it does not plan a day ahead and it may plan years ahead—clarity has so far been very poor, and I know there have been a huge number of concerns about that.

The National Farmers Union Scotland has called for the UK or for Scotland to remain part of the customs union for that very reason—the critical importance of the customs union to our food and drink sector, to our export markets and our partners elsewhere in Europe—but there are other important areas as well. Protected geographical status is exceptionally important to the food and drink sector. Perhaps the Minister will want to update us on where we are with that. It is not just with whisky: Arbroath smokies recently obtained that status and there are other such products as well, so it is an important point.

The food and drink sector is employing an increasing number of people. Newburgh in my constituency has the highly successful Lindores distillery, and farmers next door are looking for a little certainty as well. We know from the Scottish Government's analysis that any plans to take us out of the European Union will have an impact on our economy, and that is reflected in the UK Government's own analysis, which we have all seen: that any plans to take us out of the European Union will hit our economy hard.

The Scottish Government analysis shows a loss of 8.5% of GDP, £12.7 billion, and by 2030, £2,300 per individual. That will hit industry, including the food and drink industry, because it relies on our relationship with the rest of Europe so heavily. Although those are figures from the Scottish Government—they have published those figures, so they are publicly available—we know that they reflect the UK Government's figures. They are pretty much the same figures, because they were drawn together by a wide range of independent economists, whom the Government employ to teach them about this kind of thing. Will the UK Government now publicly publish their figures to inform a fuller debate about these key issues? The Scottish Government have been very open about this, but the UK Government have been less so.

I have mentioned the devastating figures for Scotland—my part of the United Kingdom—but Professor Graeme Roy of the Fraser of Allander Institute says that the food and drink sector in other parts of the UK will be even harder hit. Other hon. Members will reflect on that, but there is nobody here from Northern Ireland. We know how important it is to sort out that border

problem, given the food and drink exports that go to and fro over the course of producing food and drink items. The World Trade Organisation rules would be the worst of all.

One issue that affects farmers now is seasonal workers. I hope the Minister will tell us how we can tackle that issue. Lord Duncan, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, was good enough to join me at a farm in my constituency recently. Mr and Mrs Mitchell, who run Allanhill farm, told him that they need clarity now, because their seasonal workers are down. The produce of that berry farm is for consumption across the UK and elsewhere in Europe, and they need to know whether to plant their next crop so they can harvest it next year. That is a very difficult decision if they do not have certainty about seasonal workers. This is not something we will be debating in the future; we are debating it in the here and now. Will the Minister reflect on the urgency of our food and drink producers' situation?

That is echoed by James Orr, who farms around Blebo Craigs in my constituency. I am sorry to be talking about my own constituency, but those are the examples I know best. For example, I recently learned that there are only two places in Scotland where broccoli can be grown. One is in my constituency, because it is so sunny—yet another reason for the Select Committee to visit us. Broccoli has to be harvested by hand, and it is really important that it is not left to rot in the field. If seasonal workers are down, there is the distinct danger that that will happen.

On trade, the Scottish Government have done a lot of work on farmers markets and on promoting the food and drink industry, because agriculture is, of course, reserved to the Scottish Government. Will the Minister tell us how that will work in the future? The Secretary of State for Scotland is making a statement right now, but we have not had much in the way of certainty. The legislative consent motion for the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which will have a direct impact on this area, was refused by three quarters of parliamentarians in the Scottish Parliament—not just Scottish National party Members, but Labour, Liberal Democrats and Green Members, too.

Will the Minister tell us how we will take that forward? For instance, what will happen in the future if there is a dispute between the UK and Scottish Governments? I know the Minister will do everything he possibly can to avoid disputes, but such things will happen. If there is a dispute over the trade in food and drink, will Westminster simply override that decision, and therefore 20 years'-worth of devolved settlements?

What will happen if there are more trade disputes with, for example, the United States? Although the tariffs are being applied to steel, there is considerable concern that they will also affect the food and drink sector. The whisky industry, for example, has highlighted that. If we step outside the European Union, we step away from those closest to us in terms of our trade and our economy. They are closest to us politically and geographically, which is particularly important to the food and drink sector. What happens when the UK stands itself alone against the world? That is not a particularly comfortable place to leave our food and drink producers.

What happens to access to the critically important single market? Like the customs union, the single market and freedom of movement are hugely important to our food and drink sector. We have no clarity about those issues at present. I know the Minister will not be able to give us all the answers, but he needs to provide certainty. I thank Committee members again for their valuable work on this timely report. I hope the Minister's response will reflect the urgency of the situation, as Committee members have done in their work.

2.5 pm

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I am very pleased that, yet again, we are in this place debating food and farming. I am even more pleased that the Minister is here, because otherwise I would not have been able to ask him the questions I want to ask him. I am sure he will try to answer them.

The Chair of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), raised a number of issues that I wish to take up. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), who has had to leave, and my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (John Grogan). They are very strong members of the Select Committee, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Sandy Martin), who has not had a chance to say anything yet, but if he wishes to intervene and put something on the record, I am more than happy to let him do so.

I am a former member of the Select Committee, and I am grateful that it is in good hands. I was lucky to be chaired by David Curry and Michael Jack, and the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton has carried on in the same good order. He has shown how the Committee is making a difference. The quality of its work is in the preciseness of its arguments. Why write a long report when a short one can do the job?

The hon. Gentleman's speech ranged far and wide, so I make no apology that I will refer to the later report, which may also be discussed in this place in due course. It is, however, contingent on the report before us. I will refer to a number of things in the Government's Command Paper, and how the Select Committee has investigated them.

Let me start with where we are with this whole exercise. Although farming is a relatively small part of the British jigsaw, it is a very important part of European functionality, because half the EU budget is spent on farming. My first question to the Minister—I have asked this previously—is, when will we get into serious negotiations about farming, and particularly food? Although farming is not a huge constituent part of the British economy, food and food exports are. As the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton said, that sector is responsible for about £110 billion-worth of business, and employs one in eight people. It is an important part of the UK economy, so we have got to get this right whatever the post-Brexit situation is.

I echo the hon. Gentleman's request to see the sectorial reports. Like lots of hon. Members, I went to look at the original sectorial reports. I have to say that a good A-level student would probably feel reasonably pleased with them, but I do not think their quality was much better than that. We need definitive evidence, because

these sectors are very different and will require different negotiations. It would be good to know when some of those negotiations will take place, and that there will be ministerial—not just civil service—input, because they will be complicated.

I am not sure—I know the Minister is sure and can allay my fears—when we will start talking to the WTO. We are a signatory to the WTO, but through our membership of the EU. At what stage will we start to talk to the WTO about how we will exercise our independence? The one thing that I know from all my time on the Select Committee, and since, is that when we start to get into the different boxes—amber, red, blue and green—and the aggregate measure of support, we get into enormous complexity, which will not be sorted out in a few weeks. That will take a long time.

Neil Parish: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and certainly for his comments about the Select Committee. When it comes to tariffs and the European relationship with agriculture, the problem with the WTO is that if we were under WTO rules rather than in a free trade arrangement with Europe, French and Irish beef would have to have the same tariff as Brazilian beef. Imagine having to compete with Brazilian and Argentinian beef—we produce very high-quality beef in this country, but it would be difficult to produce it at the same prices as Brazil and Argentina.

Dr Drew: Again, I am not an expert on the farming industry per se, as the hon. Gentleman is, but having talked to those who know about it, I know that the lamb market—Welsh lamb, in particular—is very vulnerable. I made the point that New Zealand would no doubt be keen to expand its exports to this country, but I was proven wrong in the sense that New Zealand can already export 200,000 tonnes of lamb. The big threat is actually from Australia, which has a more limited quota arrangement and will no doubt wish to have a free trade agreement—any agreement—so that it can export more to us. Again, that is a question I ask. I genuinely do not know where outside the EU—where 60% of our food exports go to—we can form all these free trade agreements.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem is not only where our exports will go or where our imports will come from, but that the laudable environmental and health and safety constraints that we place on agriculture in this country will not necessarily be replicated in countries in other parts of the world that may wish to export to us? We shall see a race to the bottom on environmental and health and safety concerns.

Dr Drew: That is, of course, a real threat. I refer to the Government's response to the Committee's report. At paragraph 6, on "Regulations and Standards", the Government cited the Prime Minister in her Mansion House speech, saying that

"the UK will need to make a strong commitment that its regulatory standards will remain as high as the EU's."

I should damn well hope so—excuse the proverbial—because if we do not, we will not be able to export to the EU. It is important to maintain the existing standards, and we would want to drive them up—the Minister has

[*Dr Drew*]

said that—but that will be in some jeopardy if we form free trade agreements with countries with lower standards, because those would preclude the higher-standard export markets that we have now.

Looking ahead to the Select Committee's "The future for food" report—to laud the Committee again—its value is that it has all the right headings. The keynote is uncertainty; we need to allay the element of doubt that is creeping into what is now a tight timescale. Looking at the report, the questions will obviously be about budget—I am pressing the Labour party to ensure sufficient funding. We have already guaranteed the same money until 2022, but to be honest with the Minister, we want to go further, because we do not think that the transitional period is long enough. That has come through in both reports.

There is not enough money to make the transition work. Whatever form of payment system we come up with, it will be a pretty traumatic change. For some farmers, it will be the most traumatic change they have ever had in their lives. We would therefore like more money to be allocated and for things to be done properly. We are not against public using moneys for public goods, but we have to handle the situation with extreme sensitivity. Otherwise, we will lose a lot of good farmers who cannot make the transition easily.

To go back to today's report, I have some questions arising from the Government response. How will they deal not only with tariffs, but with non-tariff issues? In my constituency, some of the manufacturing companies say that the problem is never with free trade, or setting up free trade agreements, because they are set up all the time. The problem is when other parts of the world take non-tariff action, which is a real danger in the food sector. It would be good to know how far the Government have got and in what ways they are at least investigating how to deal with the threat of non-tariff barriers.

On the potential for increased paperwork, the Government are setting great store by a new computer system—as did my Government, to our cost, when we introduced the Rural Payments Agency, and I dealt with Accenture at that time. We were told then how everything was going to be wonderful because the computer would do it all for us. It would be good to know how far we have got with the new computer system and what it will do—there is the idea of "e-certs", but whatever name it has, it is just a computer system. If we do not have the right brief to start with, we will not get the right outcomes. Therefore, how far have the Government got towards introducing that computer system in such a way as to cope with all the different pressures, whether of trade or of the standards and so on?

There is also the human dimension. The spokesperson for the Scottish National party, the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins)—to whom I should have paid due regard earlier, but I do so now—spoke about the need for seasonal workers. Another element, which was picked up on by the Select Committee, is the additional need for veterinary support. At the very least, we do not have enough vets in this country to do the work that is needed, which is why we recruit foreign vets.

That work will only increase, despite restrictions on immigration and on what is called mutual recognition of professional qualifications—a very good thing that

ensures we get in people with equivalent qualifications to ours. Dealing with that takes time. We will need additional vets in the short run to deal with some of the new processes. Again, will the Government give us an update on their important discussions with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Association and so on?

That leads on to the issue of customs and how those arrangements are being looked at. I must say that some of the Government's answers are fairly sketchy. The response is a fairly brief piece of work—I laud the Select Committee again because although its work was brief, it was precise, but the Government did not necessarily tell us everything. Perhaps the Minister will fill in some of the detail, such as how much store is set by the IT system, how he will deal with border inspection post capacity and what is happening with some of the trade agreements with non-EU countries. All that will require a very different approach. I hope that we will not have a hard Brexit, but even under a soft Brexit those will be very complicated issues that are difficult to work through in the short term.

Another issue is country-of-origin labelling, which Members across the House would all support. Customers need assurance to know where something has come from and whether it is of the standard that they expect. Again, the Government have made lots of commitments, but it would be good to know how they will deliver on those commitments—what they said in paragraph 13 of their response was very good in aspiration, but not detailed in how they would action it.

In conclusion, there are many points of detail. That matters, because we should be entering a period of discussion where agriculture, hopefully, will be in the footlights. That is rare, because normally agriculture is somewhat in the shadows, but it is crucial at this stage because of what happens to our food chain. We must make sure we get this right to support the industry and the people who work in it. That may not be easy in the short run, but we must be clear where the strategy is taking us.

If there is any regulatory divergence from the EU, those of us who fear that things could get worse in the short run need the Government to be clear on what they are trying to do. What mechanisms will they employ and who will employ them? The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has taken on a huge number of new people—perhaps it should not have got rid of as many as it did when it was not at the frontline of these changes. It would be good to know how those people could be as effective as they should be, in a short period. Their knowledge alongside the ministerial team will be crucial. I sympathise with Ministers; I know how much pressure they are under, because this issue puts the Opposition under a lot of pressure due to the number of ways in which we have to respond.

I hope the Government have got the message that they need to be very clear on how they are moving forward. Otherwise, we will be back here week after week with debates, trying to ascertain what the detailed considerations really mean and how we will take British agriculture and the British food chain forward into the next decade, whatever our status with the EU. More particularly, they must make sure that British food is of as good a standard as it can and should be, and that it can be traded successfully with the rest of the world.

2.21 pm

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George Eustice): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. I apologise again for being late to the debate, for the reasons I described earlier.

I thank the Chair of the Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), for introducing the debate. This is an incredibly important issue that matters to all sectors of the economy and to food and farming. I want to set out, for the record, the Government's approach to our future trading relationship with the European Union, because that is important. Much of the report looked at the consequences of a possible no-deal Brexit, for reasons I can understand and that I will deal with, but it is important to recognise the UK's position.

We are seeking a bold and comprehensive free trade agreement with the European Union. We want tariff-free access for all sectors, which would be reciprocated, and we seek a frictionless border. We believe that the growth of technology in the last 20 to 30 years means that we do not have to have as much friction at the border as some would claim. Indeed, we have looked the procedures used prior to 1993, when the single market was introduced—an important point that many people forget. We had frictionless borders not when we joined the European Union, but after 1993. Technology has assisted a lot with the frictionless borders that we enjoy today in the European Union—that is not just about the regulations of the single market.

Neil Parish: I agree with the Minister entirely; it would be great if we could get the frictionless trade deal and frictionless borders. Is he convinced that when we have the technology—I think we have it—it will work? I must be quite blunt about the Rural Payments Agency, Natural England and others. I know he will defend them to the hilt, but I said yesterday that they are not fit for purpose. If they were in the private sector, they probably would be dead by now, because they do not handle things properly—every time, we get more and more problems. The key thing is whether we can get this to work and whether we can get Europe to agree to it. Ultimately, let us get those lorries across the border and back again. We all want that. That is the reassurance we are all looking for.

George Eustice: I agree with my hon. Friend. I was going to come on to why it is in everyone's interest to do the type of agreement that we are offering. We do not believe that we have to have total uniformity of regulations on these various issues to have a frictionless border. It is quite possible to recognise what in trade jargon is called equivalence.

Our offer to the European Union is that bold and comprehensive free trade agreement, tariff-free trade and frictionless borders, where the European Union and the UK can both adopt a risk-based approach to any border checks they might put in place, assisted by technology. We want to give each other confidence by agreeing a set of arrangements through which we will recognise the equivalency of our various regulations. That can be done. Our starting point is not as a third country trying to establish a trade deal with the European Union, but as a member state that is stepping back from being a European Union member. On day one, we start

with absolute uniformity of our regulations. That is unique in the world, which is why it is absolutely possible to do the type of agreement on borders that we seek.

The other point to recognise is that the European Union has a trade surplus with the UK in food and drink alone of £18 billion each year. It may feign indifference to its trade with the UK for the purpose of the negotiations that are going on, but that matters. Access to the UK market matters to Irish beef farmers, poultry producers in the Netherlands, pork producers in Denmark, horticultural producers in the Netherlands and cheese producers in France. They need access to the UK market. Therefore, it is in their interest to take up what we are offering, which is a comprehensive free trade agreement with frictionless borders.

Stephen Gethins: Will the Minister tackle the issue of how the customs relationship will work? Can he set that out? How will seasonal workers work? That is a matter of urgency; other Members also have made it clear that it is a matter of urgency.

George Eustice: I noted the hon. Gentleman's points from his speech and will come back to them.

First, I want to address one of the questions posed by the report: what happens in a no-deal scenario? The reality is that there are quite a number of options open to an independent country in control of its own trade policy. It does not have to be most favoured nation rules, and that is the end of the story. One option for an independent country when setting its own trade policy would be to have unilateral tariff rate suspensions—it would keep the bound tariffs where they were, but it could suspend them on certain product lines if it wanted to. It also could have what is called an applied tariff for some product lines that was lower than the bound tariff set in the WTO schedule.

An independent country could also establish unilaterally something called autonomous tariff rate quotas—ATQs. They enable the country to create a quota in certain product lines to allow that tariff-free trade.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton pointed out that one of the issues is that those have to be what is described in trade jargon as *erga omnes*—open to all—around the world and not just to the European Union, but we could, of course, abide by our own sanitary and phytosanitary regulations. In a short period where such measures might prevail, our existing trading partners would find it easier to satisfy those and potential new ones. There are many tools in the box that we would have as an independent country controlling our own trade policy.

My hon. Friend also asked about a sector-by-sector analysis. He will be aware that in December last year, the Department for Exiting the European Union published analyses for each sector. The hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Drew) read that and was very complimentary about the detail in it. There was a specific report in there on the food and drink sector—my hon. Friend will be aware that, in addition to that, the Government have done a great deal of more detailed ongoing analysis and modelling—but for reasons that we have been clear about, and that I think Parliament understands, there are certain things in a negotiation that we should not

[George Eustice]

put out there. Not everything that we have done has been published, but we have published that report sector by sector.

Neil Parish: I thank the Minister for giving way again. This is important and we have plenty of time, hence I will take up a bit more. When you say “sector by sector”, are you talking about the food and drink—

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. I am not talking about anything—the Minister is.

Neil Parish: When the Minister says “sector by sector”, is he referring to the food and drink sector? Our report naturally referred to the individual sectors of agriculture—dairy, sheep, beef and so on. This issue is linked not only to trade, but to the support policies that will be needed. An extensive beef and sheep farmer perhaps needs the basic farm payment much more than a dairy farmer due to the overall income from that business. That is what we are particularly interested in.

George Eustice: Yes, I understand, and I was going to come on to that. Although, of course, we have done other, more detailed work, not all of which has been published, I think I pointed out in evidence to the Committee that in March 2016 the National Farmers Union commissioned a detailed piece of work by a Dutch university, which looked at precisely that issue—what would happen under a most favoured nation trading scenario for a range of sectors. I probably cannot go much further, except to say that I recommend that research to anyone with an interest in this area because its analysis was broadly correct. In summary, it showed that some sectors are indeed more exposed than others to our trade with the European Union.

Notably, as the shadow Minister pointed out, the sheep sector is quite dependent on our trade with the European Union. The analysis commissioned by the NFU bore that out. It also identified that there might be some impact on barley producers that export for the lager industry in Europe in a most favoured nation scenario. However, broadly speaking, for most producers in every other sector there would actually be a slight firming in farm-gate prices, because most sectors would have less import competition. It is hard to predict exactly what would happen in a no-deal scenario, but in a scenario in which it was slightly harder to export lamb to Europe and harder to import beef from Ireland, some mixed beef and sheep enterprises likely would diversify a little more into beef to substitute for Irish imports and put a little less into sheep, particularly if they were exposed to the export market in countries such as France, Greece and Belgium.

There would obviously be changes under such a scenario, but it is worth reflecting on debates in the House in the late 1950s on whether we should join the European Union or remain a member of the European Free Trade Association. I am afraid that, given the nature of the debates we are having now, I revisited some of those debates to understand how we got into this pickle in the first place. It is telling that in the late 1950s and early 1960s there was cross-party agreement that joining the European Union would be bad for

agriculture. One reason we did not join early was that it was recognised that that would be negative for agriculture. It is interesting that the NFU analysis largely bears that out to this day.

Neil Parish: Just to be facetious, Minister, does that mean you are going to re-establish deficiency payments? Do not forget that deficiency payments were coupled with that.

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. Two points. First, interventions must be quite short. Secondly, I am sorry to pull the hon. Gentleman up again, but it is an absolute rule in this place that hon. Members must refer to one another as “the hon. Member”, “him”, “the Minister”, “she” and so on. Hon. Members may not refer to the Minister as “you”, because whenever you use the word “you”, you are referring to me. Please make an absolute habit of using only the third person.

George Eustice: I am interested in history, but I am not necessarily interested in implementing all historical policies. To extend the history lesson, there was also a view in the 1960s that we should not have subsidies but we should have tariffs. Obviously, we have moved some way since then.

Dr Drew: I always love a bit of history, but to bring us up to date, in all those previous reorganisations and structural changes, there was time to make changes partly because the British Government were deciding things for British farmers. Will the Minister assure us that the transition period must respect the importance of these changes, and that there must be support for those who will suffer if we get this wrong in the short run?

George Eustice: Yes. I was going to return to that point. The Select Committee report states that we have to take care during the transition. We absolutely recognise that. Indeed, in our recent consultation, we described what we have as an agricultural transition, where any changes we make to the support regime will be done gradually over a number of years to take account of the fact that we do not want to deliver unsustainable shocks to the industry that it would not be able to cope with.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton mentioned the importance of Northern Ireland. I absolutely understand that a huge amount of trade takes place across that land border. That is why, unsurprisingly, the way we should approach that issue dominates much of the discussion about our future arrangements with the European Union. He will understand that that is a much broader discussion, which is being handled by people in the Government more senior than me.

Let me pick up on some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for North East Fife (Stephen Gethins), such as customs, which is being looked at. We have a cross-Government working group, which has brought on board lots of Departments, including Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs and the Treasury, to look at customs, as well as DEFRA and our Animal and Plant Health Agency to look at border inspection posts. DEFRA’s focus is ensuring that we have the right capacity at any border inspection posts, and we will seek to agree our approach to that. Generally speaking, customs is regarded

as an easier and more administrative thing to do, rather than necessarily requiring lots of checks and infrastructure at borders. Technology really has moved on in that area.

I simply make the point that one of our biggest successes in food and drink—perhaps the biggest, and certainly the biggest in Scotland—is Scotch whisky. We have zero tariffs on Scotch whisky, but that sector competes globally and has a recognised international brand. It is also very used to dealing with national markets, even within the European Union, because there are different alcohol duty rates so there must be bonded supplies for each country. There are sectors that have got very good at managing borders. Several hon. Members made the point in yesterday's debate that we have borders even within the single market for things such as customs duties.

Probably the second biggest food export from Scotland is Scottish salmon, which again is renowned around the world. Scotland's biggest competitor in that sector is Norway, which is outside the European Union and outside the single market for the purposes of fish products, because, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the European economic area does not cover fisheries products. So there are sectors, including fisheries and Scotch whisky, that have developed quite sophisticated ways to address some of these challenges. This is not an insurmountable problem.

The hon. Gentleman also raised seasonal labour. We recognise that that issue is important, which is why the Home Office commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to look at what our labour needs will be after we leave the European Union. The MAC is already doing that piece of work. It published an initial summary of the responses it received, and it is now looking in earnest at what arrangements we will need after we leave, and in particular after the end of any transition period.

However, in some ways we already have the necessary structures in place under our existing migration system, through things such as tier 3. That is currently set at zero because we have free movement of people, but we could make some allowance for work permits in less skilled sectors if we wanted to and deemed that we needed to. We have been clear that we are looking at the idea of a seasonal agricultural workers scheme. We had one, which ran successfully from 1945 until 2013, and we have been clear that we are looking at that issue. I worked in the soft fruit industry for 10 years, so I am fully aware of some of the challenges. Those are issues that we will have the power to deal with as an independent country—they will not need to be negotiated with others.

Stephen Gethins: I am astonished by the Minister's use of the phrase "an independent country" given that Ireland, Greece and Denmark all consider themselves independent countries. On customs and seasonal workers, he referred to infrastructure. I mentioned urgency, so what is the timescale for that infrastructure? We have heard from a wide range of experts—we still believe experts—that the end of 2021, or even the end of 2020 when the transition period ends, is not realistic. Have they got that wrong?

George Eustice: Look, on your first point—sorry, Mr Gray, it is a contagious problem. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, there are degrees of independence.

As things stand, as an EU member we do not have an independent farming policy, an independent fisheries policy or an independent policy on migration. When we leave and become not an EU member, we will have independence in those areas.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, there will be some challenges, but we have been working on this area. One scenario we have been planning for right from the referendum result is a no-deal scenario where we come out without an agreement, even in March next year. There are contingency plans and work has been done to prepare for such scenarios. While there will be challenges, we are aware of them and have been addressing them.

Dr Drew: The problem is that those who might have come here in the future will not do so and we are now into the second year in which they would have been making such arrangements. What inducement is there for someone to come here, when effectively they have been told for two successive years they are not wanted, rather than go to other parts of Europe, as they are now?

George Eustice: There are anecdotal reports that more have come back this year because of recent changes in the exchange rate. Some daffodil producers in the west country say that it was easier to get labour this winter than last. It is quite common for seasonal agricultural workers to return for a number of years, and indeed levels of returning are one of the yardsticks used to assess the availability of labour.

The hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) posed a question in an intervention about rules of origin. The Government are looking at that area. Obviously, not every nation state in the world is a member of the European Union. Lots of countries are not, and they have quite established procedures on rules of origin. While we have not reached a final position on those issues, there is, for instance, the pan-Euro-Mediterranean regional convention, which is a rules of origin system covering countries both in and not in the European Union. Other parts of the world have therefore addressed such issues.

I turn to points raised by the shadow Minister, who asked about how we are approaching the WTO. We have been clear that our schedule of tariff rate quotas on agricultural products should be divided between the EU and the UK based on an historical reference period. We regard that as a matter of technical rectification rather than reopening everything for renegotiation, and that is the approach we are taking on existing TRQs.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned New Zealand lamb and pointed out that we have a TRQ of just short of 250,000 tonnes for lamb from New Zealand coming into the UK. It is also important to recognise that, in recent years, New Zealand has only ever used about 70% of its quota. That demonstrates that long before the ceiling of that tariff rate quota is hit, they find themselves unable to compete with UK producers. I am more optimistic than some about British sheep producers' ability to compete with New Zealand and Australia. Many do so already. As a country, we should not get spooked by some kind of New Zealand haka on lamb production. We need to get on the pitch and play, and I think we will find that we can beat them.

[George Eustice]

We have been clear that in any future trade agreements we will maintain our standards. We will not reduce our standards in pursuit of a trade deal. That is a common feature. It is quite possible for us, through doing trade deals with third countries, to require that those who wish to supply us under such agreements must meet our standards.

Just this morning, I visited the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and talked to officials who were involved in our negotiations with the United States on reopening its market for British beef, which we have worked on for a number of years. There are opportunities for British beef exports to the United States, but there are also one or two technical areas where the United States wants us to change our rules for those supplying them to meet their standards. For instance, they have a slightly different approach to monitoring things such as E. coli and to the methodology that a vet should use when visually inspecting animals as they arrive in the pen.

We could go in and say, “This is no good. You’ve got to change your rules to be like the British rules,” but we do not. Actually, we say, “Fair enough. Those suppliers who want to supply that market should do that. We should respect their rules, and they should respect ours.” Equally, if US producers want to supply the British market, it is absolutely open to us to say that that must be done on British standards. We are a free-trading country, and we will be open to doing trade deals, but we are clear that we have standards and values that we will not abandon.

Neil Parish: We have very high standards in this country. We also use less and less antibiotics in producing meat. The Americans still use a lot more antibiotics, their environmental standards are lower and often their welfare standards are lower. On the antibiotic side in particular, we must be clear in negotiations that we do not reduce our standards and allow in products that have had many more antibiotics.

George Eustice: My hon. Friend makes an important point. In a trade negotiation we are talking about food standards, not just food safety. Some people misleadingly try to divert the debate, but it is about food standards, and issues such as animal welfare and the approach taken to farm husbandry are integral to those standards. We should not be shy about saying so.

A number of hon. Members mentioned IT systems. We—in the European Union—currently use the trade control and expert system, but we are doing a detailed piece of work to build a replacement system, should that be needed, and that work is well advanced. My hon. Friend asks in his Committee’s report for the Government to set out clarity about the future of the agriculture Bill. I am aware that this week the Secretary of State appeared before my hon. Friend’s Committee, where he was given that reassurance. The report also raised the potential impacts of tariffs on food prices. Again, as with the sectoral impacts, the Government are looking at this area, but we are not in a position to publish details. However, I recommend those hon. Members interested to look at work done by, for instance, the Resolution Foundation, which identified the fact that the impact on domestic food prices would be quite marginal, even under a most favoured nation scenario.

We have had a comprehensive debate covering a wide range of issues. I welcome the Committee’s interest and it bringing its report to the House for debate.

James Gray (in the Chair): The question is, That this House has considered the Third Report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Brexit: Trade in Food, HC 348, and the Government response—

Neil Parish *rose*—

James Gray (in the Chair): I beg your pardon. Mr Parish can indeed conclude if he wishes. That is quite right.

2.48 pm

Neil Parish: Thank you, Mr Gray; I wanted to ensure that we kept to correct parliamentary procedure, having been corrected a number of times this afternoon. I will do my best not to refer to hon. Members as “you” in future.

I thank the Minister for his summing-up speech. He mentioned the good work done by the NFU through a Dutch university on sector-by-sector analysis, which I welcome, but I do not think that takes the place of a proper sector-by-sector analysis by DEFRA, which still needs to be done. I make that point very strongly.

I also thank the Minister because I know the work he does to understand the trade deals and to get a good deal in the future for this country; he cares very much about that, which I respect. In particular, the deal we do on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic will be important not only for Northern Ireland and our own country, but for the Republic of Ireland. I had an Irish grandmother from Dublin, which may account for many things. I find it fascinating that, after nearly 100 years of independence from the United Kingdom and of being its own country, the majority of the Republic’s trade is still with the United Kingdom. Not only is it important for us that we get it right, but it is important for the Republic of Ireland. I hope the EU, on the other side of the argument, also understands how important that is.

I like the Minister’s idea of a bespoke, risk-based arrangement. The idea that we will be able to open up and inspect every lorry will never actually happen, but we need to have a system where we are able to do that if we need to. What matters is the speed at which we can get through those borders, and keeping the trade that is so important. We have talked about trying to ensure that, as we do a future deal, there are no tariffs, because that will not be good for any sector, and especially not the farming sector, in the long run.

The shadow Minister referred to the fact that we must watch for interference with trade, not through tariffs but through other means. I remember that in my previous existence, when I was elected to the European Parliament in 1999, we were trying to get British beef back into France after bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Even under single market regulations and all the regulations that were in place, the French were masters at finding reasons why that beef should not go into their country.

Although I am very happy to trade with France and the rest of the European Union as we leave, we have to be conscious that those countries could find ways of disrupting trade. They still do it within the European

Union now; they usually stop just before the Commission throws the rulebook at them. They are very clever at looking after their own trade, and we need to be equally clever to ensure that our trade goes into France and that, when we reciprocate those trade arrangements, they also honour their arrangements as we move forward.

Again, I thank the Minister, who has come to our Committee and had some very good and open exchanges. In the end, whether we voted to remain in the European Union or to go out, I believe now that a Brexit deal must be done. The people have decided, and we must make that work. Nowhere is that more important than in the farming and food sector, because it has been part of a common agricultural policy and trade policy for 40 years. We have great opportunities, but we must get this right—not only for food and farming, but for good food to be had by all in this country at affordable prices.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the Third Report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Brexit: Trade in Food, HC 348, and the Government response, HC1021.

2.53 pm

Sitting suspended.

BACKBENCH BUSINESS

Immigration Detention (Victims of Torture)

[MR VIRENDRA SHARMA *in the Chair*]

3 pm

Joan Ryan (Enfield North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered immigration detention of victims of torture and other vulnerable people.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I thank the Backbench Business Committee for granting the debate and hon. Members from all parts of the House who supported the application.

I also thank the 131 Members who signed my early-day motion on immigration detention last December. It is the eighth most supported EDM in the current Session, which I think signifies the amount of concern on this matter. I am also grateful to the 118 and 114 Members respectively who supported my other two EDMs that prayed against the Government's delegated legislation on these matters. Those were debated in a Delegated Legislation Committee last week, at which some hon. Members here were present.

I will return to the substance of those statutory instruments later. That the Home Affairs Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights are also currently investigating issues relating to immigration detention indicates the scale of concern across the House regarding current Government policy.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing the debate. I know she is aware of it, but I draw other colleagues' attention to the joint inquiry of the all-party parliamentary groups on migration and on refugees, which involved a number of Members from both sides of the House, including a former Conservative Cabinet Minister. Our recommendations were adopted by the House, albeit without a vote.

We recognised through our inquiry the impact of immigration detention on some of the most vulnerable people, hearing evidence of those who had been through trauma having that trauma multiplied through the experience of detention. We concluded that, as well as a different approach to vulnerable people, there should be a statutory time limit on indefinite detention. Will she join me in hoping that, when the Government look at immigration in the pending White Paper and the immigration Bill, they will also consider the whole impact of immigration detention?

Joan Ryan: I know that those APPGs do valuable work. After seeing examples of the harm caused to vulnerable adults by immigration detention—I am sure we will hear more today—I hope the Government will pay more serious attention to this than their legislation from past years demonstrates, particularly since the introduction of the adults at risk policy in 2016.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing the debate. I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests relating to the support I receive for

[Kate Green]

my work on asylum and immigration. Does she agree that, for those who have already suffered torture and persecution in their home countries and who flee here for security, to have that pain compounded in detention, with abuses against them carried out by those who detain them, is the ultimate outrage and something of which we should be deeply ashamed?

Joan Ryan: Absolutely. I will later ask the Government whether they are not ashamed of the harm caused in their name and which it is within their gift to change—not only is it within their gift, it is under the instruction of the High Court.

The debate provides an important opportunity to scrutinise these matters and to call on the Government to honour their promises to improve the protections for identifying and securing the release of vulnerable adults at risk in immigration detention. The debate also enables us to refer to there being no time limit for immigration detention, unlike in nearly all other European Union countries. That adds to the lack of protection, to the suffering and to the likelihood that the serious mental health harm being inflicted will increase suicide attempts.

The debate is particularly pertinent because the new Home Secretary has pledged to review the Home Office's hostile environment policy—admittedly because of the Windrush scandal. The 70th anniversary of the arrivals on the Windrush is currently being debated in the main Chamber. I am sure that, as they arrived, they did not expect what has happened recently. The example of what has happened to the Windrush generation should be a warning to the Government that we do not raise these issues to make party political gains; we raise them because there is a humanitarian need and a human rights cause that the Government should not need reminding that they need to address, given what has happened with the Windrush scandal.

The treatment of vulnerable people in our country's immigration detention system should be an important part of the Home Secretary's review. It is the considered judgment of esteemed organisations, such as Freedom from Torture, Medical Justice, the Helen Bamber Foundation and Bail for Immigration Detainees, that the current safeguards and the Government's proposed changes to the law have failed to provide, and will fail to deliver, adequate protection to vulnerable people. That view is held across the board.

Paul Blomfield: My right hon. Friend mentioned a number of organisations. Has she also seen this week's report from the British Red Cross, which specifically and very helpfully proposed that the Government adopt a vulnerability screening tool, to provide more effective screening of individuals prior to the decision to detain?

Joan Ryan: I absolutely agree. As I am sure the Minister will mention, because it came up in the Delegated Legislation Committee just a few days ago, the Government consider they have done that. However, given caseworkers' comments on the training, it is evident that that screening is precisely the problem in many ways. It is not clear to caseworkers how to identify those who are vulnerable or powerless. Those terms are too vague, and the catch-all simply says that the list of identifiers is not exhaustive, which in itself is not good enough.

Kate Green: I am sorry to intervene on my right hon. Friend again. Does she agree that one deficiency of the current arrangements for identifying vulnerable individuals is that, at that very first stage, Home Office staff rely on Home Office information and do not obtain other objective evidence, which might support their making a better decision?

Joan Ryan: Absolutely. All the evidence tells us that there are major problems with the screening, and all the expert organisations that have commented on this situation, including the Red Cross, tell us that the Government's changes will not provide the protection that should be provided.

Long-standing Home Office policy has required that vulnerable people, including those with independent evidence of torture, should not be detained unless in exceptional circumstances, but in practice many are. We know from extensive medical evidence that immigration detention can seriously harm the mental health of detainees, particularly those who have previously suffered from ill treatment, and the conditions of immigration detention can be appalling. In a series of findings between 2012 and 2015, the High Court said that the Government's immigration detention system amounted to “inhuman and degrading treatment”.

In 2015, undercover reports by Channel 4 News inside Yarl's Wood and Harmondsworth immigration removal centres revealed abuse of detainees and references to medical mistreatment. When the then Home Secretary, now the Prime Minister, commissioned the former prison and probation ombudsman Stephen Shaw to conduct a review into the welfare of vulnerable persons in detention, his damning report, published in January 2016, found that safeguards for vulnerable people were inadequate and that detention was used too often and for too long.

The Government responded by drafting and implementing their adults at risk policy, which incorporates the detention centre rules and the guidance on detention of vulnerable persons. However, that flagship policy, which is intended to safeguard vulnerable adults by routing them away from or out of detention, is not working—far from increasing protection for vulnerable detainees, it has increased the risk of harm.

In its initial 10 weeks of implementation, the adults at risk policy was applied incorrectly in almost 60% of 340 cases. From January to September 2017, Freedom From Torture's medico-legal report service received 101 referrals for suspected torture survivors in immigration detention, and 14 of its treatment clients were detained between January 2016 and November 2017. Torture survivors continue to be detained.

The guidance on the detention of vulnerable persons raised the threshold for a decision not to detain by increasing the evidentiary burden on the vulnerable individual. As a result, the release rate following a rule 35 report—designed to screen torture victims out of detention—has fallen dramatically. In quarter 3 of 2016, before the policy was introduced, 39% of those with a rule 35 report were released. In quarter 1 of 2018, that number had fallen to 12.5%.

I urge the Minister to publish more detailed information and data on the functioning of the adults at risk evidence levels and the rule 35 process. Since the adults at risk policy was introduced, how many people have been

categorised as an adult at risk under levels 1, 2 and 3, and how many within each of those categories resulted from a rule 35 report? I hope all the scribbling going on among officials and by the Minister herself means that we will get some answers to these questions today.

For each of the adults at risk categories, how many people were subsequently diverted from detention—in other words, not routed into detention? How many were released from detention as a result of a rule 35 report and under which categories? I hope we get some answers today, but I certainly intend to correspond further with the Minister and will consider parliamentary questions as a means to get more data on those matters.

Although it might be the case that the overall number of people in detention is decreasing, there were still more than 27,000 people placed in immigration detention last year. When I reveal that figure to people, they are shocked. I do not think the general public realise how many people are held in immigration detention and they are horrified when they hear that number.

In 2017 alone, 11 people died in custody. Detainees are dying at a faster rate in immigration detention than we have seen before. According to Freedom from Torture, “statistics for 2017 show that 446 people self-harmed to an extent that they required medical attention. This constitutes a 30% increase over the last two years, which is even worse when we remember there has been a reduction in how many people are detained. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons has noted that there has been a significant increase in deaths in detention, particularly self-inflicted deaths: in 2017 there were at least five self-inflicted deaths in immigration removal centres compared with only three in the previous five years.”

There were 2,272 people on formal self-harm watch last year. That constitutes approximately 8% of the detained population, or almost one in 10.

Last September, the BBC’s “Panorama” programme investigated conditions in Brook House immigration removal centre and exposed a culture of abuse and widespread instances of self-harm and attempted suicides by detainees. In its most recent inspection report on Yarl’s Wood, published in November 2017, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons found that vulnerable women were still being detained, despite

“professional evidence of torture, rape and trafficking, and in greater numbers than we have seen at previous inspections.”

It concluded:

“The effectiveness of the adults at risk policy...was questionable”.

I would go further: this catalogue of failings shows that the Government’s policy is not fit for purpose.

Let us remember that, despite all the evidence, the Government are not changing their policy. We did not see that in the delegated legislation a few days ago. They are not making changes because they have listened or seen the evidence for themselves; they are doing so because they were pulled into the High Court and told that they must make changes.

The analysis that the policy is not fit for purpose was borne out by the ruling of the High Court last year in a case brought against the Home Office by Medical Justice and seven detainees. It found that the Government’s policy unlawfully imprisoned hundreds of victims of torture. That was due to the Home Office’s deeply regrettable decision to narrow the definition of torture so that it refers only to violence carried out by state

actors, and excludes vulnerable survivors of non-state abuse. We discussed that in the Delegated Legislation Committee, and I made the point then that the definition excludes anybody tortured—I am sure we can all come up with our own groups—by Hezbollah, ISIS, Daesh, Hamas or whoever. It excludes all those people and encourages states to outsource torture to their proxy groups. I cannot believe the Government are not aware of that.

We need a change. During the Delegated Legislation Committee last week, it was galling to hear the Minister say:

“The adults at risk policy represents a proportionate and rational way of carefully balancing the vulnerability considerations against immigration considerations.”—[*Official Report, Third Delegated Legislation Committee*, 6 June 2018; c. 12.]

Will the Minister clarify how the policy is proportionate and rational when, according to Medical Justice, it has “fundamentally weakened protections for vulnerable detainees, leading to more rather than fewer being detained, for longer”?

How is it proportionate and rational to propose amending the detention centre rules and guidance as set out in the Immigration (Guidance on Detention of Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2018 and the Detention Centre (Amendment) Rules 2018, when Medical Justice, which brought the successful litigation against the Home Office, said that the changes will not deliver inclusive, protective and effective detention safeguards for vulnerable people? Medical Justice brought the litigation and the High Court agrees with it. The Government now propose changes, but again Medical Justice says that they will not deliver the required outcome. It beggars belief that the Minister and the Government are not listening.

I did not get a satisfactory response to the question from the Minister in the Committee last week. However, I received a letter from her yesterday—finally responding to a letter that I wrote to her at the end of March, expressing my concerns about immigration detention matters. Given that I wrote my letter two and half months ago, it would have been useful to have the Minister’s response prior to the Delegated Legislation Committee last week. The time lag is unacceptable. In her response, the Minister claimed again that

“the policy we have in place, which will be enhanced by the amendments we lay before Parliament, is rational, sensible and balanced, and provides vulnerable people with proportionate levels of protection.”

What does “proportionate levels of protection” mean? Proportionate to what? That feels like a huge step back from the Government’s commitments in the adults at risk policy. Certainly, it is not what Stephen Shaw had in mind. Drawing on medical evidence, Shaw said in his report’s conclusions that

“detention in and of itself undermines welfare and contributes to vulnerability. I need hardly say that a policy resulting in such outcomes will only be ethical if everything is done to mitigate the impact”.

We should be seeking maximum levels of protection for vulnerable people—not proportionate levels. Can the Minister please clarify today what she means by “proportionate levels” of protection?

The Minister also said in her letter that her

“officials have engaged with a range of NGOs and inspectorates in producing and developing the Statutory Instruments.”

[Joan Ryan]

I do not know what criteria the Minister uses to judge adequate levels of engagement with outside organisations, but I know that the NGOs are not happy with the way the Minister and the Home Office have conducted the so-called consultation. Freedom from Torture, Medical Justice and others have said that the Home Office failed to consult appropriately or to consider relevant evidence. How can it be, to use the Minister's words, "proportionate and rational" of the Government to ignore the advice of expert organisations when drafting the statutory instruments, and proportionate and rational of the Minister to run the risk that the Government will face further court action, by ploughing on regardless of criticism?

When the High Court ruled against the Government last year, it placed no obligation on the Home Secretary to define torture in the new policy. Medical Justice and Freedom from Torture cautioned that the new torture definition set out in the Detention Centre (Amendment) Rules 2018 was unnecessary, inappropriate and too complex for caseworkers and doctors to apply to specific cases. That is the very point raised by my hon. Friends. Last week, the Minister said that she did not accept that assessment. I ask her to check again. Organisations commenting on the Home Office training to accompany the new adults at risk guidance said that

"it is quite obvious that the caseworkers did not understand the torture definition".

They stated:

"The training focuses very closely on distinguishing between victims of assault and victims of torture, rather than on identifying vulnerability. The training kept creeping back to notions of detention and physical restraint in the language used to explain the definition, and it was clear there was no common understanding of what severity or powerlessness means in the examples used."

I hope that we do not hear those points referred to in court at some time in the next 12 months, but I fear that we may.

Freedom from Torture and Medical Justice said that "even when applied correctly, the definition of torture will exclude a group of victims of severe ill-treatment who do not fall within the other indicators of risk".

I ask the Minister to look at the matter again. I urge her to replace the current categories of torture and sexual or gender-based violence with a more inclusive category, modelled on the detention guidelines from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, namely victims of torture or serious physical, psychological, sexual or gender-based violence or ill-treatment.

NGOs have stipulated that the new catch-all provision in the revised guidance on the detention of vulnerable persons

"does not adequately mitigate the risk of excluding from the protection of the safeguard those known to be at risk of harm in detention."

Their concerns have been ignored by the Government. NGOs, as well as a cross-party group of parliamentarians, also called on the Government to wait for the publication of Stephen Shaw's re-review of the welfare of vulnerable people in immigration detention before laying the statutory instruments before Parliament in 2018. That was mentioned in Committee last week and I am afraid that the response was far from satisfactory. I am not even sure that I count it as a response at all. It held no water.

The request to wait for the re-review is perfectly sensible. The High Court did not demand that the Home Office should respond to the court order before Shaw published, so that is not an adequate answer. We are now in the bizarre situation where Parliament must consider the revised definition of torture and the amended guidance separately from the findings of the Shaw re-review. It would have been much better to give the Home Office, parliamentarians and expert organisations the benefit of considering the changes in the light of the full insights from Shaw. Given that the statutory instruments are not due to come into force until 2 July, I urge the Government to withdraw them so that a proper consultation can be carried out on the basis of Shaw's recommendations. Last week, the Minister said in Committee that Stephen Shaw's new report had been given to the Home Office at the end of April—a matter of a few weeks after the statutory instruments were tabled—and that it will be published with the Government's response later in June. I ask the Minister to reaffirm when it will be published. Can she guarantee that it will be this month?

The Home Secretary said in a recent written statement to the House on the Windrush scandal that it was "fundamentally important that the lessons from this episode are learned for the future, so that this never happens again."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 2018; Vol. 641, c. 53WS.]

However, it is very difficult to have any confidence in Home Office Ministers when they are demonstrably unwilling to learn the important lessons on how to increase protection for victims of torture and other vulnerable people in immigration detention. Freedom from Torture, Medical Justice, the Helen Bamber Foundation and Bail for Immigration Detainees could not be clearer:

"Under current arrangements the Adults at Risk policy does not work to ensure that fewer vulnerable people are detained for shorter periods of time. It is already failing and the proposed changes will exacerbate the problem."

It is their considered and expert judgment that a terrible situation is going to be made even worse.

The Government should be ashamed, yet at no stage have I heard the Minister offer any kind of apology to the victims of torture and other vulnerable people who have suffered under the policy. It is a prime example of the hostile environment that flourished when the Prime Minister was Home Secretary. The adults at risk policy was drafted on her watch. I know that the Minister has been in her post only six months, so I urge her to apologise on the Prime Minister's and the Government's behalf for the torment that so many individuals have faced.

However, an apology alone will not be sufficient. We need a fundamental review of immigration detention policy. We need a policy devised with consideration, care and compassion for victims of torture and other vulnerable people. We need a more humane approach, which should also include an end to indefinite immigration detention. I urge the Minister to reflect and act on the concerns that I have expressed and to commit to engaging far more constructively with parliamentarians and NGOs on these important issues. I look forward to her response.

3.30 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): It is, as always, a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. It will not surprise anybody that I wish to

join in this debate to talk about my experiences of detained women who have been victims of torture, gender-based violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, abuse—anything that can be thought of that happens to us women. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) on tenaciously and consistently fighting for these people. The Minister should recognise, after a few weeks of being in front of her, that she will not give up.

I associate myself with everything that my right hon. Friend said about the adults at risk policy. That policy specifically states that survivors of sexual or gender-based violence are recognised as “at risk” and so are unsuitable for detention, yet anybody who ever visited Yarl’s Wood would know that the majority of women in there have certainly suffered gender-based violence, sexual violence or domestic abuse.

I went to Yarl’s Wood about a year and a half ago to visit a woman who I knew to have been a victim. She was in Yarl’s Wood regardless of the fact that she had been a victim of quite horrendous trafficking and abuse. I do not know whether it was just because these people knew I was coming, but by the time I got there, they had released her, so I went to speak to another woman, who had nobody visiting her—I went back round through the security.

I am not entirely sure what training the Home Office is getting, but as somebody who was trained as a first responder for human trafficking and modern slavery and as such was allowed to refer into the Home Office’s system, it took me one minute to identify that this woman I had never met before was a victim of human trafficking. I did that by talking to her and asking her about her experiences—it was not difficult. I had no doubt that this woman was somebody I could easily have acted as a first responder for to get her into the national referral mechanism for modern slavery in this country. There was absolutely no doubt in my mind, yet there she was, in Yarl’s Wood, surrounded by people who were meant to have assessed her.

Kate Green: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention particularly to the situation of women and, indeed, men who have been trafficked, because there is plenty of evidence that being in detention makes it harder for those individuals to receive the expert support and advice that they need, to be able to build up trust to report the experiences that they have had to the authorities and therefore to access the national referral mechanism. As long as we put people in detention, we make another part of the system that is supposed to protect them even less likely to be effective.

Jess Phillips: My hon. Friend is exactly right, and the matter of trust between the different agencies is something that I shall come on to; in fact, that is the main focus of my speech. I could give hon. Members endless evidence from Women for Refugee Women. I have with me case study upon case study of women who had suffered FGM, been forced into prostitution, managed to escape and ended up in Yarl’s Wood. None of them ever seemed to have rule 35 laid out to them—and if they did, that was after two weeks of being detained.

I need not go through all the stories; I am sure that the Minister is very familiar with the issues and I will gladly send her every single one of the case studies. I

want to talk mainly about how the Home Office is not only not assessing the people it finds in detention, but actively seeking victims as low-hanging fruit, in its drive to get deportation numbers up. We have seen from the Windrush situation that there is a target culture that is undeniable—somebody got a big Brucie bonus for getting more people deported. We have seen what that has done to that community.

In my constituency, I was dealing with the case of a woman who was brought to this country on a spousal visa and was abused, tortured, kept locked up and prevented from being fed by her spouse and his family. When she escaped, she came to me, and I did all I could to ensure that her immigration was secured through the domestic violence rules that the Home Office lays out.

It used to be the Sojourner project—or “sojournay” for people who are not from Birmingham. Things were going absolutely fine. We often deal with these cases, and the Home Office agreed that it would put the appeals on hold while we were dealing with this woman’s case. There were some discrepancies. Her husband obviously denied what she had said, and the Home Office, for a spell, decided to agree with him, but we managed to get over that little hump in the road, and then he sent a letter to her family in Pakistan, threatening to kill them—his family in Pakistan would kill her family in Pakistan—and that he would kill her in the UK.

On receiving the letter, my constituent called the police; her brother told her what had happened, and she called the police. I do not necessarily know whether this fits into the fancy idea of torture, but I think that somebody threatening to kill a person’s entire family and them—it is a credible threat, because it is not the first time that they have tried to kill the person—is pretty torturous. The woman called the police. The next day, her neighbour, upset and frightened, called me and said, “She’s told us to call you; she said to call you as she was being taken away.” She was taken away to Yarl’s Wood. When she called the police for help because her life was in danger, the response that she got was that she was taken away to immigration detention.

I cannot think of anything that would make women who are desperate and at risk in this country more unlikely to call the police than the fact that they might be dragged off to immigration detention. It is not only that when this woman was taken to Yarl’s Wood, she was not assessed properly for vulnerabilities or how at risk she might be; they actively took a woman, knowing that her life was at risk. That is totally unacceptable.

As somebody who has dealt with many cases like that, I know that immigration detention and deportation is a tool used by perpetrators of violence and abuse, grooming gangs—you name it, it is used by pretty much every perpetrator I have ever met where immigration was involved in the case. The perpetrators say, “If you tell anyone, they’ll take you away,” and boy, haven’t we just colluded with the violent men in this country that we pretend we are trying to stop!

I thought, “Maybe this is an isolated case and it just happens to be in my constituency,” which I did think was a little odd, but it turns out that it is in no way an isolated case. A freedom of information request was made recently of every police force in the country. Of the 45 police forces asked about the practice of handing over victims’ details, more than half said that they did that; the rest either did not reply or did not give a clear

[*Jess Phillips*]

yes or no. Currently, we have a situation in our country where immigration officers are specifically targeting victims who come forward to the police forces. There should be a Chinese wall between victims of abuse and violence, and immigration detention.

I will not read the list of names of migrant women with unstable immigration status who were murdered last year. I asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department,

“how many victims detailed in domestic homicide Reviews were classified as (a) migrant to the UK and (b) no recourse to public funds in the last three years.”

Unsurprisingly, although we share all sorts of information about who is in our custody, we do not collect that information centrally.

It is horrifying to think that people who are vulnerable and desperate, who have suffered all manner of torture, are still being failed by our immigration system when they come forward for help. It is criminal that we are handing over victims of violence into immigration detention centres. We do not even need to do an assessment, because we know; they have rung us up about rape, abuse and torture, whether at home or abroad. That we think the appropriate thing is to get on the phone to immigration detention is totally and utterly unacceptable. It is a massive breach of trust in this country that this is still happening.

Again, I associate myself with everything my right hon. Friend has said and the questions she put to the Minister. I want to know what plans the Home Office has to introduce proactive screening processes in the adult risk process; it has a proactive way of detaining people, as I have just outlined. How will the Home Office ensure that people are detained only for the shortest possible time, as the detention policy sets out? As has been said, why is it only the UK that does not have limits on immigration detention? I want to hear from the Minister about that.

I am sure the Home Office will get used to all the amendments that will be tabled to the Domestic Abuse Bill, because this Chinese wall will be in there. I will stand and ensure that no woman who ever rings up about being raped or having a threat to the life of her or her children, whether here or in a different country, ever ends up in Yarl's Wood again. I will find every single woman that has happened to.

What plans does the Home Office have to look at different ways of dealing with this? The Corston report on women in prison should be a lodestar and touchstone. There are community organisations to which the Government could pay a tiny fraction of what they are currently paying to whoever it is these days—G4S or Serco, or perhaps it is Sodexo, which makes sausage rolls for hospitals and keeps prisoners safe. Such a range! Those community organisations would actually help these people.

I worked in a human trafficking service. I worked for years in community projects with women with unstable migration status. I can almost guarantee that our rates of return home were better than those of the current detention system, because we did not just send people back to a country with no support. We ensured that

those choices were made in reasonable time and that the safest option, whether staying here or going back, was followed.

There is no energy going into looking at better community options for immigration detention, for both men and women. Yet, in every other area of criminal justice, we will see that community detentions have far better rates, are far cheaper and are much better for the human rights of the people involved. I will leave the Minister with that. I cannot ask enough times whether she will confirm for me that a victim of crime will never again be used just to inform our deportation numbers.

3.44 pm

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I do not have a great deal to add to the eloquent speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips). Like them, I have been absolutely devastated by some of the stories I have heard of what has been happening to vulnerable people, who have committed no crime and who are locked up by the state when they have already suffered unimaginable trauma.

I became aware of just what that means for individuals at the St Bride's Destitution Project, which is run with the British Red Cross at St Bride's church in my constituency. It is a drop-in for refugees and asylum seekers, many of them destitute, to find company or to get some advice, food or clothing.

While I was there on a visit, a lady came in who had just been released from Yarl's Wood and sent all the way back to Manchester that afternoon. That was not the first time that this had happened to her, because one of the features of our detention system is that people are in and out, in and out. We have a cat and mouse situation of taking people into detention, deciding they are vulnerable or do not pose a risk, releasing them and then—later in the protracted process of handling their claim for status—bringing them back into detention again.

When that lady came in, she collapsed in front of me. She literally collapsed. Her legs gave way beneath her, not for a physical reason, but for the sheer relief of being out of detention. I have never seen anything like it. I was moved and horrified. The distress that lady felt and her relief at being out of that situation will stay with me all my life. What threat she posed to our community and society I cannot imagine. The threats were being directed by us, as a state, at her.

I endorse everything that has been said about the deplorable, inhumane way that we are treating people in detention, particularly about the failure of the process to screen out at the first stage people who should not be going to detention at all. I would also like to draw the attention of right hon. and hon. Members to the complete failure of the assessment process when people try to avail themselves of rule 35 inside our detention centres.

Women for Refugee Women produced a compelling report on the experiences of a group of women that it was able to talk to in Yarl's Wood, some of whom had sought rule 35 reports. Sometimes those women had had to wait a considerable period even to have the assessment and the report prepared—women who present

as highly vulnerable and are then told to wait days, if not weeks, until someone takes the time and has the capacity properly to assess that vulnerability. That would not happen in any other part of our public services. It should not happen to those vulnerable people.

Even when those women obtained a rule 35 report and it confirmed that they were survivors of gender-based or sexual violence, many of them were still kept in detention. I cannot understand how they were not released when it had been identified that those women had experienced something that any woman in this room will know would be torturous. We could not live with that. We would be vulnerable as a result.

We have to recognise that many of those who spend time in detention will be released and returned to the community. Some 56% of those in detention return to the community after a time.

Joan Ryan: That is a really interesting statistic—56%—and I thank my hon. Friend for making such a powerful contribution to the debate. Let us remind ourselves: Home Office policy is that people should be detained only in exceptional circumstance. How can that be being applied if 56% are then released?

Kate Green: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right, and when she was talking about detention not being proportionate, I thought, “How can it be proportionate, when more than half the people who are detained are clearly not a risk that means we have to lock them up? If they were, they would not be returned to the community.” It makes no sense.

We need some clear answers from the Minister on the failure of the assessment process—or lack of process—before people are detained, and we need much greater insight into what the Government are doing to address the fact that in detention, the way of screening, assessing and dealing with vulnerable adults is still not working well, despite the adults at risk policy and the availability of rule 35.

Just today, I was sent a copy of the Independent Monitoring Board’s report on what happens when people are deported from detention centres. There, too, we have a catalogue of poor-quality treatment of people who are leaving the country and are therefore likely to be traumatised, angry and frightened. Although it is legitimate to remove them, we should do that in a way that is dignified and humane. The report makes it clear that we do not consistently do that. How can we hold our heads up in a civilised country if we have to shackle people unnecessarily, deny them access to private toilet facilities and leave them to get off a plane in their home country without any knowledge of what support they will have or what situation they are walking back into, and without any advice available?

At every stage of the process, our system shames us, especially in relation to the most vulnerable people who have suffered persecution, torture and abuse. I hope the Minister understands how much concern there is about the way our detention system works—not just among those of us who could be in the Chamber this afternoon, but across the House. Like my hon. Friends, I very much look forward to her response to that concern.

3.51 pm

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I congratulate

the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) on securing the debate, on another expert speech and on the work that she has done in recent weeks to challenge Government policy on the detention of vulnerable people. I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to the debate so far. It is fair to say that they all have strong and long track records in championing the cause. We have heard typically eloquent and passionate speeches from the hon. Members for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) and for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green).

I also thank the campaigners and campaign groups who do so much to keep the issue on the agenda. The vulnerable detainees we are talking about are kept so far out of sight and out of mind that it would be easy to forget about them. It is a tribute to the campaigners that they continue to work to support those detained individuals and push to keep them on the political agenda.

As in every debate on detention, I begin by repeating the position of the Scottish National party that the large-scale, routine detention of many thousands of people in private prisons for an indeterminate period at the discretion of immigration officers remains a scandal. It is a stain on our democracy and an affront to the rule of law—a matter of shame, as the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston correctly put it.

The current system is unacceptable for a host of reasons: it detains too many people, including people who should never be detained; it detains people for too long and without a defined time limit; and the safeguards against detention are utterly inadequate. If those factors are not enough, we can appeal to the purse strings: it is hugely costly and inefficient, and it does not remotely achieve what the Government want it to do.

Root and branch reform is urgently required; tinkering around the edges is nowhere near enough. Reform is needed not just of the detention system, but of the whole immigration system of targets and the hostile environment, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley argued.

I suspect that the Minister will say, as she has said before, including last week, that the number of people detained is proportionately quite small, but that is just too far removed from reality. The fact that 28,000 people are detained in any given year is absolutely horrendous. The UK’s immigration estate is among the largest in Europe; we detain several times as many people as some of our European neighbours. It has become a matter of routine rather than a last resort.

All those facts and figures were set out in the cross-party report referred to by the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield). The sheer volume of people involved is one reason that adequate procedures to stop the detention of vulnerable people are almost impossible to operate—the system cannot cope.

The debate is not just about numbers; it is about individual stories. The hon. Members for Birmingham, Yardley and for Stretford and Urmston did us an important service in reminding us of that, and in providing some horrifying examples of what is going on. As Stephen Shaw made clear in his first report, “detention in and of itself undermines welfare and contributes to vulnerability.”

That vulnerability will vary over the period of detention and has consequences for people long after they are released—as we have heard, 56% of them will be released back into the community—as highlighted in the new British Red Cross report, which has also been referred to.

[Stuart C. McDonald]

Despite that, the UK still locks up vulnerable people on a huge scale, including victims of trafficking, torture or sexual violence, people with mental health conditions, and pregnant women. Mr Shaw described the detention of people with serious mental illness as an “affront to civilised values” and I agree.

Torture survivors and victims of serious violence and ill-treatment are among those particularly vulnerable to harm. Last week, the Government ignored concerns from the Opposition and from organisations such as Freedom from Torture and Medical Justice that their proposed changes to the detention rules would undermine rather than improve the safeguarding of victims of torture and ill-treatment.

As the right hon. Member for Enfield North said, the problem with those changes is that they encumber medical practitioners with an overly complex definition of torture that introduces a concept of powerlessness that has a dubious link to vulnerability and that will require a detailed and excessive interrogation of the vulnerable person. There is a danger that victims of severe ill-treatment and violence risk being excluded from the protections offered in the detention centre rules and guidance.

The burden of evidence placed on torture survivors has also increased. Instead of simply requiring them to provide independent evidence of torture to justify exclusion from detention, specific evidence is now needed to show that detention is likely to cause harm, which is a difficult concept.

We also need to consider the fact that guidance now includes a broader range of immigration factors that can justify detention even of torture survivors. As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has said, the adults at risk policy appears to make it more likely that vulnerable people will remain in detention because it requires the Home Office to balance the person’s vulnerability with their immigration history, with disproportionate weight being given to latter in many cases. The proof is in the pudding: the figures show that the number of releases following a rule 35 report has plummeted from 39% to 12.5%. The hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston set out exactly why the rule 35 process cannot be considered fit for purpose.

Last week, along with other hon. Members, I argued that the Government’s policy on the detention of vulnerable people should be shaped by the new Shaw review. The right hon. Member for Enfield North described that request as not unreasonable; I think it would be entirely sensible. Even though the Government have ignored our request, it remains the case that fundamental reform is needed, and it should reflect the wide-ranging recommendations of Mr Shaw’s reports.

We will continue to argue that there is no need for a specific definition of torture, and that the category of vulnerability should be broadened to include other victims of serious violence and ill-treatment, as recommended in the UNHCR detention guidelines. There should be a presumption, not a burden of proof, that such individuals are vulnerable to harm, and we should make their detention truly exceptional, rather than arming the Home Office with a further list of excuses for keeping them locked up. There is a drastic need to introduce a more thorough screening process.

More broadly, the detention estate must be cut drastically. The Yarl’s Woods, the Brook Houses and the Dungavel Houses should be shut down. Community alternatives and case management systems are more humane, cheaper and more effective, and they should be rolled-out with learning from best practice in other countries. There must be a time limit on detention. We must end this stain on our country’s reputation. As the right hon. Member for Enfield North said, this is a human rights cause, and we will all continue to champion it until radical reform is delivered.

3.58 pm

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) for securing the debate, for her powerful speech and for her pertinent questions. I am sure that we would all agree that although there are not many hon. Members present, the speeches we have heard have been of a very high quality and very passionate. Some important questions have been asked of the Minister; as we have enough time, I hope she will answer them.

Victims of torture and other vulnerable people should not be in immigration detention, but current safeguards are not working and vulnerable people are still being detained for long periods. The Shaw review made a number of recommendations, but the Government’s response to that review—addressing adults at risk—has in some places made matters worse. Last week, the Minister confirmed that she already had Shaw’s follow-up review. I look forward to that being published this month, so that we can fully scrutinise and debate his findings. Today I will discuss issues that happen before people are detained, the experience of people in detention and the difficulties that vulnerable people have when they are released.

First, the Home Office should identify whether someone is vulnerable before they are detained; a number of Members emphasised that point. Currently, there is no effective pre-detention screening process. The detention gatekeeper works only with the limited information that is already on a person’s file; often, that information is not enough to identify vulnerability.

Secondly, the experience of being in detention can often increase someone’s vulnerability; again, this point has been emphasised before. Many studies have shown that the lack of a time limit on detention causes significant distress. As Sabiti from Uganda put it:

“It’s horrible not knowing when it will end. You are just there sitting, waking up and eating, and there’s nothing; it’s like your whole life has just stopped.”

We need a 28-day time limit on immigration detention. The detention estate is enormously expensive and it is not effective, even when measured by the Home Office’s own standards. The majority of people in detention are released back into the community and not deported.

It is common for people to be moved around between detention centres. I have been told that moves often happen at night because the contractors doing the outsourcing do not have enough vans and drivers to organise moves during the day. This causes a number of problems, especially for vulnerable people: people with health difficulties cannot receive the continuity of care

that they need, and people are housed away from their families and often do not have any visitors for the whole period that they are detained, especially as detainees' phones are routinely confiscated. They cannot contact family, friends or anyone else they rely on outside.

Thirdly, it is difficult for vulnerable people to be released from detention, even when the Home Office has recognised them as being vulnerable. Vivian experienced female genital mutilation, or FGM, as a child. Later, she married an abusive and violent man, who forced her into prostitution. She eventually fled to the UK. Vivian told the Home Office what had happened in her main asylum interview. She remained in detention for two months before she obtained a rule 35 report. However, even after that report, the Home Office refused to release her for four months, when a new legal aid solicitor threatened to take the Home Office to court. Vivian's story highlights a number of problems with the rule 35 process. Many detainees do not know about it. Women at Yarl's Wood detention centre are not told about rule 35 reports by Home Office or detention centre staff as a matter of course.

Some detainees also have to wait for long periods to see a doctor—sometimes two weeks or more. Even if a vulnerable person receives a rule 35 report, fewer vulnerable people are being released now than before the adults at risk policy was introduced. Before that policy was introduced, 39% of those with a rule 35 report were released. After its introduction, that fell to 12.5%. Why was there this fall?

The adults at risk policy raised the threshold as to a decision to detain. Before, victims of torture would be detained only in "very exceptional circumstances"; now the harm of detention is balanced against a vague set of "immigration factors", such as the risk of absconding. And the vulnerable person must present specific evidence that detention is likely to cause harm. This is very hard to do before someone has actually been detained.

Most people with rule 35 reports are victims of torture. The Government have made changes to the definition of torture in the adults at risk policy that will come into effect on 2 July. I have already set out in detail our objections to these changes, but I will reiterate them briefly here.

First, the new definition is unworkable. It is too complex to be applied by either doctors or Home Office staff.

Secondly, the new definition is unnecessary. If implemented in its current form, and even if it is applied perfectly, this definition of torture will exclude victims of severe ill treatment.

The Secretary of State has the power to create an inclusive category of people who will be protected by the adults at risk policy. Rather than narrowing the definition of torture, the Government should incorporate the High Court ruling into their wider review of the detention centre rules, and the adults at risk guidance. This should take into account the findings of the second Shaw review and a proper consultation.

During consideration in Committee of the Immigration (Guidance on Detention of Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2018 last week, the Minister told us that she is rolling out an extensive training programme for caseworkers and healthcare professionals in detention centres. Would it not make more sense to conduct a review of the entire detention centre rules and guidance, and train staff on

everything at once, rather than bringing this change in now and possibly altering it later this year?

Finally, I turn to what happens when people are released; put simply, the problems do not go away. Often, people are released into destitution. Some very vulnerable people in detention will have been receiving medical treatment. Typically, people are given only four hours' notice of release and then given a ticket back to wherever they were living before being detained. That creates serious problems regarding continuity of care. The trauma of detention stays with people. Without a resolution to their case, they are released from one limbo into another. Many people were originally detained when they went to report to authorities. On release, they go back to reporting regularly and each time they worry that they could be detained again.

Our immigration detention system is not adequately protecting vulnerable people. We have the Shaw review, and the review of the detention centre guidelines is coming up. I encourage the Minister to halt the changes to the definition of torture that are due to come in soon, and to undertake a proper consultation on the wide reforms that are needed. Our detention system desperately needs a culture change: we need a 28-day time limit; we need a true presumption against detention, so that it is used only as a last resort; and we need to end the outsourcing of detention to private companies.

4.8 pm

The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes): It is, of course, a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma.

I commend the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) for securing this debate on the immigration detention of victims of torture and other vulnerable individuals. As many Members will know, the right hon. Lady has been absolutely diligent on this issue. Of course, we have heard several times mention of the debate that she secured last week, having prayed against the two statutory instruments, which, to a large extent, provoked this discussion today.

I thank Members for their contributions to the debate, but I pay particular tribute to the expertise and knowledge of the hon. Members for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) and for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green). I certainly recognise their wealth of knowledge and the opportunities that they often provide to—for want of a better phrase—pick their brains and find common ground. That is important when we are discussing sensitive issues. We should find common ground when it is there to be found. I know that there will be many areas where we disagree, and I will undoubtedly cover them in due course, but it is imperative that when Members from across the House have expertise and knowledge, we seek to use it and learn from it.

There was certainly no intention in last week's statutory instruments to make matters worse for vulnerable individuals and victims of torture, but I come back time and again to the judgment of October last year, which clearly gave us guidance and a steer that we needed to take action within a reasonable timescale to make our definition clearer. We have discussed the timing of the statutory instruments, but I go back to this point: we are duty bound as a Government to act within a reasonable timescale, and the judgment indicated we should do so.

[*Caroline Nokes*]

I was concerned that if we waited for the Shaw re-review to come out, we would lose the opportunity to lay the SIs before the summer recess and that they would then not be laid until the autumn, potentially coming into effect more than a year after the judgment. In making his judgment, Mr Justice Ouseley had the benefit of the expert witnesses of Medical Justice, among others. He made it very clear that we as a Government had to act.

Joan Ryan: The Minister is being very generous, as she was in Committee. Did she give any consideration to simply going back to the definition that we had prior to the adults at risk policy, while we waited for the Shaw review? It was surely in her gift or that of her officials to talk to Stephen Shaw and ascertain roughly when the re-review might be available. Clearly he was very close to making it available. We could have taken a step back from the 2016 adults at risk policy, and then found ourselves with the Shaw re-review and in a position to do a full review to bring forward a policy that could command the support of the expert groups.

Caroline Nokes: I thank the right hon. Lady for her intervention. I want to address briefly some issues of timing and whether the most desirable outcome would be to seek to turn the clock back. I think she almost commenced some of her commentary this afternoon with a discussion of how the Shaw review occurred. We received his first review in 2016. It was started because previous policies were not working. We should accept his expertise and recommendations and learn from them.

I am not going to say this afternoon that I think the adults at risk policy is perfect. I regard it very much as a work in progress—something that we will seek to improve, adapt and amend. Do I at this point seek to turn the clock back? No, I do not. The right hon. Lady must wait for the publication of the review and the response we intend to make. I intend it to be very full and to provide as much information as possible, taking on board Stephen Shaw's recommendations and ensuring that we make our detention policies better. I said last week and reiterate this afternoon that we will update our detention centre rules in the second half of this year. That gives us an opportunity to look at many of the issues that have been raised this afternoon.

Members will know—it has been alluded to this afternoon—that 95% of those who are here without the right to be so are in the community. Some 5% will be in detention at any one time. I am determined, and have been since I came in as Minister, to look at the alternatives to detention. We do so constantly. We can all understand that being in detention puts stress on individuals. For those who are vulnerable, those stresses will be exacerbated, and we have seen the evidence that indicates that. It is important, however, that we accept that it is Government policy that for those who have no right to be here and for whom alternatives to detention have not succeeded, may not succeed or may not be appropriate, there will remain a place for detention within our immigration system. It is important that we recognise that it is only when there is a realistic chance of removal within a reasonable timescale that individuals will be considered for detention, including by the new detention gatekeeper that was introduced post-2016 and post-Shaw. We should

acknowledge that the detention estate has reduced. I have an ambition to continue to see it reduce, because that is absolutely the right direction of travel.

I reject the right hon. Lady's suggestion that there is targeting of victims, and I reject the phrase "low-hanging fruit". That is not a term I recognise or would use, but I know we can do better. One hears with absolute horror the case studies that she identifies and highlights so properly to us this afternoon. We must ensure we are not putting individuals who have been the victims of domestic violence at further risk. She has been diligent in her determination to reinforce that message to me.

We have also heard of the horrendous—I think that is the only word I can use—instances at Brook House. As a new Immigration Minister, the "Panorama" programme made extremely unhappy viewing. My private office provided me with the link and told me to go home that night and watch it. We have the Lampard review in place, and we have the reviews that are carried out in every immigration removal centre by the independent monitoring boards. I have been pleased to meet members of the monitoring boards and receive their reports. They are an important tool in understanding where we are getting things wrong and how we can do things better.

We will review the detention centre rules in the second half of this year, and I regard that as an important opportunity that we must seize. As Members will know, the Government work hard to encourage individuals to comply with our immigration rules and support those with no right to remain to leave voluntarily. A minority of individuals refuse to comply, and detention can then become a necessary tool for enforcing return.

Like the right hon. Lady, I would prefer that we did not have to use detention, but when people do not leave voluntarily, have no right to be here and frustrate attempts to seek their return from this country, we must use it. It is used sparingly, however, and we operate a strong presumption in favour of not detaining. Of those people with no lawful basis to stay in the UK and who are liable to removal, 95% are managed in the community at any one time.

For every individual who is detained, there must be a realistic prospect of removal within a reasonable timescale. In each case, we expect those making detention decisions to consider the likely duration of detention necessary to effect removal. The majority are held for short periods. Some 91% of those leaving detention in the year ending March 2018 were detained for less than four months, and 64% were detained for 28 days or less. Their welfare is of the utmost importance to the Home Office.

Where it is necessary to detain people to remove them, a number of safeguards are in place including the presence of healthcare staff in all immigration removal centres and residential short-term holding facilities; a comprehensive suite of published guidance and operating procedures to govern conditions in the centres and support the wellbeing of detainees; regular reviews of detention by increasingly senior officers to ensure that detention remains appropriate and to drive forward case progression; and independent judicial oversight of immigration detention.

The adults at risk policy implemented in September 2016 provides a further vital safeguard and was a key part of our response to Stephen Shaw's review of the

welfare of vulnerable people in immigration detention, which was commissioned by the Prime Minister when she was Home Secretary. Under the adults at risk policy, vulnerable people are detained or their detention continued only when the immigration considerations in their case outweigh the evidence of vulnerability. Detention decisions are made on the basis of all the available evidence. Cases are reviewed not only at regular intervals, but whenever new evidence comes to light.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, we were all deeply shocked by the events shown in the BBC's "Panorama" programme about Brook House. The centre operator took swift action in response, suspending and then dismissing a number of members of staff, and, as I said, Kate Lampard has been commissioned to conduct an independent review.

The national referral mechanism is the existing process by which people in the UK who may have been trafficked, or people in England or Wales who may be the victims of slavery, servitude or forced or compulsory labour, can be identified and supported by the Government or other agencies. In addition, detention centre rules 34 and 35 help us to identify vulnerable victims.

The right hon. Member for Enfield North asked a very specific question about how many individuals are categorised as level 1, 2 or 3 under the adults at risk policy. I will write to her separately with the management information, but I want to put it on record that we are considering publishing that information as part of our response to Shaw. The adults at risk policy seeks to strike a balance between the risk of harm to the individual from detention and the immigration factors in their particular case. That is both sensible and reasonable, and ensures that those who are most vulnerable, and therefore most at risk of harm from detention, are not detained unless the immigration factors outweigh that risk. I believe that that is a proportionate approach, and if people are detained their welfare is, of course, of the utmost concern, including ensuring that the period of detention is as short as possible.

Joan Ryan: What the Minister has just said beggars belief in the light of the statistic mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham—

Kate Green: Stretford and Urmston.

Joan Ryan: Stretford and Urmston. Streatham is not very far away, is it? You would think, with my accent, I would have been able to get that right—I do apologise.

My hon. Friend talked about 56% of people being released back into the community. There clearly is a problem. It is not as the Minister says. I do not understand what confidence we can have if she cannot take account of that. Will she also confirm that the Shaw re-review will be published later this month?

Caroline Nokes: That is an important point about proportionality and the numbers who are released from immigration detention. We use detention to ensure that people who have no right to be here are returned to their home country. However, it is important that when additional information emerges and people demonstrate vulnerability, there is constant review. They can ask at any moment for consideration of immigration bail. That will be automatic after four months and every

month thereafter. I accept that we do not make correct decisions all the time. I welcome the fact that when evidence emerges of vulnerability or of another reason it is inappropriate for somebody to be in detention, we are happy for them to be released into the community and for their case to be managed in a better way than detention.

Kate Green: The Minister might not have the information before her, but I wonder whether she could write to advise me of the frequency of people being taken into detention, released and then taken back into detention, and the reasons for that. She suggests that new information might come to light and people's vulnerability may change over time. I accept that, but I would like a better understanding of the degree of churn in the system. That constant uncertainty, and the sense that even when they are returned to the community they might end up back in detention, is extremely damaging to vulnerable people.

Caroline Nokes: As I would expect, the hon. Lady makes an important and concerning point about churn. We all share that concern, because we want to have effective immigration policies, not churn. As I said, it is right that when vulnerabilities are demonstrated people are released, and that their immigration bail can be considered on request at any time. I will certainly write to her with the information she seeks.

The Shaw review became available to me at the end of April, which was later than I had anticipated, albeit not by much. We are working very hard on our response. We will publish that as soon as possible, but I want it to be thorough. It is important that the Government's response is as full as possible, taking on board, understanding and showing action on the recommendations that Shaw has made.

Afzal Khan: Listening to the Minister, I am struggling. The simple point is that she has said, even today, that detention is a last resort. We know from the facts that the majority of people are released back into the community. Does that not prove that the system is not fit and that something needs to be done?

Caroline Nokes: The hon. Gentleman needs to reflect on the fact that 95% of those who have no right to be here are in the community. A small proportion are in detention, but it is absolutely right that when those who have gone into detention provide us with additional information towards their potential asylum claim, we reflect on that, and that we enable people to be released from detention when they should not be there. I do not accept his premise that the system does not work, and I hope that he might accept that there is a place for immigration detention.

Afzal Khan: Will the Minister give way?

Caroline Nokes: I am sorry; I wish to conclude my remarks very shortly.

I reassure hon. Members that we are absolutely committed to the welfare of detainees, and specifically to protecting victims of torture and other vulnerable people in immigration detention. I am clear that those aims are important to us and not incompatible. It is to

[*Caroline Nokes*]

those complementary ends that we are now implementing the judgment that the court set down clearly in October, and we shall seek to do so within a reasonable timescale.

4.26 pm

Joan Ryan: I thank hon. Members who have taken part in today's debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) provided moving and powerful examples from her own experience. She and my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) fleshed out the human cost of the policy since 2016 and, I think, its cost going forward. I am grateful to the SNP Front-Bench spokesperson, the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald), for his support and knowledge on this matter, both today and in Committee. The Front-Bench spokesperson for the Labour party, my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan), made a powerful case that demonstrated understanding, for which I am grateful.

I cannot deny that I am very disappointed in the Minister's response. I do not expect her to stand here today and change policy, but I hope that she will go away and reflect on what has been said. I am sure that she will, and I hope that she will reflect to such a degree that we hear something different when we get the Government's response to the Shaw re-review. I think

we are seeing a change only because the Government were dragged into the High Court. The change has not occurred of the Government's own volition, so perhaps we should not be surprised that we are not hearing the things that we think we should be.

It is no use talking about 95% and 5%. We are talking about 27,000 people—more than 4,000 women at any one time—suffering from an inhumane policy that contravenes many people's human rights. I do not think we can say that the Government are doing it in the name of the people of this country. This is taking the low-hanging fruit to meet the immigration numbers, and it does not take account of how people are suffering.

The policy has to change. It will continue to be challenged, and I hope that we do not have to come back here in a year's time. It will give us no satisfaction to say, "We were right," given what the human cost will be between now and then. That could be avoided if the Government would but listen. Do not give lip service to abandoning the hostile environment—genuinely abandon the hostile environment.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered immigration detention of victims of torture and other vulnerable people.

4.29 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Transport Council

Thursday 14 June 2018

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George Eustice): The Agriculture and Fisheries Council will take place on 18 June in Luxembourg.

As the provisional agenda stands, the primary focus for fisheries will be a presentation by the European Commission on the state of play of the common fisheries policy (CFP) and consultation on the fishing opportunities for 2019.

Council will exchange views on a regulation on the European maritime and fisheries fund, followed by an exchange of views concerning a regulation amending Council regulations as regards fisheries control.

The primary focus for agriculture will be an exchange of views on the common agricultural policy (CAP) post 2020. Council will discuss three regulations during this item: a regulation on CAP strategic plans; a regulation on financing, management and monitoring of the CAP; and a regulation on common market organisation of agricultural products.

The Commission will also provide an update on the situation in EU agricultural markets.

There are currently six items scheduled under any other business:

- protection of honeybees and other pollinators
- memorandum on the CAP in the context of the next MFF
- decreasing availability of water for agriculture in Cyprus
- disposal of skimmed milk powder stocks
- situation in the pig meat market
- joint declaration of the ministers of agriculture of 11 member states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) on the vision of the central eastern European initiative for knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture and forestry in the bio-economy "BIOEAST".

[HCWS764]

TRANSPORT

Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill: English Votes for English Laws

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Jesse Norman): I am today placing in the Library of the House the Department's analysis on the application of Standing Order 83L in respect of the amendments tabled during the progress through the House of Lords the Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill.

[HCWS766]

The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling): I attended the only formal Transport Council under the Bulgarian presidency (the presidency) in Luxembourg on Thursday 7 June.

The Council reached a general approach on a proposal to revise the current regulation on safeguarding connectivity and competition in international air transport, which is intended to provide protection against subsidisation and unfair pricing practices in the supply of air services from non-EU countries. During the discussion, I emphasised the importance of connectivity, consumer choice and avoiding market distortions.

Following this, the Council adopted the presidency's proposal for a general approach on the directive on port reception facilities. I supported the aim to further protect the marine environment against illegal discharges of waste from ships and to ensure the efficiency of maritime operation in ports, and recognised that concerns raised by the UK had been addressed.

Next, the presidency presented a progress report on the revised rail passengers' rights and obligations regulation, which was noted by the Council.

Following this, the Council considered a number of files in phase one of the mobility package (published in May 2017). First, the presidency concluded that the Council had reached a general approach on the compromise proposal on the revised European electronic road tolling services ("EETS") directive, on which I voiced my support. Next, when considering the proposed directive on hired goods vehicles, the presidency observed it did not have sufficient support for a general approach and concluded that the Council was unable to adopt the proposal. In the discussion, I noted that the UK supported the general approach, but acknowledged that other member states wanted further discussion.

Over lunch, Ministers discussed the financing of infrastructure projects in the EU and connectivity in the western Balkans.

Following this, the presidency presented progress reports on the remaining elements of phase one of the mobility package, covering proposals designed to improve the clarity and enforcement of the EU road transport market (the "market pillar"), and proposals on the application of social legislation in road transport (the "social pillar"). I outlined the outstanding areas of concern for the UK and committed to working constructively toward a general approach and deal moving forward.

Next, the presidency presented two progress reports on proposals from phase two of the mobility package (published November 2017). The presidency provided updates on the proposal to amend the current combined transport directive, which aims to encourage and facilitate modal shift away from the roads and onto alternative means of transport, and to reduce congestion, and the clean and energy-efficient vehicles directive.

Under any other business, several items were discussed. Notably, Commissioner Bulc presented the third and final mobility package proposals, which focused on safety and technology in transport. Commissioner Bulc also presented an action plan on military mobility; in reply to Luxembourg, she confirmed that a range of actions were being pursued under the EU cycling strategy and, in reply to Finland, set out plans for an upcoming

public consultation on summertime arrangements. Furthermore, Sweden noted the 18 and 19 June summit on connected and autonomous vehicles in Gothenburg; and Austria presented transport plans for its incoming presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Regarding bilateral engagement, I met with Commissioner Bulc and my ministerial counterparts from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Malta, Poland and Romania.

[HCWS765]

Petition

Thursday 14 June 2018

OBSERVATIONS

TRANSPORT

Basingstoke Motorway Service Areas

The petition of residents of Basingstoke,

Declares that urgent action must be taken concerning proposals for new Motorway Service Areas at Basingstoke; further that there is no need for any additional motorway service areas given that the existing services at Fleet and Winchester are only 23 miles apart; further that the development of any new facilities will be detrimental to the environment and traffic congestion; further that they are clearly not in the best interests of Basingstoke residents; and further that the two proposals that have been made to date, one at Junction 6 and one near Junction 7 are not acceptable.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges HM Government to ensure road safety and the avoidance of traffic congestion are given priority over any unnecessary new motorway service areas around Basingstoke; and further urges the Department for Transport to reinstate the requirement for there to be a minimum distance between motorway service areas.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mrs Maria Miller, Official Report, 24 April 2018; Vol. 639, c. 849.]

[P002139]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Jesse Norman):

The petitioners request that the HM Government ensure road safety and the avoidance of traffic congestion are given priority over any unnecessary new motorway service areas around Basingstoke.

Motorway service areas and other roadside facilities perform an important road safety function by providing opportunities for the travelling public to stop and take a break in the course of their journey. Since 1992, Government policy has been that the private sector should take the lead in identifying and acquiring sites for motorway service areas and in obtaining the required planning permission from local authorities. The Government work closely with operators to ensure that the provision of roadside facilities is sustained and to seek ways to enhance quality so as to provide an improved service for customers.

Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council are responsible for the day to day planning of their area. The Government's policy is not to interfere with the jurisdiction of a local

planning authority unless it is necessary to do so. This is because local authority Councillors are elected to represent the views of local people and, in the main, it is these Councillors who are in the best position to decide whether a development should go ahead. In determining a planning application the local planning authority are required to have regard to all material considerations including the development plan, national policies and views expressed by third parties. It is, of course, for local planning authorities to provide whatever justification that may be appropriate to give for their decisions and procedures. The Government are committed to giving more power to councils and communities to make their own decisions on planning issues, and believe planning decisions should be made at the local level wherever possible.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council consulted Highways England on the proposal to construct a Motorway Service Area at land adjacent to M3 Junction 6 in November 2017 (planning application 17/03487/FUL). They are reviewing the proposal in line with Department for Transport Circular 2/2013 The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development and in particular Annex B Roadside Facilities for Road Users on Motorways and All-purpose Trunk Roads in England. There is currently insufficient information to establish the potential impact to the safe and efficient operation of the M3 from the proposal and therefore have not formally responded to Basingstoke with a final position. Highways England are currently working with the applicant to provide the appropriate information to enable them to determine if any potential impacts can be accommodated or if necessary mitigated whilst maintaining a safe and efficient operation of the M3.

Basingstoke have previously requested EIA Scoping Opinion (16/02767/ENSC) in 2016 for a proposal for a Motorway Service Area on the M3 Southbound between Junctions 6 and 7. We are not aware of a formal application to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council subsequently being made.

The petitioners also request that the Department for Transport reinstate the requirement for there to be a minimum distance between motorway service areas. The current spread of service areas across the motorway network has evolved from a long-standing spacing criterion of 30 mile intervals between sites. This spacing criterion was set on the premise that drivers should have the opportunity to stop for rest and to obtain fuel at intervals of approximately half an hour. Current Government advice is that motorists should stop and take a break of at least 20 minutes every two hours. There are currently no plans to reintroduce a minimum distance in future revisions of the Circular as all issues regarding safety and congestion are already considered fully via the planning process.

Ministerial Correction

Thursday 14 June 2018

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Business of the House

The following is an extract from the statement on the Business of the House on 7 June 2018.

Justine Greening (Putney) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can the Leader of the House set out when the airports national policy statement will be debated and voted on?

Andrea Leadsom: The NPS was laid on 5 June and will be subject to a debate and vote in the House of Commons within 21 sitting days of laying the final NPS in Parliament. The last date that that can take place is 10 July 2018.

[Official Report, 7 June 2018, Vol. 642, c. 466.]

Letter of correction from Andrea Leadsom:

An error has been identified in the answer I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening) during business questions on 7 June 2018.

The correct response should have been:

Andrea Leadsom: The NPS was laid on 5 June and will be subject to a debate and vote in the House of Commons within 21 sitting days of laying the final NPS in Parliament. The last date that that can take place is **9 July 2018**.

ORAL ANSWERS

Thursday 14 June 2018

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PETITION

Thursday 14 June 2018

	<i>Col. No.</i>	<i>Col. No.</i>
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Basingstoke Motorway Service Areas	9P	

MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Thursday 14 June 2018

	<i>Col. No.</i>
LEADER OF THE HOUSE	5MC
Business of the House	5MC

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